

INVITATION TO TENDER

Restoration and Conversion of Two Heritage Coaches to Provide Accessible Passenger Accommodation

Issued by	Swanage Railway Company Limited
Project	Accessible Coaches Project
Funding	Supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund
Tender issue date	20 August 2026
Tender return deadline	12 noon, 11 September 2026
Anticipated contract commencement	21 September 2026
Anticipated completion	To be agreed with the successful contractor

1. Introduction

Swanage Railway Company Limited invites suitably qualified and experienced contractors to tender for specialist works associated with the restoration and conversion of two heritage railway coaches to provide accessible passenger accommodation.

Swanage Railway is a heritage railway and visitor attraction operating between Swanage and Norden through the Isle of Purbeck in Dorset.

The Railway welcomes hundreds of thousands of visitors each year and is committed to making the heritage railway experience available to as wide a range of people as possible.

The Accessible Coaches Project is supported by a £249,000 grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund and forms an important part of Swanage Railway's wider commitment to improving accessibility and inclusion across the organisation.

The project will restore and adapt two heritage coaches, providing improved facilities for wheelchair users and passengers with additional accessibility requirements while retaining, wherever reasonably practicable, the historic character and significance of the vehicles.

2. Project Objectives

The principal objectives of the project are to:

- create accessible passenger accommodation within two heritage railway coaches;
- provide safe and practical access for wheelchair users and passengers with reduced mobility;
- provide appropriate spaces for wheelchair users while enabling companions, carers, friends, and family members to travel together;
- improve the overall passenger experience for visitors with additional accessibility requirements;

- retain and restore significant heritage features wherever practicable;
- ensure that alterations are sympathetic to the historic character of the vehicles;
- achieve a high standard of workmanship appropriate to operational heritage railway vehicles;
- ensure that the completed vehicles are suitable for regular operation on Swanage Railway; and
- deliver the project within the agreed National Lottery Heritage Fund programme and budget.

Accessibility should be considered as an integral part of the design and restoration rather than simply an addition to an otherwise conventional coach refurbishment.

3. Scope of Works

The successful contractor will be required to undertake the restoration and conversion of two heritage passenger coaches.

Structural and Bodywork

- assessment of the existing condition of both vehicles;
- repair or replacement of deteriorated structural components;
- timber and/or steel repairs as appropriate;
- repairs to exterior panelling;
- floor repairs and modifications;
- door and doorway alterations required to facilitate accessible use;
- repairs to window frames and glazing;
- roof inspection and repairs;
- corrosion treatment and prevention;
- weatherproofing; and
- preparation and painting to an agreed heritage finish.

Accessible Accommodation

- designated wheelchair spaces;
- suitable circulation space;
- appropriate seating adjacent to wheelchair spaces;
- consideration of different wheelchair and mobility aid dimensions;
- appropriate grab rails and handholds;
- accessible doorways and routes;
- appropriate signage;
- consideration of colour contrast and visibility;
- accessible passenger information where appropriate; and
- safe methods of boarding and alighting.

The design should seek to enable wheelchair users to travel alongside their family, friends, companions, or carers rather than being unnecessarily separated from the wider passenger accommodation.

Accessible Toilet Facilities

- suitable doorway and access arrangements;
- appropriate internal dimensions and manoeuvring space;
- grab rails;
- accessible fittings;
- appropriate lighting;
- water and waste systems;
- emergency assistance arrangements where required; and
- appropriate signage;
- design & installation of controlled emission toilets and effluent tanks.

Electrical Works

- inspection and renewal of existing electrical systems;
- appropriate internal lighting;
- emergency lighting where required;
- charging or power facilities where appropriate;
- electrical provision associated with accessible facilities; and
- testing and certification of completed installations.

Interior Restoration

- restoration or replacement of interior panelling to remove or cover existing Formica;
- flooring;
- seating;
- tables where appropriate;
- luggage arrangements;
- internal doors;
- fixtures and fittings;
- decoration; and
- restoration or replication of appropriate heritage features.

Materials and finishes should be appropriate for an operational heritage railway environment while taking account of durability, fire performance, cleaning, and maintenance requirements.

4. Heritage Considerations

The two vehicles form part of Swanage Railway's heritage collection and alterations must balance accessibility, operational requirements, and conservation.

- retain original material wherever reasonably practicable;

- record significant components before alteration;
- use sympathetic materials and construction techniques;
- ensure new work complements the historic character of the vehicles;
- distinguish necessary modern interventions from surviving historic fabric where appropriate; and
- minimise unnecessary loss of historically significant material.

