The Train at Platform 1

The Friends of Honiton Station Newsletter 64 - July 2025

Welcome to the July newsletter. Last month, we were pleased to welcome volunteers from a major community project to the station, officially to unveil the new display in the waiting room. As we continue to celebrate the 165th birthday of the station and the 200th anniversary of passenger railways, we are determined to keep the benefits of a successful railway in the minds of the local travelling public, as well as to keep up our work to make our station and attractive and interesting place to be. We are grateful to all our volunteers and our industry partners for their support.

Train Landscape' by Eric Ravilious was voted "the best-loved railway artwork in the UK" in a world-wide online poll, as part of Railway 200. Credit: Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums

New Display Unveiled in Station Waiting Room

On Monday June 16th, we officially unveiled the new display in the Waiting Room at Honiton Station, highlighting the town's rich, multicultural history. It is part of Telling Our Stories, Finding Our Roots, a community heritage and oral history project co-ordinated by Devon Development Education and supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Funded by the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership and supported by South Western Railway, the display has a special focus on four narratives that centre around the railway that has served Honiton since July 1860. The unveiling is part of the station's celebrations for Railway 200, the anniversary of the opening of the first regular passenger railway between Stockton and Darlington in 1825.

Richard Burningham, Manager of Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership and Andrew Ardley from South Western Railway with volunteer researchers from Telling Our Stories, Finding Our Roots project. Photograph by Dave Withey.

From its earliest settlement, Honiton has welcomed new arrivals, from Celts to Romans and Anglo-Saxons. This changing population has fostered new traditions and opportunities. The town's growth has been influenced by its surrounding hills, the river, and transport links and prides itself on being inclusive, regardless of cultural heritage. The project unearthed 16 stories from Honiton's history.

A spokesperson for the project said:

"Telling Our Stories, Finding Our Roots explores the stories, memories and hidden histories of Devon's towns and cities, past and present. Through building an archive of oral history interviews, the project aims to preserve, share and celebrate the voices, stories and heritage of the wide range of people who live in Devon today, ensuring that the voices we listen to today and in the future are more diverse and more inclusive than the ones that have been told before."

For instance, the extension of the railway line from Yeovil Junction to Exeter Central brought work opportunities and quicker travel between London and Exeter. Despite engineering challenges and objections from landowners, manual labourers or Navvies, many from Ireland, constructed the mile-long tunnel near Honiton using gunpowder, picks and shovels.

During World War Two, Irish labourers and other workers arrived in 1942 to help construct Dunkeswell Airfield. Many of them settled in Honiton after the war. Among them was the father of Jerry (Jeremiah) O'Brien, who later worked as a senior railwayman at Honiton Station for many years.

Other stories covered in the display include how a local businessman sold excursions by train to see the Great Exhibition in London in 1851, and how Heathfield Camp in Honiton housed 1800 Ugandan Asian refugees, 200 of whom left the town in January 1973 aboard a specially-commissioned train, on their way to the Faldingworth Camp in Lincolnshire.

The project in Honiton was co-ordinated by Jess Huffman and was supported by a team of local volunteers. It features the voices and contributions of many local people. The project culminated in a month-long exhibition at the Thelma Hulbert Gallery in November and December 2024.

A self-guided Heritage Trail is also now available which starts at Honiton Station, and visits locations around the town linked to the 16 stories collected during the project.

As well as the station, copies of the trail map can be collected from the Allhallows Museum, the Thelma Hulbert Gallery, Honiton Library and from a number of shops and businesses in the town.

Commenting on the success of the project, Co-ordinator Jess Huffman said:

"We could never have anticipated the sheer number of stories waiting to be uncovered. The depth and richness of Honiton's history, with its remarkable cultural diversity, have truly been a revelation. Each story has added a unique thread to our community's vibrant heritage, highlighting the incredible journeys and contributions of individuals from all walks of life.

“As we reach the latest stage of this project, we are excited to present a final exhibition at the local railway station. Featuring four stories connected to the station, this showcase highlights its central role in our community's history. It's a fantastic opportunity to share these stories with a wider audience and promote our heritage trail map, encouraging visitors to explore Honiton's rich historical tapestry.”

