

PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT GROUP – WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT BRUNEL HOUSE, BISHOPS LYDEARD

Thursday 1st December 2016 at 1100

PRESENT:	Steve Williams (SW) - Chairman	Director	<i>West Somerset Railway plc</i>
	Chris Austin (CA)		<i>West Somerset Steam Railway Trust</i>
	Godfrey Baker (GB)		<i>Somerset and Dorset Railway Trust</i>
	John Cronin (JC)		<i>Diesel and Electrical Preservation Group</i>
	Roger Habgood (RH)	Councillor <i>Council</i>	<i>Taunton Deane Borough</i>
	David Hall (DH)	Deputy Leader	<i>Somerset County Council</i>
	Paul Whitehouse (PW)	Chairman	<i>West Somerset Railway Association</i>
APOLOGIES:			
	Karen Mills (KM)	Councillor	<i>West Somerset District Council</i>
	Martin Snell (MS)	Staff and Friends Groups Representative	
Otherwise cited:	Ric Auger (RA) – WSR Director – Infrastructure Chris Bolt (CB) – WSR Director – Finance Diesel and Electrical Preservation Group as DEPG Somerset and Dorset Railway Trust as S&DRT Somerset County Council as SCC Taunton Deane Borough Council as TBDC West Somerset District Council as WSDC West Somerset Railway as WSR West Somerset Railway Association as WSRA West Somerset Steam Railway Trust as WSSRT		
* - Paper or Report presented for the agenda item			Actions
47	Welcome Roger Habgood and Paul Whitehouse were welcomed to PDG.		
48	Minutes of the meeting of 8th September, 2016 Agreed and approved. 1. Matters arising (<i>Refer to original minute for its full text</i>): 36. Vice-Chairman. JC proposed PW as Vice-Chairman and PW indicated his willingness to take that role. Agreed unanimously. SW agreed to contact PW to brief him about the role. 37. Gauge Museum. On agenda. 38. Inward investment. SW has amended the terms of reference of the Fund-Raising Group. As there had been no response from Railway partners in relation to establishing a separate coordinating group, SW suggested that PDG has a regular item on inward investment towards		SW

	<p>the end of the agenda. This was agreed by PDG Members. It was also noted that the closing date for applications for the post of Inward Investment Manager was December 9th.</p> <p>40. Bishops Lydeard – Taunton rail link. Carried over.</p> <p>43. TBDC Strategy and Infrastructure Plan. On agenda.</p> <p>44. Museums Strategy. CA said that, owing to the retirement of Mark Smith, the current lack of a chairman of the WSR Heritage Committee had held up this work.</p>	SW/PC
49	<p>WSR freehold and leasehold update (SW)*</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SW introduced the item and referred to the previously circulated paper. SW pointed out that the agreement gives PDG a key role in any future discussions on the future or in the event of any wish to dispose of the freehold. He asked members to formally endorse and adopt the role for PDG as set out in the paper. Agreed. It was further agreed that the arrangement should be communicated widely both within and outside the railway thus enabling people to see that this issue had now been resolved. 2. SW said that in April last the PLC had sought a 76-year extension to their lease from SCC. Agreement was not reached as WSR could not accept picking-up certain consequential liabilities. Subsequently the PLC had then requested and received an agreement allowing the Company to issue appropriate sub-leases without further prior authorization from SCC. JC and CA noted this as helpful in any future discussions concerning the DEPG and WSSRT sub-leases. Answering a question, SW said the agreement covered the issuing of sub-leases to non-railway people and organisations providing goods or services to WSR, but that as a courtesy, the PLC would inform SCC of any new sub-leases if the County Council would find that helpful. 3. CA spoke of the work required on Seaward Way crossing, estimated at over £800K. SW said that this was not a liability that the PLC could entertain. 	SW
50	<p>WSSRT Development Trust (CA)*</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. CA said that the Trust was keen to develop a Business Plan and that the draft was out for consultation. He was very happy to receive comment from PDG members in line with the closing date set out in the accompanying letter. 	All
51	<p>WSRA Development Plan (PW)*</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As the minute in the last meeting showed, the plan was fully discussed previously and PW said that implementation had now begun. SW explained the PLC's contributions to progressing the plan and that various conversations with WSRA were now underway. 	
52	<p>The Gauge Museum (CA)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The bid to the heritage lottery fund is now in progress. WRSRT has agreed a transfer of responsibility for the Gauge Museum from the Association and that this had been endorsed by the PLC. Work on refreshing the contents is to begin in January. The bid includes provision to appoint a part-time curator partly to encourage educational visits. 	CA

