



DOWNPATRICK AND COUNTY DOWN RAILWAY SOCIETY LIMITED

Annual Trustee Report and Statement of Accounts

For the year to end 31 December 2022

Registered in Northern Ireland as a Limited Company Registration No. NI018685

Recognised by the Inland Revenue as a Charity No. 101640

V.A.T. Reg. No. 617 614 541

Annual Trustee Report - Year ended 31 December 2022

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Reference and Administrative Details

Company/ Charity Name

Downpatrick and County Down Railway Society Limited

Company Registration Number

Registered as a Company with Company Registration Number NI018685

Charity Number

Registered Charity in Northern Ireland No 101640

Principal Address

The Railway Station
Market Street
Downpatrick
Co Down
BT30 6LZ

Directors and Charity Trustees as of 31 December 2022

Robert Gardiner
Mike Beckett
John Noble
Innis Mennie
David Crone
Norman Bodel
Ian Cross
Morgan Young

Patrons as of 31 December 2022

Honorary President, John Wilson

Vice-President, Gerry Cochrane

Banking

Danske Bank
P.O. Box 183
Donegal Square West
Belfast
BT1 6JS

Nationwide Building Society
Swindon
SN38 1NW

Accountants/Auditors

Elliott Lavery Chartered Accountants.
18 English Street
Downpatrick
BT30 6AB

Structure, Governance, and Management

The Society is a limited company with charitable status and governed on a day-to-day basis by a Board of Directors. The Board of Directors are elected at the Society Annual General Meeting (AGM) in accordance with the Articles of Association.

The Society has an Honorary President and Vice- President, which for 2022 were John Wilson (Honorary President) and Gerry Cochrane (Vice-President).

The Board of Directors of the Society meet on a regular basis to set the strategic direction of the Society and have responsibility for the relevant departments across the Society.

The Articles of Association state that each year, at least one third of the Board of Directors must retire and seek re-election. It is further stated in the Articles of Association that Directors of the Board shall elect a Chairman from amongst their number following the AGM.

Whilst Directors are not elected to a particular portfolio, it is expected that Directors assume specific portfolio's following the Annual General Meeting. The portfolios are as outlined below:

- Chairman
- Vice Chairman
- Company Secretary
- Chief Mechanical Engineer
- Chief Civil Engineer
- Operations
- Finance Officer
- Marketing & Communications
- Membership Secretary
- Compliance
- Buildings

Several Person of Special Responsibility (PSR) posts exist and include **Museum Curator, Permanent Way Inspector** and **Workshop Manager**. These are not affected by an AGM election.

In 2022 the Board of Directors were as follows –

Robert Gardiner

Mike Beckett

John Noble (Company Secretary and Director)

Innis Mennie

David Crone

Norman Bodel

Ian Cross

Morgan Young

The Society currently has one part time employee.

Objectives and Activities

Society Statement of Purpose

The Downpatrick and County Down Railway Society Limited exists to allow visitors to experience travelling over a section of the original Belfast & County Down Railway which has been restored as a working railway museum.

To achieve this the museum collects, restores or conserves and maintains in operating condition, railway vehicles and equipment which best serve to illustrate the operation and development of Irish standard gauge railways. Research and publication of related materials is also undertaken.

Our collection includes locomotives, carriages, wagons, and other items of equipment from the second half of the 19th century and the 20th century and used to promote an understanding of our railway heritage and social conditions of that period. In addition, documents and items relating to the original Belfast & County Down Railway are collected, conserved, and displayed to allow study and research into that railways effect on the area of County Down that it served.

In making the collection available to the public, the museum also aims to promote tourism and the economic regeneration of the district.

Forward/Action Plan

In the coming years the strategic focus of the Downpatrick and County Down Railway Society Limited shall be to potentially plan, where practical, further expansion of the railway in several key areas, as previously outlined in our 2008 Future Directions document.

Ballydugan Extension

It should be noted that we remain committed to actively pursuing the extension of the railway along the former Newcastle alignment to Ballydugan and shall remain in active cooperation with officials from Newry, Mourne & Down District Council to acquire the necessary track-bed. It is noted that planned projects may need to be reevaluated within this document considering any significant breakthrough.