The Chairman of The Friends of Honiton Station, Martin Long, said:

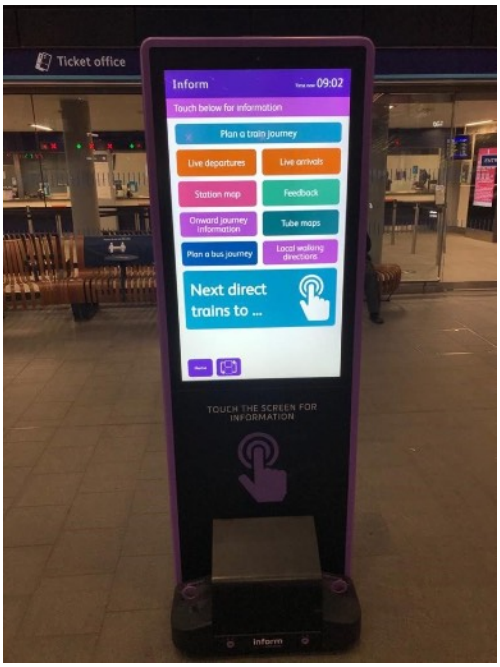
“We were delighted to work with South Western Railway and the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership to help bring this new display to the station. We have enjoyed hearing about some of the lesser known aspects of the town’s history, and are pleased to have had the opportunity to share some of these more widely. We hope that visitors and locals alike will collect a copy of the Heritage Trail and enjoy a walk around our beautiful town.”

To discover more about the project, to read the stories collected and listen to some of the interviews, go to https://www.tellingourstoriesdevon.org.uk/locations/honiton where you can also download a copy of the self-guided Heritage Trail.

East Devon Line Forum Announces Good News for Honiton

The latest meeting of the East Devon Line Stakeholder Forum, held on Monday June 16th at The Beehive, had good news for us at Honiton.

During his update, Andrew Ardley, Regional Development Manager for South Western Railway, confirmed that as part of the Jurassic Coast By Train promotion, a new free-standing Interactive Totem will be installed at Honiton Station. This piece of hi-tech kit allows passengers to see a rolling feed of live information, and to access further information by interacting with the large touch-screen device.



This has been on my wish list for the station for several years, since I first learned about it at a Community Live meeting hosted by Community Rail Manager Paula Aldridge, and immediately asked if one could come to Honiton.

We are grateful to everyone at SWR and to Richard Burningham at Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership (DCRP) for working so hard to achieve this result.

The latest stage of the Jurassic Coast By Train project, funded by SWR’s CCIF fund, will also include a video promoting journeys to Seaton, building on the success of last year’s video made featuring the bus link from Honiton Station to Sidmouth. There will further developments to the project website, as well as social media campaigns.

The latest round of CCIF funding, recently announced, also awarded funding to the National Trust, to work on a proposal for a new sustainable transport bridge over the railway in the Cranbrook area to provide, among other things, access for walkers and cyclists to the country park.

Richard Burningham confirmed that discussions are ongoing about creating a new PlusBus zone to encourage rail-bus connections in the Sidmouth and Lyme Regis areas, by providing through ticketing, which would be eligible for Railcard discounts.

Earlier during his presentation to the Forum meeting, Andrew Ardley acknowledged that while on-time performance on the local line had been improving (it has since fallen back again), there is still a way to go. Ticket sales, however, continue the rise that we have consistently seen now since we returned to the full hourly service after the pandemic.

Andrew confirmed that it is hoped to complete the latest stage of planning for the Devon Metro service – a stage called the Strategic Outline Business Case – by the end of this Summer. We are pleased to note that the latest version is focusing once again on a single loop between Whimple and Cranbrook (with or without a new platform at the latter), which feels like a more cost-effective solution than the previous double-loop option, and in engineering terms easier to construct than trying to build a loop though Feniton Station, on a very constricted site.

As part of the ongoing work on future planning, SWR is also working with Network Rail on an East Devon Stations Strategic Study, to investigate what extra facilities would be needed if and when Devon Metro is ready to run. This would include improvements, including a bridge, at Pinhoe, and improved accessibility to Platform 2 at Honiton.

