

WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY

PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT GROUP (PDG)

Minutes of a meeting of the Partnership Development Group
held from 14.00 on Monday 9 March 2015 in DEPG Depot, Williton

Present:

Steve Williams (Chairman)	West Somerset Railway PLC
David Williams	Chairman - West Somerset Railway Association
Chris Austin	West Somerset Steam Railway Trust
John Cronin	Diesel & Electric Preservation Group
Cllr Ian Melhuish	West Somerset District Council
Cllr Jean Adkins	Taunton Deane District Council
Tim Stanger	Friends of Stations Group and FOWSR
James Stubbs	Somerset County Council
Martyn Snell	Employees and Volunteers
Godfrey Baker	Somerset & Dorset Trust

In attendance:

Mel Hillman	Administrator
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There were no apologies for absence

Minute		Action
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13/15	Welcome	
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John Cronin was thanked for offering to host the meeting at the DEPG Depot, Williton and for undertaking the guided tour prior to the meeting.

It was also reported that John Irven would no longer be attending the meetings on a regular basis. He was currently indisposed and David Baker would be confirmed as Acting Chairman of the PLC at the forthcoming Board meeting.

14/15	Minutes of Previous Meeting	
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The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 12 January 2015 were APPROVED. It was NOTED that there had been a positive response to the minutes being placed in the public domain.

15/15	Matters Arising	
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- i) Minute 6/15. Bishops Lydeard Site. The next meeting of the Bishops Lydeard Development Group would be held on 10 March 2015. The Chairman of the Friends of Bishops Lydeard had been invited to attend.
- ii) Minute 7/15 Taunton to Bishops Lydeard Link. Steve Williams reported that he was working through the appraisal paper. WSRA had confirmed involvement. He had attended a meeting of the Devon Metro Group which had considered the re-opening of Wellington and Cullumpton mainline stations but not much progress had been made. An approach was being made to the

Train Operating Company and Network Rail to extend the trial Cardiff to Taunton service onto Exeter. Steve Williams had objected to this as this proposal would impact on any potential trial extension from Taunton to Bishops Lydeard. Nothing was likely to happen before 2018. A second meeting was planned for week beginning 16 March 2015 to discuss this. The WSRA would be invited to comment on how the Norton Fitzwarren Triangle would be involved in any of these proposals.

- iii) Minute 9/15 Inward Investment. Steve Williams confirmed that under the restructuring of the PLC Board there would be a new post for a Director of Inward Investment.
- iv) Minute 10/15 PLC 3-Year Plan. Steve Williams confirmed he was leading on this. Considerable progress had been made. The Draft Plan would be presented to the PLC AGM in June 2015.
- v) Minute 11/15 Norton Fitzwarren Floodplain. Cllr Jean Atkins reported that she had made enquiries on the future plans and had been told that it was unlikely that the link road and farm development would be completed in the next few years, although circumstances may change. The required road and flood prevention work was a long way off. Cllr Atkins would keep the Group informed.

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16/15 Williton Site

Following the discussion at the previous meeting, Steve Williams had circulated some draft Terms of Reference (ToRs) for a Site Development Group. The ToRs would be presented to the PLC Board in March. The idea would be to follow the Bishops Lydeard Group model and invite the interested parties to join. This would include DEPG, West Somerset Restorations, Steam Trust, West Somerset District Council, PLC and representation from the station staff. Chris Austin added that the 5542 Group also had a presence onsite and would need to be kept informed.

In considering the ToRs, David Williams and Chris Austin raised concerns about the appointment of a 'Master Planner' for the site. This could impact on the ability of individual groups to determine their own expenditure and there was a question of how this person would know the requirements. It was agreed to delete this paragraph from the ToRs. It was acknowledged that such a person may be required in the future once the plans were known and agreed. Chris Austin saw this as a Strategy rather than a Plan at this stage and there needed to be flexibility in agreeing the hierarchy of needs for the site. It was confirmed that the station area would be included within the remit of the Group. John Cronin expressed concern that action needed to be taken urgently as the current plans to extend the loop would still not allow for the passing of Charter Trains at the station. Cllr Ian Melhuish felt the plans needed a focus and were unclear at the moment. James Stubbs added that SCC would expect to be consulted on proposals.

Martyn Snell raised the issue of the various leases for the site. Steve Williams replied that the ongoing issues around the WSRA lease/licence would be dealt with via the Intermediaries Group. The PDG would not be involved in the commercial negotiations between the two parties. David Williams asked if the PDG would express support for a rapid settlement of the situation. Steve Williams replied that if it were to be an impediment

the new Group would. David Williams stated that this was the current situation. Steve Williams replied that the solution would be through the strategic work of the new Group. The Williton Group would report back to PDG. Cllr Ian Melhuish added that the question of leases would not be relevant at this early stage. Development on the Williton site had been piecemeal and an overarching view was now required.

