

Planning Ahead for the Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust

Steph Gillett

G&T Consulting Ltd

Independent Consultancy

*Working for Heritage **and** People*

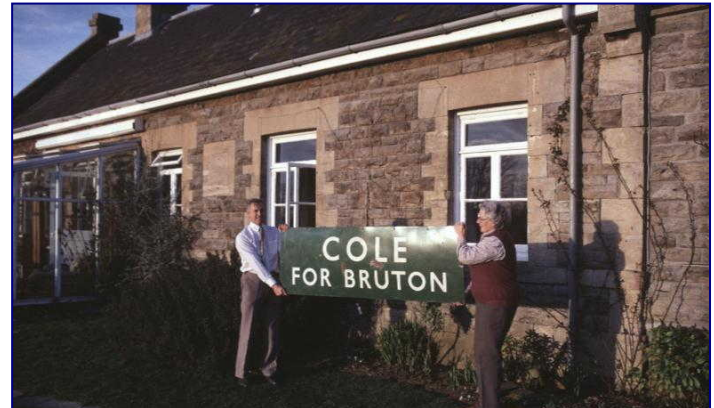
Long-Time Railway Enthusiast



Special Interest in S&D



25th Anniversary of Closure



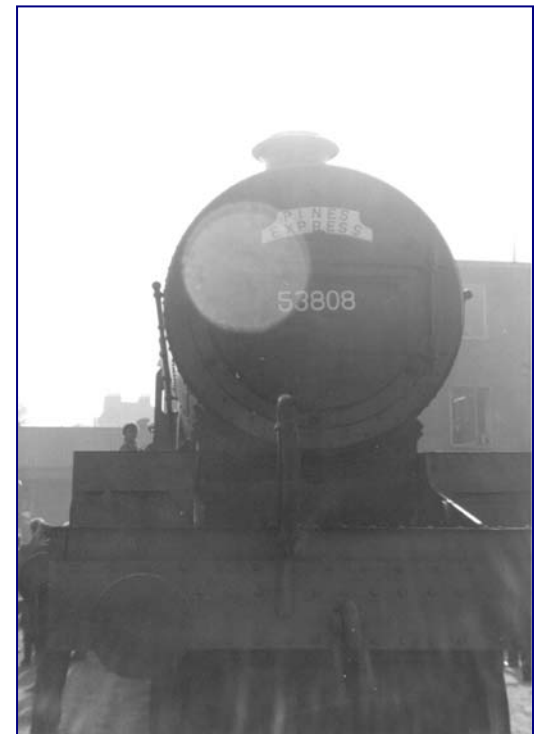
Museum & Heritage Consultancy

- 5 Years Freelance
- 30 Clients
- 40 Projects
- Dean Forest Railway Museum
- Avon Valley Railway



The S&DRT

- Keeping alive the memory of the S&D for 43 years
- Much has happened in the heritage railway sector
- Initiatives to establish a presence on sections of the former route



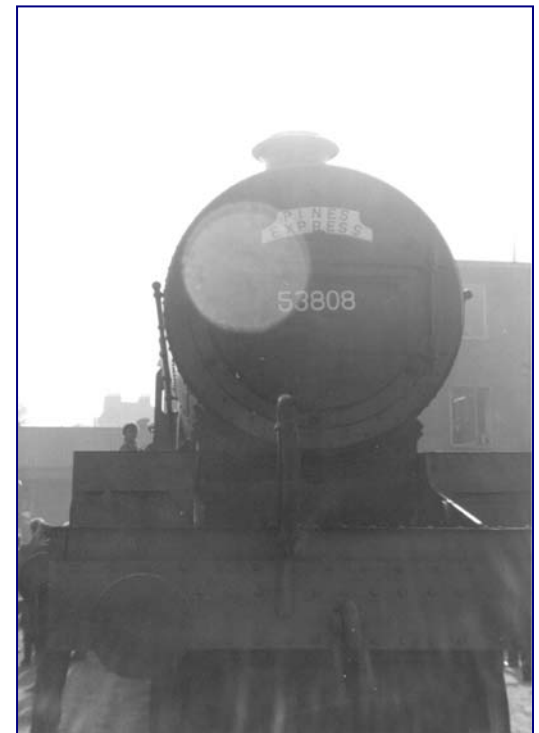
Members & Volunteers



- Decline in membership and volunteer numbers
- Volunteer policy and strategy needed
- Task descriptions all volunteer roles
- Volunteers should not need to be members of the Trust
- Joint or concessionary membership schemes with the WSR and other S&D interest groups

