

This policy was approved by the board of directors in January 2021, and sets out the long-term strategic vision for our carriage and wagon fleet.

Vision

We have a threefold vision for the railway's carriage collection.

1. The Isle of Wight Steam Railway should ensure
 - a) that the railway has sufficient carriages to operate all its intended train services together with adequate spare vehicles.
 - b) that it operates all its services using historically appropriate rakes of carriages maintained in good condition.

2. Five rakes of carriages should ultimately be available: -
 - a) Post-war SR/BR bogie set
 - b) Pre-war SR bogie set
 - c) Pre-war SR 4-wheel set (including the 2-car push pull set which can be operated separately)
 - d) Pre-grouping Heritage set (mainly IWR vehicles supplemented by others if available)
 - e) Ryde Pier Tram

3. Additional non-operational historically appropriate vehicles should be suitably displayed and interpreted as high-quality museum exhibits.

We also have a threefold vision for the railway's wagon collection.

1. The Isle of Wight Steam Railway should maintain in good condition a representative selection of historically appropriate wagons and operate them on appropriate occasions.

2. Additional non-operational historically appropriate vehicles should be suitably displayed and interpreted.

3. Non heritage wagons required for engineering purposes should be acquired, retained, and disposed of as required. These wagons should be maintained as required and kept in a presentable condition.

Background

The Isle of Wight Steam Railway has always had an enviable reputation for its collection of historic wooden bodied carriages. However, in recent years we have struggled with availability for bogie carriages which form the core of our operating fleet. Since the withdrawal from service of SECR Composite 6375 in 2013 until 2019 we had a maximum of four available for service. On occasions, this was reduced to three due to maintenance reasons. For most of the past ten years we have only had one brake coach. The four-wheeled set, with its more modern underframes, has performed very well during this period, but it too until 2018 depended entirely on a single Brake coach. With the return to service of SECR Brake Third 4149 in May 2019 and Composite 6375 in March 2021, we now have six bogie coaches, which is a significant improvement. However, we need to ensure this situation does not arise again.

Short Term Needs – the next five years

At our busiest times we run a two-train service and should have the ability to run a maximum five coach bogie set whenever necessary. To do this, we need an absolute minimum of six coaches available, as this gives us a little spare capacity if one is withdrawn for servicing, emergency repairs or any other reason. However, it is suggested that we ought to have seven for a comfortable minimum, as this would give us extra flexibility to carry out full repaints and repairs throughout the year, rather than only when the Railway is not operating. Our six operational bogie coaches include two Thirds (LBSCR 2403 and LBSCR 2416), two Composites (LBSCR 6349 and SECR 6375) and two Brakes (LBSCR 4168 and SECR 4149). (NB It may be possible and commercially desirable to run six coach trains when the shorter LCDR bogie coaches become available)

The four-wheeled set, which currently has seven vehicles, has a selection of Thirds and Composites and, with the introduction to service of LBSCR 4115, a second brake coach. However, it is currently unbalanced in having too many first-class compartments. In the short term, a few of these will be downgraded but in the longer term an extra full third is desirable.

Following the completion of Oldbury IWR Composite 10, a second, IWR First 21, is under restoration. These carriages are 'nice-to-have' and not intended to be part of the Railway's day-to-day operational needs. While their commercial opportunities are modest, from a heritage perspective we can create something genuinely unique of national importance – a complete authentic train from this era. Their restoration is being undertaken as a volunteer-led project and should not impinge on the delivery of seven serviceable bogie coaches. Following the completion of IWR 21, it is proposed to construct a replica brake coach, which will enable us to run a short train of three Oldburys.

In 2018 the committee considered which bogie coach should be restored after the completion of SECR Composite 6375 and concluded that LCDR Brake Third 4115 should precede SECR Brake Third

We are shortly to acquire a class 483 unit from Island Line and need to decide how it should be displayed and interpreted (Further details on this project appear in Section 8 below).

The IWCR (ex MR) crane is scheduled for restoration in 2021.

