



Kent & East Sussex Railway
**General Manager's
AGM Report**



November 2023

General Manager's AGM Report:

The questions:

- How have we done?
- What did we do well?
- Where could we have done better?
- Plans for next year that will make us money and fulfil our charitable aims?
- How will we do it.
- What is my message?

Executive Summary

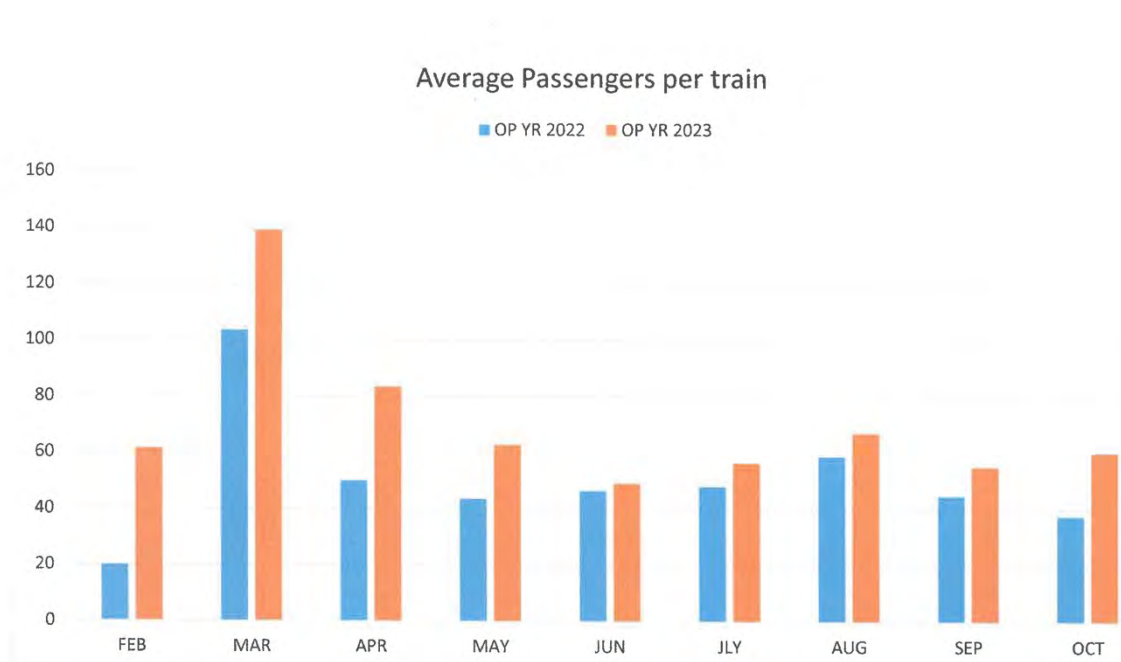
The Headline

We did OK.

Achievements

Good Year: Small growth, overcoming challenges, consolidation, and continued recovery.

- **Survived:** In the face of numerous challenges, we've successfully weathered the storm.
- **Passenger Growth:** Our passenger numbers increased by a remarkable 13%, accompanied by a notable rise in per-passenger spending.
- **Reliable Services:** We adhered to our scheduled services, 99% delivering on our promises to passengers.
- **Financial Turnaround:** We managed to transform a daunting £380,000 loss into a position closer to breaking even.
- **Volunteer Expansion:** We welcomed over 150 new volunteers into our dedicated team.
- **Extension to Robertsbridge:** Secured the Approval of the Transport Works Act Order for the extension between Robertsbridge and Bodiam, expanding our reach.
- **Overall Improvement:** In most aspects, we outperformed the previous year, despite lingering challenges due to the ongoing impact of Covid.



Success Stories

Success on Multiple Fronts: Achievements at a glance.

- **Visitor Satisfaction:** Positive feedback from TripAdvisor and other sources highlight our ability to make visitors happy. Notably, a child's comment, "Daddy, I want to stay here forever," speaks volumes.
- **Embracing Opportunities:** We effectively responded to opportunities such as Fox and Edwards, demonstrating our agility and adaptability.
- **Enhanced Business Understanding:** Our deeper comprehension of the business enabled more informed decision-making.
- **Open to Innovation:** We welcomed new ideas and initiatives with open arms, fostering an atmosphere of creativity and progress.
- **Financial Stewardship:** The establishment of a new Finance Review Committee contributed to prudent financial management.
- **Locomotive Fleet Success:** Despite challenges, our team at Rolvenden admirably kept the locomotive fleet running smoothly.
- **Crisis Response:** In moments of crisis, our team exhibited remarkable unity and problem-solving abilities.
- **Future Planning:** We initiated forward-thinking plans, including preparations for 2030 and operations once we extend to Robertsbridge.
- **Ecological Survey:** The first phase of comprehensive ecological survey of the line was undertaken, enhancing our commitment to sustainability.

- **Sustainability Advocacy:** Sustainability became a focal point in our strategic decision-making.
- **Infrastructure Improvements:** The successful replacement of a road crossing at the A28 in Northiam underscored our dedication to enhancing our railway.
- **Enhanced Governance:** The establishment of the Traction Rolling Stock and Plant Committee strengthened governance.
- **Sector Leadership:** We provided leadership within the sector, particularly on issues related to Safety, Legal Matters, and the Environment.
- **Collaboration:** We played a pivotal role in forming the Southern Six, uniting with other heritage railways in the region.
- **Media Recognition:** The KESR garnered substantial media coverage from local TV, radio, online, and published titles.
- **HRA Team of the Year Awards:** The team that took Poplar to Polar was the runner-up in the HRA Team of the Year awards.
- **National Rail Person of the Year Award:** Elliott Waters was shortlisted for the National Rail Person of the Year Award.
- **Visit England Tourism Superstar of the Year:** Geoff Colvin our Chief Station Master was the national winner by public vote.
- **Beautiful South Tourism Awards:** Our Santa Event is a finalist in the Tourism Event/Festival of the Year category.
- **Special Events:** Numerous significant events took place, including the visit of Bulleid light Pacific 257 Squadron, successful reintroduction of a 1940s event, evacuation days, a new Steampunk Event, and revitalization of the Hopping Weekend, among others.
- Significant progress on the restoration of GWR Railcar W20

Areas for Improvement

Still too many areas where we need to do better.

- **Safety Culture:** Recorded accidents revealed weaknesses in our safety culture, urging us to enhance safety protocols.
- **Communication:** We acknowledge that we could have communicated better, addressing issues related to late, inaccurate, or last-minute information to reduce frustration among stakeholders.
- **Departmental Collaboration:** At times, we could have worked more collaboratively, breaking down departmental silos and territorial attitudes.
- **Investment in Resilience:** An underinvestment in resilience in previous years is now affecting us; we need to address this to secure the railway's future.
- **Change Acceptance:** There's room to become more open to embracing change and innovation.
- **Commitment:** While the majority is committed, some may need to go the extra mile, and excessive negativity from a few needs to be replaced by proactive solutions.

- **Positivity and Solutions:** We encourage facing challenges realistically while actively seeking solutions, rather than dwelling in pessimism.
- **Visitor Experience:** Improvements in visitor interpretation are needed.
- **Safeguarding:** Addressing safeguarding and bullying issues within our operations is essential.
- **Asset Fragility:** We must recognise the fragility of our equipment, much of which is over 70 years old.
- **Proactive Issue Resolution:** Identifying and addressing problems promptly is crucial, preventing them from escalating.

Future Plans

50th Anniversary - a celebration of past, present, and future.

- **50th Anniversary Focus:** In the coming year, we will commemorate our 50th anniversary with ceremonies and celebrations, showcasing our legacy.
- **Building on Success:** We will continue to develop successful events, such as Santa and the Pullman, while expanding our charitable offerings, such as evacuation day and junior engineering days.
- **Expanding Offerings:** Our goal is to enhance our event calendar, provided we have the resources and manpower.
- **Communication and Safety:** We will improve communication and safety, investing in the resilience of our locomotive fleet, and seek grant funding for an education officer.
- **Positive Focus:** Focusing on the positive aspects, recognising our fragility and the reality of our equipment, and under-promising and over-delivering are key themes for the future.

