

# **Folkestone & Hythe District Heritage Strategy**

## **Appendix 1: Theme 3c Seaside Leisure & Tourism – The Romney Hythe & Dymchurch Railway**

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## **(3c) The Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway**

### **1. Summary**

Folkestone & Hythe District has a number of valuable heritage assets that enhance the local tourism and economy such as the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway. The 15in gauge light railway that runs from Hythe to Dungeness has continued to act as a popular tourist attraction throughout its 90 years of operation and forms an important part of the local character. The history of the railway in Kent is notable due to its proximity to London as well as to the continent and so the heritage assets relating to this legacy form an important collection that tells the history of the railway. The Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway has played an important role in the development of the railway network across the District and was also important in the defence of the Kentish coast during the World Wars. The development of coastal tourism during the first half of the twentieth century and the holiday parks that now line much of the coastline have further contributed to the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railways continued success and it is now considered to be one of the District's most popular tourist attractions.

### **2. Introduction**

The development of the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway (RHDR) was the innovation of a few ambitious men and for much of its history has held the title of the smallest public railway in the world. That title was ultimately lost in 1982 when the Wells and Walsingham Light Railway opened in Norfolk but it still boasts the most complete collection of one third full size steam locomotives in the world. It is 13.5 miles long and runs between Hythe and Dungeness stretching across the iconic Romney Marsh and shingle beaches of Dungeness. There are six stations along its route (Hythe, Dymchurch, St Mary's Bay, New Romney, Romney Sands and Dungeness) with the New Romney station acting as the railway headquarters where the Model Railway Exhibition can also be found. The majority of the stations are located within walking distance of other visitor attractions such as beaches, amusement parks, food and drink amenities, shops, nature walks and cycling paths.

#### **Brief History of the Railway in the District**

The development of the railway during the early nineteenth century opened up more effective and financially lucrative ways of providing transport for goods and passengers across the country. In 1825 the Stockton and Darlington Railway Company (S&DR) operated the first public railway to use steam locomotives on a line that connected Shildon with Stockton-on-Tees and Darlington. It provided quicker and more efficient transportation of coal from the inland mines in county Durham to its terminus point at Darlington, and would later that year also open to passengers. Following the success of the S&DR other companies then began to invest in new railway routes across the country.

In Kent the first railway line was formerly opened in 1830 between Whitstable and Canterbury and operated as a freight and passenger service. Unfortunately it was plagued by financial difficulties and was relatively unsuccessful in its early years. In contrast to modern passenger trains, early passenger locomotives were uncomfortable and often expensive and so railway travel was not a particularly pleasant or accessible experience. It wasn't until the idea of the 'cheap-day-out' and

annual leave became more popular during the early to mid-nineteenth century that railway travel began to improve and became more available to 'working' people as well as to families and holiday makers. Railway networks began expanding across the country and railway companies became large employers of labour that were also pumping money back into local economies primarily in the form of wages. Links between villages and towns were greatly improved and big chain shops began appearing on high streets.

The railway reached the district in 1843 when South Eastern Railway (SER) completed the line from London to Folkestone and Dover via Oxted and Tonbridge. The railway line in Folkestone ran onto the Folkestone Harbour and in 1849 became the first international rail-sea-rail service between London and Paris. It quickly became a popular cross channel route that rivalled its competitor at Dover and would continue to provide services up until the year 2000. Following the arrival of the railway in 1843, other new lines were established across other parts of the District with varying success. Their history is largely characterised by the conflicts between South Eastern Railway (SER) and London, Chatham and Dover Railway (LCDR) that led to the construction of unprofitable lines that consequently have not survived. Within the district these new lines included the Elham Valley Railway, the Appledore to Dungeness branch lines and the Hythe & Sandgate Branch. These will be explored in detail in a later paper and so will not be repeated here. The aim is to provide a brief history of the railway in Kent and in particular those lines that served the Romney Marsh area where the RHDR would later be constructed.

The first railway line that served the New Romney and Dungeness area ran between Appledore and New Romney. In 1866 a New Romney Railway was suggested and intended to provide a connection to the Hastings-Ashford mainline at Appledore. This idea stagnated until the early 1870s when in 1873 the Rye and Dungeness Railway & Pier Company proposed the provision of rail links to Dungeness that was to be developed as a major port with a cross channel route that was faster than its rivals at Folkestone and Dover. This again never came to fruition and interest in the area passed to SER in 1875. In 1881 the Lydd Railway Company was granted permission to construct a single track line that ran from Appledore to Lydd via Brookland. This line was constructed and then opened later that same year though the Lydd Railway Company soon became part of SER. The route provided passenger traffic to Lydd and goods traffic to Dungeness.

