

THE SEVERN VALLEY RAILWAY STRATEGY

2022 - 2026

‘To love it is to improve it’



CHARITABLE TRUST

A TIME LINE OF THE SVR

1853	Parliamentary authority obtained to build the Severn Valley Railway from Hartlebury to Shrewsbury
1858-1861	Railway constructed
1862	SV line opened to passengers as part of the West Midland Railway
1872	SV line fully absorbed into the Great Western Railway
1878	GWR opened 'the Loop', from Bewdley to Kidderminster
1939-1945	SV at its busiest during the Second World War
1948	Upon nationalisation, the GWR became British Railways Western Region
1950	Diesel railcars appeared on certain services
1963	SV line closed to all through traffic between Alveley and Shrewsbury
1965	Preservation scheme launched at Kidderminster meeting. Severn Valley Railway Society established its headquarters at Bridgnorth
1969	Alveley Colliery closed, thus the line south to Bewdley became disused
1970	BR passenger services from Bewdley to Kidderminster ceased. SVR passenger services from Bridgnorth to Hampton Loade commenced
1974	SVR passenger services extended, first to Highley, then to Bewdley
1982	Foley Park sugar factory sidings closed, thus the line to Kidderminster became disused
1984	SVR passenger services extended to Kidderminster; line now 16 miles long
2007	The Great Storm ravaged the SVR between Bewdley and Bridgnorth; line damaged in 45 places. Kidderminster to Bewdley was unaffected
2008	After nine months out of use, and nearly £3 million spent on repairs, Bewdley to Bridgnorth reopened. The Engine House, Highley opened
2012	Establishment of the SVR Charitable Trust
2015	The SVR celebrated 50 years of the preservation scheme with special events
2016	Kidderminster Diesel Maintenance Depot opened
2020	The 50th anniversary of the SVR running passenger services in preservation. Completion of the £1.3 million project to restore Falling Sands Viaduct. The Covid-19 pandemic led to national lockdowns, several periods of closure for the Railway and a devastating financial impact. The effect will be felt for years to come
2022	Celebrations for The Queen's Platinum Jubilee and the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games. Overhaul of Bridgnorth loco shed
2023	Bridgnorth station building refurbishment
2030	The 60th anniversary of the SVR running passenger services in preservation

INTRODUCTION

This Strategy aims to unite the Railway with one vision for the future. It will strengthen the organisation, positioning it for the future and building on the foundations and legacy we have been fortunate to inherit.

The Severn Valley Railway is a complex ecosystem, existing in a delicate balance. It is reliant on the interdependent relationships that have been formed over the last 50 years. With its achievements hard-won and often against all the odds, the ecosystem is passionately defended on all sides and sometimes from within. Any changes to the balance, however small, could be catastrophic.

However, in the words of Leon C Megginson*:

"It is not the strongest or the most intelligent who will survive but those who can best manage change."

The frustrating thing about evolution is that it never stops. If you don't keep up with it, you get left behind. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown us that the SVR is more resilient than any of us had realised; it has survived and thrived during major changes to its ecosystem including a

global pandemic, flooding, land slips and serious financial challenges!

Change is needed to deal with the today's challenges, but we will be building on the roots of our firm foundations. As we look to the future, we will never forget the legacy we have inherited.

The Strategy has been developed with input from across the Railway and will help ensure the SVR is the best heritage railway in the UK.

*Professor Leon C Megginson (1921-2010) was an award-winning American academic who specialised in management and business



Helen Smith

Managing Director,
SVR (Holdings) plc

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A STRONGER SVR

The five-year strategy outlined on the following pages is about uniting the Railway with one vision for the future, and the three members of the SVR 'family' are already committed to ensuring that this happens.

In 2019, a tripartite group of Directors and Trustees from all three organisations was established to review Railway-wide capital projects and consider the next priorities for development. The group was originally set up to drive collaboration and to achieve real progress on our capital projects, and that remains one of its tasks.

We now know this as 'Gold Command' and the group was able to prove its worth in 2020, as along with the rest of the country the SVR went into the first Covid-19 lockdown. The

Group made key decisions about the SVR's response to the pandemic and found ways of mitigating the impact of closure and the consequent loss of revenue, thus ensuring the Railway's survival.

The Tripartite Group created and approved a Memorandum of Understanding to set out the principles of a shared approach to supporting the Railway. It recognises the roles and responsibilities of each of the three organisations and how all of their strengths and partnership working are vital for the future success of the Railway.



SVR (Holdings) Plc
Company No 01046274

- 13,000+ shareholders
- Responsible for safety, operation, finance, governance, planning, commercial activities, customer service and management of the SVR
- Employs the paid staff



**The SVR
Company Limited**
Company No 00906842

- Membership organisation, limited by guarantee
- 11,000 members
- Recruits and inducts new volunteers
- Supports volunteer projects



CHARITABLE TRUST

**The SVR
Charitable Trust**
Charity No 1092723

- 15,000+ donors
- Receives donations in support of Railway activity
- Directs all fundraising efforts to support SVR projects



OUR VALUE PROPOSITIONS

WHAT DO WE WANT FOR OUR VISITORS AND CUSTOMERS?