My Message

We've done OK, and we're doing more than just surviving.

Our aim is to pass on a well-maintained legacy to future generations. As we approach our 50th year, let's celebrate our achievements, have fun, and set our sights on a sustainable future.

In summary, our mission is not just to survive but to thrive, ensuring the KESR's legacy is cherished, preserved, and enjoyed for generations to come. Let's celebrate our 50th anniversary with pride and enthusiasm, looking forward to the future with confidence.

The Report



The Report

Introduction

One year ago, I concluded my 2022 AGM Report with the words:

"Next year will be tough, scary and uncertain. We have battened down the hatches, have a reasonable level of provisions in the store cupboard. We now just have to weather the storm with the hope we find calmer waters before our provisions run out. Our watchword is to be agile and look out for where there may be a lull in the storm to take advantage of opportunities. Finally, I need your help. We need everyone onboard. Now is not the time to distract the team with trivia, petty jealousies, or point scoring. Put simply if I stand before you in a year's time, we will have survived and that I will take as success."

Barring accidents I will be standing up at the AGM to deliver this report. That means we have survived, and I am taking this as success. It is fair to say that not everything I wanted to deliver has been achieved, there were times we were blown off course, distracted, frustrated, but overall, we have a number of notable successes which we can take pride in.

While it's impossible to distil our complex reality into a single answer to "how are we doing," I will strive to give a clear, well-informed response to build confidence in our approach.

I am more convinced than ever that we are a great little railway, not just any railway but a truly remarkable one. Last year was undeniably a great year for us. Geoff Colvin received the well-deserved honour of being voted the Visit England Tourism Superstar Award by the public. The KESR proudly took its place at the top table during the National Tourism Awards, standing out as the only heritage railway in the spotlight.

Now this month Elliott Waters, a Guard and Pullman Conductor has been nominated in the National Rail Staff Awards, under the 'Rail Person of the Year' category. To have two such stars on our Railway is testament to the quality of all our staff and volunteers. This was recognised as the first General manager's Award going to all the volunteers to recognise their contribution.

We had the recent honour of hosting the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Heritage Rail, with the added privilege of the Rail Minister's presence, marking it as their best-ever visit. Again, a recognition of our standing in the heritage railway sector.

Our 40s event echoed with a heartfelt quote: "Daddy, I want to stay here forever." It's a sentiment that perfectly encapsulates the magic we create. Extreme weather, be it sun, rain, or snow, hasn't deterred us. Our Santa Trains, graced by the 'real' Santa Claus himself, brought joy and wonder to countless hearts, young and old alike. We even introduced new events like Steampunk, and 'We are Wild about Wildlife', we breathed new life into the Hops Weekend. Familiar favourites such as the bus rally and fish and trip trains continued to

delight, and we ventured into new concepts like breakfast and lunch trains. Expect even more in 2024. However, my two favourite events, without a doubt, are the Junior Engineer and Evacuation Day, where we have the chance to showcase ourselves to the next generation.

We proved the armchair engineers wrong; a Bullied Pacific didn't cause our track to spread or bridges to collapse. We warmly welcomed guest engine 257 Squadron thanks to the generosity of the Guest Engine Club. The visit was an overall success and significantly boosted visitor numbers in April and May.

We turned such challenges into opportunities, seizing the spotlight and igniting media interest. Yes, we've danced close to the wind on occasion, but as Andre would say, "That was another we got away with."

Liam and his team worked miracles at Rolvenden, while Frim and his team delivered a new crossing at Northiam. Catering deserves applause for delivering hundreds of cream teas to Fox and Edwards' customers, one of our many success stories during the year.

Financially, we've managed to turn around the loss we incurred in 2021/22, and we have cash in the bank. We've welcomed over 150 new volunteers, and our service delivery/cancellation rates have far exceeded the performance of any mainline Train Operating Company.

Our gala was a resounding success with 1,300 visitors over the three days, offering a glimpse of our future journey to Robertsbridge with our trips to Junction Road. The full application for extension was formally approved, receiving the green light from the Secretary of State on May 9 this year.

The Wealden Pullman, the jewel in the crown within our operations, continues to shine brightly. Operating on Saturday evenings and Sunday lunchtimes, this service delivers perfection in both its impeccable service and delicious cuisine. All this wouldn't be possible without the dedicated efforts of an amazing team led by Meg, who is ably supported by Jo, along with a group of passionate volunteers. I've also had the privilege to contribute, transitioning from my role as a humble member of the Washing Up team to serving as part of the Waiting Staff.

A significant milestone graced our railway this year with the introduction of the new Kitchen Car. This event marked the culmination of a long-running saga and ultimately freed Diana, for service on the 'A' Set.

Another triumph in our quest for preserving our historic buildings was the winning of a grant for the Heritage Building Fund, securing a generous contribution of approximately £20,000. This financial support was instrumental in catalysing our conservation efforts, allowing us to initiate work on Tenterden station building. Subsequently, this project will extend to the restoration of the signal box and building along the line.

With the aim of a grant from the Janus Foundation we undertook the first phase of an ecological survey of our railway corridor. This year, bird and pollinator surveys have been undertaken, together with plant surveys and a number of desk-based reviews. Next year will see completed a water vole survey, together with a biodiversity enhancement plan and lineside management advice that will inform the maintenance and enhancement of the railway as a natural green corridor.

The findings were nothing short of astonishing, revealing the presence of for example nesting turtle doves among other remarkable discoveries. This study, recognised by the external consultant team as one of the richest and most diverse surveys they've ever conducted, underscores the biodiversity thriving in our unique environment. These findings reinforce our commitment to serving as guardians of this ten and a half-mile linear nature reserve. We recognise our profound responsibility to support biodiversity and nature recovery and aspire to make our railway not just a testament to the past but a vibrant showcase of our natural world's incredible diversity.

We experienced an unpleasant incident last year which has led us to revisit and strengthen our safeguarding policies. I'm pleased to announce the appointment of Tori Jones, a member of our footplate staff and the Pullman team, as the new Safeguarding Officer. Additionally, she took on the role of our Teddy Bear, Easter Bunny Mascots, bringing smiles to our younger visitors. These policy changes underscore our unwavering commitment to ensuring a safe and secure environment for everyone who enjoys our railway.

Our Sustainability Group continues to be a focal point of innovation and holistic thinking for the whole railway. It remains a hub for brainstorming and implementing pioneering solutions that consider the railway's sustainability from every angle. These initiatives play a crucial role in shaping our railway's path to a greener and more sustainable future.

So, here we stand, at the dawn of our 50th anniversary year, having not just weathered storms but thrived in the face of adversity. The preserved KESR has been successfully operating for 50 years, half a century, longer than the original KESR survived. Colonel Stephens may have established the railway, but you, the members, and volunteers, have kept it going. We can all acknowledge that task has been herculean.

In 1961, the original railway was declared dead, officially closed, the end of an era. But no, it was not. Four Maidstone school boys had a vision. I recently spoke to one of those schoolboys, and he shared tales of those early days—tough but exciting, frustrating yet filled with fun. It's a spirit we must never lose sight of a spirit that drove us to overcome bureaucracy, leading to the grand opening in February 1974.

We then embarked on the journey along the original track bed, from Tenterden down the hill to Rolvenden, on to Wittersham Road, and finally to Northiam, with the invaluable assistance of 'Annika.' But the railway's journey doesn't stop there. As I mentioned, this year, the Secretary of State has given us the green light to extend from Robertsbridge to Bodiam. The KESR and its original vision will then be complete, with continuous steel rails stretching from Tenterden to London Charing Cross. But why stop there? You can travel onward to Brussels, Berlin, Moscow, Beijing, Hanoi, and eventually Singapore, covering a distance just

short of 11,000 km. I'm not entirely sure if Andre will need to alter Merac for anyone purchasing a through ticket, but I'm confident that Sarah is already planning a volunteer social event at Singapore's world-famous Raffles Hotel for 2030!

