

WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY

PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT GROUP (PDG)

Minutes of a meeting of the Partnership Development Group held from 11.00 on Thursday 15 October 2015 in Brunel House, Bishops Lydeard

Present:

Steve Williams (Chairman)	West Somerset Railway PLC
Peter Chidzey	Chairman WSRA
Chris Austin	West Somerset Steam Railway Trust
Cllr Karen Mills	West Somerset Council
Cllr Jean Adkins	Taunton Deane District Council
Martyn Snell	Employees & Volunteers
Godfrey Baker	Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust
John Cronin	Diesel & Electric Preservation Group

In attendance:

Mel Hillman	Administrator
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Apologies: were received from:

James Stubbs	Somerset County Council
Tim Stanger	Friends Groups and FoWSR

Minute

Action

61/15 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 20 August 2015 were APPROVED.

62/15 Matters Arising (items not on the agenda)

- i) Minute 48/15(i) Norton Fitzwarren flood plain. Cllr Jean Adkins reported that as part of a SADMP Site Inspection Document the Planning Inspector had queried whether plans for the site were deliverable. A solicitor acting for the owners of the land had responded asserting that the land was viable and development deliverable. Barratt had withdrawn their interest but the land agent had indicated that a planning application was possible. This made the land marketable. The parties involved were not known as this was commercially sensitive information. The full details were available on the TBDC website.
- ii) Minute 48/15(ii) Washford Site. Godfrey Baker reported that in wishing to develop the site, the Trust had engaged an advisor from the Museums Association to assist in the production of a grant application. This should be ready by the end of November 2015.
- iii) Minute 48/15(iii) PR Director. It was reported that Geoff Evens had dropped the PR/Communications brief at Board and was focussing on IT services. An internal replacement was being considered.
- iv) Minute 48/15(iv) Commercial Negotiations. It was reported that Chris Bolt had held ongoing negotiations with support groups. He was due to meet Steve Williams in the following week to follow-up.

- v) Minute 48/15(v) Heritage & Preservation Group. It was confirmed that the Terms of Reference had been passed to Mark Smith. It was agreed that Cllr Jean Adkins should be invited to represent Local Authorities on the Group. Chris Austin added that Mark Smith had written to Groups requesting other nominations to serve on the Group and would follow-up on his return from leave.
- vi) Minute 48/15(vii) Policies. Peter Chidzey reported that the WSRA Trustees meeting on 24 August had run out of time. The matter would be dealt with at the next meeting and he would report back. **PCZ**
- vii) Minute 48/15(ix) Commercial Office Review. Geoff Evens was leading this work and reviewing admin support in general. The Head of Commercial Services post had been advertised. The comments from the previous minutes had been passed to the Plc Board and it had been agreed that this was a genuine area of concern for PDG to raise.
- viii) Minute 48/15(x) SEPT Terms of Reference. A draft version would be presented to the meeting of SEPT later in the day. John Cronin commented that he had not received a copy. It was AGREED that he would speak with Steve Williams after the meeting. **JC/SW**
- ix) Minute 50/15 Bishops Lydeard Site Development Plans. It was reported that Chris Austin, Paul Conibeare, Geoff Evens and Steve Williams had met with Bishops Lydeard Parish Council who were unanimously wholeheartedly in favour of the proposed developments. However the group had not been able to meet with the residents' representatives from Station Green as yet. It was hoped to be able to move forward after 29 October 2015 when a consolidated paper will have been produced outlining the phasing and inward investment issues. Cllr Jean Adkins had met the Leader of TDBC and a further meeting was being arranged with relevant officers of the Council. It was hoped to be able to sign-off the brief on 29 October and based on the assumptions a phased work schedule could be agreed as well as identifying possible bids for external funding. The Plc Shareholders Appeal had set a target of £150,000 towards the Water Tower and Loco Compound Cover. The brief for the whole site would be finalised and the timescale agreed.
- x) Minute 53/15 Minehead Chamber of Commerce. It was reported that a further meeting had been held with John Irvan where the Chamber had repeated their aspirations to restore scheduled train services between Taunton and Minehead and had instituted a local campaign. As far as the Plc was concerned, this was a non-starter.
- xi) Minute 58/15 On-train Advertising. Chris Bolt would be speaking to Cllr Brian Leaker on this matter.
- xii) Minute 57/15 Leasehold. There was nothing further to report.
- xiii) Minute 59/15 Long Service Awards. It was reported that in view of the comments received, the Plc Board had listened and changed its plans and issued a revised Policy. This had been communicated across the Railway. Peter Chidzey commented that the WSRA knew nothing about the change. Steve Williams would follow-up on this. All recipients of Awards had been notified. **SW**

63/15 Chairman/Vice-Chairman

Following the discussion at the previous meeting, Steve Williams confirmed that the Plc Board had supported him continuing as Chairman for a second year.

Following a short discussion it was agreed that a Vice-Chairman should be elected at this meeting to become Chairman from October 2016. Cllr Jean Adkins was nominated and seconded. Cllr Jean Adkins was unanimously elected as Vice-Chairman. She would meet with Steve Williams to discuss ongoing matters.

