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News from the Boardroom

A regular update on PLC Board meetings March 2018

Best Kept Station

We have agreed with the General Manager to hold the 'Best Kept Station' competition again in 2018. We have asked Richard Fox (Fox Brothers of Wellington and Taunton Flower Show) to do the judging which will be on 15 July. Richard will be hosted on the day by the Chairman and his wife who will transport them around the various stations. We will devise a scoring matrix and the company will give a small cash prize of £100 to the winner and £50 to the runner up. We have copied the original GWR Best Kept Stations Certificate that is held in Blue Anchor Museum and adapted it for the 21st century – a copy will go to the winners. The competition is designed to promote team spirit and cohesion. Geoff Cross is coordinating the event in his new role as Stations Liaison Officer.

Company AGM 2018

This will be held on 23 June. This year we will do things a little bit different. Instead of the special shareholders' train and lunches, the directors will host a 'meet and greet' reception with a buffet lunch in the hotel prior to the meeting. This will give the directors a proper opportunity to mix with the shareholders in a far



more meaningful way than is possible on a train. As usual, the engine shed will be open for visits courtesy of Dave Horton. We are considering inviting a key note speaker to address the shareholders – we just need to find the time in the afternoon to fit it all in.

Safety Management System

At the last Heads of Department meeting on 13 Mar 2018, Richard Jones presented a paper entitled Proposal for SMS & Policy Document Framework. The content and proposals were

unanimously agreed by the GM and HoD. The Policies & Procedures Committee will be 're-invigorated' with Richard Jones as Chairman to ensure continuity, liaison and consistency in approach with the Rules & Operating Standards Committee, and initially to write its draft Terms of Reference (which will be submitted to both HoD and to the Board for approval). A clear and concise numbering system for policy documents has been formulated and all policy documents are to be 'migrated' to HOPS in due course and to be 'de-linked' from the Staff Handbook. Risk Assessments to be managed by Heads of Department, but to be migrated to HOPS in due course in order to provide a central and accessible resource.

The next stages are to review the SMS and correct any errors/inaccuracies, whilst ensuring that the overall framework reflects good practice and guidance from the ORR and HRA. After that we need to clarify the role of Department Safety Reps.

Infrastructure Engineering

Signal & Track: Equipment renewed at Leigh Wood crossing including a new location cabinet, posts and flashing lights. The crossing will have a second dedicated power supply. In the meantime the previous power feed from Crowcombe Heathfield remains as the primary power source.

Minehead Seaward Way crossing is to be renewed during the winter of 2019. Design work has been going on for the past two years and drawings have been prepared. Ordering parts and further detailed planning will start shortly. The work will require the complete replacement of all existing equipment and the new crossing will be a full barrier crossing in place of the current half barriers. The S&T mobile workshop (CCT) has been moved to Dunster due to lack of space at Williton. We are hoping to get it moved back to Bishops Lydeard in May.

Permanent Way: The gangs assisted with the Seaward Way Level Crossing renewal in early March. The old panels were removed by contractors and then PW and Land

WSR Community Involvement Day

The Board are considering a WSR Community Involvement Day when the whole community can come together and 'take over' the running of the railway. In effect, of course, the local community will be shadowing our qualified staff - drivers, guards, signalmen are the obvious jobs but also station staff, PW gangs, working in the buffet and shadowing the many other jobs that need to be done to run the railway. Most shadowing turns will need to be booked in advance, but we will also need a range of activities for those who turn up on the day.

The trains would all be free on the day and we will issue souvenir tickets so that the shadow booking clerks and ticket inspectors have a job to do.

The plan is to hold this on a Saturday in March or April 2019 which means we have a year to organise it. This event fits very well with the Hinkley Point Community Cohesion money that we are currently bidding for. Alongside the benefits to the local community we would hope to recruit a range of new volunteers from the day.

