

THE WAY AHEAD



JULY 2020

A message from the SVR chairmen

Our plans to reopen the Severn Valley Railway are progressing well, and in this leaflet we'd like to share news of our preparations with you, as one of our closest supporters. There's information about how you'll be able to book tickets, a flavour of what things will be like when you next come to see us, and information about how we're working to get the Railway through the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and months of enforced closure.

If you're one of the thousands who donated or purchased shares to support our Fight Back Fund, thank you very much

indeed. Your support means we have now raised £750,000. It's not too late to boost this amount even further, and every pound will help us through this crisis. See page 11 for more details.

All being well, we will reopen the line in August. We must stress that it isn't guaranteed that we will be able to do so, but if we're allowed, we will be ready. We have a wonderful team of paid staff and volunteers, and a collective determination to survive. Thank you so much for your support and understanding, and we look forward to welcoming you back soon to the wonderful Severn Valley Railway.

Nick Paul CBE
SVR (Holdings) Plc

David Williams
SVR Company Limited

Peter Copsey
SVR Charitable Trust



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Reopening the Railway

General Manager Helen Smith writes

We need to reopen as soon as we safely can in order to generate revenue. We're losing £600,000 of income for every month we're closed, the profits from which we would normally use to maintain the heritage assets and infrastructure in our care. Though we can survive for a short while by cutting back on our usual level of investment, in the long term it's not sustainable.

The reopening will be slow and steady, following government guidance, so we can look after our visitors, volunteers and staff. We must balance the need for volume with the need for control measures. To begin with, we'll sell pre-booked fixed journeys using compartment carriages and one disabled-access carriage. Each compartment will be sold for a group of up to six visitors. We're aiming at the family market who are more likely to visit in August.

It is essential the Railway can survive when we open so initially we will only be able to allocate 30% of tickets to loyalty pass holders, shareholders and members. We will introduce more services if all goes well. We hope that you, as one of our closest supporters, will understand our predicament at this time.

All tickets must be pre-booked through svr.co.uk or on 01562 757900, once we have announced that tickets are on sale.

We don't yet know whether face

coverings will be mandatory, and will follow Heritage Railway Association guidance.

The SVR's pubs will reopen from 4th July, in line with government advice.

Find out when tickets go on sale by signing up for our newsletter at svr.co.uk/subscribe. There'll also be announcements on social media and in the local press.

New AGM dates

The Severn Valley Railway (Holdings) plc Annual General Meeting will take place by proxy only on Saturday 12th September. Full details will be posted to all shareholders in due course.

The Severn Valley Railway Company Limited AGM will be on Saturday 10th October. More details will be published in the September edition of *Severn Valley Railway News*, sent to all members.

Getting ready to welcome you back



Most of the Severn Valley Railway has been mothballed for the past three-and-a-half months, and the enormous task of bringing everything back into working order is underway.

A limited number of volunteers and paid staff are already back at the Railway. We are bringing people back in a phased way, so that we're confident we can meet their safety and welfare needs and ensure everyone can follow the prevailing government guidelines on social distancing. Those with outdoor roles have been the first to return.

Meanwhile, our heritage rolling stock, some of which is 120 years old, has been standing unattended all this time.

We need to make sure we have enough locomotives ready to run services when we reopen. Each one needs a full inspection and steam testing. Once an engine moves under its own power, we'll make further checks to the valves and pistons, and, very importantly, to the braking systems.

A number of back-up heritage diesel locos will also be available to supplement steam if needed. We'll continue to use the Class

33 and the Class 09 diesels that have been in service throughout the lockdown to attend to jobs on the permanent way.

Forty carriages are being prepared for the reopening services, and we'll examine each one, internally and externally. We must check the doors, windows, seats, heating systems and lights, not to mention the wheels, axleboxes and braking systems. We'll finish with a thorough clean, inside and out.

Inch-by-inch inspections of the permanent way are taking place, to identify and deal with any track issues. At each of our six stations, staff are cleaning, polishing, gardening and tidying to make sure we're looking our best for returning visitors.

There's no denying the sheer size of the challenge we face, but the passion and determination of our dedicated volunteers and paid staff means that when the time comes, we will be ready.

Meet some of the team who are getting us back on track...

During lockdown, Rob Hendrie has carried out site walks as part of his daily exercise. In 'normal' times he volunteers as a signaller and member of station staff.

"Living so close to Bewdley station, it's been easy to walk round to check for any signs of damage. Now we're working hard to get ready for reopening. We're cutting down four-foot-high grass and removing a thick layer of dust from window ledges and benches!"

"Social distancing isn't something they thought about in the 1860s when the SVR was built, but we'll make it work. We want to see this place come alive again."



Charlotte Marsh is preparing the onsite overnight accommodation at Bridgnorth to receive those volunteers who travel considerable distances to work at the Railway.

"I think a lot of people would be surprised at just how extensive our volunteer accommodation is – four railway carriages can sleep around 70 people in normal times, although now with social distancing requirements that number will be more than halved."