Downpatrick Racecourse Extension

Progress on advocating the Downpatrick Racecourse extension has stalled, however avenues to promote this as a viable scheme should be taken wherever possible, and works should be planned or designed with the potential for expansion in mind.

St Patrick Centre Extension

The St Patrick Centre extension came closest to realisation with the Carriage Gallery Heritage Lottery application, however delays in administration at the then council Down District Council led to it being shelved. Interest from other parties, such as the St Patrick Centre itself, remains high. The expansion east would also allow track realignment in Downpatrick Station to utilise the full length of the platform and so this extension should be considered for resurrection as either a standalone project or as part of a larger one.

Inch Abbey Development

As our current terminus the facilities at Inch Abbey will need to grow, through expansion of the car park, provision of toilets, as well as general maintenance and repair of the platform/or replacement of it, along with new signalling systems to make operations simpler.

Consideration shall also be given to potential for either extension of the line to the proposed new hotel on the Abbey Lodge site as per the Future Directions document, or park and ride options with this new venture.

Achievements and Performance in 2022

It is my honour to present the Chairman's Report, reflecting on the achievements, challenges, and progress we have made over the past year.

Introduction:

After navigating through the continued impact of the global pandemic, 2022 proved yet another challenging year due to external pressures, most noticeably the ongoing issues with access to the station building caused by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. However, despite the challenges, the dedication and resilience of our volunteers, staff, and supporters have allowed us to persevere and continue fulfilling our mission of preserving and showcasing the rich railway heritage of County Down and further afield.

Operational Highlights:

Our dedicated teams have worked tirelessly to preserve and restore our collection of historic locomotives, carriages, and artefacts. Notable progress was made in the restoration of several key pieces, ensuring that they remain tangible links to the past for future generations.

Our big focus was on our recovery from prolonged Covid-related closures, with a huge backlog of work on the track, trains and buildings. Our small team of volunteers worked their socks off to get ready for public trains in July. For the first time in many years, it was diesel all the way, with us promoting the Derry Girls connection with our 450-class railcar. The summer was packed with special events, with dinosaurs and superhero trains especially popular.

2022 kicked off with the traditional taking-apart of the steam engines to get them prepared for their annual boiler inspections.

February is usually the high season for track maintenance, and 2022 was no different. Among the Track Team's many achievements this year was the re-ballasting of the track in the station and adjustment of joint gaps, removing many legacy defects. In April, thanks to one of the last Covid grant aid rounds, we took delivery of two lightweight portable tamper tools from rail specialist supplier Geismar. These went on to be used to great effect out at Inch Abbey station and have been much kinder on our team's backs than their predecessors.

In March our Operations Manager Morgan Young jetted off to Birmingham for the Heritage Railway Association Awards, where he had been nominated for Young Volunteer of the Year. He came home with a runner-up certificate, as did the two other Irish representatives at the Awards - Peter Jones of The Irish Traction Group (Diesel Preservation Award) and Alex Duggan of the Railway Preservation Society of Ireland - Dublin Operations (also Young Volunteer of the Year).

On April 26 Derry Girls Series 3, episode 3 "Strangers on a Train" was broadcast on Channel 4, a moment we had been waiting for since October 2021. Our 450 Class railcar was the real star of the show (Sorry Granda Joe!) as it took the girls and the Wee English Fella off on their holidays to Portrush.

August saw the arrival of six new vehicles to the railway. The first of these new arrivals were three ballast hoppers and a plough van from Iarnród Éireann. Not only do we now have the Hornby-esque joy of a 'complete' new train set, but we also have a useful ballast train that will be essential for any future expansions. The final two vehicles in our series of deliveries arrived later in August, with a new Tamper and a VMT (fancy crew transport machine with an onboard crane) coming to us from Translink NI Railways.

