

WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY

PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT GROUP (PDG)

Minutes of a meeting of the Partnership Development Group held from 11.00 on Thursday 25 June 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 Brian Leaker	West Somerset Council (from item 42/15)
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 Railway Trust
John Cronin	Diesel & Electric Preservation Group

In attendance:

Mel Hillman	Administrator
-------------	---------------

There were no apologies for absence, although Cllr Brian Leaker had indicated prior to the meeting that he would be late arriving due to an emergency at work.

Minute

Action

33/15 Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting. It was noted that Peter Chidzey would now be representing the WSRA in place of David Williams. It was also noted that Cllr Ian Melhuish had not been re-elected in the council elections. Cllr Brian Leaker would be taking his place together with Cllr Karen Mills as per the previous arrangements for West Somerset Council. Cllr Atkins reported that she had been re-elected but the formal allocation of councillors to organisations had not yet been made. She would continue attending unless told otherwise.

34/15 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 30 April 2015 were APPROVED.

35/15 Matters Arising

- i) Minute 25/15(i) Norton Fitzwarren flood plan. Cllr Jean Adkins reported that she was not aware of any changes.
- ii) Minute 25/15(ii) Washford Site. Godfrey Baker reported that the plans were being developed but the group would like the PDG involved.
- iii) Minute 25/15(iii) Pedestrian control outside Minehead station. Martyn Snell reported that there had been no further action.
- iv) Minute 25/15(iv) WSRA Journal. Steve Williams reported that this had been discussed by the Plc Forward Planning Group in May. The new proposed Director for PR & Communications would pick up on

this once in post. The PR Committee was dormant until this position was filled. John Cronin raised concerns about problems obtaining information over special events costs on behalf of SEPT. Steve Williams agreed to feedback to the Plc.

SW

- v) Minute 25/15(v) PLC Committees. Steve Williams tabled printed copies of the new structure and would circulate electronic copies.

SW

36/15 Commercial Negotiations with Plc

Steve Williams confirmed that the paper shared at the previous meeting had been adopted by the Plc Board as the way forward. For future leases between the Plc and organisations there would be a negotiating team of Chris Bolt, Humphrey Davies and Paul Conibeare. Steve Williams had circulated a sheet outlining the headline areas that would be considered during discussions. It was intended as an aide-memoire for the organisations in preparing for the discussions/negotiations so that they could 'plug-in' to the Plc structure.

Tim Stanger, on behalf of the various Stations Support Groups raised concerns that it might be too formal and rigid. Steve Williams assured the meeting that it was only intended to offer a structure as a basis for discussions. It would be followed up by a programme of meetings with the organisations over 6 months or so. It was agreed that Steve Williams would contact Chris Bolt as the Plc lead on commercial negotiations to ask for a programme of dates.

SW

The sheet was welcomed as an initial basis for discussions but should be used in a flexible manner. The process would help in clarifying the business/commercial relationships with the Plc and who was responsible for what. John Cronin insisted that this included the budget figures as he found it difficult to ascertain the costs, especially through SEPT. He hoped that it would also improve the communication process. In answer to a question from Cllr Jean Adkins, Steve Williams confirmed that there would be a need for organisations to comply with Plc policies as appropriate.

Steve Williams asked all members to take the sheet back to their organisations and ask the organisation to start thinking about the discussions, knowing the process had the backing of PDG.

ALL

37/15 Heritage & Preservation Group

Steve Williams confirmed that Mark Smith was in the process of setting up this Group. Steve also reminded the meeting that the proposed new Plc Director for Heritage and Preservation would have a role in this process.

SW

38/15 Bishops Lydeard Development Group

Chris Austin confirmed that the third meeting of the Group would take place on 2 July 2015.

Version 2 of the Plc Baseline Planning Assessment had been discussed at the previous meeting and there had been collaboration with the Steam Trust and WSRA over the Station Farm Site. Taylor Wimpey had

indicated that they would be proceeding with the various enabling works and a briefing was expected shortly.

