



West Somerset Railway Association & West Somerset Railway PLC

Press Release for immediate release, 31/10/2018

West Somerset Railway wins funding grant from the Hinkley Point C Community Fund

The West Somerset Railway has been awarded a grant from the HPC Community Fund. The Fund is in place to help address and mitigate against intangible and residual community impacts deriving from the construction of Hinkley Point C.

The successful WSR application, led by the West Somerset Railway Association with the full support and involvement of the West Somerset Railway PLC and other members of the WSR Family will enable the railway to increase its engagement with local communities, individuals, organisations and agencies to extend its reach to a wider, more diverse community base. A range of activities have been developed including volunteering opportunities and training & work experience which are all designed to facilitate personal well-being, community cohesion and the training/upskilling of people to help the economic stability for West Somerset and the wider areas surrounding the HPC build.

The programme will also reach out to attract new volunteers and stakeholders from the wider and more diverse population which HPC brings and it will help to facilitate their integration into the community as the populations of Somerset Towns and Villages develop and change during the construction of HPC. In addition to its core purpose this award will also allow the WSR to build and develop strategic partnerships with organisations, agencies and businesses in order to allow it to work much closer with others who have similar objectives. This in turn will help the WSR in its remit as a large and important not for profit community project to continue and expand as a place people where can come to experience many different activities (not all related to railways), as an educational, heritage and leisure attraction and a large local employer which currently generates a secondary spend within its surrounding community in the region of £9 million per annum.

The award for £96,000 over two years includes the employment of a dedicated WSR Community Engagement Officer. This person will develop new relationships and deliver activities designed to open up the new opportunities for existing communities, new HPC workers and others to meet, integrate and develop interests and pastimes that bind them together.

WSR PLC Chairman Jonathan Jones-Pratt said *"This is an exciting new dawn for the Railway of which demonstrates how important the WSR is to our stakeholders through the West Somerset Community. I wish to thank and congratulate the WSRA on the hard work that has led to our successful HPCF bid submission*

and we look forward to creating legacy for the future as we work closely with our communities along our beautiful line."

WSRA Chairman Paul Whitehouse said *"As the support charity for the West Somerset Railway we are thrilled to have been selected to deliver this project which will be of great benefit to individuals, the West Somerset Community, and the railway."*



Notes:

- The West Somerset Railway is the longest heritage railway in the UK at nearly 24 miles long. It attracts nearly 200,000 visitors a year to the area and is run by around 1,200 volunteers supported by nearly 50 staff. It is run by the community, for the community as a not for profit organisation supported by a number of Charities and support groups.
- The WSR has a large number of heritage, educational and training resources along what is the only complete Victorian built volunteer run heritage branch line in the UK.
- WSR Volunteers come from all ages and walks of life and the volunteer roles which are available to anybody are often not railway focused. With 10 Stations along 24 miles of railway comes: 10 gardens, miles of fencing and lineside, 97 bridges and culverts, 8 Caf  s, 5 mechanical signal boxes, 3 Museums, 3 Engineering centres, 2 shops, 2 restoration centres, a complete signalling, telegraph and internal telephone system and a commercial department, all of which need manning and maintaining. That's not to mention the various Boards of Directors and Trustees, therefore there is a role to suit most people's needs. In addition the social circle alone is often the reason for people to come and enjoy being involved.
- The WSR runs an intensive service most of the year, with 7 day a week operation during the summer season. Its steam engines run in the region of 50,000 miles a year, supported by heritage diesel services running a further 10,000 miles per year. It is also connected to the mainline at Taunton and hosts a large number of excursion trains both steam and diesel from London and other UK cities bringing visitors to the area.
- The West Somerset Railway Association is the main support charity for the West Somerset Railway.
- WSR Volunteer Andy Norman is the Project Manager leading on this project for the WSRA.
- For more information about the railway please visit www.west-somerset-railway.co.uk
- For more information about the West Somerset Railway Association please visit www.wsra.org.uk
- For any other information please contact the WSRA General Manager Jacquie Green at jacquie.green@wsra.org.uk,