

Stogumber Parish Council
The Orchard, Biscombe, Churchstanton, Taunton TA3 7PZ
Tel : 01823 601495
e.mail: stogumberpc@outlook.com
Clerk : Claire Morrison-Jones

Robin Moira White, WSRA Trustee
Chair, West Somerset Railway Joint Fundraising Group
Station House
Stogumber
Somerset
TA4 3TR

10th August 2020

Dear Robin,

One of the 'jewels in the crown' of this area of Somerset is the West Somerset Heritage Railway which, under normal circumstances, draws many thousands of visitors to the area each year. The 'tourist pound' is an essential boost to local finances and employment opportunities in a rural, and in many ways socially disadvantaged area; both directly within the Railway itself and indirectly via the demand for accommodation, catering and ancillary services in the parishes bordering the railway.

In addition to drawing the tourist pound to West Somerset, the Railway provides a living link to the area's past history; many of Stogumber's residents previously relied upon the railway as a vital link between the coast and Taunton (and onwards to the rest of the UK) and it is important for modern generations to continue have access to experience and understand the role that the steam era and the railway played in the modern evolution of West Somerset. It is a link to the past that is an intrinsic part of our local heritage, culture and economy.

The Covid-19 pandemic, and the consequential social restrictions imposed in the UK, has had an enormous impact on West Somerset and the parish of Stogumber which rely heavily on tourism to sustain its local economy. Sadly, the necessary actions taken in an attempt to halt the progress of the virus, although slowly lifting, will continue to have a negative impact for a long time to come and it is clear that West Somerset Railway has, like so many organisations, not been immune to the financial impact of these restrictions.

However, we as a community must look forward and plan for the future. A vital part of this future is the West Somerset Railway and its positive 'ripple' effect on the surrounding areas.

Stogumber Parish Council has learnt that the West Somerset Railway are to be submitting an application to the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Support requesting funding from the support package being made available for the heritage sector.

The Parish Council wishes to offer its full support to this application and Councillors sincerely hope that the application will be considered favourably. The awarding of a grant will enable West Somerset Railway to not only ride the present storm but to emerge fit and ready to embrace the challenges posed by post Covid Britain.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Claire Morrison-Jones', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Claire Morrison-Jones

Clerk, Stogumber Parish Council