

Iconic Isle of Wight trains reach the end of the line

January 4, 2021



A historic chapter for Island Line passengers and staff has closed as an emotional farewell has been bid to its famed and beloved 82-year-old trains.

The final Class 483 train rolled out of the iconic Ryde Pier Head Station at 23.17 on Sunday evening.

Every ending heralds a new beginning though, and Islanders can look forward to a major upgrade this spring with a new, **fully refurbished fleet** which will deliver a modern railway for the Isle of Wight.

The trains, which are estimated to have each travelled in excess of 3 million miles in their 82 years, will enjoy a retirement which befits their cherished status. One will be heading to the Isle of Wight Steam Railway, meaning that islanders and visitors alike will still have a chance to enjoy the old red train, while another unit goes to the London Traction Transport Group. Formed in May 2020, the Group hopes to run the train on the Epping Ongar Railway under its own power and even take it to rail galas across the country.

Commenting, South Western Railway's Managing Director Mark Hopwood said:

“We’re saying goodbye to a truly iconic train fleet which is held in great affection by people living on the Island and elsewhere.

“These trains had already been carrying passengers for half a century by the time they arrived on the Island in 1989, coincidentally the same year that I started my first job on the railway, but they have served our customers well – even if they have on occasion shown their age. This is in no small part thanks to the exceptional team at Ryde Depot, who have gone above and beyond to keep the trains running.

“While this may be an emotional end to one era, it’s also the start of an exciting new one. The £26 million being invested in new trains and major infrastructure upgrades will help to deliver a railway fit for 2021, with performance and customer experience both set to be transformed.”

Steve Backhouse, General Manager at the Isle of Wight Steam Railway said: “The Isle of Wight Steam Railway already has a world-class collection of carriages dating back to the opening of the Ryde to Shanklin line in 1864. The 1938 stock have been an iconic feature of the Isle of Wight for the last 30 years and we’re delighted that a unit will be preserved at Havenstreet so that it can be enjoyed by future generations.”

Daniel Nash, Secretary of the London Transport Traction Group, said: “80 years after delivery to London Transport, we’re excited to be bringing unit 483006 back to a former tube line at the Epping Ongar Railway. We hope that enthusiasts who have not been able to make it to the Island today due to the current restrictions will support us and help us to keep one of these trains running in preservation. Although they have finished on the Island Line, this will not be the last chance to ride on one of the trains.”

The fleet of two-carriage trains were built back in 1938, serving the London Underground network before travelling across the Solent to the Isle of Wight in 1989, where they have been faithfully carrying passengers ever since.

In keeping with tradition, the fleet set to replace the retiring trains are also former London Underground stock which previously served the District Line. This upgrade will give a major boost to reliability, comfort and convenience, with the fully refurbished trains boasting modern features such as free on-board WiFi, improved passenger information, at-seat charging points and wheelchair spaces. The first new train was welcomed onto the Island last month.

The new trains form part of a £26 million investment in Island Line, which will deliver the installation of a new passing loop at Brading, allowing for a service at regular 30-minute intervals; track enhancement work to improve ride quality; and adjustments to platform heights to improve accessibility.

These major improvements will take place between 4 January and 31 March, during which time there will be no service on Island Line. A bus service will be replacing trains throughout the three months.

Photo credit: South Western Railway