



## **Position Statement on Stored Items**

August 2019

### **Background**

In the summer of 2017 The Electric Railway Museum announced it was to close, this meant that all 41 rail mounted items would need to be re-homed and the responsibility for doing this fell to the owning/custodial groups who initially brought the items to the Coventry site. In the case of the SERA this meant the group had responsibility for the following:

Class 405 4-SUB, four car EMU plus one spare trailer car which was a donor for this project.

Class 503 LMS Wirral EMU, three car unit

South Tyneside EPB, two car EMU.

Bulleid 2-EPB, two car EMU.

Spondon No.1 battery-electric locomotive.

Class 457 EMU driving motor car.

Ruston & Hornsby 88DS diesel locomotive 'Crabtree'.

LSWR Ironclad bogie tool van coach.

Two City & South London Railway carriage bodies.

Ruston & Hornsby 165DE diesel locomotive 'Mazda'

Liverpool Overhead first class trailer car no. 7.

Given that the SERA had gone into hibernation as all membership and fundraising activity was largely handled by the Electric Railway Museum the possibility of not only finding new homes for these fifteen carriages, three locomotives and two grounded bodies but also financing their movement was a massive undertaking given that at the start of the project the funds in hand were less than 10% of what would be needed in total.

The SERA looked in the first instance to rationalise the collection, the 88DS loco was sold; the worst condition C&SLR body was donated to the LT Museum on the understanding it would be scrapped if they did not want it and the 4-SUB and spare trailer was set up as a separate project independent of the SERA for evermore, eventually the LMS 503 would join it and those vehicles are now in store at Margate under the auspices of the Heritage Electric Trains Trust. The Bulleid EPB was offered to any organisation willing to take it but the only offer turned out to be from a group who in reality did not have any site to take it to or the funds to move it; like wise the LOR coach. Three prominent organisations connected with Merseyside transport heritage were contacted to be offered the vehicle but only one bothered to send a reply saying they couldn't help. Sites were arranged during the winter of 2017/18 to house everything and thanks to fundraising via crowdfunding, some very generous personal donations, a grant from The Electric Railway Museum and proceeds from sales, everything on the list above was moved off site and to a new home by the deadline of the end of June 2018. The final bill was over £40 000. The SERA still had responsibility for ten items after the sale of the 88DS and the transfer of the 4-SUB and 503 vehicles to the new charitable trust. They were to be split over three sites based upon their status of either restored, likelihood of imminent restoration or retained as long term restoration project (stored).

### **How Did We Decide Which Was Which?**

As far as we are concerned no project is more historically important than another. They are all equally important. No decisions can be taken based upon that criteria. Whilst some readers will claim that such and such is the most important artefact, another set of readers elsewhere will consider a different item as the most relevant. Preservation can be tribal but our position is that everything was acquired for its own unique importance.

The easiest category was the restored item which was the class 457 vehicle. It was available for immediate display and went to the East Kent Railway who wanted to take the vehicle on

load and it is on display at Eythorne station today.

Projects that would be restored soon included both the Spondon Loco and the Ruston 165DE, both were technically operational at the time of the ERMs closure but needed overhaul and this could be undertaken by the SERA volunteer team at the Battlefield Railway in Shackerstone. The Tyneside EPB unit is hugely popular amongst SERA volunteers and receives suitable regular funding as a result into its own account. This was also selected to go to the Battlefield Railway where work on it will start as soon as both locos are complete by the end of 2020. The Ironclad tool van joined it there; due to the nature of the vehicle it does not need any restoration (other than a coat of paint) and fulfils a vital role in support of the Tyneside restoration project. The current estimate for completion of the Tyneside is the end of 2027. That left the remaining C&SLR body, LOR Car 7 and Bullied 2-EPB. These items went to secure storage at Hope Farm in Sellindge, Kent and will remain there until resources become available to effect any restoration work on them.

### **The SERA workforce.**

At the time of writing the volunteer team attending The Battlefield Railway comprises of five people who attend an average of two days a month each (not all on the same days). They are based in Yorkshire, SE London (2), Berkshire and the Midlands. In addition there is one volunteer who attends a few days of the year to carry out routine repair and maintenance of the 457 vehicle at Eythorne.

### **SERA Funding.**

At the time of writing the SERA receives £90 per calendar month via standing orders from its members. This is allocated according to the individual donors preference and is allocated thus: Tyneside EPB £50, Bullied EPB £20, General unallocated funds £20. In addition there have been donations received to progress the work on the two locos at Shackerstone. The SERA receives no other funding. One should also note that at the end of June 2018 after all movements from Coventry were complete the SERA had a residual bank balance of £0 – that's right, nothing as we were cleaned out!!

Given all of the above information perhaps you can understand why items have had to be placed in long term store. There is no money or manpower to do anything with them right now and that is not likely to change given the current levels of support until other projects are completed.

### **What Can Be Done To Help Stored Vehicles?**

There are three ways that the cause of an item in store can be accelerated:

#### *1) Start a team.*

It takes two or three people who are new to the organisation to start a team and take on a fresh project, if each gave a couple of days a month it would be viable. The only requirement is that at least one of the team has sound knowledge of the work that is to be undertaken so as to lead, direct and teach the rest of the team. The team could be in another part of the country and the SERA would consider moving the item to them if such a move was viable.

#### *2) Raise Funds – Become a Fund Raiser.*

With regular income to support a project it starts to become viable. Even without volunteers if there is a decent amount of cash flow work can be given to outside contractors who will do it for the right price. Alternatively the funds can be accumulated and then the project will jump the queue. An active fund raiser, whilst not being a hands on restoration team member is an equally vital part of any project team. Some one who promotes a cause and directs their energy to secure funds that can be used on that pet project is an invaluable aid to any voluntary body and it is a highly productive and rewarding use of your spare time. This work can be done from the comfort of your own home.

#### *3) Find Another Group Willing To Take The Project On.*

This is the least likely of the options but the SERA always remains open to offers to take a

stored item on by another group, provided they can prove they are serious about their intentions. Remember both the LOR coach and Bulleid EPB were offered around the heritage community prior to June 2018 and both met with indifference or time wasters. The community is full of groups with a similar predicament to us; too many projects and not enough resource. In over 20 years of preservation I have yet to receive a single approach from another group wanting to take something on; but we are open to offers. But we don't chase them – there are only so many hours in a day !!!

### **Conclusion.**

Items in store are there for a reason, not because the SERA doesn't care about them – quite the opposite. Great lengths were gone to and expense incurred so these items survived the closure of the Electric Railway Museum. It is the people who do nothing, when they could be a part of something, who are the ones who don't care enough.