Projects & Work Programmes

- No projects should be started without sufficient volunteers to complete them
- Establish clear work programmes and budgets
- Carriages, etc that cannot be restored in a reasonable time be considered for completion on a commercial basis.



Washford Museum



- Site away from S&D railway route means it is difficult to understand for many visitors
- Level of interpretation and lack of interactives or multi-media
- Much only has real meaning to railway enthusiasts
- Unlikely that planning permission would be granted for museum extension on Trust land; returning to allotments could involve local residents

Museum Displays

- Displays need revitalisation including new themes and storytelling
- Reduce number of items on display at any one time
- Rotate objects through short-term exhibition
- Interpretation strategy needed for wider railway themes



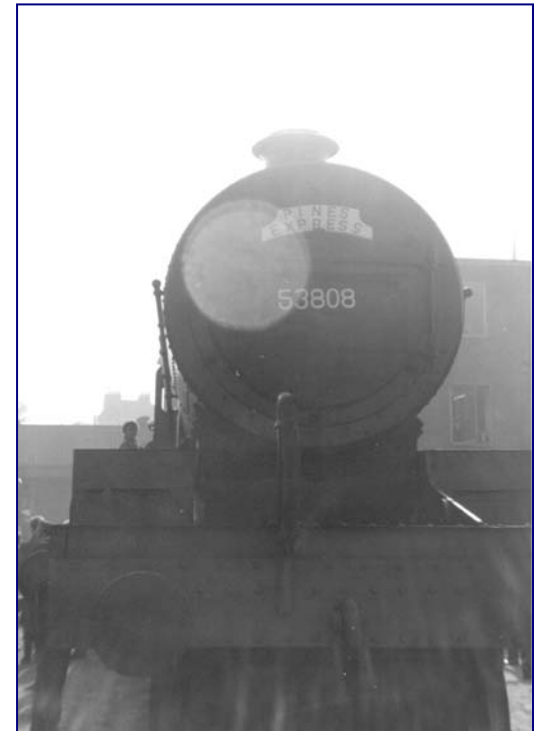
Museum & Archive Collections



- Acquisition & Disposals policy needs to be re-written to match Accreditation Standard template
- No conflict with current Charity Registration
- Focus of the collecting policy needs to reflect the long term vision of Trust
- Suggest focus on the S&DJR
- Review collections to ensure that all items are relevant

Locos & Rolling Stock

- No. 88 Trust Flagship
- Other significant items
- Locomotives and rolling stock should be de-accessioned and retained as non-museum items
- Items that are beyond any reasonable hope of restoration or conservation should be considered for disposal