SW/JA

64/15 3-Year Business Plan

Steve Williams presented the Plc 3-Year Business Plan. The full infrastructure plan was contained in the appendices. This would be circulated to all the Stakeholder Groups, Local Authorities, other interested organisations and well as being placed on the Plc website and the Un-Official WSR website. Any comments should be passed to Steve Williams asap.

ALL

The delivery of the Plan would be aligned with the Budget for next year in order that a rigorous process would be in place to deliver against the objectives and implementation schedule contained in the Plan.

Groups were asked to look at the Plan and consider the impact on their activities and follow-up with the responsible manager/director or via Steve Williams.

ALL

The Heritage & Preservation Group had been given 'teeth' in order to help the Railway focus on these aspects. All business cases would need to be presented to the Group for endorsement before submission for approval.

Martyn Snell asked how Friends Groups could proceed in this process. Steve Williams replied that the process had been designed to be as flexible as possible, but any plans, however well meant, would now need proper consideration and approval.

65/15 Williton Site Development Group

The draft minutes of the first meeting of the Group had been circulated prior to the meeting.

John Cronin pointed out that shunting problems on the site would need to be resolved and there would be a case for re-convening the Site User Group. An aerial photo was required to clarify usage. Peter Chidzey commented that the WSRA was producing a document which would be available in the next couple of weeks and would be shared with the Group.

PCZ

The draft Planning Brief had been considered. There was consensus support for parts of the Brief but it needed to be passed to the Heritage & Preservation Group as the station buildings were Grade 2 listed. There had been no council representatives at the meeting but it was known the Williton Parish Council was keen to support and help develop the town as a tourist attraction.

Steve Williams added this was a clear brief with a baseline for site Groups such as WSRA, DEPG and 5542 Ltd. He added that the Plc did

not yet have clarity of what it wanted from the site. There would be further internal meetings with Heads of Service before reporting back to OEC and Plc Board.

John Cronin commented that any plans should be based on the current track plan. Peter Chidzey added that the WSRA was expecting a reply to a letter regarding the lease position by November 2015. **SW**

The next meeting of the Group was scheduled for November. The dates would be shared with West Somerset Council. **SW**

66/15 Inward Investment

Steve Williams confirmed that he had been appointed as the interim Director for Inward Investment for the Plc alongside his planning role. He had produced a scoping paper which had been approved at the September meeting of the Plc Board and this was shared with the meeting.

There would be a need to clarify where partner groups were in relation to inward investment. All groups would need to think about applications in line with the principles outlined in the paper. This would be used as a basis for discussions with various individuals and organisations on the best way forward. There would be a need to think beyond the more 'big ticket' projects eg BL site, WN site and the proposed Taunton to BL link. The Plc had relied mainly on shareholder donations in the past.

At the next meeting this would be an agenda item where a discussion would be held on the principles of how to construct bids using the paper and to consider phasing, timetabling and types of funds available. There were many funding streams available. This was AGREED. Cllr Karen Mills commented that to make bids, the project needed to be ready first. It was no use gearing a plan to matched funding. She added that both councils had considerable experience and expertise in constructing bids and this may be available to the WSR. **SW/MH**

67/15 Plc – Phase 2 Re-Organisation

Steve Williams reported that as part of the re-organisation, five new Director roles had been advertised. There had been 10 applications from suitable individuals and an interview process was underway. Recommendations of appointments would be made to the October Plc Board and the successful individuals invited to the November Board meeting. This would complete Phase 1. In response to questions, Steve Williams assured the meeting that the unsuccessful individuals would be considered for other roles and their interest and expertise should not be lost.

Phase 2 would consider the management structure below Board. A paper had been approved by the September Plc Board meeting. Steve Williams was leading this and ensuring a real look at the functions and roles requirement and not the historical position. There would be a need to develop and balance the heritage aspects against running the business. This Phase should be completed during 2016.

68/15 Policies

Two policies were being presented for comment by Groups:

- i) Noise Management – relating to railway events.
 - ii) Environment – some comments had been made at OEC and the amendments were being made. The final version would be circulated.
- SW**

All Groups were asked to consider the policies and send comments back to Steve Williams asap. **ALL**

69/15 AOB

- i) Chris Austin commented that there were several small museums along the line and there would be a need to co-ordinate any bids to prevent overlap. Steve Williams agreed to produce a paper on external bids to be overseen by the Heritage and Preservation Group as a partnership component of PDG. **SW**

- ii) It was reported that Tim Stanger had relocated to Derbyshire but had kept a base in Taunton. He had spoken to Steve Williams on how he could best keep in touch with the various Groups, given that communication had not always been successful in the past. There was a wider ranging discussion on how to proceed. It was AGREED that Chris Austin and Martyn Snell would invite the various Groups to a meeting to discuss how best to proceed and report back to the next meeting. Steve Williams would report back to Tim Stanger and thank him for his excellent contribution to PDG. **CA/MS**
SW

60/15 Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting would be held from:

11.00 on Monday 30 November 2015 in Brunel House, Bishops Lydeard.

The meeting closed at 12.35