In 1882 two extensions to the line were authorised, the first from Lydd to New Romney and the second from Appledore to Headcorn via Tenterden. In 1884 the extension to New Romney had been completed and was open to all traffic. Any further extensions were not pursued and the Lydd Railway Company was officially absorbed by SER later the following year. However, the line never served the purpose that it was primarily intended for as Dungeness was never developed as a major cross channel port and so the line to New Romney continued as a route that primarily transported local farm produce and livestock to the market. During the First World War a connection to a firing range at Lydd was also added and remained in use until the 1950s.

By the 1920s coastal tourism was on the rise, and the coastal towns of the district became popular destinations as well as locations for a number of holiday camps. It

was in this climate that the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway (RHDR) was to be built in during 1927 and would act to revitalise the area and its railways. By this time the SER and LCDR were now constituents of Southern Railway (SR) who invested in the existing line between New Romney and Appledore by adding two new halts as Lydd-on-Sea and Greatstone-on-Sea. The Lydd station was renamed as *Lydd Town* and a new alignment was created that joined the Dungeness branch to the new *Romney Junction* resulting in the closure of the original line between Lydd and New Romney.

The line became important during the Second World War when it found itself on the frontline following the fall of France in 1940. Repairs were needed following the war and the line continued to cater for holiday makers, livestock and local farmer produce thereafter. In 1948 the line changed hands again and was now under the British Railways Southern Region where it continued until the Beeching Plan in 1963 listed the line for ultimate closure. In 1953 the line between Romney Junction and Dungeness had closed to goods traffic and then in 1964 goods traffic to New Romney had also ceased followed closely by passenger traffic in 1967. The goods traffic to Lydd Town continued until 1971 when it was also closed and today parts of the line are used for freight and nuclear waste from the Dungeness Power Station. The RHDR has however continued to thrive as a popular tourist attraction as well as an iconic heritage asset that is integral to the local character.

### **The Romney, Hythe & Dungeness Railway (RHDR) from 1927**

The RHDR was the culmination of two men's ambitions; Captain J. E. P. Howey who was a wealthy landowner, sometimes racing driver and former Army Officer as well as a miniature railway enthusiast and Count Zborowski who was also a wealthy man and a well-known racing driver of the day. Both men were keen to build a fully working express railway using the 15in gauge line and miniature locomotives. They initially attempted to purchase the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway in the Lake District but this did not come to fruition. Despite this set back, Count Zborowski commissioned the design of two pacific locomotives (Green Goddess and Northern Chief) by the leading model engineer of the day, Henry Greenly. The locomotives would be built in Colchester by Davey, Paxman & Co. and would later run on the miniature express line that the two men were still endeavouring to build. Unfortunately before the locomotives were delivered the Count was killed in a racing car accident at the Italian Grand Prix and so Howey was left the task of finding somewhere to build their miniature railway as well as two yet unused locomotives. Henry Greenly was commissioned to continue helping Howey to build the miniature railway and it was Greenly that then suggested the Romney Marsh as a location for the line.

The RHDR was constructed during the 1920s when coastal tourism was on the rise and holiday parks were beginning to appear along the coastline. It was officially opened on the 16<sup>th</sup> July 1927 and ran from Hythe to New Romney covering eight miles. The locomotive Hercules hauled the inaugural train out of the station at Hythe to main terminus at New Romney. The line was a 15in gauge and one third full size fully working steam railway that upon opening became the smallest public railway in the world. This title was lost in 1978 to Réseau Guerlédan in France and then regained again a year later when that line closed. The title was ultimately lost in 1982

when the 260mm gauge Well and Walsingham Light Railway opened in Norfolk which still holds the title today.

Soon after the opening of the RHDR in 1927 Howey already had his eye on extending the line towards Dungeness. In 1928 the double tracked 15in gauge railway was extended southwards from New Romney through Greatstone to Dungeness though this stretch would later be reduced to a single track. Proposals to extend to Sandling Station were also made at points throughout the railway's history but were never realised primarily due to problems with the steep incline that locomotives would need to navigate. During these early years the railway quickly became famous as the "smallest public railway in the world" and grew in popularity. The locomotive fleet was extended to nine main-line express engines as well as a fleet of luxurious coaches. Passenger traffic that was attracted by coastal tourism and the holiday parks meant that a continuous stream of people used the railway and it continued to revitalise the area and the railway line that already existed here between New Romney and Appledore as mentioned earlier.

The RHDR played an important role during the Second World War when it was requisitioned by the War Department. Following the fall of France in 1940 the railway found itself on the frontline and was utilised in the defence of the Kentish coastline. Armoured trains were operated along the New Romney and Dungeness branch lines and a miniature armoured train that ran along the RHDR became the only one to have been created in the world. The RHDR was also used extensively during the building of PLUTO (Pipe Line Under The Ocean) which allowed fuel to be transported to the Allied invasion forces across the channel.