This could be a really exciting event and a great opportunity for us to show off what we do and to involve ourselves more in the local community. We now need a volunteer to organise the event! Not on your own, but to lead a small team to put it all together. If you're interested in being involved or have any other thoughts on the day, please contact the Chairman.

Management teamed up and spent Wednesday morning clearing out the old panel, replacing fixings, adding ballast and preparing the ground to be tamped. Loco and Ops assisted by putting on a light engine to help compact the ground and a on-track tamper completed the alignment work bringing the crossing up to level. The following days were spent installing the new panels and relaying the road surface.

The gang has completed reballasting and packing a number of joints between DR and MD which has now resolved most of the wet bed sites, with around three panels which still required work later in the year. The tidy train was cancelled due to the weather, but this has been rescheduled for May.

Blackmore House & Station Farm: RAMS continue to refurbish the facilities at BL and have moved on to restoration work, such as the window frames for WT. Work continues on the ladies toilet and cleaning/drying facilities. Work is almost complete at Doniford to repair the damaged masonry on the bridge. Scaffolding is due to be taken down later this week.

Williton and Bishops Lydeard Site Developments

The work on the strategic plans for both of these sites has been on hold and now we wish to restart activities. We wish to ensure broad agreement so we will be forming project teams from across the railway.

Mechanical Engineering

44422: Volunteer work continues on setting up and grinding of the horn tie faces, before the measurement and alignment of the hornguides. The wheelsets are being sandblasted and Non-Destructive Testing (NDT) scheduled.

6960: In service. New cab floor fitted.

53808: In service. Visited Keighley and Worth Valley Railway for their spring gala (3 days) followed by short notice stand-in for locomotive cancellation at the Severn Valley Railway spring gala the following weekend.

7822: In service. Passed annual insurance exams post-half term.

6046 (S160): Arrived 15th March. Familiarisation day for crews undertaken on Saturday 17th March.

7828: The boiler is planned to return mid-May. Work continues at Minehead and at Williton on other components. A team of volunteers, led by David Hurd, are poised to reassemble the locomotive once the boiler is back and are confident that the locomotive can be returned to steam by the beginning of July.

9351: The pace has slowed slightly due to maintenance work on the other locomotives, gala preparations and delays in manufacture of the bolts which hold the smokebox to the boiler.

Hinkley Point Community Fund

Andy Norman updated the Board on his work to win investment from this fund.

The fund is designed to offset the effects that the building of Hinkley Point C will have on the community. Andy said that EDF have an obligation under a 106 planning agreement to provide a grant fund which amounts to £1.3

million per year for 10 years and the theme for 2018 is "Community Cohesion".

There are great opportunities for the WSRA/WSR PLC and WSR Family. There is grant funding with no match funding requirements. The funding would enable us to run a project without affecting current WSR resources either physical or financial and to run a project that gives a tangible output supporting the strategic plans. The funding bid will enable us to gain a long term relationship with SCF, EDF, Hinkley Point and the local community.

In the short term there will be benefits to volunteer recruitment and in the longer term access to much bigger funding opportunities.

Staff Communications

Bill Knell updated the board on his work. Bill identified that although there are several written communications such as the On Line Newsletter, the Staff Website and "News From The Boardroom", what is lacking is any structured form of face-to-face communication. A well known method is a simple form of team briefing, alongside existing methods and day to day management that would enable important information to be delivered consistently and regularly, provide a platform for discussion and obtain feedback for upwards communication. The board agreed with Bill and asked him to talk further with the teams.

Spring Steam Gala

This month's board took place on Friday morning of the Board. As we met, this was going extremely well, thanks to the hard work and dedication of the people involved in putting it all together and running it. We were especially grateful to those who worked so late on Thursday night to get the S106 back into traffic after it shed some of its bits trackside.

The overall results from the gala look very good and as soon as we have the figures we will share them.

On a personal note, the Chairman and Vice Chairman enjoyed a very tasty lunch on the QB on Friday - excellent food, well done to all involved!

Board Contacts

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