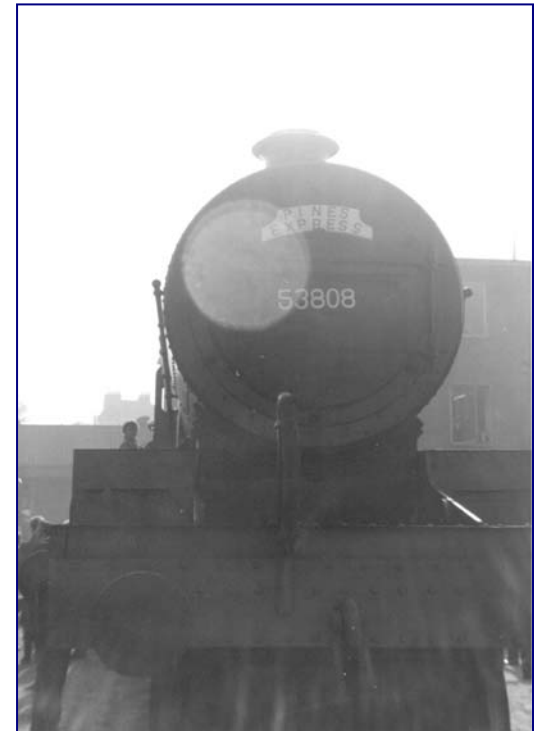
S&D Heritage



- Loan and exhibition of items at other S&D heritage railway sites, and local museums along route of the S&D
- Prepare suitable text for labels to ensure a consistent standard
- Guardian of S&DJR heritage wherever displayed
- Working with local councils, amenity groups, etc to assist with *in situ* interpretation of the railway

Archives

- Digitise archives and make available via the Internet
- Original archive material could be deposited in relevant county record offices or specialist archives



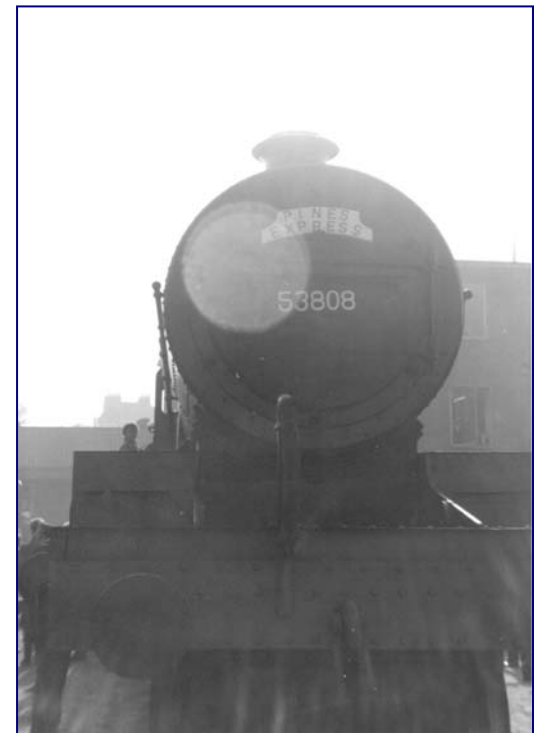
Curatorial Support



- Need professional advice on museum activities
- Guidance on meeting the national Accreditation Standard
- Combining curator and archivist roles would help to ensure that all collections are looked after consistently
- Easier to recruit volunteer curator if they do not need to be trustee or member

Washford Site

- Added value to the Washford site, but difficulty in providing volunteers
- WSR is unable to market the Trust's activities as no guarantee of activity
- Not on S&D route
- What can the Trust do at Washford that it could not do as well or better elsewhere?
- What can the Trust do at Washford that the WSR could not do as well or better?



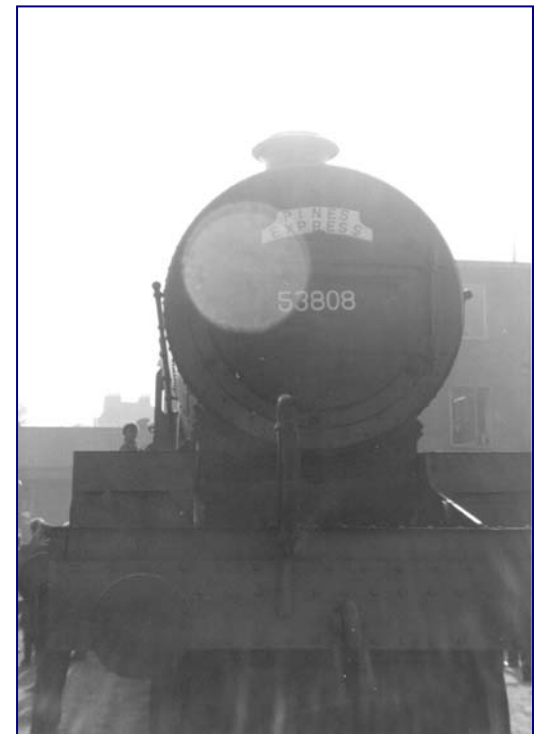
West Somerset Railway



- WSR may wish to re-gain some or all of the Washford site on termination of the lease in 2020
- Yard part of the site is probably more valuable to the WSR
- Possible that Trust could continue to occupy the station only
- WSR may need to be convinced that the Trust could regularly staff the station

WSR, contd.