Following the Second World War, the RHDR had sustained considerable damage and major repair works were required. The section between Hythe and New Romney was soon reopened in 1946 with the section running onto Dungeness reopening in the following year. Due to a scarcity in raw materials and high costs immediately following the end of the war, the trackway between New Romney and Dungeness was reduced to a single track but this was possible as there is a terminal loop at the Dungeness station. Famously the opening ceremony for the Dungeness section was attended by film stars Laurel and Hardy.

In the post-war years, publicity gained from the role that the RHDR had played as a frontline defence during the war had attracted attention and the railway remained popular. During the fifties and early sixties there was a boom in tourism to the area and the Kent coast benefited greatly from the increased visitor traffic. The introduction of cheaper 'package holidays' to sunnier destinations abroad however then saw a decline in passenger numbers as holidaymakers opted for the continent. Owner Howey then died in 1963 and investment into the railway dwindled which became apparent in the poor condition of some of the bridges, rolling stock and ageing locomotives that were costly to maintain.

In 1973 a new consortium headed by Sir William McAlpine pumped much needed investment back into the railway and has continued since then. A number of bridges were renewed, rolling stock was replaced and two new diesel locomotives were added to the fleet. Between 1977 and 2015 the railway has also provided school services to transport children to and from the March Academy in New Romney. This

ceased due to a fall in usage. The RHDR Association which was formed in 1967 now also plays a key role in supporting the railway in a financial capacity and through the provision of voluntary staff to various departments. There is also a RHDR Association Heritage Group that ensures the preservation of items of historical interest that are associated with the RHDR. The group have collected a number of photographs, postcards and articles that are being added to an online archive. The Association also publishes *The Marshlander* which is a quarterly heritage railway magazine that is available to Association members. It has been in publication since 1967 and aims to record the events on the railway as well as providing updates for various departments and contributions from readers and members.

### **The Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway (RHDR) Today**

Today the RHDR continues to provide a timetabled service to passengers between Hythe and Dungeness and is now considered to be one of the District's most popular touristy attractions. It is estimated to carry around 150,000 passengers each year and this year (2017) will be celebrating its 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its opening in 1927.

The railway is owned by Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Public Limited Company in which the two largest stakeholders are the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway Association and Sir William McAlpine. It was originally conceived as a public service but now relies on tourist trade and is an important tourist attraction for the local area and District. It is also a distinctive heritage asset and is integral to the local character. Passengers are able to enjoy the distinctive landscape of the Romney Marsh and Dungeness estate along the railway's route through the Marsh, and its six stations (Hythe, Dymchurch, St Mary's Bay, New Romney, Romney Sands and Dungeness) are within close proximity to other tourist attractions and areas of interest. Services to the holiday camps at Romney Sands, St Mary's Bay and Dymchurch have been operated by the RHDR as well as school transport and 'shoppers specials' for local residents.

Once the railway was opened in 1927, its owners and designers envisaged freight as well as public services. Two of the original locomotives (No 5 Hercules and No 6 Samson) were built to the 'mountain' wheel arrangement (4-8-2) which is unique to British railways and allows the locomotives to haul heavy loads with only a small loss of speed when used on passenger work. These engines still operate on the railway today. In the early years, the RHDR only carried a limited amount of freight which included shingle and fish traffic. A goods shed was constructed at New Romney with a dual gauge for easy transfer, but was rarely used and was subsequently demolished in 1934. The railway was then utilised by the War Department during the Second World War to transport materials and equipment for the reinforced concrete sound ranging detectors that were being experimented with near Greatstone. More recently *ad hoc* freight contracts have been used and the railway now operates its own engineering and permanent way trains that form the majority of the non-passenger workings. The RHDR also operates a licensed postal service as well as a casual parcel service.

16 locomotives, 3 only being used for shunting, are currently operated at the RHDR. In the railway's earlier days the railway was equipped with four-wheeler 8-seater coaches that were designed by Henry Greenly. These coaches only had half height doors and no glazing except in the end bulkheads and so were completely

unsuitable for winter operation, particularly to Dungeness. In 1928 the railway took delivery of eight fully enclosed and 12-seat bogie coaches that were built by Clayton Carriage & Wagon Company and which also incorporated electric lighting and steam heating. In 1934 Howey had decided to scrap all of the original four-wheelers and replace them with fully enclosed bogie vehicles. Today the RHDR operates 20-seat and 16-seat open and closed coaches for continued operation throughout the seasons.

Of the six stations that span the length of the line, New Romney station is the railways headquarters and is also home to the Model Railway Exhibition. The exhibition offers a comprehensive educational resource that tells the story of the railways history including its involvement in the Second World War and the PLUTO pipe line operation. Photographs, posters and other memorabilia from World War II are displayed as well as scale model trains, interactive displays and local history in connection with the railway.

