

MANIFESTO



steam in action



south africa

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Primarily driven by three entities, Steam in Action aims to stabilise and further develop Steam and Rail Tourism in South Africa



Background

The demise of Steam on South African Railways networks was a natural development which took place in virtually every country in the world. In South Africa's case this process was characterised by a sensible commitment to Heritage by the authorities and the Transnet Heritage Foundation was established to operate trains and to act as custodians for the hugely valuable inventory of Steam locomotives that survived the transition from Steam to other forms of traction on the South African network. For some years this process was well managed with South Africa gaining an excellent reputation as a Steam destination of note. Trains like the Union Limited, the Outeniqua Choo-Tjoe, and others, all of which were managed successfully by THF, brought in tens of millions of Rands to South Africa and confirmed that we still had what it took to operate Steam trains in their original format.

However, lack of focus, reorganisation and changes in attitude have caused this magnificent programme to struggle to the point where Steam traction and Railway Heritage in South Africa may no longer exist. Over two years ago THF signalled its desire to offload its responsibilities to the Private Sector and the individual Private Railway Operators, Clubs and Preservation groups held their breath while they waited for something exciting to happen. Unfortunately nothing happened and the anticipated regeneration of the national Railway Preservation picture went into paralysis. In fact, it went beyond paralysis because the authority in charge of Main and Branch lines at the time, namely Spoornet, became proactive in cancelling overseas tours that had been booked. Only through great perseverance on behalf of individual clubs were some (but not all) of these trains ultimately allowed to operate.

Although the war of words continues to rage, the status quo remains as above with real signs that through disunity, hostility from the National Railway Authorities and through lack of resources, Railway Preservation operations in South Africa are in for a rough ride.



Cover photograph and above courtesy of Dick Manton



Photograph courtesy of Chris Janisch

Is there hope? As always there must be! There is considerable optimism that if the key players act in a resolute fashion the situation can be stabilised. It is very obvious from the encouragement that is being received by the various clubs and operators that the International market is watching with bated breath to see how the future of South Africa's Rail tourism operations will evolve, both for Steam enthusiasts and for people wishing to enjoy a more general African Steam Railway Heritage experience.

In consequence of the above those organisations still managing to operate have decided to create a new initiative which invites people who have South Africa's Railway preservation programme at heart to step forward and make a contribution to its salvation. There is a need to demonstrate that the collective voice is one that will be heard. Although hostility does exist towards Steam in particular, there is a belief that a calm factual presentation of the benefits of rebuilding South Africa's position as the No 1 Steam Railway destination in the world will bring about a change of attitude. The big difference between this initiative and others in the past is that it is a truly Global programme which seeks to encourage the support of not only the International Railway preservation community but also people with strong tourism interests. In fact it seeks to include any individual anywhere who feels that there is something very special about what Steam in Africa really represents and who has a desire to see it not only maintained but also improved and expanded in the future.

Who is behind this initiative?

So far, three of the primary players in Steam preservation have combined to form the Constitution of “Steam in Action” and have introduced this manifesto. This voluntary association of entities plans to implement it and to live up to its objectives. They include:

- (a) ReefSteamers Association. This is one of South Africa's premier Steam operators with a hugely impressive line-up of Main Line locomotives and the ability to operate trains long distance to exacting standards.
- (b) Friends of the Rail. A long established Steam preservation club in Pretoria operating excellent locos and maintaining a busy schedule of short to medium haul trains on an interesting variety of lines. They already have a close working relationship with ReefSteamers. The combined power of ReefSteamers and FOTR can provide a world class capability when it comes to operating trains countrywide which would be configured to suit clients' requirements.
- (c) The Sandstone Heritage Trust. This self-contained private Narrow Gauge railway in the Eastern Free State is considered one of the great Narrow Gauge railways of the world with an impressive collection of operating Narrow Gauge locomotives, from diminutive Sugar Cane engines up to the impressive ex SAR&H Garratts.

Sandstone is a logical partner for organisations like FOTR and ReefSteamers owing to the fact that it is located in the centre of the picturesque Eastern Free State line which has long been considered one of the most scenic railway branch lines in the world.

How can you support “Steam in Action”?