53	<p>Southern Gateway</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SW invited all PDG members to become involved in the Southern Gateway consultation on proposals, which were to include two staff meetings (the presentations were being prepared by SW and Ric Auger) and an article in the WSR Journal. The consultation ends in March and the results will go to the Project Board, and then to the WSR plc Board in April. is the project manager. 2. JC asked as to the potential costs, and SW said that at high level initial assessment, they were of the order of £18-25M. He said that WSR needed to find new and large sources of investment and that the PLC Board had recently given permission to him and Chris Bolt to explore alternative means of funding including external borrowing to achieve this. JC then gave some details of the need for investment in the Williton Goods Shed and to render safer the Dunster West crossing. SW said that these appeared in the overall WSR Business Plan to be published in January. He gave some details of the infrastructure planning process. 	
54	<p>TDBC Review of core strategy (RH)*</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. RH first said that he was most optimistic about the prospects and opportunities of WSR. He wished railway organisations to be involved in the consultation of the review. He mentioned briefly the possible merger with WSDC. SW welcomed the support of TDBC towards the aims and objectives of railway partners on the WSR. 2. PW asked about the consequences of the future closure of Norton Manor Camp and RH said this would feature in the new core strategy. 3. CA asked about the likely time-scale of the TDBC infrastructure development plan and RA said it was medium to long-term. 	RH/All
55	<p>The WSR Board (SW)*</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SW outlined recent changes and retirements. He is to act as the Commercial Director in addition to his current responsibilities for the time being. The Board is to hold a workshop in late December to review Directors' portfolios. 	
56	<p>Visits of Flying Scotsman (SW)*</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. SW outlined the planning process and said Frank Courtney, former Chairman of WSR, was to be the project manager. He said that the visits would have a major impact on the operation of WSR and that the planning group would learn from the previous experience of the Severn Valley and East Lancashire Railways, whose project plans and reports had been given to WSR. He pointed out that though revenue might be substantial so would be the associated costs. 2. SW said that where there were infrastructure implications in relation to the visit, these costs would be factored into the financial project plan. In principle, the PLC also intended for any "profits" to be put towards the newly established Infrastructure Fund. PW expressed concern that issues over e.g. axle loading were a potential problem for the railway in terms of infrastructure compliance. SW said that the PLC had taken external as well as internal advice and were satisfied that the challenges of hosting such a large engine could be managed by the railway. 3. CA said that it was a considerable accolade to have been awarded the visit in 	

	<p>the face of much competition, and that it represented a large tourist opportunity for Taunton Deane. RH agreed and said he would alert TDDB accordingly.</p>	
57	<p>Bath Spa University study for Minehead Chamber of Commerce (SW)</p> <p>1. The American students who carried out the study were due to present their conclusions at the Beach Hotel, Minehead on the forthcoming Saturday. WSR representatives were to attend. SW understood that no large changes to current plans were to be thought possible. The PLC does not support scheduled services direct from Taunton to Minehead as their preferred option, currently being worked upon, is for a regular link from Taunton to Bishops Lydeard. PDG noted the content of the recent joint press release with Minehead Chamber of Commerce.</p>	
58	<p>WSR programme of commercial negotiations (SW)</p> <p>1. SW outlined the current programme as including discussions and negotiations on Washford with the S&DRT; on Bishops Lydeard and Blue Anchor with the WSSRT; on the commercial possibilities of the Williton site; with the Friends organisations on the management of stations; with WSRA on the management of Bishops Lydeard; and on the future provision of locomotives and rolling stock with various owners and groups. He would update PDG regularly on these discussions.</p>	SW
59	<p>Vacancy for the Chairman of the WSR Heritage Committee</p> <p>1. The Heritage Committee is a sub-group of PDG. Therefore, SW wished PDG to approve proposals for the search for a new chairman. He believed the membership of that committee had a key role to play across the railway with a developing work programme, for example on the Somerset Heritage Centre's proposal to handle the WSR archives.</p> <p>2. PW believed that the new chairman should either come from WSRA or WSSRT. He would look within WSRA for possible candidates. To a suggestion from CA, he approved a name put forward as a good choice, and SW said the WSR Board would hope to agree its new Director nomination to the Heritage Committee at its workshop in late December. He noted that the person suggested already carried other responsibilities.</p> <p>3. PDG agreed that members of the Committee should be able to appoint their own chairman and to notify PDG accordingly.</p>	
60	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>1. CA noted that he was secretary to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Heritage Railways and that a minister had recently spoken with the group, showing more interest in heritage railways than had his predecessor. He had put emphasis on the new mainline franchising process that requires franchise bidders to talk to their local heritage railways as being both tourist attractions and potential providers of transport services. CA noted the relevance of this to discussions on the Bishops Lydeard to Taunton link and the re-letting of the GWR franchise due in 2019/20. SW wondered if this should be raised now with GWR and there was agreement to such an approach being made.</p>	SW

	<p>2. JC raised certain concerns about the review and proposed restructuring of the WSR Operations Department. SW outlined the current position and the intention to introduce changes over a 12-month period, with the crucial step being the appointment of a new Operations Manager. The hope was to widen the responsibilities and outlook of the department. The composition of the implementation team was due to be made public shortly. SW agreed to feedback the concerns raised by JC on behalf of Operations staff to the lead Director Ian Coleby.</p>	SW
61	<p>Date of next meeting Thursday 19th January, 2017 at 11.00 in Brunel House, Bishops Lydeard</p>	