

West Somerset Railway PLC statement on the 'Coombes Review' and interactions with the West Somerset Railway Association

The board of the WSR plc has now had an opportunity to review in detail the report of the 'Coombes review' of the WSRA and the responses of their trustees to it. At a board meeting on 19th December 2015, the board resolved to

1. Support the existence of the WSRA and wish to see its continued existence as an efficient, well-run organisation contributing fully to the West Somerset Railway.
2. Welcome and support the report and recommendations of the Coombes review, and call for its immediate implementation, including the recommendation that all trustees stand down and work to establish a smooth transition to a completely new board to take the Association forward.
3. Co-operate fully in exploring the consequences of the review recommendations, and confirms it sees the WSRA and its members continuing as a key partner in the WSR family as the new board shows it has consulted with and gained approval from its membership for its implementation plans and future strategy for the Association, based on the recommendations of the review report.
4. Welcome the statement by the new WSRA chairman Frank Courtney that there will be a new spirit of co-operation with the WSR family by the WSRA and look forward to working with him and a new board as we see evidence of this being achievable.
5. Reaffirmed its policy of not engaging at board-trustee level until the governance issues have been properly resolved, but authorised the Chairman John Irven with appropriate directors to explore with the new chairman of the WSRA whether and how the governance issues can be properly and appropriately addressed.
6. Welcome that the whole WSR family will have the opportunity to consider the report and debate its views at the next PDG meeting scheduled for 18th February 2016. Robin Coombes has been invited to attend and present the findings of the report, from which we would hope for an agreed response from the WSR railway family members.
7. Note that with a new chairman and board of trustees at the WSRA the PLC sees great potential for developing a way forward for the WSRA as part of the railway family based on their own Coombes review, but not if the key recommendations of that report fail to be implemented and with the existing trustees remaining in post.

John Irven said "The WSR plc is looking forward to the speedy appointment of a new Board of Trustees of the WSRA, as recommended by the Coombes Report; we will then be able to restart a meaningful dialogue between the two organisations for the purpose of enhancing the West Somerset Railway."

Geoff Pateman, Governance Director & Company Secretary WSR PLC for and on behalf of the board
20 Dec 2015