Where original material cannot reasonably be retained, the contractor should discuss the proposed approach with Swanage Railway before removal or replacement.

5. Design and Methodology

Tenderers should provide a detailed explanation of their proposed methodology, including:

- initial condition assessment;
- proposed sequence of works;
- design development;
- approach to accessible conversion;
- heritage conservation methodology;
- structural repairs;
- materials proposed;
- electrical and mechanical works;
- quality assurance;
- testing and commissioning;
- project management arrangements; and
- management of risks to programme, budget, and quality.

Tenderers are encouraged to identify opportunities to improve the proposed design or delivery of the project. Any proposed departures from the specification should be clearly identified within the tender.

6. Accessibility and User Engagement

This project is intended to make a meaningful improvement to the experience of disabled visitors.

The successful contractor will be expected to work with Swanage Railway and, where appropriate, accessibility specialists and people with lived experience of disability during development of the final design.

The contractor should respond constructively to recommendations arising from accessibility consultation and demonstrate how accessibility considerations have been incorporated into the completed work.

7. Railway Safety and Compliance

The completed vehicles must be suitable for operation on Swanage Railway. All works must comply with applicable legislation, railway standards, engineering requirements, and Swanage Railway's safety management arrangements.

Tenderers should identify any standards, approvals, certification, or engineering acceptance they consider necessary. Appropriate risk assessments and method statements will be required before work commences.

No work affecting the safe operation, structural integrity, or engineering configuration of either vehicle may be undertaken without appropriate authorisation.

8. Deliverables

- an initial condition assessment for each vehicle;
- an agreed programme of works;
- detailed designs and specifications for significant alterations;
- accessibility proposals;
- records of significant heritage material affected by the works;
- regular progress reports;
- photographic records before, during and following restoration;
- completed restoration and accessible conversion of both vehicles;
- testing and commissioning;
- relevant certificates and technical documentation;
- operating and maintenance information for newly installed equipment; and
- a final completion record suitable for Swanage Railway and National Lottery Heritage Fund project records.

The contractor may also be required to attend project meetings and provide information to Swanage Railway's Executive Team, Trustee Directors and project funders.

9. Programme

Tenderers should submit a realistic programme for completion of the works as part of their tender by 11 September 2026.

- design and development;
- procurement of materials;
- commencement of physical works;
- major restoration stages;
- accessible conversion works;
- electrical and mechanical installation;
- painting and finishing;
- testing;

- commissioning;
- snagging; and
- final completion.

Tenderers should highlight any long-lead items or other matters that could affect the programme. Meeting the agreed completion date will be important because the project is being delivered as part of a funded programme.

10. Contract Management

Daniel Bennett
Trustee Director
Swanage Railway Company Limited
Email: dan.bennett@swanagerailway.co.uk
Telephone: 07939 953675

Daniel Bennett will act as the principal client representative for the project, supported by relevant members of the Swanage Railway team and specialist advisers as required.

The successful contractor will nominate a single project manager. Regular project meetings will be held at agreed intervals.

- progress against programme;
- expenditure;
- emerging risks;
- design decisions;
- variations;
- health and safety;
- heritage considerations; and
- any matters requiring a decision from Swanage Railway.

No variation resulting in additional expenditure may be undertaken without prior written authorisation from Swanage Railway.

11. Budget and Pricing

The Accessible Coaches Project is supported by a £249,000 grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Tenderers are required to provide a clear and comprehensive cost for the works proposed within this ITT, including:

- labour;
- materials;
- specialist subcontractors;

- design costs;
- project management;
- transport where applicable;
- equipment;
- testing and certification;
- expenses;
- contingency recommendations;
- VAT; and
- any other costs necessary to complete the works.

Tenderers should provide a breakdown between the two vehicles and principal elements of work wherever practicable. Any exclusions or assumptions must be clearly stated.

12. Payment

The final payment schedule will be agreed with the successful contractor and linked to significant project milestones.

- payment following mobilisation and agreed commencement;
- staged payments following completion of defined restoration milestones;
- payment following substantial completion; and
- final payment following satisfactory commissioning, completion of snagging and receipt of all required documentation.

13. Contractor Experience and Competence

Particular consideration will be given to experience involving:

- heritage railway rolling stock;
- railway carriage construction and restoration;
- timber coachwork;
- metal fabrication;
- heritage conservation;
- accessible transport;
- accessible design;
- specialist electrical installations;
- operational railway vehicles; and
- National Lottery Heritage Fund or other grant-funded conservation projects.

