



To the Chairman & Boards of the:
West Somerset Railway PLC, West Somerset Railway Association (WSRA) & West
Somerset Steam Railway Trust (WSSRT)

Please find attached a signed copy of an open letter to the three boards. The letter is submitted to you and signed by myself on behalf of the 543 people who have signed the letter on change.org.

From the outset, we wanted to protect signatories from any potential retribution and allowed signatories to opt to remain anonymous. The fact we felt this was necessary is a poor reflection on the culture of the West Somerset Railway. A large number of people have signed the open letter and have taken this option. We recognise and respect this decision and will not be passing on any of their names to you. Change.org is a well-established online petition site and ensures signatories are valid by verifying email addresses prior to counting the person. As such we are confident that each signature is well founded.

We are aware questions have been raised as to who George White, the person who posted the open letter is. As a group of concerned volunteers, we wanted to protect our identities due to the unfair treatment of those who have spoken out in the past. Therefore we selected the name of a famous West Country transport pioneer from the 19th century to use on change.org.

As a group of active volunteers, we can recognise a large number of those who are West Somerset Railway volunteers and stakeholders. Based on this we submit the following figures to you:

Total Signatures: **543**

Total number of names recognised by the group as current West Somerset Railway Volunteers and Staff: **287**

Total number living within 50 miles of a West Somerset Railway Station: **404**

Total number living within 100 miles of a West Somerset Railway Station: **455**

Total signatories from the UK: **531**

Total signatories from outside the UK: **12**

Initial signs of change on the WSR are positive and we are happy to see that since the open letter was first posted online, the HRA report into the S & D Trust has been partially published. The recommendations are fully supported by the group that launched the open letter. We feel the approach proposed by the WSRA is particularly worthy of praise. The Partnership Development Group (PDG) met for the first time since 2018 in late June, which is a welcome development. We were disappointed that the public minutes made no mention

of the Washford site or organisational change and that the next meeting is not until scheduled until September 2020.

The issue of the notice to quit issued to the S and D Trust remains though. We still feel this needs to be withdrawn as a matter of urgency. With organisational change now likely, we feel the Washford tenancy issue should be decided by the new charitable body. There is still a lot of bad feeling about this issue and to move forward a degree of compassion needs to be shown by the PLC. Many have withheld donations or contributed to other causes as a result of this action which has been a PR disaster for the West Somerset Railway.

At the foremost of our intent with the open letter is the desire to ensure the West Somerset Railway is around for future generations to enjoy. The level of support shows how passionate people are about the railway and how important it is that it's managed responsibly.

We request that any response to the open letter is sent to myself to enable distribution to all signatories through change.org.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Ruddick', with a long horizontal line underneath it.

Christopher Ruddick
WSR Locomotive Department Volunteer
WSRA Member
WSSRT Member
S & D Trust Member
Somerset Resident