John Cronin added that any considerations should include the overall engineering strategy in the 10 Year Plan. Steve Williams confirmed that this would be part of the longer term plan.

It was AGREED to set up the Williton Support Group as soon as possible. Steve Williams would revise the ToRs to delete reference to the Master Planner and add the membership. The revised version would be circulated to members. Cllr Jean Atkins added that it might be beneficial to seek the views of local residents and businesses. Steve Williams would take this on board. Martyn Snell suggested it might also be an idea to keep the Town Council informed. Steve Williams agreed that a communications plan would be needed.

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17/15 Bishops Lydeard Site

A briefing paper had been circulated to members beforehand. The next meeting of the Bishops Lydeard Development Group would be held on Tuesday 10 March 2015. The PLC Plans would be the starting point for discussions.

Details would be shared at the PLC Stakeholder Meeting. The slides would be circulated for information together with those on the financial challenges for the Railway in 2015.

18/15 Washford Site

Godfrey Baker distributed a short briefing sheet on the background to the location and work of the Somerset & Dorset Trust at Washford since 1975. It had always been considered part of the overall WSR visitor attraction. Comments were made that it was probably the most visible station to visitors as it was located next to the main road.

Godfrey Baker stated that there was a need to invest in the site but the current lease expired in 2020. The current lease allowed the Trust to own all the development facilities they had completed onsite. The Group had been told that the future requirements needed to be considered through PDG. Steve Williams replied that there would be a need for the Trust to produce their 5 Year Plan to identify why the lease should be extended and to point out the key issues. David Williams asked for clarification on the PLC position on Washford. Steve Williams replied that it had not been discussed for some time and that he did not know the current position.

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Once the Draft Plan had been completed with priorities identified, the Plan could be presented to PDG for further discussion. Steve Williams would inform the PLC Board that this was on its way. In response to one question on what the Trust would want that is not currently provided, Godfrey Baker replied that there was an urgent need for a larger building. Chris Austin commented that this was also a consideration at Bishops

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Lydeard. It was pointed out that a co-ordinated approach to any funding bids would be essential as they would be more likely to succeed. Steve Williams confirmed that the PDG would be the Group to discuss these Plans. Steve Williams added that with the proposed re-structuring of the PLC Board, there would be a Director with responsibility for Heritage and Preservation.

19/15 List of Projects

John Cronin presented a list of 32 small projects which he considered would make quick 'gains' in improving the Railway. Thanks were expressed to John for producing the list.

Members considered the items and commented on individual ones impacting on their areas. Some felt that they might not be suitable for the location. It was AGREED that all members take the list back to their Groups for further discussions and report back. David Williams commented that some of these projects might not sit comfortably with a Heritage Railway and those aspects should not be destroyed.

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Martyn Snell, in his role of Chairman of FOMS commented that he would contact the local county councillor on the issue of barriers outside Minehead station.

It was noted that there was a forthcoming meeting of Station Masters and this list may be of interest to that forum. Steve Williams was already due to attend that meeting to discuss the PLC three year plan. He asked all Groups to consider submitting any plans to him by the end of March 2015.

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20/15 WSR Railway Photographic Archive

Tim Stanger gave details of a new Photographic Archive that was being created for the WSR. There were already about 225 images on the site. There was no copyright (although a caption acknowledgement would be appreciated) and no fee.

21/15 Any Other Business

- i) WSR Journal. David Williams stated that at the first meeting he had mentioned that there had been comment that the Journal had regressed. He pointed out that the Journal was for the whole Railway but there was now no input from the PLC which was not helping the Railway overall. Previous articles submitted by Heads of Department had ceased. Steve Williams agreed to raise this with the PLC. It was agreed something about the role of the PDG would be valuable.
- ii) PLC Committees. Steve Williams informed the meeting that he would share the new PLC Committee Structure at the next meeting. The process for reviewing and approving policies was being reviewed. Steve Williams would keep PDG informed of the changes as some of the policies would impact across the wider Railway Family.
- iii) Heritage and Preservation. It was noted that there was a chapter in the 10 Year Plan on Preservation but it was unclear

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how this was going to happen moving forward. Members of the Group were asked to think about how a coherent programme could be produced. Chris Austin offered to produce some thoughts for the next meeting. Steve Williams repeated that in the PLC Board restructure there would be a Director for Heritage & Preservation. There would also be a need for a coherent Acquisitions and Disposals Plan.

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22/15 Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting would be held:

11.00 on Thursday 30 April 2015 in Brunel House, Bishops Lydeard.

The meeting closed at 16.00