

The Vintage Carriages Trust was formed in 1965 by a number of railway enthusiasts in their 20's. They preserved a number of wooden bodied carriages and at first restored them in the open at Haworth on the Keighley and Worth Valley Railway as a weekend hobby. Later covered accommodation was made available for one carriage at a time to be restored at Oxenhope.

The Trust was offered land in the 1980 to develop its own building to house the collection at Ingrow and by 1990 it was decided to open this to the public and eventually it became the museum. The early interpretation of small exhibits was put together to cater for the enthusiast market with very little interpretation.

As this developed, and our restoration abilities increased, we found a need to open midweek, at first with volunteers who took early retirement, and later with the addition of a member of paid staff.

We carried out a SWOT Analysis in 2008 as part of our Forward Plan and one item stood out that we were at risk of major management shortcomings if one or two key members were unable to continue in their roles.

Those who had been involved for so long were now forty years older, and this needed to be addressed if the organisation was to continue in future.

In 2012 the Bahamas Locomotive Society, also on the site at Ingrow, was successful in obtaining a Heritage Lottery bid to restore their "Flag Ship" steam locomotive. One of the requirements was to create a Learning experience and the employment of an Audience Development Coordinator. VCT entered into a partnership arrangement with this role and we work together, along with the railway to promote the site as Rail Story. It was at this time that it was realised that a move towards interpretation for the family market was required.

We have been reasonably successful in having further numbers of early retired volunteers in their 50's and 60's that have been available to strengthen the workshop team. However, very few have been willing or able to strengthen the front of house team, or to give their time to be part of the board of Trustees. How this source of volunteers will be affected by the changes in the national retirement age and pensionable income has still to be seen.

We reformed the organisation into a Charitable Incorporated Organisation in 2015, and this set us a time scale to look towards succession planning for of Trustees.

We now have all Trustees needing to have a maximum term of office of nine years, being three terms of three years, and this has prompted the need to look towards new blood for the future.

The Trust would have been weakened if those who had been in senior roles for 20 or more years were to stand down at the start of this new arrangement, as only two would have been in post for less than the required nine years.

We were planning that as the Trustees, now in their 70's, needed to hand over some of their duties we still had time to act in a controlled manner.

However, it was the loss of one of our key volunteers last year before his seventieth birthday to pull us up short. He had been key member in the running of our retail offer and marketing, and whilst he

had covered these roles he was not able to develop a group of others to share the workload or be willing to receive assistance.

We have since then involved more people in a team based process to share the workload as well as spreading the knowledge in a number of areas for the future.

We have employed Alexandra, with us today, to offer a new perspective to our front of house and updating our display within the museum, as well as new Janitor who also has interpretation skills. A full audit of our small objects collection has been reviewed, and themes are to be developed to improve the interpretation of what is on show.

We have had three new younger Trustees over the last two AGM's, and now have five ladies on a board of twelve Trustees, and this brings a fresh perspective to the board.

Jackie Cope, our Treasurer for the last 24 years, has decided to retire from the role, and if this sounds as if we have addressed sustainability you need to think again. I have been the Chairman for the same period as Jackie, and also having been the Treasurer for the previous 16 years. Forty years in two senior roles is not best practice by today's standards.

Our Secretary has also been in the role for 12 years, having replaced Michael who was in that role for 28 years before him. Our second paid front of house person is above the normal retirement age. We have to consider how we wish to develop this role when he decides to retire. We also have a need for more volunteers to man the front of house at weekends, especially on Sundays if we are not to increase the number of days with paid staff.

We are in the latter stages of re-accreditation and good support has been given by Anthony Coulls, as the Museum Mentor, and by Museums Development Yorkshire during this process. We are just at the point of updating our Forward Plan for the next five years.

We are getting there, and now have a much clearer idea on the areas to be tackled. My recommendation to others is to plan early and spread the workload so there are others waiting in the wings with the experience to move the organisation forward, but without losing the experience from those who have been involved for so many years.