

The Dartmoor Pony *Express*

Dartmoor Railway in Administration

During the autumn, preparations for the Dartmoor Railway Community Interest Company (DRCIC) Christmas trains proceeded with co-operation from DRSA. Our LMS Brake Van was used on the works train to build the Christmas Town site and DRSA provided many of the operational staff for the four-week event.

The lease on the line (with Aggregate Industries) was up for renewal at the end of 2019. In early January it became apparent that part of a railway sale by Walker Singleton called "The Southern Project" was DRCIC which was put up for sale by British American Railway Services (BARS). Bids were sought before the end of January. In the event this proved not to be possible and an Administrator was appointed.

On February 7th following a meeting with the Administrator the staff received notice of redundancy. Several of the staff have been with the railway for many years and our sympathy goes out to them all. The Administrator is responsible for the disposal of assets and DRSA members were on site quickly and able to make clear that DRSA has a separate lease with Devon County Council (DCC) of rooms on Platform 2. DCC owns the station.

The Association has been raising awareness of the ongoing situation for the railway by contacting representatives from DCC, Aggregate Industries, Okehampton Town

Council and the OkeRail Forum. DRSA is seen by the Administrators as a key organisation which is here for the long-term support of the railway. Members have volunteered to be the eyes and ears around the Okehampton Station site, continue to work on the gardens, carry out maintenance on platform 2 and on the rolling stock in Meldon yard.

We value every member's involvement and support. At this turning point there is plenty of work ahead but also opportunities for supporting the Dartmoor Line. Your committee is working hard to explore options for the future. As part of this, we look forward to hearing more about the proposed Exeter to Okehampton service in the GWR franchise/direct award statement which is due in the next 6 weeks.

Spring is ahead!

The Pony Express

Due to the limited information currently available, we are publishing this newsletter in place of the Dartmoor Pony winter edition to ensure that members are aware of the current situation.

We intend to publish a full edition when more news and activity may be forthcoming. Please stay tuned to the DRSA website and/or Facebook page for the most up to date information.

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