Work on the steam engines had been put on pause during Summer as all effort was concentrated on running passenger trains. In October the team got work up and running again, with long-term steam volunteers Norman Bodel, Morgan Young, and Jonathan King appealing to volunteers from across the railway to help them get O&K No. 3 over the line in time for Christmas. With able assistance from Niall Kelly (Carriages), Mart Hogg and Chris Johnston (Permanent Way), Mike Beckett (Locos) and new volunteer Shea McKee, we are glad to say their joint efforts were successful and we had steam by the end of November.

In November we said goodbye to Travelling Post Office 2978 which was scrapped. It had served as our Merlin and Santa's Workshop from 2003 to 2019. This was a bittersweet moment for sure, but alas the carriage was simply too far gone to restore.

Visitor Experience:

Despite the ongoing challenges, we managed to provide an engaging and safe visitor experience. The implementation of health and safety measures, guided tours, and online booking systems allowed us to welcome guests and enthusiasts, sharing the fascinating history of our railway.

Throughout June there was only one thing on our minds - reopening the railway after nearly two years of closure. The date was set for our grand return in July, and so we spent June getting ready - painting fences, cleaning the train, and at Inch Abbey, paving the car park and getting a brand-new wheelchair-accessible toilet, all supported by grant-aid.

One of the highlights of Summer 2022 was our SuperTrain events, when the evil Hela descended on Downpatrick to take over the railway and the world - twice! Thankfully Cap, Spidey, and Captain Marvel were there to help us out. These important events with professional paid actors are definitely the future, as families demand higher quality performances than volunteers can provide.

Another Summer highlight was the return of the Jurassic Express dinosaur experience, proving to be once again as popular as it was in 2019. An interesting development of using the 450 on our trains was the mobile buffet proving very popular with visitors.

Our first summer season since 2019 came to a spectacular close with the European Heritage Open Days weekend. We ran free trains and provided behind-the-scenes tours of our sheds and signal cabins. Standing room only on all trains!

Whilst in 2022 we didn't run a Halloween Ghost Train due to pressures on the small team working on the steam locomotives, carriages, tracks and everything else, the Lapland Express was certainly back in style: Our last train at the end of a busy first weekend running Lapland Express steam trains was a very special one, as we welcomed a group of around 70 Ukrainian refugees to the railway for a pre-Christmas treat. With drinks, cookies, chocolates and presents paid for by our own volunteers, the families enjoyed Ukrainian Christmas songs on board for a magical journey with Santa, Mrs Claus and the elves. It was a wonderful and emotional experience for us all.

Community Engagement:

Our commitment to engaging with the local community remained strong, working with groups such as the Downpatrick Town Committee, and the Downpatrick Community Group. We continued to offer educational programs, workshops, and events for schools and community groups, fostering an understanding and appreciation of the local railway history.

Challenges and Adaptations:

The legacy of the pandemic presented unprecedented challenges, affecting visitor numbers and volunteer availability, as some people had made lifestyle adjustments in the preceding year. Nevertheless, we swiftly adapted by restoring as soon as possible as many of our pre-pandemic events within volunteers' capabilities, which included a reduction of most weekends to be just Saturday running.

However, the biggest challenge that presented itself was the sudden withdrawal of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council from the Partnership Agreement that we had operated under since 1997. This meant that the Council no longer conducted the statutory inspections on the Council-owned properties such as the station building, which would have invalidated our Public Liability Insurance if we used the station.

The origin of this was that both NMDDC and DCDR had been in discussions about updating and renewing the old agreement, and we do not believe that the new officials fully understood the implications of the decision to revoke the old agreement before a new agreement was in place, and certainly believe this was a case of unintended consequences rather than a breakdown in relations. Indeed, I would like to place on record my thanks for the support of officials and elected representatives for continuing to engage with us and getting us to the point that all checks and inspections were done just in time for the Lapland Express.

Financial Resilience:

The economic impact of the pandemic led to financial strain. Our team worked diligently to secure funding through grants, donations, and creative fundraising initiatives. We are immensely grateful to our supporters who stood by us during this difficult period. I want to thank John Noble, Kathryn Casement and Jack McIlheron for all their hard work over this period.

