

NEW EUROPE RAILWAY HERITAGE TRUST
SOFIA MUSEUM OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT

1 We in NERHT are delighted to hear of the Sofia Museum of Public Transport project.

2 I visited Sofia a few years ago, and was pleased to see how your beautiful city is served by the tramway network. It is good that the system is being updated. In Great Britain, America and elsewhere trams are being reintroduced in places where they were abandoned, and surviving systems are being modernized. Trams are safe, “green” and highly efficient - the means of transport of the future. But progress requires us to ask - should the tramway heritage be preserved? And how can this be done?

3 Museums are an important cultural asset and an educational facility. Transport museums describe an aspect of the growth of civilization. Trams made an immense contribution to the development of towns and cities where they were the first means of mechanical urban surface transport. This fascinating story needs to be told, so historic trams and tramway-related artifacts must be preserved and displayed in an appropriate museum setting.

4 The best way to appreciate our transport heritage is to see it in operation. Historic tram rides are hugely popular in many countries, and in some places new tracks (or “heritage tramways”) have been laid at great cost where the original lines were abandoned long ago. In Sofia as in other cities you are fortunate in being able to run preserved trams on the city system – something which is not possible in places where new technology is incompatible with old trams.

5 The Public Transport Museum, if established, will “tick all the boxes”. The museum itself is sure to become a major tourist attraction. The Klokonitsa depot itself is worth preserving as part of your industrial heritage, and would be an excellent museum, not least because it is conveniently located and linked to the tram network, thus allowing preserved trams to be operated. Studies carried out in Europe and elsewhere show how transport museums and historic tram services can attract tourists and stimulate economic growth.

6 If the project goes ahead, it will be able to draw on the experience of transport museums elsewhere. NERHT will be happy to arrange for foreign experts to give advice, and we have already invited those in charge of the project to visit our National Tramway Museum and other locations on a study tour.

7 I wish you every success with this important and worthwhile project.

STEPHEN WIGGS
CHAIRMAN, NERHT

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