



West Somerset Railway P.L.C

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News from the Boardroom

A regular update on PLC Board meetings April 2018

New Director

The Board were very pleased to welcome Rodney Greenway as a director of the PLC. Rodney is a long standing volunteer and is also a WSRA Trustee. With Rodney's cooption onto the PLC Board we once again build the strong links between the two organisations.

Rodney has picked up the volunteers portfolio and has already made progress in this area. Please contact Rodney direct if you wish to help with volunteer recruitment.

I am sure you will join me in welcoming Rodney to the Board.

Retirements

Both Geoff Evens and Geoff Pateman have decided to retire from the PLC board at the forthcoming AGM on June 23rd. Both Geoff's have contributed a huge amount to the railway in many different roles over the years and we thank them for their work and dedication. We have received many responses to the corporate plan and we are now preparing the final version. Once we have that, the intention is for each activity strand to be championed by a director. The draft had eight such strands. This will require further board recruitment and this will be started as soon as the plan is finalised.

Long Service Awards

The board has received a number of comments about over eligibility of the long service pass. Currently, the free pass is issued after 15 years'

service whereas in the past it was issued after 10 years' service. The point has been made to us that with the age profile of many of our volunteers, waiting 15 years for recognition is unreasonable. We now intend to revert to the 10 year service limit for the free pass.

The following is our proposal:

5 years' service – travel warrants and certificate

10 years' service – long service pass and certificate

15 years' service – certificate

20 years' plus – significant contribution certificate and framed, mounted photograph

We have asked the WSRA IF we can also include a WSRA membership benefit in the packages.

We would welcome any comments on this proposal.

Heritage Committee

It is with regret that the board accepted Chris Austin's resignation as chairman of the heritage committee and the end of the WSSRT's involvement. This is an important committee so Ian Coleby has assumed chairmanship and we will retain the existing membership. We are grateful to Richard Salt who has offered his services as secretary to the committee. We will be getting this moving soon and Richard will be contacting the committee members to arrange a meeting. In the meantime, if you have any comments, Richard can be contacted on wsrheritagesec@gmx.co.uk

Williton Site Strategy

A project to review the best way forward for the Williton site, ie the Swindon shed, the activity within it and the immediate environment has been authorised by both boards. A number of proposals have been suggested by various people in recent times but no agreement has been reached. The purpose of this review is to find a financially viable solution which is of benefit to the West Somerset Railway and which has the backing of all organisations.

The review will be as objective as possible and will involve consultations with all parties who have a direct interest in or who have activities using the facilities. This will be coupled with a financial and strategic appraisal of options which emerge from the discussions. The immediate goal is to agree a financially viable way forward but, longer term, the aim is to agree the best ongoing and sustainable use for the site.

The project will be led by Ian Harrison who has been a volunteer in the loco department since 2001 and qualified to drive steam locomotives in 2015. He brings to the project the combination of a very good working knowledge of the WSR's operations and its needs with a business background in Engineering and Manufacturing in the UK, US and Europe plus a decade of experience of the NHS. He has an honours degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Nottingham. He is well used to dealing with different cultures and working with people in a fair, objective and transparent manner.

He will report to both organisations as soon as possible in the summer. He will be making contact with the many people whose opinions are important in determining a way forward in the next week or two. His e-mail address for this purpose will be Ian.Harrison@wsrail.net

South Devon Railway

The Rules and Operating Standards Committee reviewed and discussed the RAIB Report 02/2018 into the dangerous occurrence on the South Devon Railway on 22 Jun 17. Feedback has been provided to the PLC board on what lessons we should learn and implications for the WSR. The Board have asked for further analysis and an action plan.

Locomotives

44422: Two wheelsets have multiple cracks extending between spokes. Repairs are likely to be in the region of £60-90k and 9-12 months'

6960: In service. No issues to report.

53808: In service. No issues to report.

7822 'Foxcote Manor': In service. The engine-to-tender steam heat 'bag' problem has been fixed.

6046 (S160): The locomotive has some difficulties and the unreliability of the air pump is due to our unfamiliarity with the machine. Apart from that the locomotive has been a good addition to the fleet, free steaming and strong and going down well with most crews.

7828 'Odney Manor': The new re-entry into traffic date is anticipated to be mid-July

9351: Josh Chivers and Ivor Cooksley have now almost finished drilling and bolting the smokebox to the boiler.

Infrastructure Engineering

The board received a detailed analysis of the infrastructure from Andrew Young. Whilst our track is in serviceable condition, a lot of it needs upgrade over the next few years and some bridges need strengthening. This is because the line was built as a lightly laid branch, but today we wish to run much heavier and more frequent trains. It is difficult to finance infrastructure upgrades out of general revenue. The board agreed the criticality of this and agreed that this must be the subject of external financing, possibly from a major share issue.

Finance

As always, the Board received a detailed finance report and considered passenger and financial figures against the budget. We discussed the impact of poor weather on our finances and the challenging economic situation. This is impacting on all tourist based activities in the region.

The Board have initiated a review of new marketing initiatives, together with keeping a very close control on expenditure.

The recent gala was noted to be very successful and the planning team were congratulated.

Board Contacts

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