



& DARTMOUTH STEAM RAILWAY RIVER BOAT COMPANY

Tuesday, 02 February 2021

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Constituency Office
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Mr A Mangnall
Member of Parliament for Totnes
Westminster Office
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Email: anthony.mangnall.mp@parliament.uk

Dear Anthony

Re: Goodrington & Churston stations

I do hope you are well!

I was surprised to see in the local media that you are proposing to increase services to our Churston and Goodrington stations. As I mentioned in our meeting, these stations have remained open since the Dart Valley Railway acquired the line (although they were closed last year to allow us to ensure all customers were socially distanced on our services). When we discussed the subject previously, I mentioned a number of significant hurdles that would need to be resolved to bring mainline services onto our line. This of course does not mean it is impossible and I am more than happy to look at a workable proposal should you be able to produce one.

I thought it would be wise to write to you to remind you of some of the issues your proposal will need to address. As you are applying for public funds, I would ask that you include this letter with your application so that we ensure that the decision makers have as full a picture as possible.

Infrastructure

- Track & signalling are currently at heritage line standards rather than mainline standards.
- It is the same for maintenance staff and plant & equipment in that these are currently at heritage railway standards not mainline standards.

Interruption

- The track is closed for at least 6 weeks each year for maintenance.
- Further adhoc closures occur throughout the year.

Churston Station

- The station is closed for 8 weeks per year for our Christmas Train of Lights. It would not be possible to use the station for public service during this period.

DARTMOUTH STEAM RAILWAY & RIVER BOAT COMPANY

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- Access to the station is limited and lacks adequate parking. Increased usage of the station could lead to an increase in traffic congestion. If this was the case it would be of particular concern if it increases pressure around Churston school at drop off and pick-up times.

Line Capacity

- The line is at full capacity for large parts of the year. In July and August a steam passenger service leaves Paignton & Kingswear roughly every c.35 minutes.
- As the line from Paignton to Kingswear is single track the services pass at Churston. There is currently no space for a third mainline service. This is difficult but not impossible to solve, you would need to consider how to acquire enough land to extend the station but please keep in mind the station is a very historic structure and it would not be appropriate to just start redeveloping it.
- As outlined above, the railway is a single line and is often at full capacity. This means that you would need to significantly increase the capacity between Paignton and Churston and in practical terms this means a second track. This would be quite a civil engineering task as we are close to the sea (not to mention the need for a new viaduct at Broadsands). I am not a civil engineer but I would guess it would cost many millions of pounds.

General Practicalities

- Whilst steam engines are wonderful machines, they are not particularly practical. They frequently breakdown and small lineside fires are a common occurrence. This inevitably leads to delays (sometimes significant.) Any mainline operator would have to accept delays are unavoidable when working with a heritage railway. The mainline operator would need to confirm that they accepted this - we cannot be held responsible for the penalties that the operator will incur when re-joining the mainline network late.

I have tried to give a reasonable overview of the issues that I am aware of but please be aware this is by no means an exhaustive list, there will be many issues we have not yet considered.

Finally, as I previously mentioned to you during our call, the Dart Valley Railway is a privately owned line and permission to gain access would need to be sought and provided. We view ourselves as custodians of this incredible business and, as I'm sure you will understand, we will not agree to any proposals that put the business at risk. Any proposal would need to 100% guarantee the business is kept financially secure and ensure that all jobs are protected.

Best wishes and I look forward to hearing from you should you be able to produce a workable proposal.

Best wishes 



John Jones
Managing Director