

STEAMNET 2000 NPC

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"Preserving Northern Cape's steam Trains"

Affiliated to Transnet Foundation and a member of the Heritage Railway Association of S.A.

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PRESS RELEASE

Notification to members, supporters and all heritage rail interested parties.

Steamnet 2000NPC is the only heritage railway preservation / restoration / operation organisation in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa, established 1990 and encompassing local and international membership.

South Africa was, until some 20 years ago, a preferred World destination for steam train fans, offering some of the best attraction in the world and underpinned by Transnet support. Unfortunately the country no longer features in most international rail tour operators programmes aimed at rail-fans.

The Transnet Foundation, the body charged with dealing with the heritage aspects of what many still recall as the old SAR [South African Railways] are currently engaged in rationalising and re-positioning their collection of historic and heritage assets, especially locomotives. From the originally identified National Collection of around 150 steam locomotives only some 64 will now be retained by Transnet as identified by SAHRA [South African Heritage Resources Agency] with most of the remainder soon to be auctioned for scrap. It is understood that, other than those items already in the Outeniqua Transport Museum at George, many of the 64 locomotives will be moved to, and ring-fenced at, Bloemfontein.

However, in addition to these 64 engines, the Foundation has also put a number of locomotives on loan to organisations like Steamnet2000 and we have four Class 25NC locomotives* in our care already along with other, privately owned engines.

It is against this background we are proud and delighted to announce that the Transnet Foundation has now allocated certain priceless, unique and irreplaceable assets on an initial 5 year "custodianship" to us and the Board of Steamnet 2000NPC wishes to place on record their sincere thanks to Transnet Foundation and their Heritage Manager, Mr Brian Murison, for entrusting us with these.

This is also a major step to restoring the Northern Cape Province as the Prime World destination for steam train tourists.

Assets granted :-

⑩ **Class 16E 4-6-2 locomotive No 858;** The fastest steam locomotive in Africa outside Algeria. It has the largest driving wheels (1,83m / 6') of any locomotive in the world on the 1067mm (3' 6") rail gauge, allowing higher speeds. Only 6 were manufactured in 1936 by Henschel & Sohn of Kassel Germany, for operation of the prestigious *Blue Train* between Johannesburg and Cape Town. No 858 is one of only 4** surviving locomotives in Africa fitted with the revolutionary Rotary Cam valve gear and has called the Northern Cape its home since 1970.

⑩ **Class 24 2-8-4 locomotive No 3654;** The regular locomotive assigned to the Kimberley-Douglas branch line railway until diesels took over in 1985. A lightweight model suitable for secondary lines such as to Kakamas

⑩ **Class 25 4-8-4 locomotive No 3511;** One of only 2 surviving condensing locomotives in the World – and the only one capable of operating again without major expenditure. 90 Class 25's were manufactured in 1953-54 by Henschel & Sohn and North British Locomotive of Glasgow, Scotland. The special unique design was developed for dedicated operation in the South African Karoo desert between Kimberley and Touwsrivier. Instead of exhausting, used steam was condensed using giant turbine operated fans and recycled. The 25's offered an 85% water [fuel] saving in the arid, dry Karoo and are among the largest and longest [32,46m / 106' 6"] steam locomotives outside USA and USSR. From the 1960's they were all concentrated North of Beaufort West and by 1974 all 90 were operating out of Kimberley and De Aar in the Northern Cape Province. Only 4 countries operated this type and today only 2 survive.

No 3511 will now be cared for by us at our Beaconsfield site as will Nos 858 and 3654, all three of which are already Kimberley based. The goal of restoration to operating condition for the first time since 1991 as a major tourist attraction is dependent on funding.

⑩ **Class 25 4-8-4 locomotive No 3451;** The only other surviving condensing locomotive! This was the first of the 90 to be constructed and the only one manufactured 100% by Henschel & Sohn; it happens to be the only locomotive surviving in South Africa fitted with Timken' as opposed to SKF' roller bearings and due to its historical & engineering significance it was selected for preservation in the late 70's but was moved from the relative safety of De Aar to Millsite Krugersdorp in the mid 80's where it has been systematically vandalised and stripped of components. The costs to move this 237 755Kg (234 ton) item 500km back to the Northern Cape are prohibitive so Steamnet 2000 members have arranged with Gauteng steam train club *Reefsteamers* to provide a home for No 3451 for protection while the long rebuilding task is tackled. We are most grateful for their assistance.

A regular, almost hourly, unforgettable sight was two giant Class 25's in tandem hauling heavy freight trains through Three Sisters and Hutchinson to and from De Aar. The opportunity now exists to recreate and celebrate the last time this happened half a century ago in 1974.

⑩ **Kimberley Se Trein;** This set of 5 historic, nicely appointed passenger coaches was a regular Provincial attraction providing day trips and excursions out of Kimberley. Abandoned since 1991 and in need of extensive upgrading work, 4 of these could however once again be used for this purpose.

All of the above mentioned now need funding to progress their restoration to operating standards and to provide a major tourist attraction in the Northern Cape Province.

Steamnet2000NPC Board of Directors

* Nos. 3441, 3457, 3467 and 3482.

No.3441 a Henschel loco the other three all North British and ex. condensing engines.

** Class 15E No.2878, Class 16E No.857, Class 16E No.858, Class 19C No.2439.

Nos.2878, 857 and 2439 are all among the 64 National Collection assets to be retained by Transnet.

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