Three of the stations along the RHDR provide food and drink facilities; New Romney station, Dungeness station and the Light Railway Café that is adjacent to the Hythe station. There are also a number of public events and activities that are planned throughout the year which attract large numbers of visitors and passengers to the railway. As this year (2017) will be the 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the stations opening in 1927 there will be a celebratory event planned in July to commemorate this anniversary. The RHDR can also be used as a wedding venue and 'Drivers Experience' courses are offered. Working parties and volunteering opportunities help in running and maintaining the railway.

The Destination Management Plan that has been recently produced for has identified the RHDR as being a key asset that contributes to the visitor economy as well as to the tourism offering within the District. It offers some of the key events that attract people to the area whilst also acting as an integral part of the local character and identity as well as a valued communal asset.

### 3. Description of the Heritage Assets

The RHDR is not a designated heritage asset but is nonetheless a valuable heritage asset that is important to the local community and overall distinctive character. There are various features of the RHDR that make it distinct and also nationally important such as it being the largest collection of one third full size steam locomotives in Britain. Not only this, but it is also the only railway in the country to use the 'Mountain' type locomotive (No 5 *Hercules* and No 6 *Samson*). All 11 of the original steam locomotives that were built between 1925 and 1937 still operate on the railway. During the 1980s two diesel locomotives were added to the fleet which are also regularly in service. The RHDR locomotives are valuable heritage assets that highlight the history of this miniature railway and its continued success.

#### Key Assets

<b>Name of Locomotive</b>	<b>Description</b>
No. 1 <b>Green Goddess</b>	One of the two original locomotives ordered in 1924 by Count Zborowski and designed by Henry Greenly. The design was based on Nigel Gresley's famous A1 class locomotives of which the Flying Scotsman is a surviving



	<p>example. The Green Goddess and tender cost £1250 to build and the name is believed to have been taken from one of Captain Howey's favourite plays.</p> <p>During 1925 the RHDR had still not been built but the locomotive was ready. It was tested on the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway in Cumbria whilst the RHDR was being constructed.</p> <p>The Green Goddess runs in a livery of green and since the war has also sported two high capacity tenders. The second of these now belongs to the Northern Chief. It carries a Wilcox Chime whistle and is still active on the RHDR.</p>
<p><b>No. 2 Northern Chief</b></p>	<p>This locomotive was ordered at the same time as the Green Goddess by Count Zborowski in 1924 and was stored at the Romney Marsh until the RHDR was completed. During the lines construction the Northern Chief hauled the first official train on the occasion of the Duke of York's visit on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1926.</p> <p>Northern Chief did some work during the Second World War but was in poor condition by 1946. Immediately following the war No. 3's boiler had to be fitted in order to continue service. An accident at Dymchurch meant that she received a re-tubed boiler and then a complete overhaul later in 1947-8 at New Romney. In 1952 the boiler was adapted to take a superheater which led to all other locomotives at RHDR receiving the same type of boiler on their next refits.</p> <p>In 1971 she was sent to the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway to assist with locomotive trials, becoming the next RHDR loco to visit the Lake District. Until 1981 she retained her original Greenly designed tender but is now on her third tender that was originally built for Green Goddess.</p> <p>Northern Chief has always been livered in green except during the war when she was painted black. The locomotive has also starred in Channel 4's 'Classic Train' series and is still active on the RHDR.</p>
<p><b>No. 3 Southern Maid</b></p>	<p>Southern Maid was ordered in 1926 and arrived at the RHDR in 1927. She was originally going to be called Southern Chief but at the last minute Howey changed his mind.</p> <p>In 1946 Southern Maid was involved in an accident on a level crossing near Dymchurch that left the locomotive in a nearby dyke. During a refit in 1947 the</p>

	<p>Maid received a large capacity tender and a livery similar to the Green Goddess. This was later changed to brown in 1954, French grey in 1959, Malachite green in 1965 and then Apple green in 1971. It has received the most changes of livery than any other RHDR locomotive.</p> <p>She currently has a tender similar to the ones attached to Northern Chief and her whistle is an ex-Isle of Wight section 'hooter' from the Southern Railway. Southern Maid returned to New Romney for the Steam and Diesel Gala in 2003 following an extensive overhaul. Her current livery is green based on the original livery the locomotive had in 1927. Southern Maid is still active at the RHDR.</p>
<p><b>No. 4 The Bug</b></p>	<p>The Bug is a modified version of a standard design by a German manufacturer. She was ordered during the construction of the original line and extension to Dungeness. Her short wheelbase and high water capacity made her ideal for work on the new line. Once the building of the RHDR was complete, she was sold to a Blackpool showman in 1933. He in turn sold her to the Belle Vue Park Railway where she remained and was then sold for scrap in 1950. In 1972 Sir William McAlpine rescued the locomotive and returned it to New Romney.</p> <p>The Bug was restored in 1974 and painted in a Southern Railway green. She was then used during special occasions. She received an overhaul in 1991 and now has the nickname 'Basil' as well as her own 'Bug Club'. The Bug is often used during special events and family fun days. Her current livery is Brighton Umber.</p>
<p><b>No. 5 Hercules</b></p>	<p>In order to meet the anticipated ballast traffic, RHDR ordered two Mountain-type locomotives from Davey, Paxman &amp; Co to Henry Greenly's design. Hercules was the first of these and arrived at New Romney in April 1927. The RHDR then became the only railway in Britain to operate this type of locomotive. The level of ballast traffic never rose to the anticipated levels and so Hercules was often derailed.</p> <p>Hercules hauled the inaugural train from Hythe during the opening ceremony of the railway on July 16<sup>th</sup> 1927. In 1936 renewed ballast traffic meant that Hercules was rebuilt for use on this service. By the time the Second World War hit, Hercules was chosen as the engine to be used as the miniature armoured train, the only in Britain. Following the war Hercules was sent to Ashford</p>

