

Network Rail commences ownership of Dartmoor Line and Okehampton station

July 2, 2021



Another 'key' milestone in reopening the Dartmoor Line has been reached with the completion of the purchase of the railway and Okehampton station.

Network Rail's acquisition of this ownership was formally marked on Thursday (1 July) with the symbolic handing over of keys to the station and the track.

The 16 mile stretch of railway – from Coleford Junction to the end of the line at Meldon Quarry – has been purchased by Network Rail from Aggregate Industries.

Aggregate Industries has owned the line for more than 25 years having acquired it from British Rail in 1994, and up until 2008 operated aggregate services to and from Meldon Quarry. Since then, Aggregate Industries continued to support train operations through a long-term lease to the Dartmoor Rail Company as well as supporting the Dartmoor Railway Association (DRA) in championing the reopening of the Dartmoor Line.

Following the administration of the Dartmoor Rail Company, Aggregate Industries has worked

collaboratively with Network Rail and Great Western Railway (GWR), accommodating detailed surveys to be undertaken to understand what infrastructure and railway control system improvements are needed to bring the Dartmoor Line up to the required standards to enable GWR to operate trains safely.

Devon County Council has transferred ownership of the northern part of Okehampton station to Network Rail for a peppercorn fee of £1, enabling the station and platform that will serve passengers upon the resumption of regular passenger services, to become part of the rail network.

The Council will retain ownership of the southern side of the station and will maintain the footbridge to allow connectivity between the two sides of the station.

Yesterday at Okehampton station, Aggregate Industries' Aggregate Director, South Phil Coupland marked the sale of the railway by presenting Network Rail's industry programme director, Christian Irwin, with a large key, known as a 'train staff', used by train drivers to enter a section of single track assured no other trains are on the same track. The sale of Okehampton station was also marked with Devon County Councillor, Andrea Davis, presenting Network Rail with a set of keys to the station.

A framed picture was also presented by Network Rail to Tom and Sue Baxter in recognition of their longstanding support of the reopening of the Dartmoor Line and ongoing volunteering efforts to maintain and refurbish parts of the station, as part of the [Dartmoor Railway Association](#).



Christian Irwin, Network Rail industry programme director, said: “We are delighted to have completed the purchase of the Dartmoor Line and northern side of Okehampton station.

“Aggregate Industries and Devon County Council have been incredibly supportive of the scheme and have been tremendous throughout the whole process.

“We would like to thank them and the local community for their ongoing support as our teams continue to work hard look to reopen to the Dartmoor Line by the end of the year.”

Phil Coupland, Aggregate Director, South at Aggregate Industries, said: “At Aggregate Industries, we are committed to being a good neighbour to the communities in which we operate. We are extremely pleased that the passenger rail service between Exeter and Okehampton is going ahead, giving back an important rail section to the local community and offering a sustainable means of transport for residents and businesses alike.

“We have worked hard with Network Rail and other stakeholders to get to this point, and we are very happy that this much missed route will soon be back up and running.”

Councillor Andrea Davis, Devon County Council Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport, said: “Transferring our station assets to Network Rail at no cost has helped with the financial package for the reinstatement of regular services on the Dartmoor Line. I’m proud of Devon County Council’s part in this scheme, which goes back several years, having supported the Sunday rail services and keeping the railway reopening hopes alive.”

Matt Barnes, GWR regional development manager, said: “Today’s handover marks a significant step in returning passengers services to the people of Okehampton and beyond.

“Returning regular, daily services to this line has been a long-held ambition of ours and was the most sought-after additional routes in our most recent franchise consultation.

“We’ve already done a great deal of work with Network Rail and local partners, including Devon County Council, to support those aspirations.

“This commitment to re-open the line will help extend the reach and social and economic benefits of the railway, further supporting the communities we serve.”

For more information and the latest updates on the Dartmoor Line, please visit www.dartmoorline.com

Photo credit: Network Rail