"We're checking everything is in good order, including fire alarms, smoke detectors, and plumbing. My 'real life' skills as a pump applications engineer come in useful, as there's a small pumping station to take away waste from the sleeping carriages."



Dave Evans is a paid member of the permanent way team, and also volunteers as both a diesel and steam driver. He's responsible for training and assessing drivers and firemen.

"Apart from a three-week furlough period, I've been working throughout the shutdown on vegetation clearance, weed killing, and inspecting and repairing the track. It's been odd, knowing our little team are the only people out on our 16 miles of line!"

"I can't wait to see the Railway back in action. I've missed the hustle and bustle. Things might not be 100% normal, but I know that we'll make it work. We're pretty good at overcoming challenges here."





Would you like reduced fares and discounts on refreshments at the SVR?

Then join the 12,500 people who pay a small annual fee as members of the Severn Valley Railway Company Limited. Benefits include:

- Reduced train fares – save one third off most ticket prices!
- Discount of 10% in our refreshment rooms on selected items
- Your own copies of the full-colour quarterly magazine *Severn Valley Railway News* (usual price £3 each)
- The opportunity to get even more involved as a volunteer, if you choose

If you care about supporting and preserving our heritage railway, you can become an SVR member from as little as £22 a year, with reductions for senior citizens and young people. Join online at svr.co.uk, or phone 01562 757930 Mon-Wed 9.30-1.30 (membership enquiries only.)

Did you know?

The SVR Company Limited has invested more than £1.7million in the Railway, supporting projects such as Bridgnorth station development, the Kidderminster diesel depot and repairs to Borle viaduct.

Why not treat a friend or family member to membership as a gift?

Looking for the perfect gift for a heritage rail enthusiast?

Why not adopt an engine?

Nine home fleet steam and diesel engines available, including SR 34027 'Taw Valley' and Class 50 50033 'Glorious'

Receive an adoption certificate, SVR accessories, homeware, cuddly toys and a 'Freedom of the Line' ticket

Adopt an engine from £30 at svrshop.co.uk

All proceeds to the SVR's Fight Back Fund



Welcome to the online Severn Valley Railway Shop!

Clothing • homeware •
artwork • games • model
railway items • books

There's something for
everyone at svrshop.co.uk

All proceeds to



contact@svrlive.com

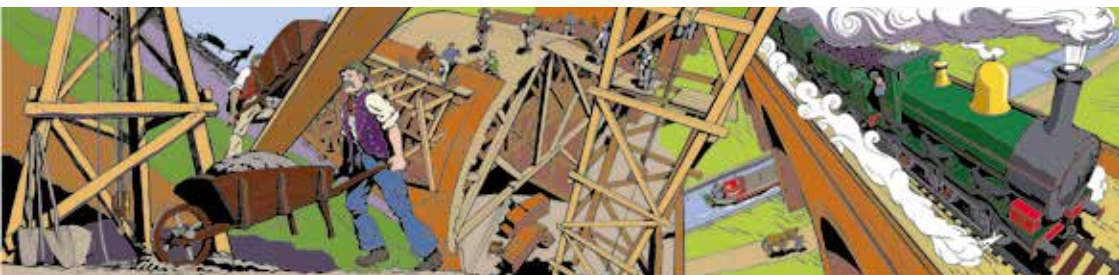
Bat's life....

Some unexpected visitors have temporarily halted work on phase 2 of the Falling Sands Viaduct restoration project. Site workers using rope access to repair the external brickwork noticed bats under one of the arches. 'Bat activity' was confirmed by the Worcestershire Wildlife Trust. Because bats are a protected species, further inspections must take place to determine whether we need a license from Natural England to restart the work.

The good news is that we don't think the presence of bats will prevent us running trains over the viaduct when we reopen, and even if the restoration work is delayed, it won't be a problem to complete

it later in the year, without impacting on the Railway's operation.

As with phase 1 of the project, this work is being funded through a grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF.) This funding was secured back in 2019 and is restricted to repairs and activities relating to the Falling Sands Viaduct.



Bringing the SVR's rich history to life

Sharing the heritage of the Railway is a key condition of the NLHF grant and we're delighted to report that work has restarted at The Engine House, Highley to install an exciting new interactive exhibition that brings to life the early history of the Railway and the construction of Falling Sands Viaduct. This will be ready for visitors when we reopen.

Meanwhile, we're hoping that the unique

mobile exhibition in the newly restored Stove R van will also be completed in time.

An exciting and important project has been the recording of oral histories to capture the history of the SVR in preservation. We've spoken to eight veteran volunteers, and are planning more recording sessions with others. We'll be sharing these fascinating accounts in the future – look out for more details.

Raising funds, cutting costs

Getting the Railway through its current difficulties has meant tackling the problem in many different ways. With the Railway closed and no visitors, we've sought to raise income from alternative sources, and also worked hard to cut our outgoings wherever possible.

