Railway Heritage Conference: Opportunities and Challenges

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The Workshops Rail Museum
Ipswich Queensland AUSTRALIA

Approaching Rail Heritage Preservation from the perspective of Local Economic Development.
Who carries the mandate to preserve Rail Heritage in society?

There is no doubt that the preservation of Railway Heritage is noble and enjoys public support. The question however is how this public support is carried through to an institution of state which will carry a mandate to implement the preservation of Railway Heritage.
In a country as poor as South Africa with all the social demands being made on the state it is obvious that the luxury of preserving rail heritage assets, for their own sake, cannot be justified no matter how noble and worthy it may appear.
In the light of these dynamics the Ingwe Municipality has approached Railway Heritage from a different perspective, and while it is too soon to pronounce on its success, several interesting deductions can be drawn from this case study / experience.
The Sisonke Stimela

• The Sisonke Stimela is an Economic Development initiative owned by the Ingwe Municipality with substantive support from the European Union Gijima Fund, the Department of Local Economic Development, the Department of Local Government and the Department of Arts, Culture and Tourism.

• It comprises a steam-hauled passenger train consisting of locomotive GMAM 4074, seven refurbished luxury passenger coaches, a dining car and 2 lounge cars as well as a power car.

• The intention is to provide a luxury passenger train journey linking Pietermaritzburg to the Sisonke District Municipalities, more specifically Kwa Sani and Ingwe and eventually Umzimkhulu and Greater Kokstad.
By virtue of the fact that Local Government carries the Constitutional Mandate for Local Economic Development my conclusion to the question “Who carries the mandate to preserve Rail Heritage in society?” posed at the outset of this presentation is that Preservation Groups must align with Local Government and develop plans that will deliver jobs and Local Economic Development.
Government led, private sector driven, and community based