

West Somerset Railway

PRESS RELEASE

Flying Scotsman Visit

The West Somerset Railway is planning a special event with a Scottish theme around the visit of Flying Scotsman in September. The unique locomotive will be making an initial visit to the WSR in May, bringing in a Railtour on Tuesday 23rd May. It will then spend two days on the Shed, with the Platform at Minehead open to visitors, before departing on Friday 26th May. For the main visit it will arrive on Monday 4th September, operate trains on the railway on the 5th, 6th, 7th, (not 8th), 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th before departing on Wednesday 13th.

During the September visit, trains will operate to a special timetable, with Flying Scotsman heading a non-stop train from Bishops Lydeard to Minehead, twice a day. A normal service of stopping trains will also operate on these days.

All travel behind Flying Scotsman will be on a special train with limited accommodation and all tickets purchased in advance. These will go on sale on the West Somerset Railway website in March. A series of options will be available, which will include one way travel along the 20 mile route behind Flying Scotsman and the other behind another visiting loco with a significant Scottish connection. Details of this second loco are currently under negotiation, and it is hoped to announce this shortly.

It is also expected to offer some evening dining train options, with a Scottish flavour, during the September visit.

Flying Scotsman is one of the largest locomotive to operate on the railway in recent years, so additional work is planned over the next few months to ensure that the infrastructure is fully prepared for it.

Experience elsewhere shows that Flying Scotsman draws the crowds, including many on-lookers. Scotsman seems to have the capability to draw in people that are not normally particularly enthusiastic about railways and steam engines. The West Somerset Railway is therefore making plans to cope with significant extra numbers of visitors, many of whom may not be travelling by train. The roads and lanes of West Somerset are not designed for substantial additional traffic, so the railway is working with the police and other agencies to try to minimise any disruption.

A separate dedicated Planning Team has been set up by the Railway to manage all aspects of the visit. This group has been meeting since December and various elements are already in place. The group is chaired by long-standing volunteer, Frank Courtney, and includes representatives of all the relevant West Somerset Railway departments.

General Manager, Paul Conibeare said: "The forthcoming visits of Flying Scotsman are very exciting for us. We are delighted to have been selected by the National Railway Museum to host the visit and look forward to offering our passengers a unique, interesting and enjoyable experience. We are also working with our neighbours in the West Somerset community to ensure they are able to share in this experience, and will be working to support local businesses. We will also be working with local schools to ensure that children and young people have an opportunity to share in the excitement of this event."