Andrew also confirmed that funding has been allocated in this financial year for several station improvements, including better accessibility and an updated waiting room at Feniton, and the repainting of Honiton Station.

During the Forum meeting, we also heard from Harry Riley, Public Affairs Manager at Network Rail's Southern Region. He recognised that there are ongoing challenges with managing this line, including drainage and flood prevention, and the condition of embankments and cuttings - ranging from landslips to ground movement when the clay soil dries out during increasingly regular heatwaves – and near-life-expired signalling, particularly in the Salisbury area.

Harry outlined the maintenance work that is ongoing on the line locally, to deal with these and other potential issues. Network Rail continues to focus on two, week-long, blockades each year, one in the Spring and usually one in the Autumn. However, at present there are no plans for an Autumn blockade in 2025.

Looking forward into 2026, the provisional dates for the two planned blockades are between April 3rd and 10th, with a closure around Crewkerne Tunnel, and between October 26th and November 1st around Honiton Tunnel.

Paula Aldridge gave those attending the meeting an update on all the wonderful things happening during Railway 200, as we look forward to our own anniversary event on July 19th. DCRP and SWR have co-operated on providing a celebratory plaque to go up in Axminster and Honiton Stations, to mark the event.

Paula confirmed that all tickets for the Railway 200 exhibition train visit to Waterloo in July have been sold, but that the train will now also be making a visit to Southampton between December 14th and 16th, for which tickets are now on sale.

This was a highly successful meeting, attended by a number of newly-elected councillors from Devon County council and East Devon District Council. We were grateful that several industry partners attending the meeting took the time and trouble to attend this hybrid meeting in person, travelling from as far afield as London, Sussex and Plymouth. It made all the difference being able to meet face to face, and made us feel that we not quite so far on the edge of the network, but at the very heart of things.

News From Network Rail

Network Rail's latest Wessex Strategic Planning's Newsletter had this to say about the process of trying to move forward with Devon Metro:

"This Strategic Outline Business Case was originally initiated with Devon County Council following the publication of the West of England Line CMSP. Following the initial phase of work on the Devon Metro SOBC, which looked at what was required to extend the Barnstaple service through Exeter to Axminster, the decision was taken for Network Rail to fund the completion of the SOBC, exploring what other service options which could offer a phased approach to delivering capacity, connectivity, and performance benefits for passengers.

"The team are working closely with our Train Operator Company (TOC) colleagues at SWR and GWR, as well as East Devon District Council, Devon County Council and Peninsula STB, to finalise the SOBC and identify funding sources to take the concept beyond SOBC."

Network Rail's Southern Region Newsletter also reported that as SWR transferred into public ownership in May, Lawrence Bowman moved over from Network Rail to take up the post of Managing Director at SWR, working with colleagues eventually to bring track and train together under Great British Railways. Lawrence previously worked for South West Trains when it held the franchise. Stuart Meek, who had been Interim MD, has now resumed his substantive role as Chief Operating Officer of SWR.

It was also reported that Network Rail Property, Places for London and the London Borough of Lambeth have formed a strategic partnership to regenerate Waterloo Station and the South Bank neighbourhood.

The creation of the new partnership follows the Waterloo Station Vision published last year which set out a series of long-term aspirations for both the station and the wider area.

London Waterloo Station is the fourth busiest station in Great Britain. Located next to the cultural hub of the South Bank and home to major organisations including St Thomas's Hospital, The Old Vic, Southbank Centre and BFI Southbank, London Waterloo Station needs to serve and connect a growing workforce for the capital, alongside the growth for tourists and leisure customers during weekends and holidays.

Network Rail says: *"The partnership between the three parties will explore opportunities to deliver a new station destination, improving the customer experience within and around the station environment. This forms an integral part of a wider regeneration plan. Working closely with key stakeholders and the local community, future regeneration will improve wider permeability, create iconic open spaces, alongside bringing forward the widest range of development and investment opportunities. The plans will be brought forward in a series of phases, working with both private and public sector partners."*

SWR Announces New Support for Community Projects Across the Region

Last month, South Western Railway confirmed its continuing support for community projects around its network by announcing an investment of more than £500,000 through the latest round of its Customers and Communities Improvement Fund (CCIF). As we reported above, this includes several projects with local implications.

