

Changes to the Board of the West Somerset Railway Plc

Alan Nicholson has been appointed Chairman by the Board of Directors for the West Somerset Railway Plc. This follows the resignation for personal reasons of John Irven, who has been the Chairman of the Board for the last five years.

After a long career in the aerospace industry leading to senior posts in project management, marketing and business development, Alan ran his own successful holiday business in North Cornwall for five years. With a lifelong interest in railways, Alan joined the West Somerset Railway as a volunteer in 2013 and became Station Master at Bishops Lydeard station in 2014. He joined the Board of Directors as Commercial and Marketing Director earlier this year.

Alan said: "I am delighted and honoured to take on this new role. John Irven did a magnificent job for several years and led the railway through some quite difficult times to a new period of stability. I am a one railway man and my role is to build on John's success and to grow the business over the coming years with the support of the WSR family of organisations. It is also particularly important for the Board to work to support the huge efforts of our highly committed and enthusiastic staff and volunteer team without whom there would be no railway."

Other recent changes at Board level include the appointment of Frank Courtney as Business Planning Director. This follows the resignation of Steve Williams, again for personal reasons. Steve has been instrumental in restructuring the railways Corporate and Business Plans and has become well known in the local business community for representing the railway.

Frank has been a volunteer guard on the railway for thirty years and played a significant part in bringing the supporters group, the West Somerset Railway Association, through a difficult period. In his professional life he is Managing Director of a company working in education management, mainly in developing countries.

Frank said: "I look forward to taking up this new role on the Railway. The West Somerset Railway is a vital part of the local economy and community. Whilst we must make sure it retains its character as a country railway of the steam era, we must also ensure its long-term viability and continuing success."

The railway is now at its busiest season with trains running seven days a week. General Manager, Paul Conibeare said: "We are very pleased to see busy trains and to welcome our passengers on Britain's longest heritage railway. Planning is now well advanced for the visit of the Flying Scotsman in early September and we look forward to greeting the many thousands of passengers who have bought tickets to see and travel behind this world-famous steam engine on the West Somerset Railway."