Now, there's a serious point to all this. It's not just about our ability to make this incredible journey from Tenterden to faraway places; it's about enabling others to embark on their journeys in the opposite direction. By postcode, more than half of our visitors live closer to Robertsbridge than Tenterden. Logically, they would commence their journeys at Robertsbridge, a trend that is only set to increase. The implication is that our railway's dynamic is shifting, with Tenterden becoming the destination rather than the starting point. This presents us with a fantastic opportunity to collaborate with the town of Tenterden in promoting it as an inland destination akin to Whitstable—quirky, raw, and trendy, while staying true to our roots as a railway that carries people with a purpose, inviting them to experience our Light Railway heritage, an endeavour I believe Colonel Stephens would wholeheartedly approve of.

Change is an ever-present companion in our lives, and we must learn to embrace it. Change is not our adversary; it's our dance partner on this journey. The climate crisis, evolving technology, and shifting landscapes are the new companions of our time. Embracing change is not a choice; it's a necessity.

We recognise that we are part of the broader heritage railway sector. To thrive, it's essential that we collaborate, share resources, and collectively envision the future. The challenges we face are not unique to the KESR but are shared by heritage railways across the nation.

We are dedicated to actively participating in collaborative networks such as the 'Southern Six' and supporting the Heritage Railway Association. This approach allows us to share knowledge, pool resources, and ensure the heritage railway sector remains vibrant.

Our influence is recognised by others, and we have embraced a role as a leader and supporter of initiatives that benefit the broader heritage railway community. We believe that by assisting others, we help the entire sector grow and thrive. The path forward is one of embracing innovation, environmental responsibility, a learning environment, and collaboration. By doing so, we aim to pass the legacy of the KESR to future generations while ensuring that it continues to captivate hearts for another fifty years and beyond.

Of course, amidst these grand plans, many of you are eager to know when No. 65 will be back in service, when Poplar will be repaired, and why your rostered turn in August was cancelled. You're also curious about the release of a year-ahead working timetable and details of our upcoming events.

I understand that these are the tangible matters that often cause frustration. Please understand that I don't sit at my desk plotting to create chaos and annoyance. On the contrary, I'm committed to minimising disruption. However, as former Prime Minister Harold Macmillan once wisely said when asked about the greatest challenge for a leader: "Events, dear boy, events." The same holds true for most leaders and organisations. Events happen, and when they do, many things hang in the balance: lives, emotions, finances, time, and

reputation. So, knowing how to respond to these events is a crucial survival skill for those of us entrusted with managing the railway, especially on a day-to-day, hour-by-hour basis. In my own career, I've learned many essential lessons, including how to manage events—the hard way, through making mistakes. But as President Kennedy aptly noted, "Good judgment is usually the result of experience, and experience is frequently the result of bad judgment."

Rest assured, No. 65 will return to service in 2024, though I know it was said last year that it would steam in 2023, and Poplar will undergo necessary repairs, again this has taken much longer than anticipated, the world of insurance moves at a very slow pace. The cancellation of your rostered turn in August was probably due to a last-minute change in locomotive availability, and the planning for 2024 commenced in June 2023. The timetable is currently in the process of being finalised, and a draft event calendar for 2024 has already been published. Our primary focus will be on a gala to celebrate our 50th anniversary. While I can't promise that there won't be changes, it's important to remember that every piece of equipment we use and many of us operating it are more than 60 years old.

Over the past year, we've faced our fair share of challenges. We've danced with uncertainty, navigated the twists and turns of change, and encountered our own versions of uphill battles. However, what truly defines us is not how we weathered the storm but how we harnessed its energy to propel our progress.

The heroic efforts of many among us have not gone unnoticed. To you all, I say thank you. Thank you for your unwavering commitment, for sometimes teetering on the edge of exhaustion as you've strived to achieve the impossible with the limited resources available. Your dedication forms the very backbone of this railway, and the armchair members owe you a debt of gratitude that words can't fully express.

My main message today is that, as we approach our 50th year, we must set a trajectory towards developing a sustainable business and operational model, first to 2030 and beyond to 2040, 2074, or even 2124. This is how we secure the legacy of the KESR, ensuring that future generations can enjoy, experience, and be educated by it.

In simple terms, we must not merely survive but also hand over a well-maintained railway to the next generation, so they can continue this legacy. We must celebrate our 50th anniversary to the fullest, with joy and enjoyment as our guiding principles. It's a time to look back with pride and nostalgia and, simultaneously, to look forward to the future with energy, confidence, and the expectation of success.

Our future is marked by challenges such as climate change, new societal circumstances, and a changing volunteer landscape. However, we're embracing these challenges, driving innovation, and adapting to secure the next fifty years.

So overall to answer the question initially posed:

How Have We Done?

Survival Amidst Challenges

We have proven our resilience. The heritage railway sector has faced unprecedented challenges, yet we not only survived but thrived. We navigated through the ever-changing landscape with strength and determination, preserving our legacy and heritage.

Passenger Growth and Increased Revenue

In a time when many visitor and heritage venues experienced reduced numbers, we proudly achieved a 13% increase in passenger numbers. This significant growth is not only a testament to our strong brand but also to the outstanding service and experiences we provide to our passengers. Moreover, the critical indicator of financial health, revenue per passenger, also saw an upswing. Our passengers not only increased in number but also in their contribution to our financial stability.

Financial Turnaround

One of the most remarkable achievements this year has been our financial transformation. We managed to turn around a daunting £380,000 loss, coming close to achieving a financial break-even point. This accomplishment is not only a testament to the dedication of our team but also to our prudent financial management strategies. By focusing on strategic financial reviews and tight financial control, we've shifted our trajectory towards fiscal health.

Enthusiastic Volunteer Engagement

The heart of KESR lies in its people, and this year, we've witnessed a significant surge in our volunteer base. With over 150 new volunteers joining our team, we've strengthened our capacity to maintain and develop our railway. Their commitment, passion, and unwavering support continue to be a driving force behind our achievements.

Expansion and Progress towards Robertsbridge

The extension of our railway line from Robertsbridge to Bodiam is a remarkable milestone in our journey. I am happy to report that we have obtained the Approval of the Transport Works Act Order for this extension. This marks a significant step towards expanding our reach and the experiences we offer to our passengers and communities.

Overall Performance in Challenging Times

While the past year presented its unique set of challenges due to the enduring impact of Covid, we continued to perform admirably. We remained resilient, innovative, and customer-centric, offering railway experiences that have exceeded our passengers' expectations.

What Did We Do Well?

As we reflect on the past year, we're proud to celebrate numerous achievements that have truly set us apart. Our commitment to excellence has been evident in every facet of our operations. Here's a summary of what we did exceptionally well:

1. Creating Joyful Memories for Visitors

Feedback from our visitors, particularly through platforms like TripAdvisor, reaffirms that we've succeeded in making many individuals happy. We cherish comments like "Daddy, I want to stay here forever," as they signify the wonderful experiences we've created for our passengers.

2. Embracing Opportunities with Fox and Edwards

We've been proactive in identifying and responding to opportunities presented by partners like Fox and Edwards. This proactive approach has allowed us to continually enhance the experiences we offer to our passengers.

3. Enhancing Business Understanding

This year, we've taken steps to deepen our understanding of the business. This insight has proven invaluable, allowing us to make more informed decisions and strategic choices.

4. An Open Door for New Ideas

In a spirit of innovation and progress, we've adopted an open mindset. We have not shied away from new ideas or initiatives such as business networking, and a wildlife weekend, even when faced with challenges. This willingness to explore and experiment is an integral part of our success.

5. Prudent Financial Management

Our financial management was strengthened by the introduction of a Finance Review Committee ensured that our financial strategies remained sound and effective and information was reviewed on a monthly basis using real time information.