Future Outlook:

Looking ahead, we remain committed to our mission and vision. As the situation gradually improves, we are excited to reintroduce events we have not run since before the pandemic, expand our educational offerings, develop new and better relations with third parties and are exploring opportunities for partnerships with local businesses, organisations, and institutions to strengthen our impact within the community and beyond.

We are planning essential infrastructure upgrades to enhance the visitor experience and ensure the safety of our operations. This includes track maintenance, station improvements, and accessibility enhancements.

We are focused on developing new exhibits and interactive displays that will captivate visitors and provide a deeper understanding of the history and significance of our railway.

Appreciation:

I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to our volunteers, whose dedication and passion are the driving force behind our successes. Their tireless efforts, enthusiasm, and willingness to adapt in the face of challenges have been truly inspiring.

I also extend our thanks to our members, supporters, sponsors, and partners. Your unwavering support has been instrumental in ensuring the continued operation and growth of the Downpatrick & County Down Railway.

In conclusion, I am proud of what we have achieved together in the face of adversity. The Downpatrick & County Down Railway's legacy continues to thrive, and I am confident that with our collective determination, we will emerge from these challenging times even stronger.

Robert Gardiner
Chairman

Compliance

This report covers compliance for the period January 2022 until December 2022.

The planned acquisition of six items of redundant permanent way rolling stock from NIR and Irish Rail required us to ask permission from the Rail Safety Authority for Northern Ireland, as per our current operating licence.

Permission (with conditions) was granted on 23rd March 2022 and arrangements made for a site visit on 28th April for the RSANI and HSENI to follow up this application and their consideration of the detailed report submitted on the Inch derailment of 5th December 2021.

The visit passed off without any follow-up actions and the new items of rolling stock arrived during August. At the present time, getting the Plasser 07-16 tamper operational is the highest priority and work is ongoing to re-commission the various systems and rectify the faults being revealed.

Ian Cross
Compliance Director

Membership

This report covers membership for the period January 2022 until December 2022.

2021 membership numbers were 148, though this fell slightly for 2022 to 137 members. Our volunteer numbers have also dropped slightly from 49 in 2021 to 46 in 2022. The reductions are mainly due to members choosing not to renew, and, sadly, a few members who passed away during the period in review.

Innis Mennie
Membership Secretary

Operations

2022, much like 2021 before it, was very much a recovery year for Downpatrick and County Down Railway Society Limited (DCDR) and this was reflected in the years' Operations and Events offerings. Though the worst of the Covid pandemic and long periods of closure were behind us by this point, a new set of challenges in 2022 meant that it wasn't quite back to business as normal yet.

At the start of the year the Operations Department was hit hard by the loss of our dear friend and colleague Robert 'Bob' Edwards. In addition to the loss of such a wealth of knowledge, wit, and wise counsel, with Bob's passing we also lost one of our four steam locomotive drivers, which will have a lasting impact on our ability to run multiple steam days until we can get a new driver trained up. Another loss came at the end of the year with the passing of Philip McKinstry, who in addition to his well-known role as our pre-2020 Santa was a regular face at Inch Abbey platform and behind the buffet counter. Both Bob and Philip continue to be sorely missed within the Operations Department and wider DCDR family.

As has been covered in other reports, we spent the first six months of 2022 in dispute with Newry Mourne & Down District Council over our Partnership Agreement. The effect of this as far as operations and events were concerned was that we were unable to permit public access to the station building for some time, which meant no running days during Spring.

As the situation dragged on, we took the decision to open the railway to the public once again in July 2022 without the use of the station building. Passengers entered through the main gateway whilst the station building remained locked out of bounds. It was far from ideal, but it did allow us to resume train services and run our first summer season since 2019. Our special events offering was scaled back from 2019 under the circumstances, comprising just SuperTrains and a Jurassic Express weekend, as well as the annual European Heritage Open Days weekend in September. I am pleased to say that they were extremely well patronised, and the resumption of summer running came as a much-needed morale boost to all our volunteers after two long difficult years. Though this temporary fix got us through Summer, it was clearly not appropriate for the Winter months and with no solution by October this ruled out using the station building for any possible Halloween trains.

