

Robin Moira White  
WSRA Trustee

Please ask for: [David Hall](#)

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Date: 11<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Sent via email to

Dear Robin

**WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY APPLICATION FOR DCMS RECOVERY FUND FOR CULTURAL, ARTS AND HERITAGE INSTITUTIONS**

I am writing on behalf of Somerset County Council to confirm the Authority's strong support for the application being submitted to the above fund relating to West Somerset Railway.

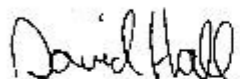
The Railway is a critical part of the tourism economy and cultural fabric of West Somerset, a part of the county with many social and economic challenges including a narrow economic base, low social mobility and an ageing population. For many years West Somerset Railway has acted as an anchor attraction for the tourism economy of the area, attracting circa 200,000 visitors per annum and defining the visitor proposition of the area. The Railway also operates as a "year round" attraction, drawing visitors to the area and lengthening the visitor season. The Railway is also important to community well-being and social capital in this area, as illustrated by its large number of volunteers and the support and affection it holds with the local community.

Somerset's economy has been deeply affected by Covid 19, with the independent forecasting body Oxford Economics projecting that GVA in the county will decline by at least 8% in 2020. Our tourism and cultural sectors are among the parts of the economy that have been hardest hit by the crisis. As part of this, Covid 19 has necessitated the West Somerset Railway to cease its operational programme for the remainder of the year, which is causing significant hardship and risks for the organisation.

As we ultimately emerge from this crisis it is critical that Railway remains in place, both as an important institution in its own right and as a catalyst for recovery and growth in the West Somerset economy.

We would urge the DCMS to provide support for your application on this basis.

Yours sincerely



**David Hall**

**Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Planning and Community Infrastructure**

cc. John Jones Pratt, WSR  
David Fothergill, SCC  
Mandy Chilcott, SCC  
Michele Cusack, SCC