This year, SWR will fund 19 local projects including one at Sherborne Station. Match funding raised by the projects involved will bring the total invested to over £1.1 million this year. Since the first round of funding in 2018, SWR's CCIF fund has awarded over £8.6 million to over 100 projects.

Funding has been awarded to activities that vary greatly in scope as well as location. In London, SWR will be supporting a creative skills programme to increase confidence and direction for underrepresented young people in Lambeth who are not in employment, education or training. In Dorset, funding will be used to move forward the project to convert the station house at Sherborne Station into a community hub.

The amount that projects have bid for from CCIF this year varies widely with grants ranging from £10,000 to £63,000. Mustard Seed Autism Trust in Hampshire will use the £10,000 for their Super Sensory Kids programme, which supports autistic children who have sensory processing and motor skills difficulties through specialist occupational therapy.

All the projects to be awarded funding, which have been submitted variously by charities, community groups and local authorities, are short-term schemes which must be completed by the end of April 2026.

Peter Williams, South Western Railway's Customer and Commercial Director, said:

"We've been amazed by the number and variety of initiatives that have applied for grants from CCIF this year and it's been a difficult job to narrow it down to the 19 projects that we're supporting. These projects will make a difference in communities all around our network and help people from Waterloo to Weymouth.

"Over the last eight years, we have invested more than £8.6 million in a wide range of community-based projects through CCIF. The work that the groups and charities we fund do to support their local areas can never be underestimated and it's important to us that these CCIF grants can help to make life better for people in towns, villages and cities across the south west."

Derek Beer, Chair of Blackmore Vale CRP, said:

"It is really good news for Sherborne and North Dorset that we can now proceed with the project to bring back Sherborne station house into use, benefiting not just rail users but also the wider community. This project offers the opportunity to work with stakeholders to provide much needed services to the area, at the same time as improving the passenger environment.

"A careful approach is needed to make sure that we make the most of this opportunity to ensure that the outcomes are of the greatest benefit to as many people as possible, at the same time as being sustainable in the long term.

"We are grateful to SWR for their support and commitment to improving facilities in this part of Dorset "

What Does the Spending Review Mean for Railways?

The Government's Speeding Review, launched last month, will have huge implications for all aspects of public finances, probably for years to come. The review included details of the budget allocated to the Department for Transport, as well as other departments up to 2028/29.

The Spending Review brought the promise of further progress towards the long-awaited new stations for Cullompton and Wellington. Although Chancellor Rachel Reeves did not specifically mention the stations in her speech outlining the review, the Treasury later confirmed that additional funding would be given to the projects.

The "approval" of Cullompton's new station, which will be built near the existing M5 services, comes on the back of agreements being signed in March to build a new relief road for the town.

The MP for Wellington said the combined Wellington and Cullompton stations project had already received £6.15 million to complete the full business case and most of the design work. It is now estimated an investment of at least £45m would be needed to fully construct and deliver both stations.

In case anyone gets too excited too soon about this announcement, it is important to note that the government has not yet confirmed how much funding it will be providing for the project in the Spending Review. A Treasury spokesman simply said: *"The Spending Review provides funding to support the reopening of stations at Wellington and Cullompton. Further details will be set out shortly."*

Our colleagues at Community Rail Network ran the document through their calculator to see how what it has to say about the railways. Here is their summary:

The review states that capital investment, excluding spending on High Speed 2 (HS2), will increase at an annual average real terms growth rate of 3.9% per year between 2025-26 and 2029-30.

However, DfT Departmental Expenditure Limits will decrease by five per cent a year over the next three years. The review attributes this to a declining rail passenger services subsidy as passenger ridership and revenue continue to recover post COVID-19, and efficiencies and savings are made through public ownership of rail services.