Finally, an 11th hour resolution in November after months of work by our Chairman, Company Secretary, and Compliance Officer allowed us to reopen the station and run four weekends of Christmas trains. These followed the new format trialled in 2021, with Santa visiting families onboard the train in motion. As in previous years our Christmas running season, though very taxing on our limited volunteer numbers, was a hit with the public with eight days of sold-out trains. In addition to the regular services, one train during the season was run as a 'Quiet Train', with reduced lighting and sound aimed at families with children with ASD and sensory processing difficulties. Another was run exclusively for Ukrainian refugees who travelled free of charge.

Other activities undertaken by the Operations Department throughout the year included the weekly issuing of Operations Circulars, running a conversion course for our Guards to certify them on the 450 Class railcar, and resuming the training process after the Covid hiatus. I am delighted to report that in 2022 Jonathan King successfully passed out as both a Shunter and a Guard, in doing so becoming the first volunteer at DCDR to qualify for an Operations grade since 2019.

The railway did not run any charter or private hire trains in 2022, but several notable shunts throughout the year - particularly during August to accommodate the arrival of six new Permanent Way vehicles - saw trains running outside of our public events.

2022 In Numbers

20 public running days (up from 6 in 2021)

35 volunteers staffed these running days (up from 33 in 2021)

316 total individual rostered positions across those 20 days

10 volunteers account for 50% of those rostered positions

9 was the average amount of running days worked by a volunteer

13 volunteers either held or attained an Ops-grade competency in 2022

Finally, I would like to thank my colleagues in the Operations and Events Committees, and all those volunteers who put themselves forward for a rostered turn in 2022, for all their work in making DCDR's running days, charters and shunts possible.

Morgan Young
Operations Manager

Track and Infrastructure

This report covers the activities undertaken to the track and infrastructure for the period January 2022 until December 2022.

This year the main priority work in January was a general upgrade of the track work in the main Downpatrick station area. This saw the replacement of several point timbers in the engine shed release turnout. Two shorter length pieces of track in the main line between the run around turnouts were replaced with full sized rail and the joints correctly gapped and greased. A couple of worn rails were also replaced at this time. A projection at the end of the platform was cut back and platform gap and heights reset to standard. This allowed the track alignment to be improved and curves eased. A significant quantity of extra ballast was put down on the engine shed turnout and run around loop during February and into early March. The acquisition of two new Geismar hand tamping machines greatly eased the workload. Some joints were also repaired in the station yard. The barrow crossing was also refurbished with several planks replaced.

In April priority moved back out to Inch Abbey with work concentrating on improving levels and ensuring that there were no twist faults. 20 tons of ballast was consumed in packing and levelling the track. Several broken chairs were replaced, and the worst dips were also raised. Another 10 tons of ballast was used in levelling the trap point. A couple of point timbers were replaced, and others installed to facilitate the point rodding connections. Other work carried out at Inch has been the preparations for installing the groundframe. This commenced with digging out the hole for the foundations and the installation of the groundframe itself in November. Work on installation of the point rodding stools is now underway. At least 25-point rod stools have been cast at a rate of one a week as part of the installation. The remains of the old buffer stop on the Bay line have been removed and a replacement buffer stop brought out for later installation.

In June the main work switched to the relaying most of the South junction turnout where a 5-m.p.h. restriction had been in place due to deterioration in some of the timbers. A complete rebuild took place with the timbers replaced from the switch section onwards. One stock rail and two closure rails were also replaced as the rails were quite worn and it was an opportune time to complete this task. To finish the task 20 tons of ballast were put down and the Geismar tampers again proved their worth.

This year saw the delivery of several PW vehicles. This included 3 ballast hoppers and a ballast plough van from Irish Rail. Also acquired from Translink were a Geismar VMT general maintenance vehicle.

This comes with a large crew cab, loading area and a one-ton crane. This machine has not been used for several years. It has however been started and will take its place in the maintenance queue behind the Tamper also delivered. This machine is taking priority for maintenance and has had the engine and alternator repaired and has been started. Work will continue into 2023 with a planned move indoors for attention to the clutch and other systems.

