



Wednesday, 16 February 2022

Three Boards Meeting – 3rd February 2022

Twenty members of the West Somerset Railway PLC, West Somerset Railway Association and the West Somerset Railway Heritage Trust have met together to review common issues and plan how better to work together for the railway. The three Chairs initially addressed the meeting then Steve Williams, PLC Director and WSHRT Trustee, gave an overview of the current challenges. There followed an informative and positive general discussion.

Those present all agreed that the meeting had been a significant success and formed a good foundation for the further development of the railway.

Among matters reviewed were the difficult balance the railway needed to achieve between financial success, heritage preservation and the need to ensure current and future staff and volunteers find participation rewarding. It is acknowledged that there is a need to enhance the positive experience of working on the railway, but at the same time recognise that the regulatory environment has changed significantly for heritage railways in the last few years.

There is recognition also that, at least in the near future, the income from passengers will not be enough to fund the large scale capital expenditure necessary. Fund raising (for all of the organisations) is a serious challenge, and there needed to be sufficient lead time in the forward planning to support successful fund raising from external organisations. It was recognised that post Covid it was necessary to get this on track with long term shared planning.

It was agreed that it was critical to look forward and not back and there was recognition that some lessons had been learnt from the experience of the last few years. Whilst not everyone is going to agree about everything, it is important to present any differences in approach in a way which contributes to the positive development of the railway

In the longer term we may need to consider structural review, but it was generally agreed that our focus at the moment is building on the recent success of the railway to provide a firm future.

It was agreed by the meeting that each one of the three organisations would identify six action points which could be drawn together to form the basis of a joint work programme. We all look forward to working positively with one another for the benefit of the railway.

This note has been jointly prepared by:

Frank Courtney, PLC Director

Diana Ricketts-Tanner, WSRA Trustee

Mike Thompson, WSRHT Chairman