



PRESS RELEASE

WEST SOMERSET RAILWAY ASSOCIATION PROGRESSES RESTORATION OF GWR "SMALL PRAIRIE" 4561

The West Somerset Railway Association is continuing to raise money for the ongoing overhaul of Great Western Railway 45xx Class "Small Prairie" 4561.

The locomotive is being worked on at the Williton workshops of West Somerset Restoration where the workforce includes the apprentices funded by the WSRA as part of its remit to train the engineers of the future and to keep traditional skills alive. The next phases of the overhaul include the blower ring, costed at around £900 and work on the cylinders, costed at £12,500. Firebox stay funding, at £25 per stay, is also being raised.

4561 was built at Swindon in 1924 and, to demonstrate how inflation has increased costs in the last century, at that point the construction of the complete locomotive cost £3,803. The engine was originally based at Tyseley in Birmingham and then moved to Ebbw Junction in Newport. However after moving to Plymouth Laira in 1929 it remained as part of the railway scene in the South West of England on the branch lines of Devon and Cornwall for the next thirty years. It was back at Laira when withdrawn from main line service in 1962. *(Thanks go to locomotive historian Richard Derry for help with this section).*

Although 4561 did not work in Somerset until it was first restored for service on the WSR "Small Prairies" were regular performers on the services between Taunton and Minehead. The WSRA is keen to see the locomotive at work in the Quantock Hills and along the Bristol Channel Coast once again.

Fund-raising is currently by means of an easyfundraising account (<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes.westsomersetrailwayassociation>) and by direct donations (cheques payable to West Somerset Railway Association). A 50-50 Club, which is open to non-members of the WSRA, raises funds for WSRA projects and details can be obtained from:- West Somerset Railway Association, The Railway Station, Bishops Lydeard, Taunton, Somerset, TA4 3BX. Donation cheques for the restoration of 4561,

payable to West Somerset Railway Association, should be sent to the same address with the envelope marked "Locomotive Fund". Other WSRA details can be seen at <http://www.wsra.org.uk/support>