

West Somerset Railway PLC/JJP Holdings South West LTD/ West Somerset Railway Association

THORNBURY CASTLE STEAM LOCOMOTIVE MOVES TO WEST SOMERSET FOR FULL RESTORATION

The West Somerset Railway and Jonathan Jones Pratt, of JJP Holdings South West Ltd, have announced today that the Castle Class Locomotive *Thornbury Castle* 7027, which is owned by JJP Holdings South West Ltd will move to the railway's Williton works. Here it will be fully restored to main line running standard after completing an initial running in period on the WSR. The rebirth of the engine will be carried out on the premises of the West Somerset Railway. On completion (probably in about six years' time) the locomotive will operate regularly each year for a number of days on the West Somerset Railway, in addition to its main line duties. To enable this to happen, the railway will shortly be launching a major shareholder appeal to upgrade the track and bridges.

Thornbury Castle is a 4-6-0 locomotive designed by the Great Western Railway for express passenger use, and originally built in 1949. It operated over all the ex-Great Western main lines including the main line through Taunton to the West of England. It was withdrawn in 1963, and has not operated since.

Thornbury Castle will be accompanied at Williton by another large ex-GWR locomotive, *Kinlet Hall*, also owned by Jonathan Jones-Pratt. *Kinlet Hall* is currently under overhaul at Tyseley Works, near Birmingham and is expected to be back in operation next year. *Kinlet Hall* will also be running on the WSR.

The restoration will be managed by Kinlet Hall & Thornbury Castle Ltd coupled with the support and project management of Alistair Meanley (Tyseley). As part of these arrangements the West Somerset Railway PLC, the West Somerset Railway Association, JJP Holdings and other partners, will be working to develop the Williton works for the training of apprentice engineers. The vision is to build a centre of engineering excellence within Somerset enabling new opportunities for young engineers in West Somerset.

Ian Coleby, Chairman of the West Somerset Railway PLC said: "We consider that this development is highly positive for all the partners. We are all working hard together to achieve success and we are very confident that this will provide an exciting new development for the railway. We want to work with the community and we are particularly pleased that in addition to enhancing the work of the railway it will enable us all to contribute to the development of an engineering training centre of excellence in West Somerset, which we believe will be very valuable."

Jonathan Jones Pratt, the owner of both locomotives said: "I have been associated with the West Somerset Railway for many years, including as an active volunteer, and bringing these two

magnificent locomotives to the railway is a really exciting development. It is imperative that we now plan to safe guard the future of our locos, infrastructure and most of interest of our wonderful heritage. This agreement to take an exciting project forward with 7027 will enable a 'centre of excellence' frame work to be delivered that can be replicated to ensure firm legacy goals are achieved for our wider WSR needs. It is great to all the partners in this venture working together to see the two engines reunited together within WSR residence in the next twelve months."

Paul Whitehouse, Chairman of the West Somerset Railway Association said: "We have been discussing this possibility with Jon for some time now and we are pleased to see the project taking a significant step forward today. As the principal supporting charity we agree with Ian that the project can have positive benefits for the railway and the wider community in Somerset through the provision of a Railway Engineering Centre and a Training Centre of Excellence. We look forward to collaborating on this project as it moves forward."