

Joint Press Release from the Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust Ltd and the West Somerset Railway PLC about Locomotive 7F 53808

The Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust and the West Somerset Railway PLC are now able to announce that they have reached agreement regarding locomotive, 7F No. 53808.

This agreement will see the locomotive operating agreement with the WSR PLC being suspended for the remaining period of 53808's boiler certificate which is due to end in the autumn of 2022. This will allow the locomotive to be hired externally during this period to earn additional hire fees towards its next major overhaul. The PLC has indicated to the SDRT that it wishes to discuss the return of the locomotive to the WSR and to discuss funding options which would enable the overhaul, due in 2023, to be carried out as planned. The SDRT has agreed that a timely discussion would be appropriate.

53808 will have spent over 40 years on the railway since relocating from its first base at Radstock in the late 1970s. It was restored from its ex-Barry condition by members of the SDRT at Washford and finally at the workshops of the West Somerset Railway at Minehead where it steamed for the first time in 1987. The locomotive has since been in regular service on the WSR and proved to be one of its most useful and popular performers.

The SDRT are delighted to announce that the Trust has reached agreement with the Mid-Hants Railway Watercress Line to relocate 53808 to Hampshire for the duration of its current boiler ticket. The locomotive has visited the railway before with a visit in 2010 when the 7F was still in its SDJR blue livery. The PLC recognises the need for the Trust to generate income from using the locomotive as soon as is practically possible in order to contribute towards the costs of overhaul after 2022. The Company is therefore working collaboratively with the Trust to complete the winter maintenance programme which was halted by the impact of Covid 19 restrictions in preparation for departure.

No. 53808 will depart from Minehead by road haulage as soon as its winter maintenance has been completed during August and within the contractual agreement with the WSR. The Trust is looking forward to seeing the locomotive climbing 'the Alps' on the Mid-Hants line which should be a sight to enjoy for our many members and other enthusiasts and visitors.

Issued by Trustees and Directors of the Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust and the Board of Directors of the West Somerset Railway plc

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