

WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY

PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT GROUP (PDG)

Minutes of a meeting of the Partnership Development Group
held from 11.00 on Monday 30 November 2015 in Brunel House, Bishops Lydeard

Present:

Steve Williams (Chairman)	West Somerset Railway PLC
Ian Aldridge	Vice-Chairman WSRA
Chris Austin	West Somerset Steam Railway Trust
Cllr Karen Mills	West Somerset Council
Martyn Snell	Employees & Volunteers
Godfrey Baker	Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust
John Cronin	Diesel & Electric Preservation Group
James Stubbs	Somerset County Council
Charlie Field	Somerset County Council

In attendance:

Mel Hillman	Administrator
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Apologies: were received from:

Cllr Jean Adkins	Taunton Deane District Council
Peter Chidzey	Chairman, WSRA

Minute

71/15

Membership Update

Action

The Chairman informed the meeting that this would be the last meeting that James Stubbs would be attending as he was due to leave the County Council in December. Charlie Field, Head of Estates, was welcomed as his successor. Ian Aldridge was also welcomed to the meeting as deputy for Peter Chidzey.

72/15 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 15 October 2015 were APPROVED with the following amendment to Minute 62/15 (ii) – to read 'Washford Site -Godfrey Baker reported that in wishing to develop the site, the Trust had engaged a consultant paid for by way of a sustainability grant from the Association of Independent Museums. The Report would be presented to the Trust's Board in January 2016 for consideration.

73/15 Matters Arising (items not on the agenda)

- i) Minute 62/15(vi) Policies. Steve Williams commented that the original idea of policies being presented to PDG had been for partners to be able to comment. However, no feedback had ever been received. He wondered if this was an effective and useful process. John Cronin replied that the most effective method would be to re-instate quarterly meetings between the partner groups and senior management to discuss operational matters. Steve Williams agreed to raise at the forthcoming OEC meeting.

SW

- ii) Minute 62/15(viii) SEPT Terms of Reference. The discussion at the previous meeting of OEC had been overtaken by the 2016 Budget proposals. There was a further meeting in the next week where the matter would be discussed in line with Budget requirements.
- iii) Minute 62/15(ix) BL Site Developments. Steve Williams reported that the meeting with Cllr Jean Adkins had not yet taken place but was in hand. The plan had been placed on the Plc website and there had been a high level of interest into its implementation.
- iv) Minute 65/15 Williton Site Development Group. Steve Williams confirmed that a document had been received from the WSRA and had been circulated to all members of the Group. He was trying to organise a meeting for December or early January. With the Williton site lease due to end in 2016, the Plc was about to discuss a short-term lease with WSRA until a long term plan was finalised. **SW**
- v) Minute 66/15 Inward Investment. Steve Williams reported on ongoing work concerning the BL site and Taunton to BL link. This would be followed by the Williton site. He had held discussions with the various local authorities with general agreement.
- vi) Minute 69/15(i) Museum Funding Bids. Steve Williams reported that he was about to meet Mark Smith to start to produce a bidding list to go to the Heritage Group to help construct a work programme. **SW**
- vii) Minute 69/15(ii) Replacement for Tim Stanger. Martyn Snell and Chris Austin apologised for not progressing this item but would do so before the next meeting when it would be an agenda item. **MS/CA
MH**

74/15 Update on Plc Director & Manager Positions

Steve Williams reported on the recent appointments by the Plc:

- Colin Howard appointed as Head of Commercial Services. An appointment process to backfill the Retail Manager post was underway.
- Ian Coleby had been appointed as Director for Volunteer Development.
- Ken Davidge had been appointed as Director for Safety Audit.
- Richard Lillis had been appointed as Director for Marketing and PR.
- Geof Cox had been appointed as HR Director.
- David Baker had stood down as Vice-Chairman and nominations were being sought from Directors. The Chairman would then advise the Board on making an appointment.

Steve Williams agreed to make the contact details of the new Directors available to members of PDG. **SW**

75/15 Minehead Vision & Economic Plan

Steve Williams reported that during discussions with SCC and a Williton Councillor over the Minehead Vision proposals, plans for an Economic Plan for Minehead had emerged. This included a potential Taunton to

Minehead rail link. Cllr Karen Mills commented that a previous Progress Vision for Minehead had been completed and had been available on-line. WDC had secured new funding to employ someone to research and produce a new Economic Plan. This person would interview 20 stakeholders including the WSR. It was hoped that the Plan would be produced during January 2016 hopefully giving a steer for the future economic growth of Minehead. Steve Williams confirmed that the General Manager and Director for Marketing would meet the researcher.

In general discussion it was noted that the Plc 10-year Corporate Plan had no significant proposals for Minehead other than renewal of the station level crossing. The new proposals may have implications for PDG to consider in the future. Martyn Snell, as a resident of Minehead, commented that the WSR was an important factor in the economic wellbeing of Minehead. Funding streams for any future developments would need to be identified during the process.

James Stubbs would follow-up to check any consultations through SCC.

