



The Stephenson Locomotive Society

Ms T Villiers MP
Minister of State for Transport
House of Commons
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Dear Minister

Railway Heritage Committee

I write on behalf of the Stephenson Locomotive Society to express our concern at the proposed demise of the Railway Heritage Committee (RHC). The Society, now in its 101st year, has been involved with railway heritage for much of its existence, and indeed led the way in railway preservation by a private organisation by saving the London, Brighton & South Coast Railway locomotive 'Gladstone' in 1927 which now forms part of the National Collection at York.

Our view is that the RHC has done a valuable job over the past 14 years, having taken over a role previously held by the British Railways Board (BRB) in designating important historical railway documents and artefacts for preservation, and ensuring they are not lost for ever. Contrary to the view you expressed in parliament, we believe that this is still an important role. It is because of the work done by the RHC and the BRB before it, with the backing of legislation, that we have such a rich collection of railway heritage. Were it not for these bodies then it is likely that much of what we have now in the national museums would have ended up on a scrap heap or waste tip or been sold into unregulated private ownership. It is not reasonable to compare railways with other forms of transport (especially road and air), since their history is largely much more recent, and there is far less infrastructure and historical documentation to consider.

To the best of our knowledge the RHC operates with only one paid member of staff (the Secretary) whilst the experts drawn from the rail industry, heritage railways, the National Museum of Science and Industry, the National Archives of Scotland and including other members with expertise in conservation and archiving are all volunteers. It therefore seems that there is little saving to be made by government in abolishing the RHC, but much to be lost in its abolition. Even if its role were to be incorporated into some other department or agency, then there would likely be a loss of knowledge and expertise.

We therefore ask that the Government should review and reconsider this short sighted decision.

I await your reply with interest.

Yours faithfully

cc

Phillip Hammond MP, Secretary of State for Transport

Iain Wright MP

Editors of Steam Railway
 Railway Magazine
 Rail
 Heritage Railway

Secretaries LCGB
 RCTS

National Press