

# The Strategic Plan of the Swanage Railway Trust 2011- 2016

## September 2010

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The Swanage Railway's first strategic plan was produced in 2006 and covered the five year period to 2011. As we head rapidly towards the end of that period, it is appropriate to review what has been achieved and develop the plan for the next five years.

### 2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Swanage Railway today is arguably the most intensively operated standard gauge heritage railway in the country if not the world, with an enviable location and market. It is also perhaps one of the lines with the greatest potential for further growth. Less attractive are the facilities currently available to deliver the service required, being without doubt the least adequate of any major line however measured – locomotive servicing and maintenance, carriage stabling and workshops, volunteer and staff accommodation, commercial outlets and office space. Our challenge over the next five years is to make inroads into rectifying that situation, without which further growth of the current heritage operation and progress towards an amenity service to Wareham will not be possible. While this must be our priority, the Railway will continue to support and encourage specialist and complementary projects, particularly where these can secure their own sources of funds.

With respect to the amenity service to Wareham, the SR has indicated to Dorset County Council (DCC) that the objective can be delivered at the lowest cost and lowest risk by allowing the SR to work gradually towards this as and when funds permit. The SR's strategy has enabled DCC to support the re-signalling of Worgret Junction which in turn has re-energised discussions with BP regarding the future of the Furzebrook facility and with Network Rail regarding the future of their part of the branch.

The ability of the Railway to realise the plan is critically dependent on availability of resources, not just money but also volunteers with the necessary time, skills and experience. The operation of the Railway typically generates a modest profit which is covenanted to the Trust. However, as most of the earnings are required to cover operations and maintenance, in reality the Trust's ability to develop the Railway and support new projects is critically dependent on raising new funds and the willingness of individuals to take responsibility for this process and subsequent implementation. Similarly, the order in which such projects are undertaken will reflect not only the priorities as set by the Trust Council and Company Board as above, but also the conditions, requirements and objectives of those who might be willing to make resources available.

### 3. MISSION

How do we describe the Swanage Railway in one sentence?

**'A Purbeck people-mover, combining a real public transport service need with a heritage railway experience, all for public and community benefit'**

#### **4. VISION**

The Swanage Railway (SR) will continue to consolidate its position as one of the leading heritage railways in the country and in particular in all its developments to strengthen its portrayal of the typical BR Southern Region branch line of the 1950s/early 1960s period. The Swanage Railway Trust will continue to focus on the heritage and educational aspects of the Railway as required by its charitable deed, with its subsidiary the Swanage Railway Company supporting these goals by being responsible for operation of heritage train services and commercial activity. Additionally, it will promote the objective of providing daily community services connecting with main line trains, initially at Wareham, as a further source of income.

Our ability to deliver our vision is dependent on us understanding our situation in terms of the strengths and weaknesses of our organisation and the opportunities and threats facing us. A vision must be inspirational, but realistic and achievable. One of our key strengths is also an important weakness – we are located in a beautiful corner of England that attracts many visitors who travel on our trains, yet the very controls that protect this beauty also make it difficult for us to develop the facilities we need. Again we need to recognise here that our location in the relatively affluent south of England limits our access to the grant funding that has been a feature of the success of heritage railways elsewhere.

The success of the Swanage Railway is dependent on support of Trust members, volunteers and paid staff. Understanding their wishes and needs and doing our best to satisfy them is critical to our future.

#### **5. REVIEW**

Much has been achieved by the SR in the last few years. Our infrastructure and assets have gradually been enhanced in all areas, although there remains much to do and we fight an ongoing battle with the elements. Most of our service coaches have now been through heavy overhauls, such that lighter maintenance can be expected in the coming years. If we consider specific items in the plan we note that the first of our heritage coaches has been restored and a second is underway, our facilities for the disabled have been enhanced by the overhaul of the SK(O), the footbridge at Corfe Castle is now in place and platform 1 at Swanage is now useable by trains, although regular services must await removal of at least some of the rolling stock berthed there. Modest improvements have been made to operational and maintenance facilities at Swanage, although these remain inadequate for a railway the size of the SR. Our links to the outside world have of course been significantly enhanced during this period through the appearance of charter and engineering trains on a regular basis, together with visiting locomotives arriving by rail. Many other high profile projects remain ongoing, notably the discussions with local authority and other partners for the resumption of amenity services to Wareham and perhaps beyond. The SR is now established as one of the busiest heritage railways in the UK using passengers carried as the measure although rather more modestly ranked in terms of mileage, facilities and turnover. The railway can be justly proud of its role in being more than just a pretty ride; the SR has become a true transport service, providing valuable relief to the roads (and people) of Purbeck.

