



## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **Heritage railways show solidarity with Ukrainian counterparts**

Britain's heritage rail sector has expressed its support for their counterparts in Ukraine in the face of the huge difficulties in protecting railway heritage they are currently experiencing.

Members of the Heritage Railway Association voted unanimously at its Annual General Meeting on March 9 to record their solidarity and sympathy with those operating and promoting heritage railways in Ukraine. The UK trade body has now furthered that with advice to members on considering the impact of war in Ukraine on their operations and events.

Former HRA Chairman, David Morgan, proposed the motion to formally recognise the horrendous situation that railway preservationists in Ukraine faced. The motion read: "This meeting expresses its solidarity with and sympathy for all our colleagues seeking to operate or promote heritage railways in Ukraine. We take this opportunity to express our support for their efforts and earnestly pray and hope for their ultimate success."

Welcoming the resolution, Stephen Wiggs, Chairman of the New Europe Railway Heritage Trust, which helps railway preservation in the region, said: "It is incredibly sad that our friends in Ukraine are facing such terrible suffering. For almost 20 years we in NERHT have supported several Ukrainian railway projects and we are really grateful to the British preserved railways and museums and those in HRA who have worked with us. If and when normal conditions return, my colleagues and I will make a special effort to help Ukraine, and we will welcome all the aid we can get from Britain's railway heritage community to do this."

At the request of Heritage Railway Association members, the trade body has also considered what advice it could give to organisations planning and running military re-enactment events during the conflict in Ukraine.

After due consideration by the board of the HRA, advice is now being issued that member railways should not go ahead with military re-enactment and 'war weekend' style events during 2022, or for as long as the conflict in Ukraine continues. The HRA is also asking

members to consider whether it is appropriate to continue running such re-enactment events in future years.

Heritage Railway Association Chief Executive, Steve Oates, said: “A small number of members had already taken unilateral decisions that they were uneasy about military re-enactment style events in the light of the war in Ukraine. The HRA also received requests for advice from railways with concerns that such an event could cause unintended anguish to visitors of Ukrainian heritage.

“In light of the huge suffering being seen in Ukraine, we fully support those member railways that have decided to alter or rearrange their events. And we felt that it was only right that our advice to members should be updated to reflect the current situation.

“Our heritage railways are powerful educational tools for a number of eras in British history and fundamentally that will not change. But nobody would want to cause unintended anguish at a time like this.”

ENDS

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***Note to editors:***

**The Heritage Railway Association**

The Heritage Railway Association is a trade association representing, protecting and promoting the interests of heritage and tourist railways, related museums, tramways, cliff lifts, railway preservation groups and related organisations. More than 180 HRA member organisations regularly open to the public, 156 of them operating with passengers. The organisation has some 300 corporate members. The HRA assists and guides its members, who may be any organisation that is heritage rail related, and is preserving, or helping their visitors understand, or just enjoy, the UK's rich rail-based history.

**The UK's Heritage Railways**

There are more than 150 operational heritage railways in the UK, running trains over almost 600 miles of track, with almost 500 stations. They provide 4,000 full-time equivalent jobs, supported by 22,000 volunteers. They welcome more than 13 million visitors every year and contribute an estimated £400 million to the national economy.