



# West Somerset Railway P.L.C

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## News from the Boardroom

### A regular update on PLC Board meetings February 2018

#### CHANGES TO THE BOARD

We were pleased to welcome Bill Knell to join the board.

Richard Maw was appointed the Company Secretary.

#### AGM

The Company AGM will be held on 23 June 2018 at Minehead. This year we intend to change the format of the day. In previous years the directors have travelled to the meeting on the shareholders train, the idea being for them to meet the shareholders. This is always difficult on a train, so this year the directors and the senior management team will host a buffet lunch and 'meet and greet' session prior to the meeting. This will be a much better opportunity for shareholders to meet and talk to the team whilst enjoying a lunch in more relaxed surroundings. We plan for the engine shed to be open for visits as in previous years. More details will be available nearer the time.

#### CORPORATE PLAN CONSULTATION

The new corporate plan is now out for

#### QUESTIONS ON CORPORATE PLAN

1. Should we seek funds (e.g. a share issue) so that the railway be developed so that it can regularly accommodate large engines, or should fund be sought for other purposes and the railway only operate locos of a size appropriate to a West Country branch?
2. To what extent should we cancel timetabled trains in order to accommodate incoming charters which bring in more money?
3. How can we upgrade our buffet cars and our off train catering to provide better and more attractive facilities for passengers?
4. What aspects of heritage are most important to preserve? (For example, trains, bull head rails, signalling systems, buildings, railway operating systems)
5. Which is a higher financial priority: painting carriage roofs or improving station toilets? What other non-essential work may be a higher priority?
6. How could we try to extend the season to generate additional revenue, particularly in late February and March?

consultation. This has been put together by the board, drawing heavily on the work done by the Heads of Department and in close cooperation with them.

The board have six key questions that we would like opinions on in particular – these are shown above. The draft plan can be downloaded from the company website news section and the consultation period runs until 7 April. Please let us have the benefit of your opinions.

## STAFF COMMUNICATION & CONSULTATION

The board discussed communications around the railway and between the board, management team and staff. We are clear that we need to improve our communications and Bill Knell has agreed to look at this.

## COMMERCIAL PROGRAMME

We had an excellent half term week where we ran for seven days, including the weekends. Helped by fine weather and better advertising, the result was pleasing. We are now looking forward to the spring steam gala and have already significant advance ticket sales. Dunster Castle Express tickets are now available to buy online and brochures will shortly be circulated. Butlins partnership has been renewed for 2018.

## RULES & OPERATING STANDARDS COMMITTEE

This committee is now chaired by the Head of Operations and is made up of competent individuals from across the railway. Their job is to review the content of the rule book and our operating procedures. The committee has agreed a significant change to the rule book and the board were briefed on its content and the method used to produce the update. This will be issued soon.

## INFRASTRUCTURE ENGINEERING

Minehead relay got underway in the first week of January and 220 metres of formation was dug out, new drainage installed and a fresh bed of ballast laid. The bullhead rail has been replaced with flat-bottom track. The P-Way gang repaired a number of substantial dipped joints between Alcombe Crossing and the sewage works while the ground contractor was installing the formation. A tidy train is planned for 3 and 4 March to collect the cut logs. All welcome with a valid PTS, 09.00 Bishops Lydeard Station. Work continues at Doniford to repair

the damaged masonry on the bridge. Seaward Way level crossing road surface will be renewed by contractors, supported by PW, in early March. Planned work in 2019: a substantial relay at Blue Anchor and repairs to the slope at Stogumber. The replacement of Seaward Way crossing controls is a larger project for S&T in 2019, relating to the £800k mentioned in the press. This is entirely funded by Somerset County Council. We will carry out a further structural inspection at Black Monkey Bridge to investigate how we can strengthen the bridge. We also have a small budget to design the retaining wall at Stogumber to repair the land slip.

## MECHANICAL ENGINEERING

53809: has now departed the WSR for its new home on the North Norfolk Railway.

44422: We have started work on measuring and aligning the hornguides and volunteers continue to clean and repaint the frames, running boards, and undertake miscellaneous other jobs.

6960: Winter maintenance complete and undertook half-term duties as planned.

53808: Winter maintenance completed and undertook half-term duties as planned. Will shortly be visiting the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway to participate in their gala.

7822: Winter maintenance completed and undertook half-term photo charter duty as planned.

6046 (S160): Expected to arrive c. 7th March on the WSR.

7828: Rileys have almost completed manufacture of the new stays. Installation continues at a rapid pace. New small tubes and flue tubes are on order.

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

## Board Contacts

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