An open invitation is going out to all South African and Southern African Heritage Railway operators, i.e. other clubs and organisations who currently operate or have a desire to operate Steam locomotives in any configuration to **JOIN THIS INITIATIVE!** These include:

- A. The broader Steam enthusiast community, i.e. specialist photographers and people who just love Steam.
- B. International Railways, Clubs and enthusiast groups who see a benefit in a partnership agreement with an active and competent South African Steam coordination group.
- C. Governments, both national and regional, tourist authorities, railway organisations and anyone who has a commitment to the future of rail. A national rail picture without a passenger service and without a Heritage component might be successful financially but in the eyes of the world is still ultimately a sterile railway enterprise.
- D. Travel agencies, tour operators and members of the travel industry.
- E. Finally, the public, particularly those with a fire in the belly, and anyone with a sense of excitement and adventure.



Photographs courtesy of Paul Hloben

What is the plan?

1

TO GET THE DOCUMENTATION RIGHT

To formalise suitable long term agreements between Rail Tourism operators and Transnet which clarify the regulatory, operating and costing framework that must be met. Core routes need to be identified for use by special trains which meet the aspirations of the international rail tourism market. This agreement would cover safety issues, management of fire risk and other issues to avoid "Last minute" cancellations.

2

TO CREATE A FORMAL RAIL TOURISM PROGRAMME WHICH PEOPLE CAN TRUST

To offer national Steam hauled railway tours which are tailor-made to specific groups, many of whom have already been in touch and have expressed interest in configuring trips to their requirements. Instead of this being a one-off effort by an individual club the national "**Steam in Action**" group will coordinate all aspects of the arrangements and will make sure that the best resources in South Africa are made available to ensure its successful implementation.

3

TO PUT AN END TO UNNECESSARY SCRAPPING OF LOCOMOTIVES

To formalise the fate of numerous rare locomotives including Steam, Electric and Diesel which are currently disenfranchised and lack documentation which would clarify their legal status.

4

TO ESTABLISH STRONG INTERNATIONAL LINKS

To appoint international representatives in all countries which send visitors to South Africa to make sure that Steam in Action's interests are well represented in every forum possible. This will include a strong marketing and publicity component. Overseas representatives will act as the gateway to tour bookings and encourage members of the specialised Railway tourist community in their country to take advantage of South Africa's scenic beauty behind Steam.

5

TO RAISE FUNDS

In time, as this initiative develops, a number of fund raising campaigns to fund the refurbishment of specific locomotives that are of interest to the international community will be launched.



Photographs courtesy of Dick Manton

What do supporters get in return?

- (i) The national "Steam in Action" group will be issuing a certificate confirming that each person or group is a supporter and contributor to "Steam in Action".
- (ii) In the future when fund raising campaigns have been launched, those people who wish to contribute to the "Steam in Action" Steam Locomotive restoration fund will have a direct say in which Steam locomotive they would like to see restored and can, if they so wish, have their name recorded as being instrumental in its restoration.
- (iii) "Steam in Action" will be launching a range of DVD's, books and videos which will be made available to supporters at special prices. The proceeds of these sales will go into the restoration fund.
- (iv) Supporters will be eligible to receive a monthly e-mail newsletter, together with other "Stop Press" updates. They will also be invited to contribute their own thoughts to the newsletter so that it is a truly democratic communications medium.
- (v) Supporters will be invited first on all planned trips, Steam Safaris etc. In other words, no trips will be advertised on the open market until "Steam in Action" supporters have decided whether they would like to ride the rails behind Heritage Steam, Diesel or Electric.
- (vi) People who contribute to the restoration of a locomotive in the future will be invited to participate in any special events relating to that locomotive.

Finally, an application is being made to recognise the entire Steam Heritage programme as a United Nations World Heritage resource. "Steam in Action" supporters will be recorded as being founding members of that initiative.



Photograph courtesy of Dick Manton



Photograph courtesy of Ron Nell



Photograph courtesy of Paul Hloben

Electrics and Diesels

"Steam in Action" has every intention of expanding the scope of its action plan to incorporate all forms of Heritage Traction. When you communicate with us please point out where your interests lie.

A Final Word

Travelling on a vintage steam train is the very essence of adventure and romance. Watching the world glide by as you enjoy a meal in a teak-panelled dining saloon; being lulled to sleep by the gentle rocking of an ancient wooden coach; relaxing completely to the gentle rhythms of the Steam Age ... this is the stuff that dreams are made of.

Help us to bring the dream alive by joining "Steam in Action" now!

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO REGISTER AS A SUPPORTER
[CLICK HERE](#)

IF YOU HAVE FURTHER QUERIES PLEASE E-MAIL
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