

## Wheelchair users get dedicated coach on Wiltshire's heritage railway

Journeys on Wiltshire's only standard gauge railway are now available to wheelchair users following the completion of a four year project to renovate a 1959 railway coach to provide disabled access.

The new coach was launched by The Swindon and Cricklade Railway on Sunday 17 November on the same day that the charity marked its 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Representatives from the railway charity were joined by Michael Hill, chief executive of the Hills Group, whose company provided £27,000 of funding for the project through the Landfill Communities Fund which is administered for Hills by Community First, the Rural Community Council for Wiltshire. The mayor of Swindon, Cllr Nick Martin, was also in attendance.



Dedicated railway volunteers overcame severe weather conditions and what seemed like an unsurmountable number of repairs to convert the old 'corridor style' coach into an open and integrated one with full wheelchair access including an onboard toilet for disabled train users.

The coach is named LAURA, after the wife of The Hills Group founder, Edward Hill, who established the Wiltshire-based company back in 1900.

Michael Hill said: "I am so impressed with what has been achieved by the enthusiastic group of volunteers to deliver this project. They have had many setbacks along the way, but their sheer determination has ensured that this marvellous railway experience can be enjoyed by all. Hills is proud to have supported this project and it is very special that my great-grandmother's name is carried on the coach."

Brian Pound, chairman of Swindon and Cricklade Railway, said: "The introduction of this coach will allow people with access difficulties to enjoy the ride in a more comfortable manner."



The Swindon & Cricklade Railway offers a round-trip passenger journey of approximately four miles. Trains run between Blunston and Hayes Knoll, plus the extension north towards Cricklade and the extension south towards Mouldon Hill. **ENDS**

Notes to editors:

#### **Swindon and Cricklade Railway**

More information at <http://www.swindon-cricklade-railway.org/>

#### **The Hills Group Limited**

Established in 1900 The Hills Group Limited is a privately owned family company with a broad and successful portfolio of business activities which include recycling and waste management; quarrying of aggregates and production of ready-mixed concrete; and building new homes. It is a dynamic regional business which, while centred on Wiltshire, has stretched its boundaries into neighbouring areas. The Group has a turnover of £76 million and employs over 400 people over 28 sites.

[www.hills-group.co.uk](http://www.hills-group.co.uk)

#### **Media contact:**

Monique Hayes, Communications Officer, The Hills Group Limited

Tel: 01672 518941 [monique.hayes@hills-group.co.uk](mailto:monique.hayes@hills-group.co.uk)



@HillsGroup



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