6. Miracles at Rolvenden

The challenges and limitations posed by the previous year did not deter us. At Rolvenden, we pulled off remarkable feats by keeping our locomotive fleet in running condition. There was a fast response to any defect or necessary repair, as an example 257 Squadron only missed one day when a broken spring had to be replaced.

7. Unity in Times of Crisis

When crisis situations arose, we stood united. Our teams pulled together, exemplifying the strength of our railway family. It's during these moments that our commitment to preservation shines most brightly. The best example of this was our response to a stranded train at Santa.

8. Vision for the Future

We've started laying the groundwork for the future, envisioning our operations in 2030 and beyond. This forward-thinking approach positions us to adapt and evolve in an ever-changing industry.

9. A Commitment to Environmental Stewardship

Our dedication to sustainability has become ingrained in our strategic approach. We are more committed than ever to making environmentally conscious choices, aligning with the larger goal of preserving our planet.

10. Infrastructure Enhancement

We successfully delivered a replacement road crossing on the A28 at Northiam, improving our infrastructure to meet modern standards.

11. Specialised Committees

The establishment of the Traction Rolling Stock and Plant Committee demonstrates our commitment to specialised focus areas, ensuring the efficient operation and maintenance of our loco and rolling stock fleet fully engaging and being transparent with loco owners.

12. Governance Excellence

The Board underwent a governance review, resulting in strengthened governance and more effective decision-making processes.

13. Diversity and Inclusion

Our sincere efforts to develop Equal Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policies have garnered sector leadership recognition, particularly in the area of neurodiversity.

14. A Leading Voice in Heritage Rail

We've continued to contribute significantly to the heritage sector, particularly in the areas of safety with the creation of HRSSB, legal matters, and environmental sustainability.

15. Building Collaborative Networks

Our active involvement in the formation of the Southern Six, alongside the Bluebell, Spa, IOW, Swanage, and Watercress Railways, strengthens our collaborative network within the heritage rail industry.

16. Media Recognition

Our outreach efforts have paid off with favourable coverage in local TV, radio, online platforms, and published titles. There were also no months when we did not feature in the heritage railway press, including major features. This visibility reinforces our position within our various communities.

17. National Recognition for Team Members

Several of our team members have received national recognition. Geoff Colvin's election as Visit England's Tourism Superstar, our team's runner-up position in the HRA Team of the Year awards, and Elliott Waters' shortlisting for a National Rail Person of the Year Award exemplify our outstanding individuals and their contributions to our industry.

18. Excellence in Event Management

Our Santa Event, loved by all, is guaranteed an award in the Tourism Event/Festival of the Year category of this year's Beautiful South Tourism Awards. This recognition underscores our exceptional event management capabilities.

These achievements symbolise our unwavering commitment to our heritage, staff, volunteers, members, and the broader community. They serve as a testament to our dedication, innovation, and resilience, even in the face of adversity. As we look ahead, let these accomplishments inspire us to achieve even greater milestones in the future.

Where Could We Have Done Better?

As we reflect on the past year, it's essential to acknowledge areas where we could have performed better. This self-awareness is the first step toward progress and improvement. Here are some key areas where we recognise room for growth:

1. Safety Culture

Our recorded accidents highlighted a weakness in our safety culture. Safety is paramount, and we must prioritise it at all levels of our organization. We have already taken steps to enhance safety measures and will continue to do so.

2. Communication

Communication has been a consistent challenge, with issues such as late information, inaccuracies, and last-minute changes causing frustration. We understand the importance of transparent, timely, and reliable communication. We are committed to improving in this regard.

3. Interdepartmental Collaboration

We have at times been overly territorial in our departments, working in silos. Collaboration and sharing of knowledge between departments can lead to more efficient and effective operations. Breaking down these barriers must be a priority.

4. Resilience

Underinvestment in building resilience over the years has left us vulnerable to unexpected challenges. We are now facing the consequences of this, but we are actively working on long-term solutions to fortify our operations.

5. Embracing Change

Change is inevitable, and we should be more willing to embrace it. A culture that is open to change and innovation will help us adapt to evolving circumstances and thrive in the future.

6. Commitment and Positivity

While most of our team goes the extra mile, there is room for improvement. We aim to nurture a culture where everyone is committed to the cause, and there is less room for negativity or complacency.

7. Solution-Focused Attitude

While we must acknowledge challenges and face the brutal facts of reality, we should not dwell in misery. It is incumbent upon us to focus on solutions and take proactive steps to address issues.

8. Visitor Experience

We recognise that we can do better in interpreting our history and heritage for our visitors. Enhancing their experience is a priority.

9. Safeguarding and Bullying:

Addressing safeguarding and bullying issues is crucial to maintain a safe and inclusive environment for everyone associated with our railway.

10. Fragility

Our operations involve historic equipment, many of which are several decades old. This fragility poses unique challenges, and we must be diligent in preserving our heritage.

11. Early Problem Recognition

To prevent issues from escalating, we need to get better at recognizing problems early. This proactive approach ensures that challenges are addressed promptly.

As we move forward, we are committed to learning from these past shortcomings. Our dedication to continuous improvement is unwavering, and with your support, we aim to address these areas effectively in the coming year.

Challenges Facing the Kent & East Sussex Railway: Navigating the Path Ahead

We like many heritage railways, face a series of challenges as we navigate the ever-changing landscape of the 21st century. In this section, I delve into some of the significant challenges that KESR faces today and those that are poised to shape our future. In summary these are:

- Financial Sustainability
- Aging Infrastructure and Equipment
- Environmental Sustainability
- Regulatory Compliance
- Attracting a New Generation
- Volunteering and Workforce
- Securing Grants and Funding

- Adapting to Technological Change
- Health and Safety
- Competition and Collaboration
- Extreme Weather

1. Financial Sustainability

One of the foremost challenges confronting KESR is ensuring its long-term financial sustainability. The heritage railway sector, like many tourist and heritage facilities, is heavily dependent on a complex mix of revenue streams. Ticket sales, donations, grants, and retail sales are all critical sources of income. With the economic uncertainty that we face, the consistent generation of revenue is anything but guaranteed. The task at hand is to strike a balance between meeting the financial needs of the railway and preserving its historical integrity.

2. Aging Infrastructure and Equipment

KESR operates a treasure trove of vintage locomotives, carriages, and wagons, some of which are over a century old. Maintaining and preserving this rolling stock is a never-ending endeavour. The challenge lies in securing the resources and expertise to ensure the ongoing safety and operation of these invaluable relics. It's also crucial to adapt these aging assets to meet modern safety and regulatory requirements, a task that demands considerable investment and skilled labour.

3. Environmental Sustainability

As the world becomes increasingly conscious of environmental issues, the pressure to implement sustainable practices grows. The question of how KESR can reduce its carbon footprint while continuing to provide its unique services is complex. Addressing sustainability in areas such as waste management, energy use, and emissions is vital. Finding eco-friendly solutions while preserving the railway's heritage and charm is a tightrope walk.

4. Regulatory Compliance

Navigating a labyrinth of railway regulations and safety standards is a perpetual challenge. The KESR must continue to meet the stringent demands of railway authorities while adapting to changing rules and ensuring a safe environment for passengers, staff, and volunteers. Keeping abreast of regulatory changes and maintaining compliance is a never-ending process that requires time, resources, and expertise.

5. Attracting a New Generation

Heritage railways face the critical task of appealing to a new generation of visitors and volunteers. Finding innovative ways to make the railway experience engaging and relevant to young people in the digital age is not without its obstacles. The challenge is to create experiences that combine history with modernity, enticing the youth to appreciate the historical significance of the KESR.

6. Volunteering and Workforce

Volunteers are the lifeblood of the KESR, yet recruiting and retaining them presents challenges. Encouraging new volunteers, particularly those with the skills needed to maintain and operate vintage equipment, is essential. The railway must also balance the diverse needs and expectations of its volunteer base, from those seeking traditional preservation roles to others interested in customer service and marketing.