- Unlikely that the WSR would permit the Trust to occupy the yard only
- No. 88 is a valued part of WSR motive power; WSR probably want to extend current hire agreement
- WSR may be interested in continuing to use the locomotive beyond 2020
- Begin discussions with the WSR to consider options for the Washford site and No.88 beyond 2020



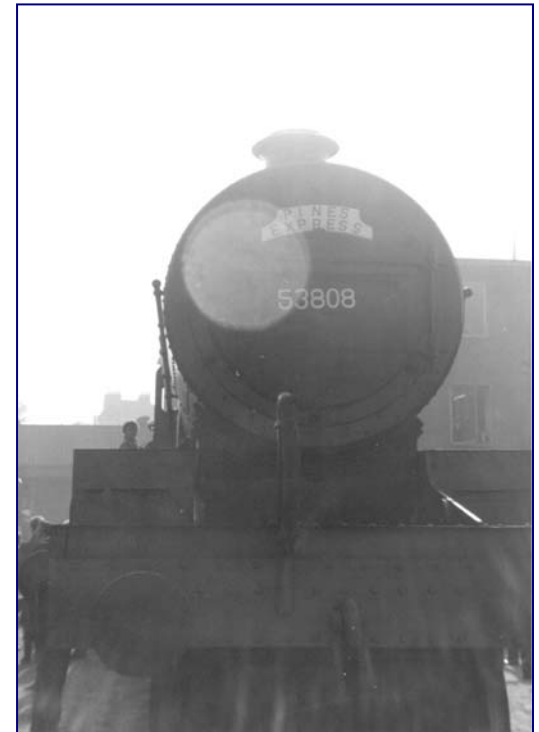
Collaboration & Partnership



- Establish some sort of presence at one or more locations on the former S&D railway
- Work in partnership with the other S&D interest groups
- Begin exploratory discussions with these groups
- Working in partnership with other organisations the Trust is more likely to achieve its aims
- Strong partnerships can be good way of neutralising 'trouble-makers'

Development

- Open to evolve into a different type of organisation
- Greater use of new technology to deliver its aims
- Working with a new range of organisations and opportunities



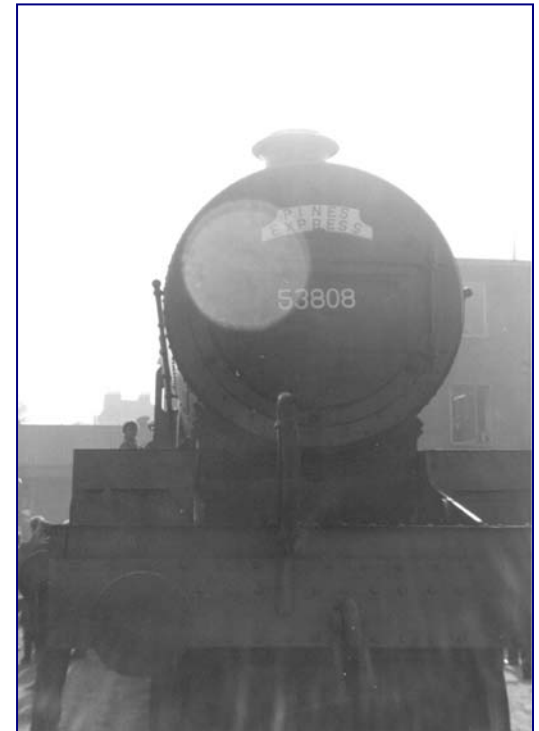
A Vision for the Future



- Long-term main focus of the Trust should be Somerset and Dorset Joint Railway, not old railways generally, ie:
- ***Working in partnership with others to keep alive the memory of the Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway.***