	<p>to be rebuilt and returned to the RHDR with a new large-capacity tender and red livery.</p> <p>Following an overhaul in 1978 Hercules appeared in a maroon livery and with Northern Chief's original Greenly design giving her the twin-appearance of her sister No. 6 Samson. Hercules now runs in Midland Railway red with a large-capacity tender.</p>
<b>No. 6 Samson</b>	<p>Samson is the identical twin of Hercules and was delivered to New Romney in July 1927. This locomotive, also of the Mountain-type, was designed to cope with the anticipated ballast traffic. Like Hercules, the level of ballast traffic was lower than expected and so Samson was also often derailed. Between 1931 and 1946 she remained unused.</p> <p>Following the Second World War Samson was sent to Hove for a re-build and then in 1961 received a superheated boiler. In 1973 she was involved in a fatal accident with a stolen car at a level crossing in Dymchurch. She was sent to Leeds for repairs and flashing warning lights were subsequently installed at road crossings on the railway to avoid further accidents.</p> <p>From 1955 Samson appeared in a black livery, and then received a red coat whilst being used at the Garden Festival at Liverpool in 1984. This livery remained until 1989 when it was changed to dark blue. Her latest overhaul retains the dark blue livery. Along with Hercules, Samson runs with a high-capacity tender and is still active at the RHDR.</p>
<b>No. 7 Typhoon</b>	<p>Typhoon's design was based on locomotives already at the RHDR; Green Goddess, Northern Chief and Southern Maid, except she had three cylinders. Before being delivered to the RHDR, Typhoon was used in publicity shots at Kings Cross with the full-sized Flying Scotsman. The three cylinder design proved costly and so between 1935-6 she was converted back to a two-cylinder configuration.</p> <p>A new large capacity tender was built for her in 1948 and she received a superheated boiler in 1958. In 1997 Typhoon celebrated 70 years and travelled to the Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway. In 2008 she travelled back to Cumbria with Hurricane. Typhoon currently sports a Malachite green livery and is active at RHDR.</p>
<b>No. 8 Hurricane</b>	<p>Hurricane was identical to Typhoon and was delivered in 1927 also with three cylinders. She was initially a favourite of Captain Howey and was fitted with stainless steel handrails as well as a high-capacity tender</p>

	<p>modelled on the corridor tenders on the LNER. She remained with three cylinders until the inner motion failed in 1937. Hurricane was subsequently painted blue and renamed Bluebottle.</p> <p>She was used extensively during the war and following the end of the war retained her blue livery and was again renamed Hurricane. In 1957 Hurricane hauled a Royal train carrying HM the Queen, the Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Charles and Princess Anne. She now carries a plaque in commemoration of this event.</p> <p>In 2008 Hurricane travelled with Typhoon to Cumbria and is also still active at RHDR.</p>
<p><b>No. 9 Winston Churchill</b></p>	<p>The Yorkshire Engine Company of Sheffield completed construction of the Winston Churchill locomotive using parts meant for two new engines. Construction was originally started by Davey Paxman and then continued at New Romney. The design is based on drawings by Greenly and was completed by A. L. S. Richardson and based on Canadian Pacific practice. When the engine emerged on the RHDR in 1931 she came complete with an 'American' Vanderbilt tender and was named Dr Syn after the fictional Dymchurch smuggling-vicar created by Russell Thorndyke.</p> <p>In 1948 she was renamed Winston Churchill after the wartime Prime Minister and sent for exhibition in Toronto, Canada. At this time she had a red livery but was repainted black along with a new tender in 1962. As an experiment, Winston Churchill was converted to an oil firing loco in 1973 but was rebuilt conventionally in 1979. The experiments were successful but a rise in the price of oil meant that it was not financially beneficial.</p> <p>She has currently undergone a major in-house overhaul and received new power cylinders and tenders. Winston Churchill currently sports a red livery and is active at RHDR.</p>
<p><b>No. 10 Dr Syn</b></p>	<p>Dr Syn has an identical history of design and build to No. 9 Winston Churchill. The locomotive was completed in Sheffield in 1931.</p> <p>She was named Black Prince on delivery but changed name shortly afterwards when No. 9 became Winston Churchill. Alterations during the 1980s included the raising of the chimneys and additions of copper-caps, raised domes, a bell and headlight. Dr Syn currently sports a black livery and is active at the RHDR.</p>

