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## Steam to cross Kaaimans again

One of the world's great scenic railways is set to be reopened for steam operation after a decade out of use.

Classic Rail, a privately-funded initiative, has been granted a 20-year concession to operate the 67km George-Knysna line in the Western Cape of South Africa.

Declared a preserved steam route by South African rail operator Transnet in 1991,

it was closed in 2006 after suffering flood damage - forcing its steam operator, Outeniqua Choo-Tjoe, to run from George to Mossel Bay instead. The latter operation itself ceased in 2010 after its passenger licence expired.

Classic Rail plans to reopen the line in three stages, beginning with diesel-hauled dining trains over the easternmost section between Knysna and Keytersnek. With a contractor engaged to carry out track clearance

and repairs, it is hoped that this could commence in December.

The second stage will be from Keyters Nek to Sedgefield, followed by the western section into George - which includes the famous Kaaimans River Bridge. With the support of the Friends of the Choo-Tjoe, the ultimate aim is for steam to return, supported by freight traffic by 2020.

Classic Rail CEO Alan McVitty said: "The project has only got this far because Transnet - and a lot of other good people - have brought enormous goodwill to the party.

"With so many people so excited about what we're doing, we're not looking at this as a 20-year project.

"Rather, we see it as a 100-year plan that will create opportunities for the local economy, for training and skills development, and for locals and visitors alike to once again enjoy the experience of what is probably the most scenic steam route in the world."

↓ **Class 24 2-8-4 No. 3683 crosses Kaaimans River Bridge with the 9am goods train from Knysna to George on May 12 1989. PETER ZABEK**



## Tyre trouble for '19D' repatriation scheme

The North British Locomotive Preservation Group has hit a snag in its attempts to preserve South Africa's last 'real' working steam locomotive - with the discovery that it is unfit to move by rail.

An engineering report on '19D' 4-8-2 No. 3 at Sappi Saiccor pulp mill concluded that its tyres are too badly worn to be permitted to move over Transnet metals. The possibility of swapping its wheelsets with those of sister engine No. 2 is being explored, as is road transport.

Nos. 2 and 3 were the last steam locomotives in industrial use in South Africa when they were replaced by diesels last August. Says NBLPG Secretary Ken Livermore: "It was originally planned to take them out of traffic in 2012, and they kept going without much maintenance. But we're still going to try and save No. 3."

The goal is to bring the Robert Stephenson & Hawthorn-built machine to its birthplace of Darlington for display, at an estimated cost of £50,000.

## Dragged to safety - behind steam

The news that South Africa's prototype condensing Class 25 4-8-4 No. 3451 had a secure future was welcome enough - but as an added bonus, it made its journey into preservation behind steam.

A remarkable convoy on June 19 saw the locomotive towed from Millsite, near Johannesburg, to the Germiston base of main line operator Reefsteamers, by David Shepherd's recently-overhauled '15F' 4-8-2 No. 3052. The move involved what is thought to be the first-ever visit of a condenser to Johannesburg station.

Also hitching a ride in the formation was a similarly derelict '19D' 4-8-2, No. 2540, which Transnet

Foundation has placed on loan to Reefsteamers - giving the group its first example of this versatile class.

No. 3451 will receive

initial protective attention at Germiston, with the ultimate aim of its custodians, Steamnet 2000, being to restore it to working order.



↑ **David Shepherd's '15F' 4-8-2 No. 3052 leads condensing Class 25 4-8-4 No. 3451 and '19D' 4-8-2 No. 2540 out of Millsite on June 19. AIDAN McCARTHY**