7. Securing Grants and Funding

Relying on grants and donations is essential for many heritage organisations, and KESR is no exception. The challenge is not only to secure funding but to ensure it aligns with the railway's objectives and that grants can be maintained for ongoing projects. With a competitive funding landscape, accessing the right support at the right time is a perpetual challenge.

8. Adapting to Technological Change

Incorporating technology, such as digital systems, artificial intelligence, social media marketing, and digital preservation techniques, is a challenge. The KESR must adopt the right technological innovations without compromising the authenticity of the heritage railway experience.

9. Health and Safety

Maintaining health and safety is paramount, especially given the railway's aging assets. The challenge is to ensure a safe environment for passengers, volunteers, and staff and to keep pace with changing safety regulations.

10. Competition and Collaboration

Competition for visitor spend is fierce. KESR must find its unique niche while also identifying opportunities for collaboration with other organisations in the sector. Collaborative efforts can amplify impact and bolster resources.

11. Extreme Weather

The challenge of extreme weather, notably scorching heat and floods, presents a multifaceted concern). With the mercury crossing 30-degree Celsius thresholds, the operation of heritage steam locomotives poses not only a fire risk but also physical discomfort for our crews, particularly the careering staff. These high temperatures not only affect our workforce but also our visitors and passengers who endure journeys in non-air-conditioned carriages. Simultaneously, the looming threat of floods, as indicated by future flooding maps, underscores our vulnerabilities in a changing climate. These climatic extremes compel us to explore innovative solutions to ensure both the safety and comfort of our team and the passengers while safeguarding the integrity of our historic rolling stock.

The Road Ahead

As the KESR faces these and other challenges, it's clear that its future depends on innovation, adaptability, and community engagement. The railway's success will hinge on its ability to find practical, sustainable solutions while preserving its heritage and meeting the expectations of a new generation of enthusiasts and visitors. The challenges may seem daunting, but they're also opportunities for growth and improvement. The KESR, with its rich history and dedicated community, is, I believe well-positioned to meet these challenges head-on and ensure its legacy for generations to come.

Plans for the Upcoming Year - Celebrating Our 50th Anniversary and Beyond

As we look ahead to the coming year, we are brimming with enthusiasm and ideas to both generate revenue and fulfil our charitable aims. Here are some of our key plans and initiatives:

1. Celebrating Our 50th Anniversary

On February 3rd 2024, we will mark our original opening date with a special ceremony. A grand festival is scheduled for June 1st and 2nd, commemorating our official opening in 1974.

In September, we will host a formal dinner to celebrate our half-century journey. Throughout the year, we will theme our events and offer branded merchandise for sale.

2. Honouring our Legacy

Our 50th anniversary will be a time to celebrate the incredible legacy created by the pioneers, volunteers, staff, and members who have contributed to our success.

3. Revenue-Generating Activities

We will continue to focus on successful revenue-generating activities such as our Santa trains and the Pullman service.

Additionally, we will work on expanding initiatives that align with our charitable objects. Events like Evacuation Day and Junior Engineering Days play a vital role in our mission.

4. Event Development

Our team will dedicate time and effort to develop all the content that makes up our annual calendar of events.

While we have exciting ideas for more Pullman services, Travelling Taverns, Fish and Chip Trains, and themed events, we understand that our capacity is limited by available resources and people.

5. Full Event List:

Below we publish a draft calendar with a list of provisional events for the upcoming year, providing our community and visitors with a clear calendar of what to expect. We are excited about the possibilities that our 50th anniversary year holds and are committed to making it a memorable and successful celebration. Through innovative revenue-generating activities and a focus on our charitable aims, we look forward to both sustaining our heritage railway and expanding its impact in our community and beyond.

Kent & East Sussex Railway																
Train Services																
2024																
			3 trip days			4 Trip Days			5 trip days			Special	Steam			
January				July												
1	Monday	1	8	15	22	29	1	Monday	1	8	15	22	29			
	Tuesday	2	9	16	23	30	2	Tuesday	2	9	16	23	30			
	Wednesday	3	10	17	24	31	3	Wednesday	3	10	17	24	31			
	Thursday	4	11	18	25	4	Thursday	4	11	18	25					
	Friday	5	12	19	26	5	Friday	5	12	19	26					
	Saturday	6	13	20	27	6	Saturday	6	13	20	27					
	Sunday	7	14	21	28	7	Sunday	7	14	21	28					
February				August												
2	Monday	5	12	19	26	5	Monday	5	12	19	26					
	Tuesday	6	13	20	27	6	Tuesday	6	13	20	27					
	Wednesday	7	14	21	28	7	Wednesday	7	14	21	28					
	Thursday	1	8	15	22	29	1	Thursday	1	8	15	22	29			
	Friday	2	9	16	23	2	Friday	2	9	16	23	30				
	Saturday	3	10	17	24	3	Saturday	3	10	17	24	31				
	Sunday	4	11	18	25	4	Sunday	4	11	18	25	6th/7th Spirit of Tenterden 13th /14th Stationary Engines				
March				September												
3	Monday	4	11	18	25	2	Monday	2	9	16	23	30				
	Tuesday	5	12	19	26	3	Tuesday	3	10	17	24	24th Sept - Evac				
	Wednesday	6	13	20	27	4	Wednesday	4	11	18	25					
	Thursday	7	14	21	28	5	Thursday	5	12	19	26	4 - 9th Victorian days (F&E)				
	Friday	1	8	15	22	29	6	Friday	6	13	20	27	9th / 10th March - Mothering Weekend			
	Saturday	2	9	16	23	30	7	Saturday	7	14	21	28	14th / 15th Sept Hoppers / Country Fair?			
	Sunday	3	10	17	24	31	8	Sunday	8	15	22	29				
April				October												
4	Monday	1	8	15	22	29	7	Monday	7	14	21	28				
	Tuesday	2	9	16	23	30	1	Tuesday	1	8	15	22	29			
	Wednesday	3	10	17	24	31	2	Wednesday	2	9	16	23	30	29th - 31st? Dinosaurs?		
	Thursday	4	11	18	25	3	Thursday	3	10	17	24	31	31st Oct - Halloween?			
	Friday	5	12	19	26	4	Friday	4	11	18	25	5th / 6th Folk Fest				
	Saturday	6	13	20	27	5	Saturday	5	12	19	26	12th- 14th Diesel Gala?				
	Sunday	7	14	21	28	6	Sunday	6	13	20	27	20th May - Evac				
May				November												
5	Monday	6	13	20	27	4	Monday	4	11	18	25	22/23/25/26/27 Mat Dinosaurs (F&E)				
	Tuesday	7	14	21	28	5	Tuesday	5	12	19	26	31st May - Groups booked				
	Wednesday	1	8	15	22	29	6	Wednesday	6	13	20	27	18th / 19th May Forties			
	Thursday	2	9	16	23	30	7	Thursday	7	14	21	28				
	Friday	3	10	17	24	31	1	Friday	1	8	15	22	29			
	Saturday	4	11	18	25	2	Saturday	2	9	16	23	30				
	Sunday	5	12	19	26	3	Sunday	3	10	17	24					
June				December												
6	Monday	3	10	17	24	2	Monday	2	9	16	23	30	1st/ 2nd Gala?: 15th June - Beer Festival			
	Tuesday	4	11	18	25	3	Tuesday	3	10	17	24	31	16th June Farthers Day			
	Wednesday	5	12	19	26	4	Wednesday	4	11	18	25	31	29/30 June Steampunk			
	Thursday	6	13	20	27	5	Thursday	5	12	19	26					
	Friday	7	14	21	28	6	Friday	6	13	20	27					
	Saturday	1	8	15	22	29	7	Saturday	7	14	21	28				
	Sunday	2	9	16	23	30	8	Sunday	8	15	22	29				

Our Strategy - How Will We Achieve Our Goals?