JS

76/15 Bishops Lydeard Site Development – Update

Steve Williams reported on progress to date:

- There had been a meeting with the residents of the Station Farm area in the previous week with 15 residents present. There had been general support for the proposals although concerns had been raised about the level of construction traffic through the estate during that period. Ian Aldridge added that there would be further heavy vehicles through the estate once the new facilities were in place and this would need to be considered.
- Steve Williams and the General Manager had met the Leader and Officers of TDBC who had been supportive of the proposals in principle subject to planning considerations. During the discussion the possibility of the WSR acquiring the car park and toilet facilities at BL had been raised. Again TDBC was not averse to the principle subject to normal commercial considerations.
- Planning applications were in hand for the temporary modular buildings replacement for Brunel House which would be handed back to the owners by March 2017. The temporary buildings would be placed on the Station Farm site owned by the Plc. The WSR would be making its own independent alternative arrangements.

Steve Williams added that he would producing a single integrated site plan showing the emerging project programme. Phase 1 would include completion of the loco compound roof, raising funds to erect the new water tower, erection of the temporary buildings and developing plans for the sidings and loop as well as mitigating disruption of construction traffic. The next meeting of the Site Development Group would be on 10 December. Part of the discussion would be on the pre-application work for a Lottery Bid and whether there should be a single or integrated bid.

A project plan had been distributed prior to the meeting. John Cronin raised a concern that there wasn't a plan for the move out of Brunel House which would require considerable management to ensure continuity of provision for RAMS and S & T at least. Steve Williams agreed to follow up on this. There was also no mention of the Station Farm building itself and this would require attention to ensure that it was not disposed of to anyone averse to the Railway. Steve Williams agreed to follow-up.

SW

SW

77/15 Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust – Washford Site

Godfrey Baker commented that it had long been the aim of the Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust to develop the Washford Site and this was now a priority for the Trust. Subject to the approval of the Trust's memberships to a proposal for redevelopment of the Washford site at its AGM in June 2016, the Trust would seek grant funding for the work. It was hoped that a draft would be presented to the Trust Board in January after which a report would be presented to PDG. It was confirmed that the consultant would meet with officers of the Plc to ascertain what the Plc needed at the Washford Site. Godfrey Baker added that this work had overtaken the previous work on a Business Plan. It was noted that Washford Station was probably the most visible on the Railway. Discussions would consider the implications of car parking at the site.

GB

78/15 Williton Site Development – Update

Steve Williams confirmed that the Plc had received the WSRA proposals for the future use of the Williton Site. It was intended to set up a meeting of the Williton Site Group before early January 2016. It was intended that this Group would include all the proposals in one coherent document.

Steve Williams added that he had held a meeting with WSC planners to discuss possible developments and restrictions on the site eg flood plain and land locked site. There would be a need to adhere to current listed buildings requirements.

Steve Williams added that he had also raised the prospect of restoring the loop at Watchet near the paper mill site should the land become available during the discussions and disposal of the paper mill site. There would mean that there would be no need for a loop at Washford which could free up space for S & D Trust developments. Steve Williams had asked that the WSR be consulted as a stakeholder. He would continue to work with planners over this issue. There may be a need to include this proposal into a refreshed Plc Corporate Plan as well as well as any Minehead proposals. Steve Williams would outline the plans in a letter, copied to Cllr Karen Mills.

SW

SW

79/15 SCC – Leasehold Update

James Stubbs confirmed that there were no variations to previous discussions over the lease arrangements. SCC was working with the Plc to finalise the commercial issues. Steve Williams added that a further meeting was planned for early December 2015.

James Stubbs tabled a proposed amendment to the Terms of Reference for PDG to be an agenda item for the next meeting. He presented a proposed process to be followed should the Leasehold become available in the future. The current Leader of the Council had indicated that it was not for sale whilst he was Leader and if it did become available it would be to the 'Railway Family'. Under these proposals PDG would decide on the preferred bidder. Charlie Field added that opportunity sales of small areas alongside the Railway would be included and decisions taken by PDG as to whether their disposal would impact on Railway use. The matter would be discussed in more detail at the next meeting. An amended version of the ToRs and process sheet would be circulated prior to the next meeting. Members were asked to consult their Groups before the next meeting in readiness for the discussion.

SW/MH

CF

ALL

80/15 Taunton – Bishops Lydeard Link

Steve Williams commented that he hoped to complete the scoping paper later in the day. A meeting of the Working Group was due in early December 2015. Preliminary discussions with TBDC had been positive and generally supportive. They were waiting for a letter from SCC.

Preliminary discussions had also been held with GWR and Network Rail. A detailed Project Plan would be presented to the next meeting of PDG with the intention of action in 2017.

SW/MH

Steve Williams added that he had reassured SCC and TDBC that any proposals would not impact on any re-opening of Wellington station or other proposals.

81/15 AOB

Martyn Snell suggested that with the imminent publication of the Coombes Report commissioned by the members of the WSRA, it would be a good idea to invite Robin Coombes to a future meeting to discuss any wider implications for the WSR.

SW

Ian Aldridge was asked to obtain the views of the WSRA Trustees and feedback for the next meeting.

IA

This was AGREED.

82/15 Date of Next Meeting.

The next meeting would be held from:

10.00 on Thursday 18 February 2016 in Brunel House, Bishops Lydeard.

The meeting closed at 12.40pm