Rail projects announced or confirmed are:

- *£3.5 billion to drive delivery of the TransPennine Route Upgrade, improving connectivity and reducing journey times between Manchester and Leeds, from 55 to 41 minutes. This is due to be delivered by the early 2030s;*

- *Continued delivery of East-West Rail with £2.5 billion investment to provide new connectivity and unlocking growth across the Oxford-Cambridge corridor;*

- *£300 million for rail investment in Wales, including for the Burns Review stations, North Wales Level Crossing, Padeswood Sidings and Cardiff West Junction. The review and the upcoming 10-year Infrastructure Strategy will recognise Wales' long-term infrastructure needs and will deliver at least £445 million of rail enhancements to realise them;*

- *£240 million to enhance Leeds station, improving capacity and relieving congestion;*

- *Funding to progress this government's long-term strategic rail ambitions, in the North of England, with further detail to be set out through the 10-year Infrastructure Strategy;*

- *Funding to progress the next stage of Midlands Rail Hub West, strengthening connections from Birmingham across the West Midlands and to other regions;*

- *£25.3 billion to progress delivery of HS2 from Birmingham Curzon Street to London Euston.*

- *Providing £15.6 billion in total by 2031-32 for the elected mayors of some of England's largest city regions via the Transport for City Regions (TCR) settlements, supporting them to invest in their local transport priorities, including zero emission buses, trams and local rail. This will more than double real terms city region transport spending per year by 2029-30, compared to 2024-25;*

- *Investing £2.3 billion in the Local Transport Grant over Phase 2 of the spending review for local transport improvements including bus lanes, cycleways and congestion improvement measures in places outside of those areas receiving TCR settlements. This will deliver a fourfold increase in funding in 2029-30 compared to 2024-25;*

- *Providing the largest multi-year settlement for London in over a decade, with £2.2 billion of funding between 2026-27 and 2029-30 for Transport for London's capital renewals programme.*

- *£2.6 billion over phase 2 of the review to decarbonise transport, including investing £616 million to build and maintain walking and cycling infrastructure.*

Engineering Report

Saturday 2nd and Sunday 3rd August

Due to maintenance work in the Wimbledon area, some **late evening services on Saturday and early morning services on Sunday** will be cancelled, revised or replaced by buses for all or part of their journey.

Tuesday 4th to Thursday 6th November

Looking further ahead, GWR has announced engineering work will be taking place between Exeter St Davids and Taunton between **November 4th and 6th**.

Previous experience leads us to expect that services through Honiton will be affected by this work, as a number of Paddington to Exeter trains will be diverted along our line between Yeovil Junction and Exeter. This will require some Waterloo to Exeter services to be re-timed. However, local passengers are usually allowed to board some of GWR's IET trains to travel to and from Exeter.

This work, and the disruption to local services may explain why there is no Autumn block of work on our line this year, as reported in the Stakeholder Forum meeting (see above).

Editor's Note: We mentioned last month a planned Driver Route Learning Train, to operate as required between Bristol Temple Meads and Exeter Central, via Yeovil and Honiton. We have to report that it has not run at all so far, and has repeatedly disappeared from services listed to run as shown on Real Time Trains.

Waterloo Station Marks Railway 200: As Only It Can!

OK, Waterloo, you win! As a Railway 200 photo-opportunity, we were never going to be able to beat the picture below, taken as the station marked the anniversary on June 18th of the battle that gave the station its name, fought in 1815.

The victory brought an end to decades of war in Europe and gave its name first to Waterloo Bridge, and then, in 1848, to Waterloo Bridge station, the terminus now known as London Waterloo and Britain's biggest railway station.

South Western Railway and Network Rail partnered with veteran wellbeing and archaeological charity Waterloo Uncovered and the Household Cavalry Museum to celebrate Waterloo Day.

The celebration began with a bugle call by Trooper Davis – a trumpeter for the Life Guards regiment in the Household Cavalry. He was joined by Chelsea Pensioners in their iconic scarlet coats.

Throughout the day, customers were transported back to the Napoleonic Wars by live re-enactors, dressing-up opportunities, mock excavations and the story of a remarkable young cavalryman.

SWR has also created a new Waterloo Walk Guide, a self-led tour from the station to Hyde Park Corner highlighting London's Napoleonic landmarks, including monuments, museums, and historic pubs along the two-mile route in central London.