Three generations of one family
enjoying a great day out.
Lesley Carr

Following a series of workshops that brought team members from across the Railway together, a number of value propositions were identified from which we will shape the future strategy for the Railway. A value proposition is an innovation, service or feature intended to make a company or product attractive to customers.

- A great day out
- A warm welcome for all, creating wonderful memories
- Living and breathing the history of the Severn Valley
- A gentle journey back in time through our shared past, weaving through an unspoilt pastoral landscape

WHAT DO WE WANT FOR OUR STAKEHOLDERS?

- Build a strong working relationship with the regulator (The Office of Road and Rail)
- Be financially sustainable
- Be a 'jewel in the crown' of the regional tourism offer, and be a proactive advocate for tourism in the area
- Partner with like-minded businesses to create stronger visitor experiences
- Contribute to and support our local economies along the length of the Railway
- Build stronger relationships with our lineside neighbours

1501 passing through Bewdley. Bob Green



VISIT WORCESTERSHIRE

Made possible with
Heritage Fund

VISIT SHROPSHIRE



The National Lottery
Heritage Fund

Historic
England

Department for
Digital, Culture,
Media & Sport



Signalman and driver stop for a quick chat before departing Bewdley. Anthony Carwithen

WHAT DO WE WANT FOR OUR SHAREHOLDERS, MEMBERS AND DONORS?

- To be as involved as they want be, and well communicated with
- Enjoy the rewards that come from investing time and money in the SVR,
- recognising the need to continue to attract funds and support
- All are great advocates for the Railway

WHAT DO WE WANT FOR OUR PEOPLE?

- A professionally-led and managed organisation, run to high ethical and commercial standards
- People feel involved, communicated with and valued
- Work is interesting, exciting and multi-faceted, and based on high standards of customer service
- Skills are prized and understood



SVR supporters at Bridgnorth MPD. Severn Valley Railway Archive

WHAT DO WE WANT FOR OUR LOCO AND ROLLING STOCK OWNERS?

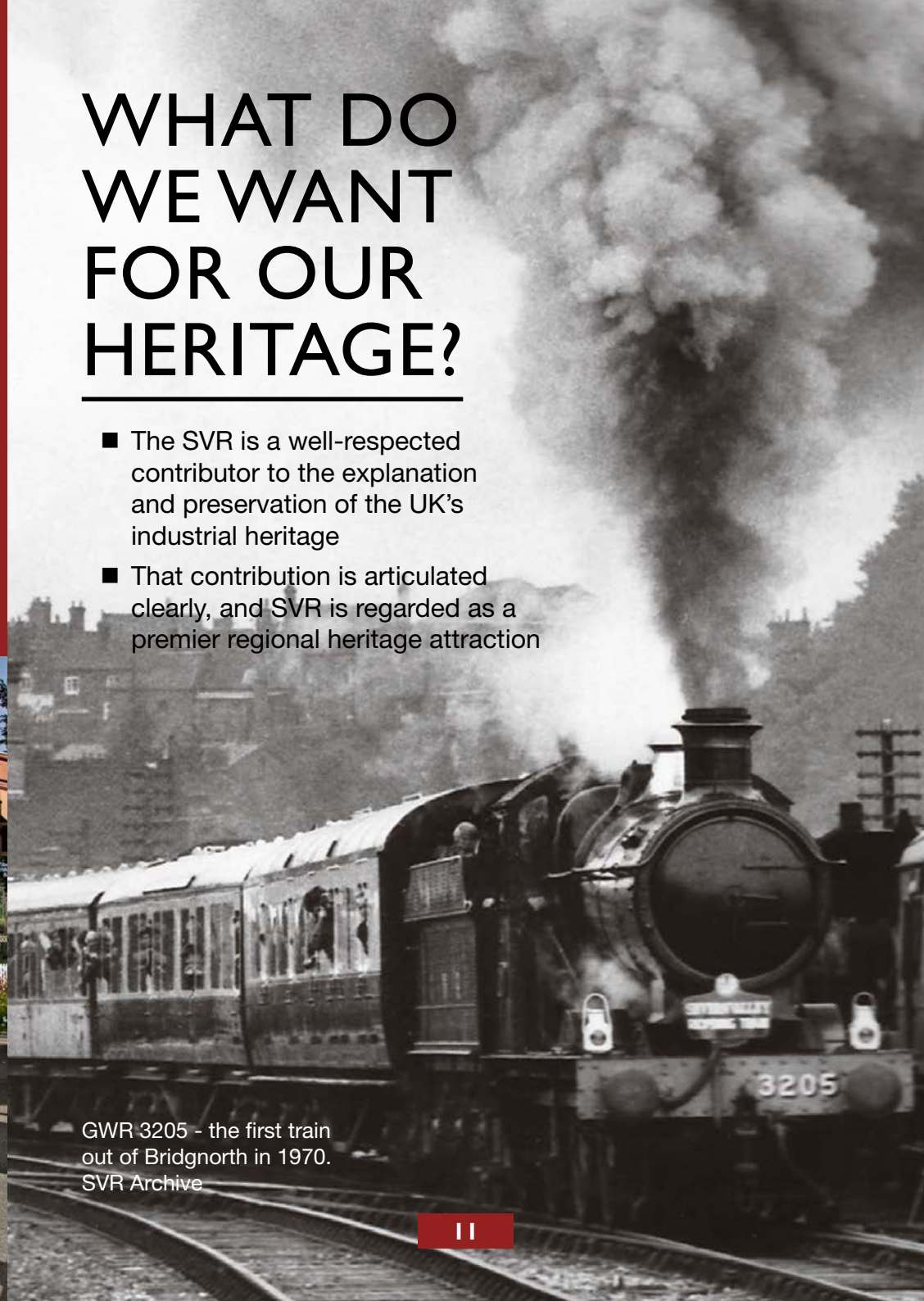
- They feel part of the SVR family
- All have effective, up-to-date agreements for their locomotives and rolling stock
- Commercial risks on both sides are recognised and understood, and dialogue is easy