It was confirmed that the Plc 2015 Shareholder Appeal would be 'Tiles & Towers' to help finance the covered canopy for the loco compound as well as erecting the Reading water tower. It was intended this would be done in-house. The drawings would be finalised within Phase 1 of the Station Farm site plans.

Chris Austin stated that the meeting had given a valuable insight to the interdependent nature of the plans and thanked Peter Chidzey for his input. Peter Chidzey commented that it was an ambitious plan and would need to be taken in stages. However the general principle was a good idea.

Tim Stanger asked about progress with the commercial issues at Bishops Lydeard. Steve Williams said that he would be raising this with the Plc Board on the 27th June with a view to getting agreement to establishing a commercial services use group to address the short term agenda as well as feed into the medium term and beyond proposals to the Bishops Lydeard site development group. PDG fully supported the establishment of a commercial services user group for this purpose and as soon as possible.

Tim Stanger asked how the current Bishops Lydeard Station Support Group was involved. Steve Williams replied that it would be involved in the strategic planning. The Plc had agreed a separate group with WSRA through the existing mediation group. The matter would be picked up at the Plc Board meeting on 27 June and actions agreed.

SW

39/15 Williton Site Developments

Steve Williams thanked John Cronin for helping to identify all interested parties and he was writing to the parties asking for nominations for the Working Group to get things moving. John Cronin had met with Peter Chidzey to discuss issues and plans. It was agreed that the Group should meet 11.00 on Thursday 23 July 2015 at the DEPG Depot at Williton.

Martyn Snell asked if the Shearing's Yard area would be included in the discussions. Steve Williams replied that the parameters of the site and the footprint of what was to be included still needed to be clarified. Peter Chidzey stated that it was not included as it was leased solely to the WSRA and it would be up to the WSRA to decide how it was used. John Cronin added that there were accessibility issues that would require clarification. Peter Chidzey replied that there was no intention of restricting anything to anyone. The WSRA did not wish to make life difficult for anyone but at the same time did not expect others to make life difficult for the WSRA. The outcome would be dependent on negotiations with the Plc. Steve Williams stated this was not an item for this meeting but the foot print of the site would be part of the discussion of the Group and the ongoing commercial negotiations. Chris Austin asked if it would be within the remit of PDG. Steve Williams stated that the PDG had considered the draft terms of reference at the previous meeting. The Administrator was asked to re-circulate the document.

MH

40/15 Plc 3-Year Business Plan

Steve Williams confirmed that the suggestions made had been taken on board. There would be a need to tailor the aspirations and needs and consider the finance implications before deciding how to proceed. It was hoped that the document would be ready in draft by the July Plc Board on 18 July 2015. If the Plc Board agreed, the document would be printed and distributed.

SW

41/15 PLC Policies

Steve Williams reminded the meeting that it had been agreed to bring two Plc policies to each meeting for discussion. The following had been circulated prior to the meeting:

- a) Staff Working Alone
- b) Apprentice Recruitment

Steve Williams asked for all organisations to take the policies back for discussion and comment back to him including whether the organisations had a similar policy and/or whether there were any significant concerns as to why the policies could not be adopted across the Railway Family by the end of July at the latest.

ALL

It was acknowledged that some policies would be part of the Safe Management System (SMS) of the Plc and could point to expert advice.

Peter Chidzey asked if the policies would apply to all organisations as the WSRA had apprentices. Steve Williams replied that if it impacted on SMS then organisations could be forced to adopt the overall policy.

Cllr Jean Adkins reminded the meeting of her previous comments, that having common policies could help in bids for external funding in showing the social value of the Railway. Steve Williams replied that comment and input from the Councils would be welcomed.

Tim Stanger asked if the requirements of the Staff Working Along Policy were already included in the Staff Handbook. Steve Williams agreed to check.

SW

Steve Williams commented that two further policies would be presented to the next meeting. The adoption of the two current policies would be decided at the meeting after next so that a rolling programme was evolved. In answer to a question from Chris Austin, Steve Williams replied that the Plc Policy Group would be involved in the feedback loop.