Peter Williams, South Western Railway's Customer and Commercial Director, said:

"As Britain's busiest station, it's fitting that we begin our Railway 200 celebrations at London Waterloo Station by marking the anniversary of its historic namesake, the Battle of Waterloo.

Public Vote Chooses Best UK Railway Artwork

This month's cover picture in our newsletter, 'Train Landscape' by artist Eric Ravilious, has been named as the world's best-loved railway artwork in the UK, following a global poll held to mark the 200th anniversary of the modern railway. The announcement of the winning artwork was made on the birthday of rail pioneer George Stephenson.

The watercolour was painted in 1940 and shows the chalk white horse of Westbury, Wiltshire, viewed through the window of a third-class train carriage. Tirzah Garwood, wife of Eric Ravilious, made the collage using elements from different watercolours Ravilious painted while travelling by train.

The painting is held in the collection of Aberdeen Art Gallery & Museums and has now been placed on public display (It had previously been held in storage).

Ella Ravilious, granddaughter of Eric Ravilious, said:

"I'm thrilled that Train Landscape has been voted best-loved railway artwork, as it captures travel through the British landscape in a third-class carriage in the late 1930s.

"This painting by my grandfather, Eric Ravilious, was created with the assistance of my grandmother, Tirzah Garwood. Eric rode back and forth on the train, making several watercolours, none of which he was totally happy with. Tirzah collaged the best bits of each painting together to create a successful picture.

"Train lovers might notice that the chalk figure visible from the train window should be the Long Man of Wilmington rather than the Westbury Horse because it was painted on the Brighton to Eastbourne line."

The second most popular artwork was the evocative 'Rain, Steam and Speed' by J.M.W Turner (1775-1851) and the third most popular choice was 'Service by Night' by David Shepherd (1931-2017).

Art lovers and rail enthusiasts can now enjoy a curated exhibition of the 20 most popular paintings on the Art UK website until 31 December 2025.

The vote was held as part of Railway 200, a year-on celebration that explores how a British invention changed the world forever, and how the railway continues to shape our lives and livelihoods, presenting a constant source of inspiration to artists.

Local Railway 200 News: As stations west of Yeovil prepare to celebrate our anniversary in July, our colleagues along the West of England Line further east towards Salisbury have already enjoyed their various birthday celebrations.

The photograph (right), courtesy of SWR, shows preparations for May's celebration at Templecombe, where the station re-opened in 1983, having closed in 1966.

Station adoption group at Templecombe

GWR Wins Important Innovation Awards

GWR has been recognised for groundbreaking operational excellence, engineering innovation and accessibility initiatives at the Modern Railways Innovation Awards, winning recognition for pioneering projects that demonstrate the company's commitment to accessibility, safety, and operational excellence.

The winner of the Passenger Experience Award was GWR's innovative response to the challenges of the construction of Old Oak Common. The project saw GWR develop new diversionary routes into Euston Station, bringing freight sidings unused for over ten years back into full operation within just four months. GWR now has three different diversionary routes to London terminus, ensuring they can continue to carry customers through the construction of HS2.

The Best Small Project Awards went to an innovative solution to the problems that can be caused by train breakdowns, when couplings between different types of trains and available locomotives mean that it can be hard to use other vehicles to rescue stranded trains – as we saw when CrossCountry Voyager trains were stuck at Dawlish when their engines shut down in bad weather.

Following the overhead line failure on the morning of the Queen's funeral in September 2022, which had serious knock-on effects for passengers, due to stranded trains, GWR developed an innovative emergency coupling adapter that enables Class 800 bi-mode trains to rescue stranded electric multiple units – both its own Class 387 units as well as Elizabeth line Class 345 units.

Working with industry experts and Bristol-based engineering partners, GWR designed and manufactured a bespoke coupling system that can be installed in just 15 minutes, significantly improving network resilience and reducing passenger disruption during power outages.

Great Western Railway Managing Director, Mark Hopwood, said:

"These awards reflect the innovative spirit and collaborative approach that defines GWR. The success of our engineering innovations show how creative thinking can turn operational challenges into opportunities for improvement. I'm incredibly proud of our colleagues who have made these achievements possible and grateful to our industry partners who have supported these groundbreaking initiatives."