Two other arrivals also took place in the year with the first being the acquisition of the remaining stock of bullhead turnout components. This included new and good used point blades plus several crossing pieces. This is a significant acquisition as there is now no future opportunities for bullhead material on the island. The other acquisition in November was 60 long point timbers from the Dargan bridge relay. A very useful stock as the number of good point timbers was declining especially after 25 were used in the South junction relay. The arrival prompted a significant tidy up of the yard area with a significant load of beyond use timber taken away and space made for access to items in stock.

In November a campaign saw 20 tons of ballast deposited from the ballast regulator on the North line enabling many dipped joints to be lifted.

In the Autumn line inspection one or two sleepers on bridge 164 were giving concern so in December planning commenced for a new year relay of all sleepers with a stock of nearly new sleepers acquired the year before from Church Road in Dublin. A steel grid has been ordered and delivered to install new walkways.

In summary this year there has been a significant improvement in the main station track work. The South junction turnout has been relayed and there have been general improvements to track alignments and levels at Inch and along the North line. There have been useful additions to PW vehicles and the acquisition of key components. On the signalling front good progress is being made with the Inch Abbey installation and we look forward next year to being able to use the Inch groundframe.

David Crone
Chief Civil Engineer

Financial Review

The financial year of the Society for statutory reporting requirements is the 2022 calendar year. A copy of the statutory financial reports is contained within this Annual Trustee report.

2022 was like 2021 and continued to be a very difficult and challenging year for the Society financially as we were trying to recover from the impact of the Covid pandemic, dealing with increasing prices and ongoing issues with access to the station building. Despite these challenges in the 2022 financial year the Society saw an increase in overall turnover (£169,326), which is mainly attributed to increased passenger revenue as we returned to a more comprehensive running season. That increase in overall turnover helped the Society increase its Net Current Assets to £354,996.

Reflecting on the cost of sales, overheads and administrative expenditure detailed within the annual accounts the overall total expenditure costs for 2022 were £159,493 (including depreciation costs), a similar level as 2021.

This resulted in a final surplus/ profit for the 2022 financial year of £10,729.

The following high expenditure cost items should be noted for 2022:

Administrative Expenses

Salary and pension costs	£13,518
Insurance	£ 4,942
Power, light and heating costs	£ 2,900
Accountancy fees	£ 1,292

Buildings

Pathways work	£12,500 (grant funded)
Electrical repairs	£ 2,000 (grant funded)
Fence painting across site	£ 3,060 (grant funded)
Station Gardening project	£ 8,791 (grant funded)

Permanent Way

New Gesimar Tamper tools	£ 8,811 (grant funded)
Replacement switches/ blades	£ 2,587
Ballast and timbers	£ 3,960
Transport for p/w equipment	£ 6,000

Operations

New generator	£ 9,480 (grant funded)
Christmas presents	£ 7,031
Christmas actors	£ 7,100 (part grant funded)
Superheroes actors	£ 3,260 (part grant funded)
Dino actors	£ 1,500 (part grant funded)
Santa train refreshments	£ 3,299
DCDR branded clothing	£ 1,919 (partly offset by donations)

To summarise, in 2022 the Society has strengthened its position financially despite the challenging times we continued to encounter during that year. 2022 saw the Society return to an overall income level last achieved before the pre-covid pandemic. However, the downside to that position is our cost of sales/ expenditure has increased significantly in the last 2 years and I would project this to be a continuing position.

As the Society entered 2023, there are continued financial issues we need to be aware of such as the continuing rising costs, which will have to be absorbed, and a potential impact on our overall turnover with reduced availability of grants and passenger revenue as the cost-of-living crisis really takes hold.

I would pay special thanks to the work of the finance subcommittee members of Kathryn Casement and Jack McIlheron for their continued hard work and support during the past year.

John Noble

Finance Director

Accounts for the Year ended 31 December 2022



DCDR Detailed
Management Account



DCDR FRS102
Accounts 2022.pdf