



West Somerset Railway Association

**Minutes of the Board Meeting
held at Bishops Lydeard
on Monday 12 August 2019 at 1800**

Present: Will Foster (WF)
Geoff Garfield (GG)
Mike Lea (ML)
Nigel Power (NP)
Diana Ricketts-Tanner (DRT)
Mike Sherwood (MiS)
Robin White (RW)
Paul Whitehouse (PCW) (Chair)

Observer: Mike Thompson, Commercial Adviser to the WSR Plc Board (MT)

In Attendance: Jacquie Green (JAG)

Apologies: John Glover
Mark Smith

B87/19 Conflicts of Interest

None were declared.

B88/19 Minutes of Meeting of 8 July 2019

We approve these Minutes.

B89/19 Matters Arising (not included elsewhere)

- a. **Peterborough Crescent Wagon Shed:** we noted that Chris Austin had set out our position in a letter to Network Rail which had been acknowledged.
- b. **Quantock House:** We considered this report (for original report please see the Minute Book). We note that progress in the hands of Mark Smith and asked MT to chase this.

Action MT

- c. **Joint Boards Vision Statement:** MT & PCW will mention this to the Chair of the WSR Plc.

Action MT, PCW

- d. **Association Rolling Stock:** PCW reported that the setting up of this working group had been agreed at the last WSR Plc Board Meeting. We asked MT to inform MS of the names of those representing the WSR Plc.

Action MT

- e. **Norton Fields:** PCW reported that he had approached the firm that had advised on flood risk for the original planning application, which had in turn referred him to RMA Environmental in Tiverton, which had quoted £1,550 excluding VAT for the work. Fortunately DRT had introduced [Mike McDonald](#), Emeritus Professor of Transportation Engineering within Engineering and Physical Sciences at the University of Southampton (and a resident of Watchet) to the railway and he had offered to consider this matter with his colleagues pro bono. He had visited the

Rally and walked the whole site with Ian Jonas. GG and Ian Jonas hope to meet him in the near future to discuss the way forward. MS was firm that we should object to any planning application unless we had reached an agreement beforehand.

Action GG

- f. **Rally:** GG reported a very good year, with over 6,400 visitors, and a likely profit of at least £37K. He informed us that there was a survey in progress of exhibitors and volunteers on whether the date should be moved one week later in August, but that this is unlikely to happen in 2020, as there will not be a clash with Taunton Flower Show next year.

B90/19 General Manager's Report

We considered this report (for original report please see the Minute Book). We noted that we do not yet know how much money has been raised in additional share purchases for the Rail Renewal Appeal, which would greatly assist in encouraging more donations. Although we have agreed with the WSR Plc that we shall be the advertised recipient of legacies for the railway we are concerned that there is still out of date advertising material on display and hope this will be rectified soon.

We are quite clear that fundraising in the vital area of infrastructure will not succeed unless we have a properly costed long term plan. As arrangements for the on train ambassadors (for the raffle and donation envelopes) are still not finalised by the WSR Plc we agree that we should postpone their introduction to the start of the 2020 operating season. We thank WF for his offer to assist in this area. We ask MT to mention these matters to the acting General Manager of the WSR Plc.

Action WF, MT

We were pleased to see the mid year SOFA. JAG undertook to provide a cashflow forecast for our next meeting. We asked JAG to ensure that there are regular membership reports at future Board meetings, showing annual and monthly trends.

Action JAG

B91/19 Volunteer Steering Committee

DRT reported on the outcome of the meeting this committee earlier in the day. Safeguarding training had started. We agreed with their proposal that all senior management on the railway should set an example by being DBS checked and ask DRT and JAG to make those arrangements for all trustees.

Action JAG, DRT

B92/19 Association Membership for Volunteers

We considered this report (for original report please see the Minute Book). We agreed with the proposals and ask our Chair to exchange letters with the Chair of the WSR Plc to formalise the arrangements.

Action PCW

B93/19 Presentation by Mike Thompson

MT explained his background as a volunteer Guard and TTI on the railway, and a career as a provider of systems to airlines on maximising revenue from passengers and minimising costs. Following a review of operations on the WSR, he developed a basic cost model that had indicated to the Board that there should be a reduction in operating days so that all running days should make a minimum operating profit. By coincidence,

these calculations had suggested a similar number of days as Mark Smith had always used as a benchmark when he was Managing Director. There will also be an increase in headline fares which is expected to bring about a 10% increase in revenue. In future fares will not be included in any printed material to allow some flexibility and dynamic pricing online if required. He also recognised the need for upselling to generate additional revenues but this was only stage one of the plan. RW pointed out that there were more ABC1s in the passenger mix on heritage railways than in the population at large.

B94/19 [Redacted]

B95/19 Community Engagement Manager's Report

We considered this report (for original report please see the Minute Book). We agree that Catherine Dance should have a credit card on one of our bank accounts in order to facilitate her expenditure. We note the importance of having the lease at Quantock House finalised as soon as possible. We agree that a Volunteer Manager is essential and hope that the Volunteer Steering Committee will expedite the appointment of a suitable volunteer to such a post. We ask MT to request the WSR Plc to agree to this. We remind ourselves of the critical need to meet all the KPIs in the project. MS will discuss our decision with Catherine Dance.

Action MS, MT

B96/19 Fundraiser's Report

We noted this report (for original report please see the Minute Book).

The meeting closed at 2010.