#### **6. DELIVERY**

The Swanage Railway is in most important respects one entity. The senior body to which all members belong will remain the Swanage Railway Trust (SRT). The SRT has to have an operational and trading subsidiary the Swanage Railway Company (SRC) for legal reasons, the primary one being that charitable bodies are not allowed to trade, except in very limited ways. The SRT and SRC work in close harmony to deliver the agreed objectives as set out

below. The predecessor to the SRT, the Southern Steam Trust (SST) currently remains in place to ensure that any funds that arrive in its accounts can be directed to the SRT.

## **7. CORE RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **7.1 The SRT's core responsibilities during the period of the Plan are as follows:**

1. Directing Railway policy in accordance with its charitable status and the wishes of the membership
2. Managing the finances of the Trust with prudence and caution such that the Railway always lives within its means and requiring the SRC to do likewise
3. Raising funds to support the work of the Trust, both generally and for specific projects
4. Directing SRC to return a net surplus each year as required by the Charity Commission, such surpluses as are not retained with the SRC to be covenanted to the SRT for improvement and development projects
5. Encouraging members and volunteers, directly and indirectly, to contribute to the work of the Trust
6. Developing the SR's Museums and its heritage and educational goals
7. Making the SR accessible to all in the community
8. Securing such additional assets as may be required for the long-term benefit of the SR
9. Leading the SR's overall communications strategy
10. Enhancing the standing of the SR in the community and in the heritage and railway industries
11. Media liaison on all strategic matters

### **7.2 The SRC's core responsibilities during the period of the Plan are as follows:**

1. To operate a safe railway
2. To operate within the policies set by the SRT
3. To exercise financial prudence in all respects
4. To manage a rolling programme of maintenance and investment in the SR's assets
5. To recruit, manage and motivate staff, both paid and volunteer
6. Deliver an annual surplus as directed by the SRT and as required by charity law
7. To manage projects and associated risk
8. Media liaison on all operational matters

### **7.3 The following sections set out:**

- projects to be considered for implementation during the currency of the Plan by SRT(Section 8.1) and SRC (Section 8.3)
- specific targets for the period 2010/11 for SRT (Section 8.2) and SRC (Section 8.4)

## **8 STRATEGIC TARGETS**

### **8.1 SRT Activities and projects to be promoted during currency of the 2011 – 2016 Plan :**

1. Raise funds for the continued implementation of the Heritage Coach Plan
2. Support the continued development of museums at Corfe Castle and Norden (PMMG)
3. Raise funds for the installation of the 70ft turntable from Old Oak Common (*priority*)
4. Fund the erection of a water tower at Swanage to facilitate storage of extracted groundwater (*priority*)
5. Promote Railway at relevant major outside events
6. Develop a team to promote Railway through talks and slide shows
7. Fund the erection of a footbridge at Harmans Cross
8. Fund the continuing upgrade of SR infrastructure assets (*priority*)
9. Enhance facilities for volunteers in order to improve recruitment, retention and skill development (*priority*)

10. Seek funds for further investment in our facilities for disabled people (*priority*)
11. To secure long-term access to all land on which the SR operates today or might require in due course (*priority*)

## **8.2 In 2010/2011 specifically :**

1. Review communications across the SR, with special attention to the needs of members and staff
2. Fund and construct Herston South Carriage Shed (SRC acting as agent)
3. Fund removal and transport of the 70ft turntable to the SR from Old Oak Common
4. Produce and implement management plan for 103 High Street
5. Restore B Van 256 for Sygnets for use as a group base and training facility
6. Display Churchill van at Corfe Castle and prepare a schedule of relevant and appropriate exhibits
7. Fund completion of Corfe Castle Signal Box building
8. Fund completion of new passenger facilities at Harmans Cross station
9. Commence a review of options for provision and funding of improved volunteer facilities

## **8.3 SRC Activities and projects to be undertaken during currency of the 2011 – 2016 Plan :**

### **8.3.1 HEALTH, SAFETY & ENVIRONMENT**

1. Maintain and manage the Safety Management System (SMS) to make sure that it is effective and remains fit for purpose in all respects
2. Manage the SR with due respect for the environment and our neighbours