New Joint Working Project Shows Future of Great British Railways

In a sign of what the future holds, with the coming of Great British Railways and the integration of train and track, Southeastern and Network Rail Kent Route have announced that they have united under a single leadership team to drive investment and efficiency and deliver for passengers and freight in an important step towards Great British Railways (GBR).

Operating as the South Eastern Railway team, and overseen by Managing Director Steve White, the streamlined structure will allow for a more responsive railway with a common purpose and clear accountability for railway performance across the network. However, it should be noted that, in the absence of the necessary legislation to create GBR, South Eastern Railway is: *"A contractual arrangement between Southeastern and Network Rail. No accountabilities are being transferred and each organisation will remain responsible for decision-making for its respective accountabilities. There are no changes to any staff Terms and Conditions."*

Already under public ownership, Southeastern has been able to work increasingly closely with Network Rail, which manages railway infrastructure, for over a year. This collaborative approach has resulted, they say, in greater efficiency with better, faster decisions for customers and taxpayers, leading to an improved railway.

Southeastern came under Government control in October 2021, as part of the Operator of Last Resort following financial issues, involving what were described as *"revenue declaration discrepancies involving £25 of public money."* The official end date of the present arrangements, and therefore full nationalisation in the widest sense is October 17th this year.

Joint planning has already led, say Southeastern Railway, to more efficient and innovative solutions to reducing delays. This includes enabling engineers to access the track during the day to carry out repairs more efficiently, while maintaining a service for customers.

Collaboration has also seen the railway trial drones up and down the network to identify and reduce incidents of trespass. More joined up working also means matching trains to when passengers want to take them, delivering at least £3m a year in additional revenue for the rail industry.

A spokesperson for the project said:

"This is a significant milestone in the Government's plans to overhaul the railways through the creation of Great British Railways, uniting train and track with the sole focus of delivering for passengers.

"This new integrated, collaborative approach across the South East sets the path for how GBR will operate including the high standards expected before the branding will be given to operators. The standards, which will be tailored for each operator will revolve around delivering high performing, better coordinated, more efficient, and more responsive services."

Further regional arrangements will come into place, as other services transfer into public ownership. This will almost certainly soon involve SWR, as the process seems already to have started with the appointment of its new Managing Director (see report above).

Launching the new arrangements during a visit to a Southeastern station, Rail Minister, Lord Peter Hendy (in photo 4th from left), said:

"Track and train are two sides of the same coin but for too long they have operated independently of each other – leaving customers and taxpayers to bear the consequences of this illogical approach. Uniting track and train leadership in the south east is the first step in our journey to create a railway we can all be proud of; delivering the Government's Plan for Change with better connectivity, leading to more growth, jobs and homes and ultimately to the creation of Great British Railways."

Coffee and Conversation

Our next Coffee and Conversation catch up will be at 11 a.m. on Monday July 14th at the Beehive Cafe. Members are warmly invited to come along. We will be able to talk about plans for the rest of 2025 and Railway 200, as well as offer some thoughts on how we move forward with some of our new and existing projects.

We are keen to organise our annual updating of the planters, and are in the serious planning phase for a new art installation on Platform 2. Network Rail have also asked us for our views on ways to tackle graffiti and tagging, and how best to present the railway bridges in Honiton, so that they are as attractive - and graffiti-free - as possible.

Remember, members are welcome to join Richard Foord MP and guests from the railway industry, when Richard cuts a cake at the station to mark Railway 200 - and the station's 165th birthday - on Saturday July 19th. We hope also to be joined on that occasion by Richard Jefferies, our newly-elected County Councillor, by Andrew Pearsall, Honiton's new Mayor, as well as Andrew Ardley, SWR's Regional Development Manager and Richard Burningham, Manager of Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership.

Network Rail Visual Inspection Train 153311 seen at Pinhoe on June 8th. It also visited us on June 19th. It is a rare visitor, more normally seen on regional branch lines where the HST-based NMT (The Flying Banana) is less appropriate. Photograph by Dave Tozer.