To put our plans into action and bring success to our organisation, we have outlined a strategy for the upcoming year. Here's how we intend to achieve our goals:

1. Listening to Stakeholders, Visitors, Staff, Volunteers and Members

We will maintain an open channel to listen to the concerns and feedback of our community

2. Timetable Stability

Ensuring a stable timetable that is simplified and repeatable, making it easier for our visitors to plan their visits, and staff and volunteers to roster and operate..

3. Advance Event Publication

Our events will be published well in advance to allow visitors and members to prepare accordingly.

4. Audience Focus

We will identify key hooks and target specific audience segments to improve our event offerings and engagement.

5. Quality First

Quality will take precedence over quantity in our activities and services.

6. Safeguarding Protocols

Implementation and enforcement of safeguarding protocols will be a top priority.

7. Locomotive Fleet Resilience

We are committed to increasing the resilience of our locomotive fleet. This includes publishing a locomotive policy, strategy, and plan, see Appendix A.

Next year, we will welcome two Austerities, one hired-in loco, a Class 20, a Class 14, and a Diesel Mechanical Multiple Unit (DMMU).

8. Improved Communication

We will focus on enhancing our communication efforts, making sure information is clear, consistent, and accessible.

9. Face-to-Face Interaction

We aim to encourage more face-to-face communication rather than relying solely on email and video meetings.

10. Safety Culture Training

Safety culture will be at the heart of our training programmes, including publishing more procedures, undertaking risk assessments, and making information available on HOPS. There will be a focus on working at height.

11. Seeking Grant Funding:

We will actively seek grant funding to support the appointment of an education officer.

12. 50th Anniversary Focus

Our 50th anniversary will be at the centre of our activities and events.

13. Embracing Positivity

We will foster a culture of positivity, focusing on solutions rather than dwelling on problems.

14. Recognising Reality:

We will acknowledge the reality of our equipment's fragility and the limitations of our resources.

15. Under-Promise, Over-Deliver:

Our commitment is to under-promise and over-deliver, exceeding expectations wherever possible.

By implementing this strategic approach, we aim to not only achieve our objectives but to exceed them, ensuring the sustainable growth and success of our heritage railway.

To Conclude:

The KESR's future rests on a strong foundation of heritage, innovation, environmental responsibility, and collaboration. We have answers to the key questions posed, but we also value your input and engagement. By addressing these questions and fostering transparency, we aim to build confidence in our shared vision for the future.

In closing, I leave you with a theme to carry forward: "**Unite and Ignite.**" Let us unite in our commitment to this remarkable little railway, igniting the spark of passion in the next generation. Together, we will illuminate the tracks that lead to a brilliant future.

And finally, a repeat of last year's plea: You'll be aware that our first scheduled 'Santa Special' departure of 2022 will soon be upon us. The perennial question do we have sufficient people available to deliver the experience that our visitors are expecting? As always, we are in need of every possible pair of hands to help us deliver.

Our customers have placed their trust in us, but we have only one chance to provide them with their anticipated Christmas experience. If we get this wrong, a few bad reports on review sites & social media could destroy the years of work we've put in to building our enviable reputation.

So, we urgently need your help. There are a wide variety of tasks, from marshalling cars in the visitor car park, helping in the shop, the buffet or elsewhere, we must ensure our visitors

expectations are met or exceeded - plus of course providing them with further opportunities to spend money!

Your support of the KESR is greatly appreciated - your continued membership alone is hugely important to us. But if you, or your aunty, brother, sister, cousin, nephew, niece or neighbour could help us at this critical time, please do get in touch with your roster clerks or via <https://kesr.org.uk/santa-volunteering-2022/>

Being a part of the Santa's team is hugely rewarding - and great FUN!

See you again on the Gallopers!

Dr Robin Coombes
General Manager
Kent & East Sussex Railway
Tenterden Station

31 October 2022

APPENDIX A

A Simplified Guide to Our Locomotive Policy, Strategy, Plan

This is a breakdown of our locomotive plan in the simplest terms. We've got three important parts to talk about: the policy, the strategy, and the yearly plan.

1. Locomotive Policy – What the Board Does

The board has a policy, and it's pretty straightforward. It says we'll use different types of locomotives. Some we'll own, and some we'll borrow or hire. We'll also make sure all these locomotives have written agreements, so everyone knows who's responsible for what.

2. Locomotive Strategy – A Bigger Picture

Now, let's talk about the strategy. It's like a big picture plan. We want to make sure our trains run well, and we want to keep the locomotives in good shape. But there are some challenges. Sometimes we don't have enough people with the knowledge and skills of how to take care of the locomotives and fixing them can take a long time.

3. Yearly Plan – The Details

Lastly, there's the yearly plan. This is where we get into the nitty-gritty. It tells us which locomotives we'll use each year and what we'll do to keep them running. It's like a schedule for our locomotives.

The objective is to maintain a robust and versatile fleet of motive power that meets the KESR's commercial and operational requirements while safeguarding its historic and charitable preservation goals.

The KESR shall either resource the relevant departments or have contractual arrangements with third parties to ensure maintenance and overhauls are carried out to enable the commercial needs to be met.

To ensure the well-being of staff and motive power the KESR shall adhere to all applicable regulations and standards that may be in force from time to time.

The KESR shall explore opportunities for the acquisition, hire or loan of motive power as required by this statement.

4. What the Policy says:

Diversified Locomotive Ownership: *The KESR shall adopt a diversified approach to locomotive ownership, encompassing the acquisition of locomotives as well as entering into hire, loan, or reciprocal arrangements with other railway entities. This approach will ensure the availability of a diverse fleet of locomotives while fostering positive working relationships.*

All locomotives not owned solely by the KESR shall have written ownership and operational agreements as required.

Operational Alignment: *Locomotive acquisitions and arrangements shall align with the operational requirements of the KESR. Priority shall be given to tank locomotives, "small" tender locomotives and mainline diesels up to Type 3 classification (up to 1999 horsepower) and Railcars / Diesel Multiple Units, with exceptions for one-off visiting locomotives of any size or type for special events. Each visiting locomotive shall be assessed for suitability from a traction, historic and operational point of view before visiting the railway.*

Historic Preservation: *The KESR is committed to preserving historically significant locomotives, maintaining their provenance to both the original KESR pre-preservation and post-preservation eras. Such locomotives will serve as tangible links to the railway's rich heritage.*

Financial Considerations: *The acquisition and use of locomotives through hire, loan, or other arrangements shall be accompanied by financial commitments as required. The KESR shall prudently manage resources to facilitate locomotive deployment and ensure cost-effective operations.*

5. What the Locomotive Deployment and Management Strategy says:

Objective

The primary objective of the Locomotive Deployment and Management Strategy is to maintain a robust and versatile locomotive fleet that meets the KESR's operational requirements while safeguarding its historic preservation goals. The strategy will be designed to achieve the following key outcomes:

Operational Efficiency: *The KESR shall maintain a balanced, effective and efficient locomotive fleet, capable of providing reliable and safe services to meet passenger demand and operational schedules, together with the needs of the railway for non passenger services.*

Preservation of Heritage: *The strategy prioritises the preservation of historically significant locomotives, ensuring their proper maintenance and restoration to retain their historical value and significance. The railway will take a long-term view 50 to 100 years ahead to ensure the collection and its legacy is secured and accessible for future generations to experience operational heritage rail traction of various types.*

Adaptability and Flexibility: *Emphasising the importance of collaboration and diverse ownership, the strategy shall enable the KESR to adapt and utilise locomotives through hire, loan, or reciprocal agreements, as per operational needs.*

Safety and Compliance: *The KESR shall adhere to all safety regulations and compliance standards while operating and managing locomotives, ensuring the well-being of staff, volunteers, and visitors.*

Implementation

Locomotive Acquisition and Arrangements: *The KESR shall explore opportunities for locomotive acquisition and collaborative arrangements with other railway entities. Consideration shall be given to locomotive classifications, suitability for operational requirements, and historic preservation significance.*

Resource Management: *The KESR shall prudently allocate financial resources to support locomotive acquisitions, hire agreements, maintenance, and restoration activities. Resource allocation shall be balanced to optimize operational efficiency and heritage preservation.*

Partnerships and Collaborations: *The KESR shall actively engage with other railway entities, preservation societies, and locomotive owners to foster mutually beneficial collaborations, aiming to enhance locomotive fleet diversity and operational resilience.*

Regular Reviews: *The strategy shall be subject to periodic reviews of not less than every 12 months, and additional reviews as soon as practical after any event that will have an impact on the information contained within this strategy (e.g. a failure or defect on a locomotive that will affect its availability in the medium to long term). At these reviews, the strategy will be updated to reflect changing operational needs, historical preservation priorities, and industry best practices.*

The KESR shall, as far as reasonably and practically possible and in line with its contractual obligations make financial provision for dilapidation of all motive power it owns and for hired and loan motive power.

