



# West Somerset Railway P.L.C

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## PLC Chairman Announcement

October 2018

Dear WSRA Member,

As you are aware there have been a number of severe setbacks that the WSR PLC has faced, and I am writing to you all with these in mind. The board will now continue a full review of how the business should look to operate in order to be a successful operation not only in business terms but most importantly a safe Railway that strives to meet best practice in all aspects of our daily output, which is a duty to our passengers and to our colleagues which we have an obligation to undertake.

Last week I met with inspectors from the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) and these two inspectors (Steve Turner and Andy Lewis) undertook an extensive inspection across all areas of compliance as well as looking deeper into our corporate governance. To be clear, the past airing of the Railways politics and the misguidance it has caused has left the WSR in a difficult position, the reality is that 'our' Railway has lost a certain amount of direction over the years. When I met with the PLC paid staff some weeks ago I was very clear that my main focus will be to ensure that the journey we place ourselves on will be collective and one where the displeasure of the past that has notably led to public embarrassment and provided continued distraction to the business must stop.

We have and share a lovely Railway, a Railway that is formed of some wonderful people, and a Railway that I feel very proud to be part of, a Railway that will succeed.

On Friday evening it was confirmed that although the WSR PLC had satisfied the ORR through a successful audit, it was confirmed that we must put in place a recovery plan which must be achieved. There will be a strict path for the WSR to take forward and we must ensure that through every department we now deliver and do not fall back into bad practices. I felt that the inspection allowed the WSR to demonstrate the wish to promote a new culture, a relationship of trust and most of all to promote what a wonderful Railway we have. I am proud that we believe the ORR went away with a very different view of organisation than perhaps they had anticipated, one that we will now push and promote and above must deliver a professional modern approach with standards reflecting where the industry sits and expects.

My personal thanks goes to the team that helped deliver the results last week, the friendly atmosphere that was shared and the professionalism of the staff on the ground. A large amount of work was committed in preparation for the audit and this would not have been done without the efforts of Chris Pratt who was appointed as an advisor to the board on safety, namely to bring a fresh view and to ensure the board had a clear understanding to ensure we as the PLC react appropriately and in a true professional manner. That I must say has been pleasing and has allowed the channelled progress we are striving for to begin to become a reality over the past few weeks.

As we look forward we will be welcoming the ORR to return to the WSR in coming months to allow further follow up to audits along with delivering training days to our staff. This will be a welcome opportunity to allow Steve Turner to attend and share specific learnings which will help drive through our new learning and safety culture that will be adopted.

In due course it will be my request to meet volunteers over a course of a number of days in a similar forum to that which was held with the PLC paid team. Engagement is a key value of mine and it is my hope that we stick together and undertake an exciting journey as we look to the future: details will follow on how this will be offered.

A number of objectives have now been set to the WSRA who are our key support arm. The Railway needs to focus on key areas of investment – infrastructure and safety being the priority. I urge individuals who can help offer ideas on fundraising to please make contact with Mike Sherwood. It is now a critical time to allow the PLC to operate the WSR and focus on the business/compliance and for the support arms to deliver funding results which will enable improvement across the railway: the WSR cannot sit still any more. For example we need an annual figure of 500k per year to continually maintain our track bed etc. That provides for no improvement legacy but is simply to conform to the standard which we are required to meet. You will see from this high figure the costs and consequent support that is required to run a safe and professional Railway.

My personal assurance to the ORR has been given and I am 100% committed that the WSR achieves the required direction. I hope you can all support the new dawn of vision and support the board to enable delivery. We must achieve this collectively and allow changes to happen and succeed for the greater good of the industry's expectations; it is the case of action not words.

I thank you for your support so far to my appointment, the response I have received from the Railway community has been heart-warming and I feel very humbled to sit in this position and welcome the challenge of recovery that we now embark on.

Let's embrace what we have and channel positive energy forward! Looking back on 2018 the WSR has achieved some wonderful events, provided many happy days for families and promoted ourselves as a premier Railway. Please as we look to work through to the closed season prior to the Christmas activities remain focussed on delivering a safe Railway, we are a learning culture and we must share that culture. Compliance is the success of our business and should be promoted at every aspect of the business; it is the individuals of our team that will deliver the overall success of this culture and become safety-compliant champions.

Finally should you wish to ever make contact direct you can do so by sending an email to:

[jon.jones-pratt@wsrail.net](mailto:jon.jones-pratt@wsrail.net)

Please be aware at busy times you won't receive a response immediately.

With best wishes,

Jonathan Jones-Pratt

***Chairman, on behalf of the WSR plc Board***