

Embargo

For release after Wednesday 17 July 2019

PRESS INFORMATION**PARLIAMENTARY GROUP CALLS ON HERITAGE RAILWAY ASSOCIATION TO HELP SECURE FUTURE OF COAL**

The Heritage Railway Association has welcomed the publication of 'Steaming Ahead?', a new report from the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Heritage Rail. The report identifies concerns about the future availability of coal for the heritage rail sector.

In drafting the report, the Group drew heavily on evidence and input from members of the Heritage Railway Association. The report offers a six-point plan for steps towards maintaining continuity of coal availability, and environmental mitigation measures. It identifies the HRA as a key player in implementing its recommendations.

The report notes that the UK's heritage railways are worth £400m to the national economy, attracting some 13 million visitors a year, and provide full-time equivalent employment to 4,000 people. All those benefits to the nation are currently threatened by the unintended consequences of environmental legislation, requiring an effective end to the burning of coal.

Taking evidence from, and working with, HRA members and officers, the report identifies steam traction as being one of the biggest draws for both rail enthusiasts and the general public. The risks of scarcity driving coal prices ever-higher, and the potential ultimate unavailability of coal represents perhaps the biggest threat to steam traction since British Railways' 1955 Modernisation Plan. Without coal, the future of heritage rail in the UK – and all it delivers in terms of economic benefits, employment, education, social cohesion and entertainment – would be in grave doubt.

Steve Oates, HRA Chief Executive, said, 'The APPG Report highlights the fact that the true scale of Britain's heritage railway sector simply isn't fully appreciated. Our members attract more visitors than the UK's top seven international tourist attractions combined – places like the Tower of London, Stonehenge, St Paul's Cathedral or Westminster Abbey. HRA members operate almost 600 miles of track, with 460 preserved and restored stations – more than double the number of National Trust historic buildings open to the public. It clearly wasn't the intention of zero-emissions targets to harm such a large and thriving sector, and the APPG and the HRA are working together to develop a practical solution.'

In a recent House of Lords debate, DCMS Under Secretary of State Lord Ashton said his department was working carefully to consider how to achieve a balance between environmental and public health protection and ensuring that the UK's heritage vehicle industry continues to thrive. He confirmed that DCMS officials are holding meetings with DEFRA to discuss the topic, and he reiterated DEFRA's previous confirmation that proposals on domestic coal burning would not prevent heritage railways continuing to use the fuels they need.

The APPG's six-point plan proposes that the Minister's confirmation is written into future strategy and any subsequent legislation.

It calls on the relevant government departments (DEFRA, DCMS and Transport) to work with the HRA and coal suppliers, to explore ways to continue and fund the long-term supply of coal.

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It tasks the HRA with encouraging best practice on locomotive maintenance and management, in order to minimise CO2 emissions.

It proposes that heritage railways explore carbon offset strategies, such as solar power for premises, tree planting, or a green levy on passenger tickets.

It encourages pursuit of joint purchasing and buying group opportunities facilitated with the help of the HRA.

It asks the government to expedite extension of workings for existing opencast mines, and to include a longer transition from coal in government plans.

'It's possible to take a doom and gloom approach to the future of coal,' said Steve. 'But the reality is this: UK industry, even today uses almost 12 million tonnes a year. UK heritage rail only uses 26,000 tonnes. Amongst users of coal, UK heritage railways therefore produce only a very small amount of CO2. And we have ways to further reduce those emissions, and to offset those that can't be reduced. Westminster and Government understand the challenge that faces us. The APPG Report's recommendations are good ones. By working together, we can meet that challenge.'

The APPG Report looks to the HRA to work with coal suppliers; to help railways minimise CO2 emissions; and to support group purchasing strategies. Steve Oates said, 'We've worked closely with APPG to help shape the plan of action. They've called on us for action and help – and that's what we're here to do.'

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Captions:

Coal 1.jpg: En route to one of the UK's power stations, coal in these quantities is no longer seen on the railways.

Coal 2.jpg: The HRA and the APPG on Heritage Rail are working together to help secure the future of heritage steam in the UK.

Coal 3.jpg: Good quality steam coal: the key to the future of heritage rail.

Coal 4.jpg: First-class maintenance keeps steam locomotives efficient, cuts emissions to the minimum.

Steam 1.jpg: A fully-booked passenger train means low CO2 emissions per passenger mile.

Steam 2.jpg: A steam hauled train delivers low-impact access to a green corridor.

Steve Oates.jpeg: Steve Oates, heritage Railway Association Chief Exec.

Note to editors:

The APPG Report will be published at a press briefing at 1600 hrs on Thursday 18 July, in Room Q, Portcullis House, Westminster. A copy of the Report is attached (*Coal Report-1.pdf*).

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The APPG on Heritage Rail

The purpose of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Heritage Rail is to brief parliamentarians about heritage railways, the contribution they make to their local and regional economies and the skills training opportunities involved. Chaired by Nicky Morgan MP, the Group's officers include Lord Faulkner of Worcester, Lord Grocott, Liz Saville Roberts MP, Lord Shutt of Greetland, Lord Snape and Martin Vickers MP

Heritage Railway Association

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

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