To raise funds we have:

- Launched our Fight Back Fund appeal, currently standing at £750,000
- Applied to our bank for a £1.5 million loan under the government-backed CBILS scheme
- Applied for emergency funding of up to £250,000 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund
- Continued to undertake contract work for outside organisations
- Opened an online shop at svrshop.co.uk to provide SVR merchandise that will appeal to people staying at home
- Applied to grant-giving bodies for emergency funding

To save costs we have:

- Furloughed the majority of our paid staff, with many of the remaining skeleton staff taking voluntary pay cuts
- Secured a business-rates holiday for 12 months
- Negotiated a 'rent holiday' with the landlord who owns buildings we use in Bridgnorth
- Deferred all non-essential capital projects or capital spend
- Reviewed current overheads, ceasing services where possible, and only making essential purchases



Make time to visit The Engine House Visitor Centre, Highley

- Set in beautiful Shropshire countryside, The Engine House is a must-see part of your visit to the SVR
- Packed with historic locomotives and carriages, including the Royal Saloon of King George VI
- New for 2020, an exciting interactive exhibition covering the early history of the Railway and the construction of Falling Sands Viaduct
- Refreshments in The Engine House café with stunning balcony views





Remedial work needed for landslips

The SVR is making arrangements to remedy issues at two separate locations on the line where landslips occurred following the heavy rainfall in February this year. Infrastructure manager Chris Bond explains more:

“At Sterns, by monitoring specially constructed bore holes we’ve found that the movement is slowing down, probably helped by the prolonged dry spell. We’re asking adjacent landowners for access on the west side of the line to carry out some mitigation works, and install a new drainage network. We hope to carry out this work during the summer, and it won’t affect the operation of trains across Sterns.

“Meanwhile, at Alveley Woods, David Symonds Associates are finalising the drawings for a remedial scheme for the land slip here. We want to put in a small drainage scheme in the near future. During our closure period in early 2021, we will carry out soil nailing and will introduce stone and a plastic geomesh material to replace some of the existing ash embankment material.

“Before any passenger trains run over either of the two locations, the permanent way department will have to correct the track geometry due to the movement that has taken place over the lockdown period. Let’s keep our fingers crossed that the work planned will ease the problems we have been having with the track formation at Sterns and Alveley Woods.”



We look forward to welcoming you back to the Severn Valley Railway!



Some of our volunteer site walkers during lockdown

Thank you for helping to save the Severn Valley Railway

Back in March, we launched an emergency appeal to help the Railway through the coronavirus pandemic. Thanks to you, we quickly reached our initial target of £245,000, but then it became apparent that this crisis would not be a short-lived one. Donations from generous supporters continued to come in to our Fight Back Fund, which now totals £750,000. This was made possible by thousands of donations and share purchases and we are extremely grateful to everyone who has backed the SVR in its time of need.

But we're not through the woods yet. As we explain on page 2 of this leaflet, the SVR has sustained significant financial losses, and will be paying the price for years to come. Please consider giving to our Fight Back Fund, if you haven't already done so. Perhaps you may wish to add a further donation or share purchase? Every single pound you give will make a difference to the SVR's resilience, and will help get us back on track as quickly as possible.

- To donate to the Fight Back Fund, please visit svrtrust.org.uk
- To purchase SVR shares in support of the Fight Back Fund, please visit svr.co.uk/shares



The reduction in income we will suffer this year will mean that a number of projects will not be able to go ahead as planned. We hope that we can pick these up in the future, but the outcome is not yet certain. The postponed projects include:

- Renewing the roof and installing sustainable lighting and a travelling crane at Bridgnorth locomotive works
- Restoration work to Wribbenhall Viaduct
- Improvements at the diesel depot
- Recruiting new heritage engineering apprentices
- Replacing our outdated website
- Resurfacing the playground at The Engine House, Highley



Why does regular giving make such a difference right now?



As we continue to deal with the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, you can help us look to the future. Your regular gift will support projects across the SVR, such as rolling stock, infrastructure and apprentice training.

Give a little every month - make a big difference

Please sign up online at svrtrust.org.uk or use the form below

Name: Tel:

Address:

Postcode: Email: Signature:

Please complete the details below and return the form to: Number One Comberton Place, Kidderminster DY10 1QR

To (your bank): Sort Code:

Address:

Postcode: Please debit my account No:

Start date: Signature:

Please pay monthly until further notice: £10 £20 £50 Other £

To the SVR Charitable Trust at: **HSBC Bank PLC, Account No: 91525786, Sort Code: 40-26-08**

Charity Gift Aid Declaration *giftaid it*

Boost your donation by 25p of Gift Aid for every £1 you donate. Gift Aid is reclaimed by the charity from the tax you pay for the current tax year.

Your address is needed to identify you as a current UK taxpayer. In order to Gift Aid your donation you must tick the box opposite:

Yes I want to Gift Aid my donation of £ and any donations I make in the future or have made in the past four years. I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.