

Future of Dartmoor Railway still unclear Local residents sets up 'Cocaine Anonymous' group in Tavistock

A fortnight ago Okehampton-based Dartmoor Railway which is currently operated by Dartmoor Railway Community Interest Company (DRCIC), was packaged for sale by its US owners IOWA Pacific, the troubled holding company of British American Railway Services (BARS).

Campaign group OkeRail, which has fought to reintroduce a regular passenger rail service between Okehampton and Exeter for the last ten years, expressed their concern while news that the joint lease between Devon County Council (DCC) and BARS for Okehampton Station buildings and car park which expired on 31st December 2019, would further delay their long term aspirations putting the future of the service, which was axed as a result of the 'Beeching' cuts in 1972, in real doubt.

Along with the heritage Weardale Railway and a rolling stock and freight company, BARS has owned Dartmoor Railway for 11 years, while the line (the track and trackbed) itself between Meldon Quarry and Coleford is owned by Aggregate Industries (AI) and was acquired from British Rail in 1994.

Mr John Penny, estates manager for AI indicated that the firm would be delighted to see the reintroduction of the passenger service and would be happy to work with all stakeholders to that end.

The Dartmoor Railway Supporters' Association (DRSA), provides rolling stock and staffing for seasonal Heritage services from Okehampton to Meldon Viaduct within



Dartmoor National Park. A 200-strong group of enthusiastic volunteers who assist the railway operation in many of its activities and help maintain the current excellent facilities at Okehampton station stated that they had not been contacted about the sale of DRCIC or changes to the leasing arrangements between them and Aggregate Industries and Devon County Council.

In an official statement, they emphasised "The DRSA welcomes any moves that will speed up the reintroduction of daily train services between the growing town of Okehampton, the city of Exeter and beyond. Daily services will improve connectivity for local people, businesses and the tourist

industry. It will also serve the wider population of West Devon and North Cornwall, currently England's largest 'Rail Desert'. Ideally, DRSA would like the Okehampton line to the boundary with Network Rail's North Devon line at Coleford (near Yeoford) to again be part of the national rail network. We look forward to working with the new arrangements. Until more is known it is difficult for us to reliably speculate on the possible future options."

It is The Moorlander's understanding that talks between all interested parties are ongoing but due to commercial sensitivity full details are not publicly available at the time of going to press.

'Cocaine Anonymous' group in Tavistock

An anonymous Tavistock resident has brought the world-wide group 'Cocaine Anonymous' to Tavistock after noticing there was 'a need' in the town.

Cocaine Anonymous fellowship is now in its third month of meetings, which are held at The Printworks (formerly Kingdon House) and has already been well received. The resident said: "I have been going to Alcoholics Anonymous as I have a history of drug abuse and there was nothing in Tavistock, so I decided to set up Cocaine Anonymous as I saw there was a need in Tavistock."

They added: "Cocaine Anonymous is for people who have a drug and drink problem. The group is worldwide but the only place locally to attend was Plymouth.

"Cocaine Anonymous is for anyone who has a drug or alcohol problem and has a desire to stop, regardless of how much they used. At the meetings people share their experiences, what they were like and what they did to recover from the life-shattering drug addiction. Everyone finds their own way.

"If you are trying to stop you are welcome, as long as you have that desire to stop. It takes a lot to admit there is a problem but at the meetings there is no judgement and it is all anonymous."

The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using cocaine and all other mind-altering substances. It is not a drug-specific group. The group meets every Tuesday at Printworks, on Pym Street. Doors open at 6.30pm where there is tea and coffee and time for 'a chat' before the meeting is held from 7pm to 8pm in the Editor's Room. The meetings are free to attend.

For any information on the group, visit cocaineanonymous.org.uk



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