This policy and strategy shall be reviewed at least every five years by the Board of Trustees to ensure it meets the needs of the KESR and its stakeholders.

The KESR shall prudently manage its resources to facilitate the implementation of this Policy, Strategy and annual loco plans.

6. What the 2024 plan says:

2024 50th Anniversary

Locomotives in service:-

Class 5 steam – Requirement is for 3 locomotives all year plus 1 locomotive for Santa.

Austerities: Swiftsure and No.25.

“Yank Tank” No 65 during year planned Summer

GWR 2-8-0 No 4253 during 2024

Hired in locomotive between March and June / July

Class 2 steam – Requirement is for 2 locomotives all year

No 15 Hastings

No 70 Poplar during 2024

Class 5 diesels – Requirement is for 2 locomotives all year plus 1 locomotive for Summer

Class 14 No D9504

Hired in locomotive on long term contract for all year Class 20

Hired in locomotive on short term contract for Summer as required

Railcars / Units – Requirement is for 1 DMMU

DMMU

GWR railcar during 2024

Shunting / Pilot locomotives – Requirement is for 3 locomotives all year

Ruston No 41, Class 03 No D2023

Ford No 40 during 2024

Hired in Class 08

Locomotives under overhaul / heavy maintenance

Class 5 Steam – GWR 2 – 8 – 0 No 4253, Austerity No 23, Austerity Sapper (off site overhaul)

Class 2 Steam – No 14 Charwelton (note – may be released as a class 3 or class 4 locomotive), Terrier No 70 Poplar / No 3 Bodiam

Class 2 Diesel – Ford Diesel No 40, Class 03 No D2024

Locomotives stored

Class 5 Steam – “Yank Tank” no 21 Wainwright / No 300, GWR 0-6-2 No 5668 and No 6619, GWR Pannier No 1638 (see comments)

Class 4 Steam – No 19 Norwegian

Class 2 Steam – P Class No 753, Terrier No 2678 Knowle

Class 5 Diesel – Class 25 No 25244, Class 08 No 08108

Notes and commentary

Currently searching for a visiting Class 5 steam locomotive March to June and potential additional Class 5 diesel for summer period and/or considering the hire of an additional Class 08 for additional resilience. No visiting locomotive required for Santas providing Sapper and / or No 4253 are returned to traffic as expected. Debate as to future for GWR No 1638, when funding available, earliest likely to enter service is 2027. No 23 to enter works for overhaul. The historic anniversary fleet during 2024 to be Poplar, Ford Diesel No.1 and GWR Railcar.

As always there is the caveat that everything is subject, to change as events (and opportunities) do occur, the budget, insurance claims.

The Traction, Rolling Stock and Plant Committee is developing a yearly loco plan to 2040.

7. In a Nutshell

So, there you have it. The board makes the policy and strategy. The General Manager in conjunction with the Loco Department, Operations and Commercial responsible for the yearly plan It's all about having different kinds of locomotive, taking good care of them, and working with others when we need to. The yearly plan tells us which locomotives we'll use and what we'll do to keep them going.

APPENDIX B

Improving Communication

How many times have we all heard the comment, "we need to communicate better". It's a challenge not unique to the K&ESR but one faced by organisations far and wide - poor communication. But it is not someone else's problem to get right. Think of good communication as a tool in your own hands, not some kind of magical spell. Even with all the high-tech gadgets and systems, it's not about the devices – it's about you. It's about your choice to share what you know, your curiosity to learn, and your grasp of how knowing the right stuff which keeps us safe and successful. It's in all of our hands!

From this perspective, let's explore practical steps to enhance communication throughout KESR, starting with all of us and having a commitment to better dialogue.

The three critical messages are:

- **Every Voice Matters:** In the journey toward improved better communication, remember that every voice within the K&ESR community is invaluable. Your insights, questions, and suggestions are the building blocks of our collective success. Encourage others to speak up, and don't hesitate to do the same.
- **Embrace Curiosity:** Be curious, not just about the tasks at hand but also about the people around you. Seek to understand their perspectives, experiences, and challenges. Curiosity fuels learning and fosters deeper connections, making communication richer and more effective.
- **Safety Is Everyone's Responsibility:** In the railway industry, safety is paramount. Enhanced communication is a vital part of ensuring that safety is maintained. Always be proactive in sharing safety-related information and prompt in seeking clarification. Remember, every piece of information shared or sought could make a difference in keeping our railway community secure.

Everything we say must be practical and actionable. Here's how everyone, including me, from Board members, managers, staff, volunteers, and all members, can collectively and actively improve communication:

- **Start with Active Listening:** We all should and can actively listen when someone is speaking. Ensure they feel heard and understood. Ask clarifying questions to confirm your comprehension.
- **Creating an Open Environment:** We must foster a culture where everyone feels comfortable sharing ideas, opinions, and concerns without fear of judgment.
- **Ask for Feedback:** Encourage and accept feedback from colleagues and members. We all need to regularly ask, "How can we improve our communication?"
- **Regular Check-Ins:** With our groups, committees, and teams we can implement regular 'check-in sessions', either one-on-one or in group settings, to discuss progress, challenges, and ideas.
- **Be Approachable:** Make yourself approachable and available for discussions. Approachability encourages open conversations.
- **Use Multiple Channels:** Diversify communication channels, from old fashion talking to face to face/ in person meetings, emails, instant messaging, and video calls, to accommodate everyone's different preferences.

- **Share Information Proactively:** Don't wait for others to ask for information; share it proactively when relevant.
- **Respect Different Communication Styles:** Recognise that not everyone communicates the same way. Adapt to different styles and preferences.
- **Set Clear Objectives:** We all can do better by defining clear communication objectives for meetings and projects. Ensure everyone knows what needs to be achieved.
- **Embrace Technology:** Utilise tools and platforms that facilitate collaboration and information sharing among your individual groups or to the wider membership.
- **Ask for Clarity:** If you receive unclear messages, don't hesitate to ask for clarification. It's better to ensure mutual understanding.
- **Celebrate Communication Successes:** Acknowledge and celebrate when communication efforts lead to positive outcomes. This reinforces the importance of good communication.
- **Address Poor Communication:** If you identify poor communication or misunderstandings, address them promptly to prevent further issues.
- **Collaborate on Solutions:** Involve others in finding solutions to communication challenges. Collaborative problem-solving can be more effective.
- **Share the 'Why':** When communicating decisions, I always try to explain the "why" behind them. This helps people understand the context and reasoning.
- **Two-Way Street:** Remember that communication is a two-way street. Encourage your others to actively participate in discussions.
- **Visual Aids:** When appropriate use visuals, charts, and graphics when presenting information to enhance clarity, but equally don't overuse.
- **Streamline Communication Tools:** We need in many cases to simplify communication tools and systems to avoid overcomplication that can hinder effective communication.
- **Encourage Learning:** We need to encourage continuous learning and improvement in communication skills for everyone within the organisation.

