

A new chairman for Severn Valley Railway (Holdings) PLC

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After a decade as chairman of the Severn Valley Railway Holdings (SVRH) board, Nick Paul CBE is stepping down, as former deputy chairman Mike Ball takes over the role. In a further change for the Railway, general manager Helen Smith has now been named managing director designate.

Incoming chairman Mike Ball said: "Nick brought astute senior level business management experience and significant financial expertise to the railway. During his tenure, he focused the board on the management of its finances, and his skills were invaluable as he led the company through the financial challenges emanating from the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, as a trustee, he has played a major role in the transformation of the Severn Valley Railway Charitable Trust into a highly successful fundraising organisation.

"The board would like to thank Nick for his leadership, hard work and the outstanding contribution he has made to the SVR's progress over the past 10 years."

Nick will continue as a director, a decision warmly welcomed by the board.

Taking on the chairman's mantle, Mike Ball brings expertise garnered through many years at a senior level in the engineering and IT services sectors. He has been a volunteer on the Severn Valley Railway for 35 years, spending 10 of those as deputy chairman of the SVRH board. During this time he helped lead the company through some of its toughest challenges, including dealing with major repairs to Falling Sands Viaduct and County Boundary Slip, and more recently dealing with the pandemic. Mike has also been key in developing the SVR's working relationships with main line train operating companies, boosting the Railway's income through contract work.

Mike's appointment will provide continuity moving forward, as he combines his business expertise and considerable volunteer experience within various SVR departments to meet the demands of the organisation.

Further to Mike's appointment, a change of role for Helen Smith from general manager to managing director designate allows her to take complete responsibility for the safe operation of the railway, its financial health and future growth. As part of the SVR's safety management system, a review and validation of this change will take place in the near future before the managing director position is confirmed.

Photo credit: Severn Valley Railway