

Heritage railway get a boost from Metro's £70m depot project

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The £70m project to rebuild the Tyne and Wear Metro depot has delivered a welcome boost to a leading north east heritage railway.

More than 20 tons of used track equipment from Nexus' Gosforth depot have been donated to the Tanfield Railway, which runs from Sunnyside in Gateshead to East Tanfield in County Durham.

A raft of surplus materials, including sleepers and control equipment, were made available by VolkerFitzPatrick and their subcontractor, Trackwork, after works got underway on the depot site on January.

The donated materials will help to secure the future of the Tanfield line, with its history that can be traced back to 1725. The donated equipment will be used by volunteers to keep the steam line in good condition, and ready for regular passenger trains to return when the coronavirus situation allows.

On behalf of Stadler, the Swiss train manufacturer making the new trains for the Tyne and Wear Metro, VolkerFitzpatrick is rebuilding the Metro depot, which will provide a modern home for the new fleet of

trains.

Metro Development Director, Neil Blagburn, said: "It's fantastic that our depot modernisation project can bring benefit to local heritage railways, who often rely on donations like this.

"No doubt there will be a great deal more equipment and materials looking to be repurposed as we press ahead with the complete transformation of our 100-year-old depot at Gosforth.

"The Tanfield Railway in particular, were keen to get some of the old sleepers from us. It is among the world's oldest railways and it's big honour to have a few pieces of the Metro network helping to support such a local icon."

Marcus Dench, senior project manager for VolkerFitzpatrick, said: "A key aim for our team, throughout this project, is to find sustainable ways to repurpose old materials. We are putting the environment first and are looking at ways we can divert waste from landfill and reduce our carbon emissions, and we hope to work with other local enterprises, to meet this goal, in the future."

Richard Thew, project manager at Trackwork, said: "We are delighted to be working on this project with VolkerFitzpatrick, and we were happy to help donate the materials to the local heritage railway."

Tanfield Railway General Manager, David Watchman, said: "The new Metro fleet is an exciting project for the future of transport in the region. But it's great to see that it's also helping to preserve some of the north east's unique heritage.

"We're really grateful to Nexus, Stadler and VolkerFitzpatrick for this donation. Equipment like this is often very hard to obtain new, and of course re-using it in this way is much better for the environment. Our volunteers are looking forward to putting it to good use as we prepare for our 300th anniversary in 2025."

The new Metro depot will be home to the new train fleet over the coming years, heralding a bright future for the transport system. The preparatory works will pave the way for demolition to start in the Spring.

It is expected to take four years for the new Metro depot to be ready. Stadler is delivering the new Metro train fleet on behalf of Nexus, and has appointed VolkerFitzpatrick to build the depot. It took over maintenance of the old fleet in October last year and will look after the new trains for 35 years.

Photo credit: Nexus