



**Press Release**  
**immediate release**  
**18<sup>th</sup> January, 2024**

**Changing trains**

We are implementing the following steps for our future.

We will develop our core brand: running Great Western designed locomotives and Pullman restaurant car trains to meet market demand, particularly for our growing *Shakespeare Express* services.

There is also a clear need to increase our operational diesel fleet to provide additional motive power for Diesel Explorers, Special Private Trains together with resilience and support for our Express Steam Trains.

In 2024 we are implementing the following next stages of our plan to continue this work.

- Recently acquired English Electric Type 3 diesel locomotive, 37240, has now arrived at Tyseley and, once some new wheel bearings have been fitted, this will be available for main line operations, together with our existing diesel stalwart, Brush Type 4 47773. Expect to see 37240 lead some Diesel Explorer tours in the second half of this year.
- We have completed the fitment of controlled emission toilets to our train and would like to thank Network Rail for their kind support on this project. This work has significantly enhanced our environmental impact.
- We have agreed a fitment plan with the Office of Rail & Road for central door locking on our train. This has enabled us to receive the appropriate

regulation approval to continue to use our vintage train on the main line railway.

- We are improving our restaurant car facilities and bringing our catering arrangements in house. This decision requires some detailed work in complying with regulations and also expanding our facilities, both on train and at our Tyseley depot for preparation.
- We have acquired Mark 1 First Open carriage 3110 to increase our dining capacity, running alongside our four Metro Cammell Pullman Cars.
- Pullman Parlour 353 is undergoing a major refit.
- We are adding kitchen facilities in our access for all BSO.
- We are fitting a travelling bar in our BFK.
- We will reactivate or add air braking equipment to our core dining train, so that it is available for use in either air or vacuum braking mode which will further facilitate our Special Private Train hire service.
- We have determined that we will concentrate our operating main line fleet of express steam locomotives on GWR designed Castles, *Clun Castle*, *Earl of Mount Edgcumbe* and *Defiant*, together with *Road Ashton Hall*. This enables a single defining brand and core livery and simplifies future workshop repair schedules, as all four locomotives share common designs and parts.
- We will return our Hall to operation next, very largely (but not exclusively) for our *Shakespeare Express* and *Polar Express Train Ride*.
- We will complete the reconstruction of a largely new tender for *Defiant*, for which funds are very largely in hand. Her boiler will be assessed during 2024 and, once we have costed the repairs necessary, we will seek funds. We will then refit the boiler.
- We will retain two pannier tanks 7752 and 9600, currently in store, for future possibilities.
- We have de-accessioned both *Kolhapur* and our third pannier tank, 7760. These locomotives are surplus to operational requirements and so will both be disposed of to facilitate the growth outlined above.

## **Editor's Notes: Vintage Trains**

The founders of Vintage Trains Charitable Trust were world pioneers in establishing heritage railways and its main line operations. Based at Tyseley Locomotive Works in Birmingham UK, the charity has established a thriving heritage engineering workshop delivering first class services nationwide, whilst preserving the skills of the steam age and training young people in manufacturing. Vintage Trains established a Community Benefit Society to establish and develop its own train operating company in 2017, licensed to run express steam trains nationwide, offering an existing range of tours including:

\* *The Shakespeare Express* in Shakespeare's County between Birmingham and Stratford

\* *The Polar Express Train Ride* from Birmingham at Christmas

\* *Diesel Explorers* to popular tourist destinations and seaside towns

\* *Express Steam Trains* running at up to 75 mph on the main line railway

\* *Private Special trains* offering tailor made tours.

The Tyseley Collection is owned by 7029 Castle Limited, a separate non trading charity which exists purely to hold the collection.

- The decision to augment our restaurant car services is market led. Our *Shakespeare Express* services, in particular, are now loading to capacity, both for Pullman Sunday lunch and Tourist Afternoon Tea. We will provide additional capacity, both on board every train and with an increased number of trains.
- We are de-accessioning *Kolhapur* as she is non standard with the rest of the collection. Furthermore, the estimate to return her to main line operation is around £750,000. However, 4965 can be returned to traffic quickly for around £100,000 in her current configuration. For approximately one third of the cost of returning *Kolhapur* to service, we consider that (at 2024 prices) we will be able to return 4965 to traffic. We will approach this work in stages. Funds are available for her ten year boiler overhaul and this work will commence in March. Subsequently (subject to funding) we will modify her cylinders to fit almost anywhere within the Network Rail loading gauge and, furthermore, convert her to burn liquid fuel, based on the GWR oil firing system. When all this work is all funded and completed, 4965 will be as useful and gauge friendly as 5593 would have been. These steps will also begin our journey to further improve our environmental footprint and provide resilience against

summer fire risk, which we consider is only likely to increase. Our Castles already fit within Network Rail's loading gauge to many interesting destinations and the Shakespeare Line has been returned to a loading gauge acceptable for all our workable fleet.

- In relation to 7760, since our pannier tanks were originally purchased, all three have only ever been steamed once simultaneously and only two have ever been required to be used together on main line excursions at any one time. A review of the three locomotives: 7752 & 7760 and 9600 determined that 7760 is surplus to our collection, being an identical twin to 7752. Both 7752 and 9600 are in very good condition. 9600 only requires a retube and minor stay work. 7752 requires the same together with a new set of wheel tyres, which are in stock. VT seek well wishers to fund this work and engineers to assist undertaking the small amount of fitting work. There is then no reason why these two locomotives cannot return to the main line as 'nice to haves'; but the charity is not currently in a position to fund this work as improvements to our carriage stock, our restaurant cars and catering facilities must take priority, together with keeping 7029, 5043, 47773 and 37240 in operation.
- No correspondence or communications will be entered into relating to the disposal of these two locomotives or subsequent ownership.