Future Roles - 1

- *To keep alive the history and importance of the Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway and its predecessor companies, through the preservation, custodianship, display and interpretation of material evidence (including artefacts, archives and oral testimony)*



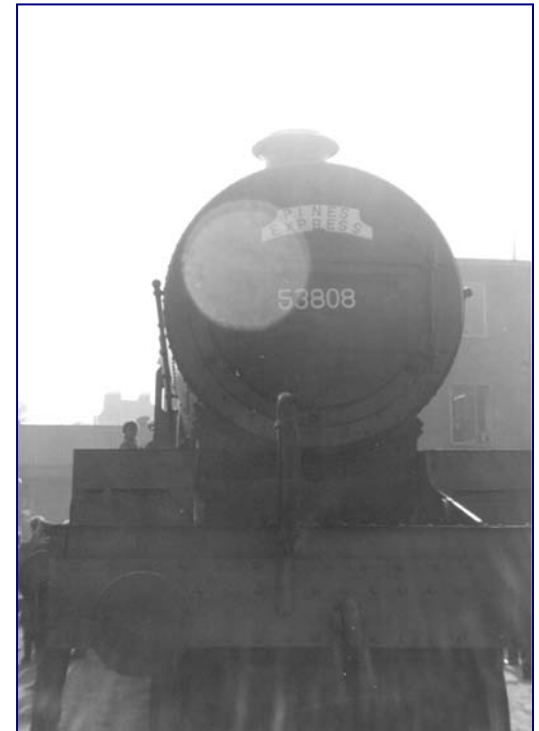
Future Roles - 2



- *To promote and facilitate public understanding of the significance of the Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway as a major cross-country rail route, its importance to the communities through which it passed, and the social impact of its closure*

Future Roles - 3

- *To promote dialogue, cooperation and coordination between all individuals and organisations concerned with the Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway*



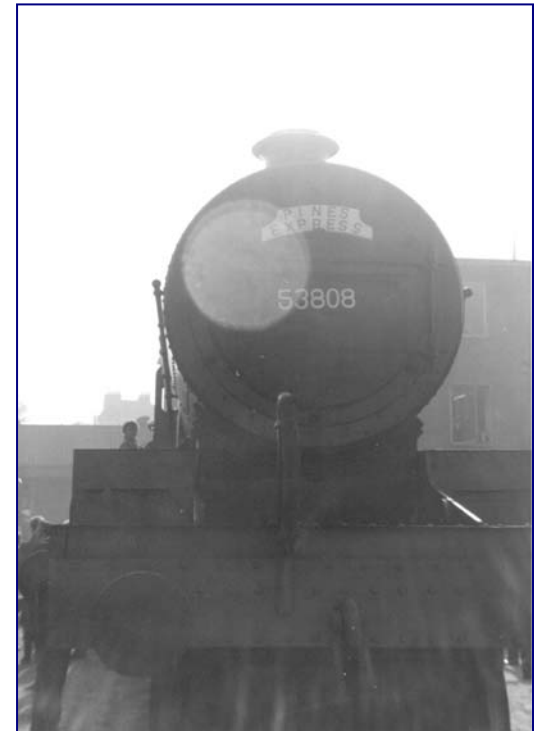
Short Term (within 6-9 months)



- Volunteer recruitment strategy
- Membership drive
- Re-vamp museum displays & interpretation

Medium Term (within 12-18 months)

- Review collecting policy
- Begin dialogue with WSR about Washford and No. 88
- Informal discussions with other S&D interest groups, etc



Long Term (2-5 years)



- Review constitution and organisational structures
- Identify opportunities for partnership and collaboration
- Determine long-term options for Washford

The Future?

- Trust retains a high profile in all aspects of the former Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway
- Trust develops new approaches and structures to fulfil its aims and objectives