<p><b>No. 11 Black Prince</b></p>	<p>Black Prince is one of three locomotives built by the German Manufacturer Krupp and designed by a contemporary of Greenly, Roland Martens. She was originally built for a trade fair held in Dusseldorf and had been named Fleissiges Leischen which means Small Flower. Her two sister locomotives were brought to England and found a home at the Bressingham Steam Museum in Norfolk. She was retained by the owner but later resurfaced in 1976 when it was offered for sale to the RHDR.</p> <p>Upon arrival at New Romney she was given the name Black Prince. She retains a Germanic appearance and sports a black and red livery. The Black Prince is active at the RHDR.</p>
<p><b>No. 12 J. B. Snell</b></p>	<p>Captain Howey had often experimented with alternatives to steam in order to make the winter timetable more economical. In 1931 Howey converted his 1914 Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost into a locomotive that survived until 1961. After further trials, the RHDR ordered their own mainline diesel engine. The local District Council met part of the costs of the new engine as it was to operate as a school train service.</p> <p>No. 12 has helped to ease the burden placed on the fleet of steam locomotives that are over 80 years old. It was over hauled in 1999 and emerged with black and yellow livery. It can now be seen hauling the permanent way train and performs other essential tasks as well as some passenger duties.</p>
<p><b>No. 14 Captain Howey</b></p>	<p>Due to the success of No. 12, RHDR ordered a second diesel loco that was almost identical. It was delivered in 1989 and initially ran without name plates and was only known as No 14. In 2001 she received the name Captain Howey in honour of the founder of the RHDR.</p> <p>Captain Howey was originally delivered in Union Pacific yellow and grey, but was repainted blue and cream in 1993. The livery was again changed to blue and silver in time for the millennium and her official naming ceremony.</p> <p>Captain Howey often hauls school trains during term-time and is also used for other passenger duties throughout the operating season.</p>

#### **4. Statement of Significance**

The RHDR is a valuable heritage asset and is also a key contributor to the visitor economy and tourism offering within the district. There are a number of heritage assets relating to the theme of transportation within the district (explored in a later

theme paper) that highlight the important role that the railways among other forms of transport have played in the development of the District. The railway has been particularly significant in the establishment of the first international rail-sea-rail service from the Folkestone Harbour to the continent as well as in the rise of coastal tourism. The RHDR has continued to play an important role in the transportation of holiday makers staying at the holiday camps at Dymchurch, St Mary's Bay and Romney Sands as well as for day-trippers to the area. It is now considered to be one of the most popular tourist attractions within the District and plays an active communal role through a number of events and activities that draw in visitors from locally and further afield. Various services are also provided to the local communities and it continues to contribute a significant amount to the local character. Overall the RHDR should be considered to be of **low to moderate significance** for its historical and communal value as well as for the important contribution it continues to make to the local character and sense of place.

### ***Evidential Value***

The RHDR and its associated assets, primarily the locomotives, whilst being important historical examples of steam and diesel locomotives that form the largest collection of one third full size miniature locos in Britain do not have the time depth or archaeological potential to reveal further evidence like other themes in this strategy. The assets from this theme have all survived well and are maintained on a regular basis by the RHDR staff and volunteers whilst also being in active operation. Alterations such as changes in livery have been made to the locos over time, but these changes are already well documented and investigation would reveal little new information. The railway line itself has also remained largely unchanged since its opening in 1927, with the exception of the reduction of the line between New Romney and Dungeness from a double track to a single track, and so again there is little potential to reveal further historical detail if archaeological investigation was undertaken. A detailed knowledge of the history behind each of the RHDR locos as well as the railway itself is well understood and the RHDR Heritage Group has continued to curate materials relating to these assets. There is therefore little potential to reveal further evidence of past activity relating to the RHDR if further investigation was undertaken, but rather the history of the RHDR should continue to be preserved and promoted as is currently done by the RHDR Heritage Group.

### ***Historical Value***

Whilst the history and time depth of the RHDR is much shorter than other assets that are explored throughout other themes within this strategy, it still constitutes an important history of miniature railway lines and locomotives within Britain. The RHDR has previously held the title of the "smallest public railway in the world" which was fairly recently lost to the Wells and Walsingham Light Railway in Norfolk in 1982. The locomotives at the railway also constitute Britain's largest collection of one third full size steam and diesel locomotives. All of the original locomotives that operated along the RHDR still survive in excellent condition and remain in active service at the railway throughout the year. They provide valuable evidence of the development of the RHDR and miniature locomotives and so are a collection of valuable assets that illustrate this aspect of transport history.

