



Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust – Press Statement

Joint Press Release from the Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust and the Avon Valley Railway Heritage Trust

We are delighted to announce that we have come, in principle, to an agreement to relocate a portion of the rolling stock and museum artefacts currently based at the SDRT site at Washford in Somerset to the Avon Valley Railway at Bitton, South Gloucestershire.

The agreement has been under discussion for several months and follows the S&DRT's similar arrangement for rolling stock and museum items relating more to the Southern element of the collection to be placed at the Mid-Hants Railway Watercress Line. The essence of the agreement is to establish a display of Midland/LMS vehicles and artefacts at Bitton which will form the basis of a new museum at the station. Several S&DRT vehicles will be adapted to house a range of S&D items with additional historical items belonging to the AVR which together will tell the story of the Midland lines terminating at the famous station at Green Park, Bath.

The Avon Valley Railway is ideally located to support the S&D story. The line from Mangotsfield arrived at Bath in 1870 and was followed by the S&D line in 1874 with both lines joining at Bath Junction just outside what was then Queen Square Station (Green Park was the name given to the station by BR from 1951).

With the unique collection of items assembled by the S&D Trust over some 50 years, it is envisaged that the story of the Midland Railway's lines converging on Bath will become a popular attraction at Bitton. The Avon Valley Railway already have a named service in operation called 'The Pines Express' which was a service synonymous with the route through Bitton into Bath from the north and then, following a change of motive power, followed the S&D line to Bournemouth.

Both railways lost their passenger services in March 1966 which emphasises the close relationship between the two heritage groups. We would like to encourage people interested in the project to come forward and help establish the exhibition which will begin with the arrival of rolling stock in the coming weeks.

Both boards of directors are very excited by the agreement which will begin a new phase in the future of both organisations.

Roger Eynon, AVR Chair said, 'The Avon Valley Railway is really pleased to be forging this new link with the Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust. Our joint heritage has such a local resonance and we look forward to being able to share more stories about the history of our line.'

Ian Young, Chairman of the Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust said, 'We have been looking for new partners to display some of our historic rolling stock and museum objects. The Avon Valley Railway has been looking to create a new museum area and the opportunity to work together comes at a good moment for both organisations.'

ENDS

Further information from the [S&DRT](#) and [AVR](#).

31 March 2021.