Remember, small changes today can lead to significant improvements in communication. Whether you're a director, manager, staff, volunteer, or member, everyone has a role to play in creating a more open, effective, and collaborative communication environment.

By all of us putting these principles into action, we can transform KESR into an organisation where communication thrives, leading to a safer, more efficient, and most importantly a more enjoyable railway.

APPENDIX C

Safety Policy

Ensuring the Well-being of Our Railway Family

At the Kent and East Sussex Railway (KESR), safety is not a set of rules; it's a promise we make to our railway family. We are committed to providing a safe, secure, and nurturing environment for everyone who contributes to our heritage railway journey, including volunteers, staff, visitors, and the communities we serve. Our Safety Policy reflects our heartfelt commitment to safeguarding lives, preserving our heritage, and fostering a culture of well-being and professionalism.

Our Safety Objectives

Human Life First: We pledge to protect every life that crosses our tracks as if it were our own. We will continuously strive to eliminate all potential sources of harm, recognizing that safety begins with care, concern, and compassion for one another.

Preserving Our Heritage: Our commitment to safety extends to the preservation of our heritage. We will safeguard our vintage trains, historic stations, and cultural legacy with the same diligence and dedication we apply to human safety.

Well-being in Every Action: We understand that safety goes beyond physical well-being. We commit to promoting the mental health and emotional well-being of our railway family, recognising that a caring, sensitive, and supportive environment is essential for the prosperity of all.

Community Engagement: Our commitment to safety extends to the communities we serve. We will engage with our neighbours, ensuring that our operations are considerate of their well-being, providing a harmonious partnership that benefits all.

Our Responsibilities

Leadership Commitment: As leaders, we will set the example by prioritising safety, well-being, and professionalism in all our decisions and actions. We will lead with empathy, showing that safety is not a burden but a shared value we cherish.

Employee Empowerment: We empower every member of our railway family to actively participate in safety initiatives. We value their insights and concerns, recognising that they are the heart and soul of our railway.

Education and Training: We will provide comprehensive education and training, ensuring that our railway family has the knowledge and skills necessary for safe and professional operations. We invest in your growth because your safety matters.

Open Communication: We foster an open and non-punitive culture of communication, where reporting safety concerns, near-misses, and potential hazards is encouraged. Your voice is our greatest asset in ensuring safety.

Continuous Improvement: We are committed to continuous improvement. We will regularly review our safety practices, protocols, and well-being initiatives, seeking opportunities for enhancement and innovation.

Community Integration: We will engage with our communities, seeking partnerships and collaborations that enhance safety, well-being, and professionalism for all. Together, we can create a railway we can all be proud of.

Conclusion

Safety at KESR is not just about following rules; it's about valuing every life, preserving our heritage, fostering well-being, and promoting professionalism. Our Safety Policy embodies our commitment to these principles. We are dedicated to being an exemplar in heritage railways worldwide, setting a standard of care, sensitivity, and responsibility that others can look up to. Together, we embark on a journey where safety is not a requirement; it's a shared responsibility and a testament to our enduring commitment to one another.

Safety Policy Strategy

1. Purpose and Scope

At the Kent and East Sussex Railway (KESR), the safety and well-being of our workforce, visitors, and passengers are paramount. This strategy outlines our approach and principles for managing health and safety risks associated with the safety of all who interact with our heritage railway.

2. Commitment to Safety

KESR is dedicated to ensuring the safety and comfort of our workforce, visitors, and passengers. We pledge to:

- **Comprehensive Safety:** Provide a comprehensive approach to safety that covers all aspects of our operations.
- **Compliance:** Comply with all relevant health and safety laws, regulations, and standards.
- **Culture of Safety:** Promote a strong safety culture that engages all employees, volunteers, visitors, and passengers in safety management.

3. Risk Assessment and Mitigation

To ensure safety, KESR will:

- **Thorough Evaluation:** Conduct regular risk assessments for all activities, considering the specific needs of both our workforce and visitors.
- **Hazard Identification:** Identify potential hazards and assess risks, focusing on areas such as height, machinery, hazardous materials, and visitor-related risks.
- **Effective Controls:** Implement effective control measures to eliminate or minimize identified risks.
- **Regular Review:** Continuously review and update risk assessments to accommodate changes in activities or conditions.

4. Competence and Training

KESR is committed to:

- **Comprehensive Training:** Providing comprehensive training to our workforce, tailored to their roles and responsibilities, as well as training for staff involved in visitor and passenger safety.
- **Competence Assurance:** Ensuring that our personnel are competent in performing their tasks safely.

- **Continuous Development:** Encouraging continuous learning and development to enhance safety skills and knowledge for both staff and visitors.

5. Safe Practices

KESR will:

- **Guidance and Information:** Provide clear guidance and information to all, including visitors, passengers, and staff, on safe practices and procedures.
- **Education and Communication:** Educate and communicate safety information effectively to enhance understanding and awareness.
- **Reporting and Response:** Encourage the reporting of safety concerns, near misses, and incidents to identify areas for improvement.

6. Equipment and Facilities

KESR will:

- **Equipment Integrity:** Ensure that all equipment used by the workforce and related to visitors and passengers is well-maintained and fit for purpose.
- **Accessibility:** Provide accessible facilities and accommodations to meet the diverse needs of our visitors and passengers.
- **Regular Maintenance:** Conduct regular inspections and maintenance to prevent accidents caused by equipment or facility failures.

7. Emergency Preparedness

KESR will:

- Emergency Response Plans:** Develop and communicate clear emergency response plans for all areas of our operation, addressing the needs of both staff and visitors.
- Training and Drills:** Conduct regular drills and training exercises to ensure preparedness for emergencies.
- Medical Assistance:** Maintain appropriate first aid and medical facilities for the safety and well-being of all.

8. Reporting and Investigation

KESR will:

- **Incident Reporting:** Establish an efficient process for reporting incidents, accidents, near misses, and unsafe conditions.
- **Root Cause Analysis:** Investigate all incidents to identify root causes and implement corrective actions.
- **Involvement:** Encourage everyone to actively participate in investigations to enhance safety.

9. Safety Communication

KESR is committed to:

- **Open Dialogue:** Promote open and transparent communication regarding safety matters with visitors, passengers, staff, and volunteers.
- **Feedback Channels:** Establish channels for everyone to raise safety concerns and provide suggestions for improvement.
- **Performance Sharing:** Regularly share safety performance data and lessons learned to foster a collective commitment to safety.

10. Compliance and Auditing

KESR will:

- **Regulatory Adherence:** Monitor compliance with health and safety regulations and internal policies across all aspects of our operations.
- **Auditing for Improvement:** Conduct routine safety audits and inspections to identify non-compliance and areas for improvement.
- **Timely Action:** Implement corrective actions promptly to address identified deficiencies.

11. Continuous Enhancement

KESR's commitment to safety entails continuous improvement. We will:

- **Ongoing Review:** Periodically review this strategy to ensure its effectiveness and relevance.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Engage all stakeholders in the ongoing enhancement of safety practices.
- **Learning and Innovation:** Continuously integrate best practices and lessons learned into our safety management.

By adhering to this strategy, KESR aims to provide a secure and enjoyable experience for our visitors and passengers while maintaining a safe environment.

Golden Rules for 'Nobody Gets Hurt Today'

1. You shall have no other priority than your safety and the safety of others.
2. You shall not do anything unless you can do it safely.
3. You should only be where you are allowed to be.
4. Safety signs, rules and warnings are there for a reason, obey them.
5. If something does not feel right, it almost certainly isn't.
6. What will keep you from getting injured is not paperwork but your training and awareness of each situation you experience. Fatigue, distraction, complacency, and over confidence are your greatest dangers.
7. You must only use tools and operate equipment you know to be safe and you are safe using them.
8. You are responsible for your own PPE that is designed to minimise risk and injury.
9. You have an absolute duty to report anything safety wise you are concerned about or go to help others as long as you do not place yourself in danger.