(Cllr Brian Leaker arrived at this point and was introduced to the meeting)

42/15 Question on Grievance Procedures

Martin Snell stated that he had been asked by some volunteers to raise the following question:

'Do all groups who support the West Somerset Railway in their various ways sign-up to the company policies concerning grievances made when staff feel they have been badly treated? With bilateral agreements in place covering some aspects it will be good to understand that all support groups sign up to these'

Martyn felt that there was a need to communicate to the Railway what the remit of the PDG was. There was some confusion as to how grievances were initiated within groups. Are all groups signed up to the Plc policy?

John Cronin replied that DEPG had its own but once drivers crossed the Plc boundary of the leased area then they would be subject to Plc policies. He stated that the Plc were aware of this but regular meetings with Plc managers had not taken place for some time. Chris Austin added that any issues from a 'live' duty would be passed to the Plc for action. Godfrey Baker stated that the S&D Steam Trust did sign up to the Plc procedure but also had its own internal system. Peter Chidzey commented that the WSRA generally signed up to the Plc procedure but action in the small number of incidents would depend on the issues.

Martyn Snell commented that there was some concern by volunteers and staff that the process could drag on. Steve Williams agreed to feed this back to the Plc Board.

SW

Cllr Jean Adkins commented that each Group should have its own procedure but where it impacted on the wider Railway, that procedure should apply.

43/15 Leasehold Update

James Stubbs confirmed that the proposal paper had been presented to the County Council Assessment Strategy Group and that the Group had taken on board the comments about the 150 year lease and sub-leases lasting longer than 25 years. As the final decision lay with the Leader of the Council there would be a delay until the meeting arranged between the Leader and the Portfolio Holder can take place on 20 July 2015. It was accepted that the process remained confidential within the Group for the time being.

Steve Williams added that the Railway Asset Strategy Group would be an important group in the long term.

44/15 AOB

- i) John Cronin asked for the Bishops Lydeard appearance to be higher up the agenda. Nothing seemed to be happening to the list of 35 small projects that he had produced. John Cronin asked for confirmation as to how the proposed compound canopy would be funded. Steve Williams agreed to confirm and circulate. John

SW

Cronin also asked what other developments were in plan for volunteers at Bishops Lydeard as the current facilities were poor. Steve Williams replied that the New Director role for Inward Investment would be key in helping prioritise projects. He accepted that there was a need to improve the volunteer accommodation and would take this to the Plc Board. John Cronin reiterated the need for better communication across the Railway and as there was a shortage of volunteers, managers were having to take on rosters to keep trains running, diverting them from their normal duties. Mel Hillman (in role his role as New Volunteer Co-ordinator) challenged a shortage of volunteers. Recruitment remained strong. One of the issues was the training capacity in departments. He was due to meet the managers in the Ops Department on 2 July to discuss this.

SW

ii) Cllr Brian Leaker stated that with some 250+ B & B facilities in the area there was an opportunity to place volunteer recruitment materials in rooms for visitors to pick up. He would be willing to arrange this. He also questioned the policy of refusing external advertising in train carriages. This could be an additional income stream. Steve Williams would take this back to the Plc. Mel Hillman would liaise over volunteer information packs.

SW/MH

iii) Tim Stanger asked if the recent acquisition of loco 4110 by the Plc had been planned as part of a policy or had been just an opportune moment. Steve Williams replied that there was a 10 year Loco Policy and the Corporate Plan indicated that the Plc would protect itself from the uncertainties of the market as locos became available. This loco fitted the requirements of the line and was available. There were a number of other repairs in process so no time scale for completion could be given. The Policy would be shared in due course.

SW

iv) Several members expressed concerns over the staffing levels in the Commercial Office in Minehead which impacted on the performance of the Railway. Steve Williams agreed to report back to the Plc.

SW

v) Steve Williams reported that there would be a Board review of the SEPT terms of reference. This would be brought back to PDG as it impacted on all groups.

SW

45/15 Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting would be held from:

10.30 on Thursday 20 August 2015 in Brunel House, Bishops Lydeard.

The meeting closed at 12.40