Tenderers should provide details of individuals undertaking the work, relevant qualifications, experience and competencies, and proposed subcontractors.

14. Insurance

The successful contractor will be required to maintain appropriate insurance for the duration of the contract, including as applicable:

- Public Liability Insurance;
- Employers' Liability Insurance;
- Professional Indemnity Insurance; and
- insurance relating to vehicles, equipment, and materials in the contractor's care.

Evidence of insurance will be required before commencement.

15. Tender Submission Requirements

- details of the tendering organisation;
- the bidder's understanding of the project;
- proposed methodology;
- proposed approach to accessibility;
- proposed approach to heritage conservation;
- project programme;
- details of the project manager and project team;
- relevant previous experience;
- examples of comparable projects;
- details of subcontractors;
- detailed pricing;
- proposed payment schedule;
- insurance details;
- health and safety arrangements;
- two appropriate references;
- identified project risks and proposed mitigations;
- assumptions and exclusions;
- any proposed alternative solutions; and
- declaration of any actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest.

16. Tender Evaluation

Tenders will be evaluated on the basis of quality and value for money rather than price alone.

Criterion	Weighting
Understanding of the project and specification	15%
Proposed technical methodology and quality	20%
Heritage restoration experience and approach	15%
Accessibility approach and understanding	15%

Experience and capability of the project team	10%
Programme and ability to deliver	10%
Price and value for money	15%
Total	100%

Swanage Railway is not obliged to accept the lowest-priced tender. Shortlisted contractors may be invited to attend an interview, site visit or clarification meeting before a final decision is made.

17. Site Inspection

Tenderers are strongly encouraged to inspect both coaches before submitting a tender.

Site inspections will be available between 24 August and 4 September 2026 by prior arrangement.

Site visits can be arranged by contacting:

Daniel Bennett
Trustee Director
Swanage Railway Company Limited
Email: dan.bennett@swanagerailway.co.uk
Telephone: 07939 953675

Tenderers remain responsible for satisfying themselves as to the nature and extent of the work required.

18. Clarification Questions

Questions regarding this Invitation to Tender should be submitted to:

Daniel Bennett
Trustee Director
Swanage Railway Company Limited
Email: dan.bennett@swanagerailway.co.uk

Questions must be received by 12 noon on 7 September 2026.

Where clarification is relevant to all tenderers, Swanage Railway may circulate the question and an anonymised response to all participating bidders.

19. Procurement Timetable

Activity	Date
Invitation to Tender issued	20 August 2026
Site inspections available	24 August – 4 September 2026

Deadline for clarification questions	12 noon, 7 September 2026
Responses to final clarification questions	8 September 2026
Tender submission deadline	12 noon, 11 September 2026
Tender evaluation	11–14 September 2026
Clarification/interviews if required	14 September 2026
Preferred bidder notified	15 September 2026
Contract award	16 September 2026
Anticipated contract commencement	21 September 2026
Project completion	To be proposed by bidder and agreed at contract award

20. Submission of Tenders

Completed tenders must be received by 12 noon on Friday 11 September 2026.

Tender submissions should be emailed to: dan.benett@swanagerailway.co.uk

Subject: Tender – Accessible Coaches Project

Late tenders may not be considered. Tenderers should ensure that all requested information is included within their submission.

21. Tender Conditions

- seek clarification from bidders;
- request further information;
- interview shortlisted bidders;
- amend or withdraw this Invitation to Tender;
- reject any or all submissions;
- negotiate elements of the preferred tender;
- vary the proposed programme; and
- decide not to award a contract.

Tenderers are responsible for their own costs in preparing and submitting a tender. The issue of this Invitation to Tender does not constitute an offer or commitment by Swanage Railway to enter into a contract. A binding commitment will only arise once appropriate contractual documentation has been completed.

22. Declaration

- the information provided is accurate;
- all relevant assumptions and exclusions have been identified;
- any actual or potential conflicts of interest have been declared;
- the bidder has the appropriate competence and resources to undertake the work;
- the tender price will remain valid for 90 days following the submission deadline; and

- the bidder understands that submission of a tender does not create a contractual relationship with Swanage Railway.

Swanage Railway Company Limited

Station House

Station Approach

Swanage

Dorset

BH19 1HB

Registered Company No. 01410568

Registered Charity No. 1218440