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Siemens and South West Trains join forces for heritage railway volunteering

A team of over 50 apprentices and graduates from Siemens and South West Trains (SWT) joined forces last week for a two-day teambuilding exercise to help the expansion of Swanage Railway, ahead of Volunteers Week (1- 7 June).

Following the success of a similar event held last year, this is the second time the train operator and maintainer have come together to help out on the heritage railway. This year, a larger group of apprentices and graduates from all over the south of England took part, including apprentices from Ilford and Acton in London.

The team concentrated on the Herston Halt area of the existing railway route, repainting and improving the station appearance, replacing ballast and clearing and sorting years of donated railway equipment. As a result, the area can now be better utilised for ongoing storage as the railway moves closer to linking with the mainline at Wareham.

This year's teambuilding exercise not only provided practical support for the heritage railway but encouraged closer ties between apprentices from Siemens and SWT, building on last year's success. Last year's event saw the apprentices together dismantle a Class 101 DMU (diesel multiple unit) before it was scrapped. The event, which was planned and organised by one of Siemens' apprentices, gave the participants a chance to practice their mechanical skills and techniques on older rolling stock.

Project Wareham Project Manager Frank Roberts – who has been a Swanage Railway volunteer since the 1980s – said:

“The area at Herston where the team has been working was set up as a storage area 25 years ago by the Army. Since then, we've gained a lot of railway assets, including some which will need to be moved from the end of the line to allow the railway expansion. Clearing and sorting this area will enable us to better utilise the space.”

Siemens apprentice, returning for his second year of volunteering, Jordan Meadows

said:

“It’s great to be able to meet up with not only the other apprentices from our business but the South West Trains apprentices too. It’s been quite hard work over the last couple of days, but good fun”.

Patrick Bailey, third year apprentice at South West Trains based at Salisbury said:

“I’ve really enjoyed the last couple of days and I’m thinking about volunteering here on a regular basis”.

Siemens apprentice and volunteer at The Swanage Railway Trust, Nathan Au said:

“There was great feedback from last year’s volunteering event so we’re delighted to have more volunteers from across the two organisations helping out”.

The ties between Siemens and SWT will be strengthened further in September with the opening of the new National Training Academy for Rail (NTAR). SWT will be the first train operating company (TOC) to benefit from the new Northampton-based academy with the entire intake of SWT apprentices receiving training in a variety of areas. NTAR is a joint project between the National Skills Academy for Railway Engineering (NSARE), the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills (BIS) and the Department for Transport (DfT), who have provided half the funds required, with industry partner Siemens contributing the other 50 per cent.

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About Siemens

Siemens AG (Berlin and Munich) is a global technology powerhouse that has stood for engineering excellence, innovation, quality, reliability and internationality for more than 165 years. The company is active in more than 200 countries, focusing on the areas of electrification, automation and digitalization. One of the world's largest producers of energy-efficient, resource-saving technologies, Siemens is No. 1 in offshore wind turbine construction, a leading supplier of combined cycle turbines for power generation, a major provider of power transmission solutions and a pioneer in infrastructure solutions as well as automation, drive and software solutions for industry. The company is also a leading provider of medical imaging equipment – such as computed tomography and magnetic resonance imaging systems – and a leader in laboratory diagnostics as well as clinical IT. In fiscal year 2014, which ended on September 30, 2014, Siemens generated revenue from continuing operations of €71.9 billion and net income of €5.5 billion. At the end of September 2014, the company had around 357,000 employees worldwide. Further information is available on the Internet at www.siemens.com.

Siemens Rail Systems

Siemens Rail Systems Division provides expertise and technology in the full range of rail vehicles – from heavy rail to metros to trams and light-rail vehicles. In the UK, the Division employs around 750 people and maintains over 360 Siemens passenger trains for First TransPennine Express, South West Trains, Heathrow Express, Greater Anglia Franchise (Abellio), Northern Rail, London Midland and ScotRail. In addition to manufacturing the new trains for Thameslink, the company will also be supplying Eurostar with its new high speed fleet of trains.

South West Trains / Network Rail Alliance

The South West Trains-Network Rail Alliance was formed on 29 April 2012 with the aim of delivering an improved service for passengers with faster, more customer-focused decision-making. It is also a step towards delivering a more efficient and cost effective railway for the long term.

- A single joint management team now look after train services and infrastructure across the South West Trains / Wessex route.
- The Alliance is the first of its kind in the UK.
- Train services operated by the Alliance are some of the busiest commuter train services in the UK. Over 2,000 passenger and freight services run on the network every day and the route covers 643 miles of track, with 1375 sets of points and 4394 signals.

Swanage Railway

- Opened in 1885, the ten-mile branch line from Wareham to Corfe Castle and Swanage was controversially closed by British Rail in January, 1972, with six and a half miles of track from east of Furzebrook to Swanage lifted during 1972.
- With 4,000 members, the Swanage Railway has been rebuilt from nothing since 1976 and is run by a regular team of 500 volunteers supported by a team of paid staff.
- The award-winning five and a half mile heritage railway now carries more than 216,000 passengers a year.
- The Swanage Railway plans to run a trial train service to Wareham from the second quarter of 2016 for 140 selected days over the following two years.

- The Swanage Railway has received a £1.47 million grant from the Government's Coastal Communities Fund to enable the trial train service to take place.
- The money is also being used to upgrade three miles of single line – previously owned by Network Rail – between Worgret Junction (on the main London to Weymouth line) and Motala which was the start of the Swanage Railway until September, 2014.
- That three-mile stretch of line was last used in the summer of 2005 when the last gas train ran from the BP Wytch Farm oil field gas terminal at Furzebrook.
- Since 2009, the Worgret Junction to Motala section of line has only been used for occasional excursion trains to the Swanage Railway as well as for the movement of locomotives for Swanage Railway special events.