The railway has also played an important role in the defence of the coast during a major historic event; the Second World War. No. 5 *Hercules* was used as an

armoured train that operated to defend the Kentish coastline along the RHDR and is the only miniature train to have been used in this way throughout Britain. The railway is of further historical importance as the only line in Britain to operate 'mountain' wheel arrangement locomotives; No. 5 *Hercules* and No. 6 *Samson*. Overall the RHDR is an important asset that plays a key role in connecting people to the history of the miniature railway and steam locomotive.

### ***Aesthetic Value***

The RHDR has significant aesthetic value and is a distinctive feature within the District's landscape. It is a main contributor to the visitor economy as well as to the tourism offering within the district and can be considered as an iconic asset that plays an integral role in the local character and sense of place. The many locomotives that operate along the line have high aesthetic value and each has a distinctive identity that many visitors and local people will be familiar with or appreciative of. They have also survived and been preserved close to their original forms and so visually illustrate the history and heritage of the miniature steam locomotive. The RHDR further offers an important sensory experience of the railway as well as the iconic landscape that it passes through such as the shingle beaches of Dungeness and the Romney Marsh.

### ***Communal Value***

The RHDR has remained operational throughout its history and has continued to provide services for the local communities as well as for visitors from further afield. It is an iconic tourist attraction and attracts large numbers of people to the area. A number of events and activities are held at the railway throughout the calendar year making it one of the most popular attractions within the District. The RHDR therefore plays an important communal role and has continued to be highly valued not only by the District's local communities but also by its visitors. It is a key contributor to the local economy and cultural offering whilst also playing an integral role in the local character and sense of place. It is an instantly recognisable asset and has been an iconic feature of the landscape since its opening in 1927 and so holds significant communal value. The RHDR ultimately offers collective experiences of this miniature railway and its locomotives and has also provided amenity services for the local communities such as school services and 'shoppers specials'. It is a highly valued heritage asset and will continue to play an important communal role.

## **5. Vulnerabilities**

Whilst the RHDR and its associated assets are not designated features, they are however arguably some of the least vulnerable assets dealt with throughout this strategy. As will be shown in a later paper, other transport heritage assets within the district are particularly vulnerable to factors such as neglect, criminal activity and degradation. However, the RHDR is still in active operation and has been generously invested in as well as maintained by dedicated stakeholders, the RHDR Association and Heritage Group that guard it against these vulnerabilities experienced by other transport heritage assets.

Since its opening in 1927, the railway and its locomotives have continued to be maintained and preserved for active service. Some of the locomotives have at points experienced declines in workload and so were derailed for lengths of time, such as the No. 5 *Hercules* and No. 6 *Samson* who are 'mountain' wheel arrangement

locomotives that were commissioned for levels of ballast traffic that were never realised and so were derailed for some lengths of time during their first few decades at the RHDR. However, these locomotives were later brought back into active service and now run regularly along the line. No. 5 *Hercules* was famously used as an armoured miniature train that played a role in the defence of the Kentish coastline during the Second World War following the fall of France in 1940.

The RHDR has also previously experienced problems due to a lack of investment following the death of owner Howey in 1963. The introduction of cheaper 'package holidays' to sunnier destinations abroad saw a decline in passenger numbers due to holiday makers choosing to holiday on the continent rather than in Britain, and from 1963 the lack of financial investment into the railway coupled with dwindling passenger numbers saw parts of the railway and its locomotives falling into states of disrepair. Investment by a new consortium headed by Sir William McAlpine in 1973 brought the railway back to life and saw the restoration of the line and its locos as well as a rise in passenger numbers again.

Whilst the RHDR has evidently suffered from factors such as a lack of financial investment, degradation and dwindling passenger traffic in the past, it is arguably no longer particularly vulnerable to these factors. The railway is owned by the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Public Limited Company in which the two largest stakeholders are the Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway Association and Sir William McAlpine. This would seem to ensure continued investment into the railway and so factors such as degradation and neglect as a result of a lack of financial investment are not prominent vulnerabilities. The RHDR is also now one of the most popular tourist attractions in the District and is a key contributor to the local economy and tourism offering and so is economically viable and sustainable, further ensuring its longevity and maintenance. It also runs a number of events and activities throughout the year that further ensures the financial maintenance of the railway and its assets as well as continued passenger traffic and visitor interest.

Cheap holidays to the continent continue to be popular with holiday makers and so reductions in passenger traffic as a result should be considered as a vulnerability here. However, the railway is well established as a popular attraction and so arguably will continue to draw in passenger traffic from day-trippers whilst the holiday camps at Dymchurch, St Mary's Bay and Romney Sands also remain popular and continue to provide passenger traffic for the railway. Some of the facilities at the stations along the line, namely that at Dungeness station, have recently been improved and so can offer food, drink and leisure amenities for use of the line. Whilst a decline in passenger traffic remains as a possible vulnerability, the RHDR is well established and continues to be popular with visitors as well as with the local communities.

