

“Vintage Diesels to the seaside” – West Somerset Railway diesel gala 2018

The West Somerset Railway Gala Planning Team are delighted to announce that plans have now sufficiently developed for our 2018 diesel gala for us to make a formal announcement about the event and the attractions we intend to offer for the event which runs from Friday 8th to Sunday 10th June 2018.

We will be having visiting locomotives brought to the WSR by our friends at GBRF from several locations around the country which will be brought together for a single move from Kidderminster SVR to Bishops Lydeard prior to the event. These are planned to be Class 20's 20189 & 20205 (courtesy of Michael Owen) hauling Class 45 No. 45041 “Royal Tank Regiment” (Courtesy of Peak Locomotive Company), Class 50 No. 50035 “Ark Royal” (courtesy of Class 50 Alliance) and Deltic Class 55 No. 55019 “Royal Highland Fusilear” (courtesy of the Deltic Preservation Society). All these visitors are in BR Blue livery, so could this be one of the longest train formations of BR Blue locos together in many a year? These visitors will be joined by the home based Diesel & Electric Preservation Groups fleet of Class 14 No. D9526, making its return to traffic after a heavy overhaul, Class 33's Nos. D6566 & D6575, with D6566 re-entering service after a heavy overhaul, Class 35 Hymek's Nos. D7017 & D7018, with D7018 making its first public runs since a catastrophic engine failure in August 1995 and a full rebuild and restoration by the DEPG team and ever popular Western Class 52 No. D1010 “Western Campaigner”. These are likely to be joined by Class 09 shunter D4107 for some rare haulage opportunities on shuttles between Bishops Lydeard and Norton Fitzwarren, quite likely in the company of the Class 14 whilst the later is gently run-in for its initial return to service.

Each of these locomotives fits our theme of “Vintage Diesels to the Seaside” in that not only are they working to the seaside at Minehead but each of these types often worked holiday trains to the seaside in various parts of the country in their working careers for BR. This will allow many diesel fans to visit the WSR and relive their “bashing years” of the 1970's & 80's.

A new intensive timetable is being designed for the event with all diesel timetables on the Friday & Saturday and a single steam hauled trip on the Sunday to cater for

casual visitors to the railway who want and expect steam and also a regular coach party booking. We are also planning to run a limited number of diesel turns on the Thursday as a preview day.

The gala will also be complemented by a beer festival which is being planned for the Somerset & Dorset Railway Trust site at Washford to run over the weekend. It is planned to have a good number of real ales available from both local west country breweries and some from further afield to cater for all tastes. Food will also be available at the festival. All trains will call at Washford to enable diesel gala visitors to indulge in a pint or two in between their haulage runs. Please note that there will be no car parking available at Washford and all visitors are encouraged to travel by train.

With the WSR's stiff gradients and plenty of mileage to be had across the weekend and a good variety of motive power to enjoy we are hoping for a bumper gala turnout.