

Statement by Frank Courtney and Rodney Greenway

We two were, yesterday evening, dismissed as trustees of the West Somerset Railway Association (by a majority of 5-2, and one abstention). We have been offered by Chairman Paul Whitehouse, who was proposer of the resolution to sack us, seconded by Robin White, the option for the Trustees to issue a statement saying "Frank Courtney (or Rodney Greenway respectively) has decided to resign from the Association Trustees. We thank him for his service". For the Association to issue this statement we each have to resign from the Association trustees **and the PLC Board**. We have to give an indication of this to Chairman Whitehouse by 2359 (sic) tonight. If we do not then Chairman Whitehouse will issue a different statement further impugning our reputations. He has shown us this statement, which contains a series of half-truths and innuendo. Doubtless he will now put a version of this in the public domain.

It seems that the WSRA trustees have moved the Association from being a support group for the railway to being a pressure group. When Whitehouse took responsibility for the Chair (from Frank Courtney) two years ago he was handed a Development Plan which the membership had fully endorsed. He chose to ignore this. The finances of the Association had been laboured over in 2016 and reached a new state of clarity, which the trustees now deny. Meanwhile the Restorations part of the Promotions trading subsidiary is now unviable and losing money, and Chairman Whitehouse commented at the recent WSRA AGM that "if the Association ceased to exist then no-one would really notice". Sadly with a continuing decline in membership this all too true. Whitehouse and White are obsessed with the continuing battle with the owners of locomotive 4160, over which they continue to spend several thousand pounds of the members subscriptions in lawyers fees (Reports to the association board envisage around another £22,000 could be incurred if the proposed action goes ahead and the trustees lose – nothing is certain in law) and only postponing the day when the restored locomotive returns to the WSR.

We two had an intention to try to develop the Association in a positive way in close collaboration with the PLC. Both Whitehouse and White made various attempts to persuade Frank not to stand, before the election to the WSRA took place, to which Frank was elected by an overwhelming majority.

The last battle between the PLC and the Association – three years ago - was hugely damaging, and last thing we want to do is to re-run that. We are quite certain that Whitehouse and White will come back with various further allegations, and assertions. In our view there is no point in responding to everything line by line: our interest is in supporting a railway, not fighting low level personality based criticisms. Once again the Trustees of the Association seem to have lost sight of this, but we are not going to spend further time fighting a public battle, and we know that our many friends in the West Somerset Railway community will be able to make their own judgments and form their own conclusions.