## **6. Opportunities**

There are a number of valuable opportunities that relate to the RHDR and its associated heritage assets. As the railway is still operational and provides regular services throughout the year, it has continued to play an important communal role as well as being a key contributor to the local economy and tourism offering. It also has an active Association and Heritage Group that are further promoting and preserving the railway and its associated heritage.



The RHDR Heritage Group works to preserve items of historical interest and value relating to the RHDR such as the collection of photographs, postcards and articles that it curates and the Model Railway Museum at the New Romney station. There are valuable opportunities resulting from this work to improve accessibility to information regarding the heritage of the railway for wide audiences. Not only does the museum space provided at the New Romney station provide innovative and interactive opportunities for access to information regarding the RHDR's history, but the RHDR Heritage Group is also creating an online archive that again enhances accessibility to information for members of the general public and other interested parties. These activities will also contribute towards the promotion of the RHDR as well as the preservation of its heritage for present and future generations.

With the RHDR being operational, it offers important opportunities for continued visitor and local engagement with the railway and its locomotives as it continues to provide services between Hythe and Dungeness. The railway is active throughout the year and offers a number of events and activities that are aimed at various age groups, local communities, interested parties and other visitors. There are opportunities for 'Driver Experience' courses that allow participants to gain technical knowledge of the locomotives, the railway and also to drive one of the trains alongside the professionals that work at the RHDR. The railway also acts as a wedding and party venue and there are often activity days aimed at families and children that again allow for a more intimate experience of the railway and its history. As an example, the RHDR will be celebrating its 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in July of this year (2017) and have a number of celebratory events planned that aim to attract wide audiences. These activities allow the RHDR to fulfil wider roles within the local communities and beyond which can then play an important role in the railways longevity and maintenance. They also provide valuable opportunities for wider audience engagement and different ways for people experience the railway and its valuable heritage.

Further to the above, there are also important voluntary and working party opportunities that allow participants to assist in the running and maintenance of the RHDR. This is a valuable opportunity not only for further engagement with the railway, but also in training individuals in the maintenance of the RHDR that could ensure its continued survival for present and future generations. Membership to the Association and Heritage Group is open to all and again provides opportunities for engagement by wider audiences and the continued support of the railway by its local communities and other interested parties.

## **7. Current Activities**

The RHDR Association and Heritage Group are active at the railway and co-ordinate a number of projects and events. The Association has a membership that is open to all and has now reformed as a charity with the primary goals of supporting the RHDR to ensure its continued success, developing a heritage and interpretation centre and connecting those that have an enthusiasm for the RHDR. In 1996 the Special Projects Fund was launched at the Annual General Meeting of the Association and has since raised in excess of £50,000 towards a number of projects on the railway. The fund is currently supporting the railway with locomotive overhauls whilst also building on financial reserves that will be used for the redevelopment of retail

facilities at the New Romney station. It is hoped that this new facility will include a bespoke Heritage Centre for the display of heritage artefacts relating to the 90 years of the RHDR's history as well as classroom/lecture facilities to enable corporate hospitality and further education and heritage activities. At the end of last year a mobile home was established in the car park at New Romney station and is able to accommodate for volunteers, meeting spaces, training facilities as well as work space for the RHDR Heritage Group.

Further voluntary activities are regularly provided as well as working parties. These offer opportunities to work on the railway as part of various projects such as track maintenance, background assistance with special trains and painting jobs. Regular "New Volunteer" coffee mornings and inductions are held to encourage wider involvement in the RHDR as well as offering valuable opportunities for hands-on experience of work around the railway.

The RHDR Heritage Group curates a collection of items that relate to the history of the railway such as postcards, photographs and articles as well as building on an online archive of this material. They also produce a quarterly magazine called *The Marshlander* that is available to Association members and records events at the railway, provides updates for various departments and includes contributions from Association members. The group is further active in a number of projects at the RHDR, such as the curation of the Model Railway Exhibition that is housed at the New Romney station. The exhibition provides interactive displays of model railways, material relating to the history of the railway such as Second World War memorabilia as well as displays of local history in connection to the RHDR.

The RHDR also plans a number of activities and events throughout the year that cater to a range of audiences. There are a number of family events and activities aimed at children such as seasonally themes services. The railway also becomes involved with wider events within the District such as county fayres and beer festivals. The railway further offers facilities for wedding and party venue hire, corporate events and meetings as well as catered events. Overall it plays an active role within the District and continues to be a popular tourist attraction with an active and supportive Association and Heritage Group.

## **8. Sources Used & Additional Information**

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