It is anticipated that all operating requirements can be met by carriages of a type relevant to the Isle of Wight railways.

Longer Term Considerations and Options

1. Bogie Carriages

A second set of bogie coaches is something to which we should aspire, particularly if we eventually extend to Ryde St John's Road or if Ashey station is reinstated as a passing place.

We already have two LCDR bogie Third bodies (2418 and 2426 – both in two parts) and two LCDR Brake Thirds (4115 and 4116). However, we currently have no Composite but believe we could recreate one using various LCDR body parts we have acquired over the years or might acquire in the future.

We currently have four bogie underframes capable of being used in restoration projects and therefore have the potential to have a fleet of at least eleven bogie coaches in the long term.

To summarise, then, we should aspire towards a pre-war and a post war set. In addition to our seven or eight LBSCR and SECR carriages, we intend to recreate a pre-war set of four LCDR carriages (two Brakes, a full Third and a Composite). This will represent an almost ideal combination of carriage types, both from a commercial and heritage perspective.

2. The Southern Four Wheelers

Our four-wheeler set is without doubt one of our Railway's greatest assets. The seven restored carriages are a well-balanced operational set. We have the body of LCDR four compartment Brake Third 4134 for restoration to add to this set and further bodies may be obtained in the future.

We have enough PMV underframes to restore several more four-wheeled carriages in the future.

3. The Pre-Grouping Heritage Set

The completion of a three-coach set of Oldburys (as detailed above) could be followed by the restoration of several more at some point. These will remain in storage in the meantime.

We also have the body of FYNR Composite 6 which is in remarkably good condition and, when restored, could run either in this set or with the Southern four-wheelers. SR 6336 / IWR Composite 46, if returned to varnished teak, could also possibly run in this set if desired. In restoring IWR Composite 10, we have developed a wooden underframe design which can be adapted for future restoration projects for the heritage set.

We already have the basis of a fascinating set of very historic carriages. We should also seek to acquire the remaining C&NR bodies with a view to restoring one and examples of the IWR (ex-Metropolitan Railway) bodies at St Helens with a view to restoring one or two. We would then have examples from all three Island pre-Grouping companies. However, as these vehicles are only ever likely to see occasional use, their restoration is always likely to be a 'nice-to-have', rather than an essential, project. Set against that, having them on display properly interpreted would be a worthwhile advantage in itself and is in line with our objectives.

4. The Push-Pull Set

Our Ventnor West push-pull set (four wheeled LCDR Brake Third 4112 and LCDR Composite 6369) is one of our star exhibits and it has long been Railway policy that it should be able to run in push-pull mode (This has already been demonstrated between Havenstreet and Ashey using a special traffic notice but

without the locomotive being controlled from the trailer car). Although outside the scope of the Carriage Policy, adaptation of a locomotive to enable authentic push-pull operation is recommended and included in the Strategic Vision.

5. Ryde Pier Tram

Ryde Pier Tramcar 2 should be complete and back at the Railway in 2021 and work on the underframe of the replica trailer car 10 is proceeding. Until now, this project has been progressing at an external contactor and it is still to be decided whether it will be completed externally or within our own workshops.

6. Wagons

Over the past ten years, we have carried out some very high-quality restoration of historic wooden-framed wagons and are now able to run both a mixed goods train and coal train when required. While such restoration must always be considered as 'nice-to-have' rather than essential, there are four more wagons which ought to be particularly considered for restoration when labour, finance and space is available:

1. IWCR (ex MR) crane. This is scheduled for restoration in 2021
2. IWCR Covered Van. We have several of these, but the best prospect appears to be the recently acquired ex GER body. We have a number of suitable underframe fittings for this. (The proposal to build a goods shed at Wootton is now moving forward and this pre-Grouping vehicle would be ideal to display there). NB Two almost identical IWCR van bodies are held, one of which is in very poor condition. This could be considered for dismantling as a source of parts.
3. LBSCR 10T Open coal wagon 27884. This is an ex-Island wagon, donated to us by the National Railway Museum.
4. IWCR or FYNR Goods Brake Van. There are examples of these still extant and we should seek to obtain one, given how few Island pre-Grouping goods vehicles are in our collection.

