



PRESS RELEASE

Date: 10th July 2017

INCIDENT ON THE SOUTH DEVON RAILWAY THURSDAY 22nd JUNE

Following an incident at the South Devon Railway (SDR) on the 1pm Totnes Riverside to Buckfastleigh train on Thursday 22 June 2017 -- involving a female passenger and her young son who almost entered a closed toilet without a floor and which seriously compromised their safety -- the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) and the Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB) are now both undertaking investigations at the SDR, and with which the railway is fully co-operating.

In line with current legal requirements about reporting railway incidents, the SDR reported the matter officially to both the ORR and RAIB as the UK's two principal rail regulatory authorities. <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/rail-accident-investigation-branch>

As a result, the SDR is unable to make any further comment about details of the incident at this time whilst the twin, but separate investigations by the regulatory bodies, and the SDR's own internal inquiry, are underway and their findings and subsequent reports drawn up. However, an SDR spokesman said:

“The South Devon Railway takes this incident extremely seriously in which safety on a moving train was badly compromised and that could have resulted in serious injury to a female passenger and her young son.

“We regret that this incident took place and wish to apologise to the lady and family involved for the trauma which they suffered. The coach was taken out of service and quarantined pending the different investigations by the RAIB, ORR and SDR.

More follows



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“On the day in question, something clearly went wrong with our safety control and hazard monitoring systems as evidenced by the incident having taken place – it simply should not have happened.

“As a result, we took steps to check all of our coaches and, subject to RAIB and ORR guidance, plan to implement an enhanced and rigorous inspection and monitoring regime for all passenger vehicles for the future.

“Despite this incident occurring, we are pleased that the SDR will continue to run its steam trains whilst the ORR and RAIB investigations are pending.

“Whilst we await the findings of the RAIB and ORR investigations, our own internal inquiry will leave no stone unturned either in order to discover how this incident occurred, how we might learn lessons from it, and how we can act accordingly in making improvements.

“As a popular family-based attraction which carries over 100,000 people a year, part of the attraction of the South Devon Railway to visitors is that they can travel in old-style heritage railway coaches pulled by steam locos.

“But many of these passenger vehicles are now over 60 years old, some even older, and so they require considerable maintenance efforts to keep them in good running order.

“On train toilets are problematic for us -- and every other heritage railway in the country -- not only because some toilet floors have rusted out over time and so need to be replaced, but also because access to the vital brake pipes are beneath them. This is why the toilet floor had been removed in this coach for brake pipe repairs to be carried out and the toilet door sealed out of use.

More follows



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“The care and maintenance of our valuable coaches for future generations to enjoy is exactly why the SDR is now building a new £250,000 covered Carriage storage shed at Buckfastleigh in order to better preserve them for the future.

“We are committed to putting safety at the heart of every area of our operations and -- whilst this was an isolated incident without any previous precedent -- there can be no room for complacency where railway and passenger safety is concerned.

“Having been in the tourism attraction business for nearly 50 years now, the SDR has a good and proven record of safe railway operations, and our visitors can rest assured that their safety is our number one priority.”

Ends

NOTES TO NEWS EDITOR

- 1) Further details about the aim, objectives and scope of the investigations by the RAIB and ORR should be directed to them direct;
- 2) We are unable to allow the media any access to the coach involved as it is quarantined pending the different investigations, but some additional photos are available on request to Dick Wood, see below;
- 3) Any media wishing to visit the SDR should contact Dick Wood to make the necessary arrangements who will be the railway's spokesman about the incident.

Press statement written and issued by Dick Wood,

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