

GB Railfreight and Class 50 Alliance collaboration sealed with locomotive repaints

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UK rail freight operator GB Railfreight (GBRf) and the Class 50 Alliance (C50A) have today announced that mainline registered Class 50 locomotives 50007 Hercules and 50049 Defiance are to be repainted into the latest GBRf livery.

GBRf worked closely with the C50A in enabling a return to the mainline for their locomotives in 2017 and subsequently through a programme of railtours during 2018 as part of the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Class 50s.

The decision to repaint the locomotives into the striking new livery is a recognition of the developing relationship between the two organisations and marks a new chapter in the story of the Class 50s.

Over the past two years, GBRf has invested in a programme of driver training to enable Class 50 operation over much of the UK rail network. The company has also operated several railtours using the 50007 and 50049s, including The Caledonian in October 2017, returning class 50s to Glasgow for their 50th anniversary.

The repaints will be carried out by Arlington Fleet Services at Eastleigh. GBRf will fund the repainting and

also manage the movement of the locomotives to and from Eastleigh.

The first outing for the GBRf-liveried Class 50s will be on Saturday 23rd March when they will work Pathfinder Tours' Terminator-Pheonixed railtour from London Paddington to Penzance and return to Waterloo. This train will mark 25 years since the final BR operated Class 50 railtour over the same route, The Terminator, which was also promoted by Pathfinder.

John Smith, Managing Director of GB Railfreight, said: "I am delighted that GBRf is sponsoring the repainting of 50007, Hercules and 50049, Defiance, into GBRf livery. Our relationship with the class 50 alliance has grown over the years, with the painting of the two locomotives being an excellent way to recognise the fact. Having first witnessed class 50's at Crewe in the early 1970s, I never thought the day would arise when one would be painted in the livery of GBRf. I'm very much looking forward to seeing the finished article(s)."

Jonathan Dunster, Director Class 50 Alliance said: "Today's announcement marks a significant next step in the story of the Class 50s, and we're delighted to build on our already successful relationship with GBRf.

"Since we successfully returned Class 50s to the mainline in 1997, we have gained a great deal of experience, working with many stakeholders across the industry. We have operated around 80 railtours, supplied power for timetabled service trains in South Wales and operated numerous freight and route learning duties. For GBRf to cement our relationship in this way is fantastic news and we look forward to working with the team on an exciting future programme, which kicks off in style when we head to Penzance on 23rd March."

Following the repaints, the locomotives will be available to operate selected GBRf trains on a 'spot-hire' basis. This work will include movement of locomotives between heritage railway gala events, and future railtours. The locomotives will continue to be based at the Severn Valley Railway, but will have easy access to the national network, thanks to the 24-hour connection at Kidderminster.

50007 and 50049 will be unveiled in their new livery at a private event at Eastleigh Works, prior to working a test run and then the railtour on 23rd March.