D821 Greyhound runs in as 7714 waits patiently.
John Tittow

WHAT DO WE WANT FOR OUR HERITAGE?

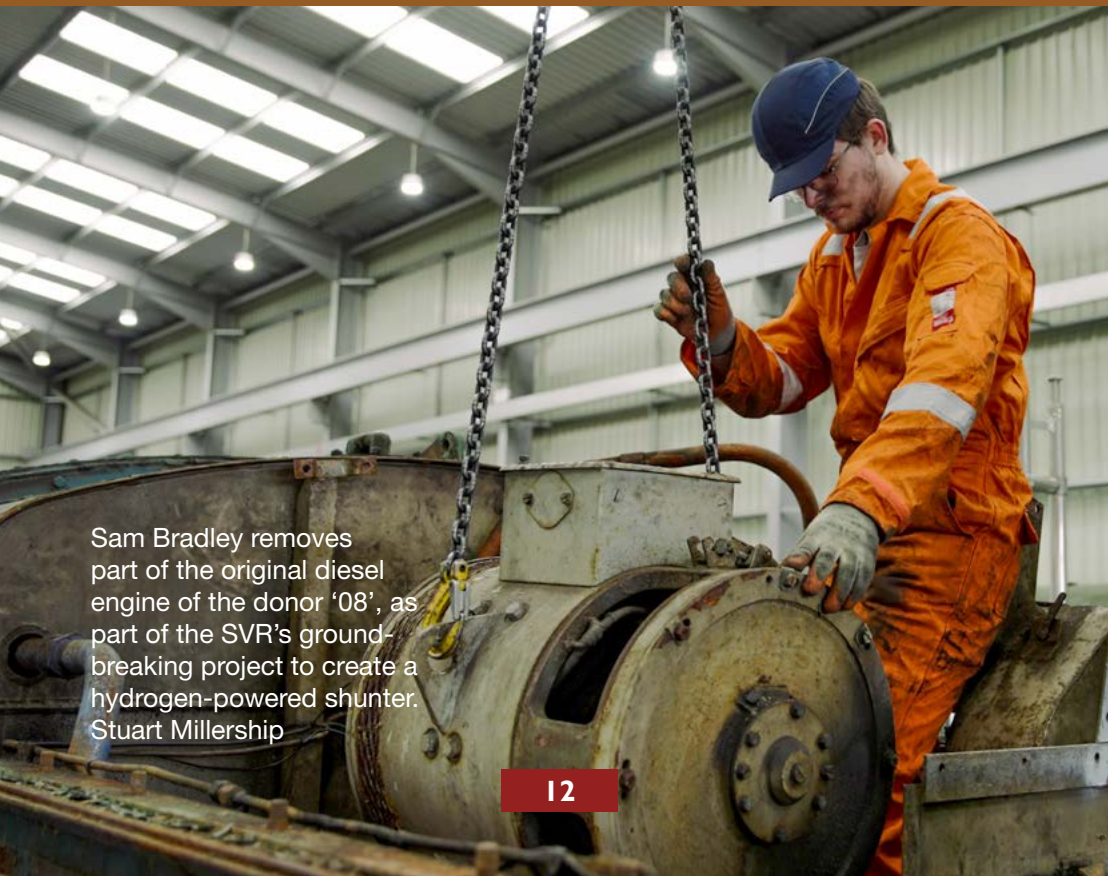
- The SVR is a well-respected contributor to the explanation and preservation of the UK's industrial heritage
- That contribution is articulated clearly, and SVR is regarded as a premier regional heritage attraction



GWR 3205 - the first train out of Bridgnorth in 1970.
SVR Archive

WHAT DO WE WANT FOR OUR SUSTAINABILITY?

