

## WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY

### PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT GROUP (PDG)

Minutes of a meeting of the Partnership Development Group  
held from 11.00 on Thursday 5 April 2018  
in the Meeting Room at Bishops Lydeard Station

#### Present:

Paul Whitehouse (Chairman)	West Somerset Railway Association
Chris Austin	West Somerset Steam Railway Trust
Ian Coleby	West Somerset Railway Plc
Julien Weston	DEPG
Cllr David Hall	Somerset County Council
Cllr Roger Habgood	Taunton Deane Borough Council
Cllr Andrew Hadley	West Somerset Council

#### In attendance:

Mel Hillman	Administrator
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#### Apologies for absence were received from:

Ryan Pope	Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust
Martin Adfield	West Somerset Railway Staff
Martin Howard	DEPG

#### Minute

#### Action

#### 11/18 Welcome

Everyone was welcomed to the meeting and introductions carried out. Julien Weston was deputising for Martin Howard from DEPG.

#### 12/18 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 29 January 2018 were APPROVED with the changing of the name of Cllr Habgood to the correct name of Roger.

There were no matters arising not covered by the current agenda.

#### 13/18 Changed Plans for Bishops Lydeard Site

Ian Coleby reported that not much had happened since the last meeting. He confirmed that Frank Courtney had been asked to convene a small group for Bishops Lydeard to take things forward as reported in the previous minutes.

Ian confirmed that new plans would be focussed on needs and would not be as originally envisaged.

#### 14/18 Gauge Museum and Heritage Lottery Application (HLF)

Chris Austin reminded the meeting that the previous application to the HLF had been rejected. A revised second application was ready for

submission in the next week. This would include a comprehensive supporting document which he would make available at the next meeting.

CA

The scaled back plans had been costed at £60,000 and the bid to HLF amounted to £40,000 of that sum. Additional advice had been taken and several letters of support from partner organisations had been received and would form part of the submission.

The new plans focused on improving the displays as part of an educational initiative linked to the national curriculum in an effort to involve schools more. There would also be a new wi-fi access, although work on this was yet to start. This would enable information to be displayed digitally and also to be accessed via an iPad app.

It was hoped that the outcome of the bid would be known by the end of May 2018.

### **15/18 Williton Site Update**

Ian Coleby reported that the previous committee had fallen into disuse and he was planning to re-instate it. He was also looking for a suitable Project Manager to help move forward.

Julien Weston, on behalf of DEPG, presented proposals which he hoped would be considered and discussed as part of the overall plans. Informal talks had already been taken place. DEPG were planning a bid to HLF for up to £200,000 to develop and extend their shed at Williton. The plans would entail moving the offices into the old goods shed as well as creating improved toilet facilities and a classroom. The space could accommodate a café. The shed could then be extended and some alterations made to the old track-work which was life-expired. It was confirmed that the plans were still under development and needed further discussions. It would be possible to remove some of the porta cabins if the plans were successful. Julien Weston agreed to send a copy of the plan to Mel Hillman for circulation to members of the PDG.

JW/MH

Julien Weston also indicated that discussions on the lease extension had been positive and that DEPG would be happy to proceed. Ian Coleby confirmed that he was arranging a meeting with DEPG.

IC/JW

### **16/18 Norton Site**

Paul Whitehouse reported that he and Ian Coleby had met with Cllr Andrew Tully (Councillor for the Norton Fitzwarren Ward of Taunton Deane Borough Council) earlier in the day to discuss ideas for the development of the Norton Site. The site owner had been unable to attend.

It had been emphasised that account needed to be taken of other issues surrounding the site, particularly the longer term opportunities once the Marines vacated Norton Manor Camp. Timing of any plans would be vital. The County Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council were both remaining vigilant over the situation.

## **17/18 Heritage Committee**

Chris Austin had produced a paper proposing the formation of a new Heritage Committee. This had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Chris Austin felt that there would need to be a definition of Heritage. It would not be realistic to recreate things exactly as they were in other periods as the Health and Safety standards and requirements were higher, as were customer expectations and there needed to be a balance struck – ‘Did it look right?’

The meeting considered the governance role of the Committee. It was proposed that it would be a sub-committee of the PLC Board, also reporting to PDG. There was a discussion on what authority the Committee would have to approve or reject developments.

It was agreed to recommend to the next meeting of the PLC Board that the Committee have powers to approve or reject plans so that no significant changes could be made without reference to the Committee. It would have a Planning Committee type authority. Cllr Andrew Hadley felt that it should become a Statutory Consultation Body for the Planning Authority. The Committee would in no way supersede any other planning issues or processes including listed building issues. There would be a formal internal appeal process.

The proposed membership of:

Chris Austin  
Ian Coleby  
Geoff Cross (as Stations Co-ordinator)  
Andy Forster (former WSR CME)  
Simon Hickman (Principal Buildings Inspector, Historic Buildings South West)  
Elizabeth Neathey (SCC – Somerset Heritage, South West Heritage Trust)  
Mel Hillman (Secretary)

was approved. It was felt it was important to have relevant external input.

The proposals were agreed and would be submitted to the next meeting of the WSR Plc Board for approval.

**CA/IC**

## **18/18 Minehead Rail Link Group**

Paul Whitehouse reported that there had been no further developments.

Chris Austin gave details on ongoing discussions with GWR over the proposed Taunton to Bishops Lydeard link. Although the funding had not been agreed, many of the issues had been resolved and GWR were actively interested in the scheme as part of their ongoing franchise requirements. The specific requirements were around on-train radios and safety systems. Discussions had been held with the WSR S&T Department on the possibilities.

WSR was due to meet the Chief Executive and Transport Advisor of the Local Economic Panel (LEP) to discuss the scope for through services. The Panel was the main conduit for government funding into the South West. The main focus would be on developing tourism, as well as recognising the deprivation factor of West Somerset.

The proposal was to initially provide a seasonal shuttle service between Taunton and Bishops Lydeard using existing infrastructure. This could improve tourism with onward travel to Minehead from Bishops Lydeard in peak periods. This would help recognise that the WSR was a major tourist attraction.

The long term focus could be on providing some through services on change-over days at Butlins and help reduce some of the traffic on the local roads.

**19/18 Membership of the Railway**

Paul Whitehouse reported that this item was still under consideration.

**20/18 PDG Documents**

A request had been received from Steve Edge, who provided the unofficial WSR website, that a page be set up on the website to store PDG documents for ongoing reference.

It was felt that this was a good idea and was unanimously agreed.

**MH**

**21/18 AOB**

i) Ian Coleby confirmed that the WSR Plc was aspirational in purchasing the toilets and car park at Bishops Lydeard and wished to engage Taunton Deane Borough Council in detailed discussions. Ian was given suitable officer contacts in order to expedite such discussions.

**IC**

**22/18 Date of Next Meeting.**

The next meeting would be held from:

**10.00 on Tuesday 26 June 2018 in the Meeting Room at Bishops Lydeard Station.**

The meeting closed at 11.40