### **8.3.2 FINANCE**

1. Maintain financial controls to avoid recourse to bank overdrafts
2. In conjunction with the SRT, source funds for repairs and renewals that fall outside revenue budgets

### **8.3.3 MARKETING**

1. Timely production of timetables and promotional material
2. Regular passenger surveys to ensure we are meeting customer needs
3. Continued development of promotions, locally, regionally and nationally
4. Develop business plans for all lines of business and events to ensure profitability
5. Media promotion of a non-strategic nature

### **8.3.4 LOCOMOTIVE CARRIAGE & WAGON**

1. Develop and implement ongoing plans for maintenance and availability of locomotives and rolling stock
2. Develop plans for additional covered accommodation and facilities
3. Improvements/maintenance of carriage stock PA to good and uniform standard
4. Complete overhauls of DMU fleet

### **8.3.5 INFRASTRUCTURE**

1. Carry out regular surveys of infrastructure, buildings, structures and trees (*priority*)
2. Eliminate remaining backlog maintenance items (*priority*)
3. Implementation of loco watering facilities at Norden
4. Provide new loco watering facilities at Swanage
5. Extension of platform at Swanage (by approx 12ft to get last door of 5 coach set on platform)
6. Improve staff facilities workplaces and staff rooms

### **8.3.6 CIVIL ENGINEERING & PERMANENT WAY**

1. Progressive improvement and upgrading of running line (*priority*)
2. Regrade and realign sidings at Swanage
3. Extend siding at Harmans Cross to facilitate short-term berthing of charter trains (*priority*)

### **8.3.7 PROJECT WAREHAM**

1. Transfer of Furzebrook-Worgret section to SR (*priority*)

2. Complete Corfe Castle signalling installation and revised interface with Network Rail
3. Complete upgrade of track Norden –Worgret
4. Upgrade of Norden level crossing to passenger standards
5. Creation of new road/rail interchange facility
6. Gain access to sidings at Furzebrook on acceptable terms (*priority*)

#### 8.3.8 SIGNAL & TELEGRAPH AND TELECOM

1. See project Wareham, above

#### 8.3.9 STATIONS

1. Acquire site from Swanage Town Council (*priority*)
2. Swanage : install platform kiosk
3. Swanage : provide staff access platform to squint
4. Swanage : install concrete lamp-posts and running in board
5. Herston : provide passenger shelter
6. Harmans Cross : Provide footpath to Woodyhyde campsite
7. Harmans Cross : Install footbridge
8. Corfe Castle : enhance the goods yard surface to improve access to the museum
9. Norden : develop plans for commercial outlet

#### 8.3.10 STAFF

1. Institute and maintain a system of regular staff performance reviews
2. With the SRT, develop and implement an enhanced communications strategy
3. Develop succession plan for key staff
4. Develop training plan for staff, concentrating on those with key skills

### 8.4 During 2010/11 specifically :

1. Install permanent facilities for Infrastructure Department at Corfe Castle (*priority*)
2. Construct new accommodation for locomotive fitters at Swanage (*priority*)
3. Re-roof Swanage Good shed (*priority*)
4. Complete structure of Corfe Signal box and installation of S&T equipment
5. Complete P Way work to Corfe Castle goods yard (*priority*)
6. Further track renewal between Swanage and Herston (*priority*)
7. Regrade and realign sidings at Swanage
8. Extend siding at Harmans Cross to provide short-term berthing of charter stock (*priority*)
9. Refurbish canopy at Swanage station (*priority*)

## 9. FUNDING THE PLAN

Routine maintenance issues contained in the plan will be financed from SRC revenue and funds for this purpose will be allocated through the annual spending plan and budget process.

All projects that result in new or improved facilities from their 2010 condition will need to identify a source of funding. Potential sources of funding include :

- SRC capital budget
- Grants from the SRT, using funds raised from a variety of sources
- Grants from external bodies (it is expected these would be sourced in the main by SRT)

Allocation of funding for projects will take place following the approval of a Project form submitted to the SRT CoM or SRC Board as appropriate. This supports the process by which projects are effectively managed and expenditure controlled. In all matters the SRT and SRC will work together to fund the enhancements and improvements listed.

Our ability to progress capital projects within the plan timeframe is critically dependent on additional sources of finance being identified and additional support coming forward to help secure them.