

The Swindon and Cricklade Railway is pleased to announce that they have completed, on a tight timescale working with the developer, the removal of track and infrastructure from the former Didcot A Power Station site in Oxfordshire.



Removing the e-clips from one of the former Didcot coal loop departure lines. The coal unloading bays were located around to the left in the far distance.

The Swindon and Cricklade Railway were initially donated several panels of track lifted by the owner of the site, Clowes Group, during their development on the western side of the Didcot site. While the S&CR were collecting these materials we noticed that the rest of the track was still in place so, after discussions with the development managers, Graftongate, we were donated the remaining track on the former power station site.

“As a railway we, the Swindon and Cricklade Railway, are eternally grateful for the generous donation of all the materials. It is a chance of a lifetime being given all this equipment for our use”, said Adrian.



The track was originally a large double-track loop with a coal unloading stage about half way round. Trains could enter, unload and exit without needing to stop. Part of this loop was removed when Winvic developed the west part of the site, then donated to us as mentioned above. The remaining sections of the loop were recovered by the S&CRS.

Also recovered was the remaining sections of a single-track loop. This used to run around the top of the power station and was used to remove dust for the construction industry and for deliveries of oil used to start the power station boilers.

A small but dedicated team of volunteers has been at the Didcot-A site for around six months, working most weekends and many week days in all weathers. The work included cutting around 2km of continuously welded rails into 60 foot lengths and removing the e-clips before gathering and stacking them for transport. The remaining track was bullhead rail; this was already in 60ft lengths but needed their joining fishplates removed and the chairs unscrewing from the sleepers and de-keying from the rails.

There were also five sets of points, all broken down into transportable sub-assemblies and gathered for transport. Finally, the various track fittings, fishplate bolts and rubber pads created around 180 hippo-bags to move.

Not to be left out, the signalling department gained a substantial quantity of signalling equipment.



Still on the departure lines, this time looking towards the site exit gates out of view in the distance.



Back at the Swindon and Cricklade Railway, these are some of the materials removed from Didcot A Power Station, stacked ready for relaying for our trains to “Return to Cricklade”.

“ This donation of rail and infrastructure is a real boost to our plan to re-join Swindon to Cricklade again” said Adrian Thompson.

“There is more than enough rail now on site now to allow us to reach our goal and also to provide stocks for future maintenance renewals” Adrian said.

Spurred on by these donated materials, the S&CR is looking at how best to reinstate ‘South Meadow Lane’ crossing, a farm crossing and bridleway located just north of our present railhead. Once reinstated we can continue track laying towards our next obstacle, Farfield Lane Bridge. This is around a mile south of Cricklade and carried Farfield Lane over the north end of the cutting until it was demolished and infilled after the line was closed.



Looking north from South Meadow Lane. Farfield Lane is in the middle distance (the grey object marks where the bridge needs to be returned). On the horizon is St Sampson's Church in Cricklade.

The track bed from South Meadow Lane to Farfield Lane has been cleared of undergrowth and scraped back to its original level. Once the drainage and fencing is repaired, base ballast can be spread ready for the track itself.

Discussions are already taking place regarding the best way to deal with the replacement of the missing bridge at Farfield Lane.

“ We have been in touch with the local landowners and farmers, many of whom have expressed their support to our outline proposals” said Adrian “while Cricklade Town Council have agreed to support our aim to reach Cricklade and will include it in their forthcoming Neighbourhood Plan”.

“As part of this development phase we intend to build a new station just to the north of the missing bridge, to be called Farfield Lane Halt. We then push onto Cricklade itself...”