- Be financially secure and protected against future business-critical issues
- Carbon footprint – understand what it is and reduce it
- Diversity – staying relevant today
- Succession planning to retain skills and knowledge
- Heritage skills are sustained for the future



Sam Bradley removes part of the original diesel engine of the donor '08', as part of the SVR's ground-breaking project to create a hydrogen-powered shunter. Stuart Millership

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SUPPORTING STATEMENTS

"Destination, more than just the journey, a whole day out."

"Great scenery, Severn Valley, countryside, river, landscape."

"Authentic, educational, compelling, fascinating, valuable, engaging, atmospheric."

"Attacks the senses, see it, hear it, smell it, breathe it, touch it, taste it!"

75069 passes through Bewdley. Jason Hood

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THE VISION OF THE FUTURE:

THE NEW SVR OBJECTIVE

The SVR is recognised as an outstanding visitor attraction, providing great days out and inspiring events, all with consistently high standards of customer service. The SVR provides an authentic heritage railway experience where you can let your senses take you on a journey through history, with learning opportunities in abundance.

The organisations to support this are professionally-led, values-based, and commercially strong. While it may be old on the outside, on the inside, the SVR uses 21st century technology to run its activities effectively. It is able to recruit, train and retain the people it needs, and brings in the wide range of financial

and other support required to develop further. The SVR is known for having good and enduring relationships with its stakeholders, from the diverse local communities in which it sits, to the loco and rolling stock owners, and the regulators and industry partners.

On a day-to-day basis, the three key areas of management focus for SVR are Safety, People and Heritage. In addition, the SVR has an industry-leading approach to the issue of sustainability.



SAFETY

Safety is central to everything we do, and everyone recognises that the SVR is a safe and professionally-run railway

How do we achieve that?

- Safety is contagious and is embedded in all our behaviours

- No 'blame culture' exists, our people are listened to and consulted at every level
- Safety is paramount in all activities the Railway undertakes
- Safety committee leads on strategic Railway-wide safety improvements

- Safety champions ensure best practice is shared and every aspect of safety on the Railway is monitored and is continually improving
- We embrace 21st century technology to help manage and improve safety



Members of the permanent way team with visiting locomotive 6023 King Edward II.
Rob Steward

PEOPLE

We are the best heritage railway in the UK to volunteer at, work for and visit

**We live by our shared values.
We are passionate about our people.**

How do we achieve that?

- Paid and volunteer team members are equal and know their worth
- Values are celebrated by all and underpin how we work

- Communication is key – we use technology to bring geographically separate teams together
- We offer rewarding, well-managed opportunities for volunteering

- We have an active HR strategy suitable for a forward-looking heritage business



Members of the Severn Valley Venturer team.
Sam Birchall

BUCKET

**The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service**

HERITAGE



GWR Pannier 7714 with a set of Great Western Coaches crosses over the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal on Falling Sands Viaduct. Alan Corfield

**We strive to be the best at what we do.
We are recognised for excellence in
preserving and sharing our heritage.**

How do we achieve that?

- Award winning heritage, managed by a team of ambitious and dedicated people working in a creative and supportive environment to enable them to excel in their roles
- We know what our environmental impact is, and we have a carbon reduction plan in place to reduce it
- We understand, improve and celebrate our diversity
- Embrace 21st century technology to help record, interpret, care for, and preserve our heritage
- Create a visitor-focused plan for the development of the Railway that builds an immersive high-quality experience in a curated, historically accurate environment
- Invest into engineering skills and equipment needed for the future
- Work in partnership with the SVR family of locomotive and rolling stock owners to preserve the fleet for the future
- Continue to manage the capital investment in our infrastructure to ensure the Railway is protected against future business-critical issues

A man in a railway uniform and cap is leaning out of the window of a steam locomotive, waving his hand. The locomotive is dark and has many rivets. The background is a blurred landscape with hills and trees.

HOW DO WE DO THIS?

A flexible management system will be used to make the strategy work across all sectors and levels of the Railway. We will use and develop the existing structures of boards, committees and management advisory groups to ensure the whole team can engage with the new strategy.

The strategy is a living document and will change and develop as we progress through it.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

- Connect with us – on the 'SVR Today' Channel on MS Teams, svr.co.uk, svrlive.com
- Innovate with us – come along to the workshops and share your ideas
- Support us – change is not easy, help each other and keep listening and talking
- Help us – get directly involved in something new!