We need to keep a small fleet of non-heritage wagons for engineering purposes. These should be kept in working order. Maintenance requirements would be significantly reduced if these were kept under cover although it is acknowledged that this will be difficult to provide. Any of these vehicles not required for use and which have no future at the Railway should be disposed of.

7. Ex Island Line Tube Stock

We will shortly be acquiring a class 483 in good, working condition. In the short term it will be displayed and interpreted as a static exhibit in *Train Story*, although it may be possible for it to be operated on a limited basis (either battery or diesel hauled) at some point in the future. It should also be policy to obtain an example of the 1926 Underground Standard Stock although the only two remaining examples are in poor condition as well as being unlikely to be released by their present owners.

Also, we should identify and retain for interpretation purposes, a small representative collection of post 1966 era goods/engineering vehicles, previously acquired from British Rail/Network South East as operators of the Island Line. This is in addition to any used as part of our Engineering fleet. The precise make up of this collection is to be agreed in due course.

8. Future Acquisitions

One of the main reasons for our reputation as one of the country's leading centres for historic carriage restoration is the foresight we had in our early days to acquire so many carriage bodies and, equally importantly, vehicles to provide suitable underframes.

Nonetheless, with almost 40 bodies still known to exist on the Island, we need to remember firstly, that as an Accredited Museum, we should not acquire any item which we are unlikely to be able to restore and, secondly, every body obtained has an ongoing cost implication for the Railway.

The Board has a list of bodies it may wish to obtain. However, because a number of these are in private ownership and private locations, this remains confidential as we do not want to jeopardise future acquisitions.

We should continue to obtain bodies (or body parts) that would help facilitate restorations included in this policy (such acquisitions would not necessarily need to be kept undercover).

There may be a need to acquire wagons to provide components for restoration of vehicles described in the policy.

9. Non-Operational Heritage Vehicles

As an accredited museum, and with our intention to provide a new museum and display facility, there may be vehicles that have historic significance but are unlikely to ever run which we would want to display and interpret. These might include the Pollard Tram and, possibly, a few unrestored carriages and/or wagons. Items which are only likely to run occasionally (such as the Oldburys, the class 483 and historic goods vehicles) should also be fully interpreted while in the museum building to enhance the visitor experience.

10. Looking After What We Have and What We May Yet Acquire

Each vehicle that we acquire and restore will need undercover storage and will also become part of an ever-increasing maintenance programme. The Railway is planning to build a further storage building to house this growing collection, which will be essential to the success of this policy, both in order to display the vehicles and to minimise maintenance.

11. Unexpected Opportunities and Threats

We could not have anticipated the opportunity which presented itself in 2017 to restore Oldbury IWR Composite 10. While unlikely, it is not inconceivable that another such opportunity might present itself in the future. We should be flexible enough to be able to take advantage of another such situation, but also be aware of any downside which might occur through any disruption of our existing restoration and maintenance programme.

Another crisis such as Covid 19 might slow down our restoration programme, but is unlikely affect our ability to operate, from the point of view of carriage availability, as we now have just enough carriages to run our service adequately,

12. Restoration and Maintenance Facilities

It is acknowledged that, while the Carriage and Wagon Workshop is an excellent facility for bodywork and painting, more space is needed for underframe work and mechanical repairs.

13. Review

This document should be reviewed every four years.

14. Conclusion

This document proposes that the Railway should seek to provide three 'working' sets of carriages plus one 'historic' set, the push-pull set and Ryde Pier Tram, together with the heritage goods train. This can be provided without the acquisition of further vehicles, although there are several more that we should acquire if possible, to fill gaps in our collection. Achieving this goal is within the Railway's capability if sufficient labour and finance continues to be available. However, the provision of the proposed new storage/museum building is essential to display our growing collection effectively and to keep maintenance costs and labour to a minimum.