

Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway essential works

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The [Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway \(GWSR\)](#), is nearing completion of its significant remedial work on its steel rail-over bridge no. 32, which spans the road between Gretton and Gotherington, near Prescott.

The road has been closed while this essential work is carried out and at the same time, Gloucestershire County Council has taken the opportunity to carry out road resurfacing work in the area.

The GWSR has more than its fair share of steel bridges, all of which are well over 100 years old. Work on Bridge 32, which is being funded through the generosity of the charitable Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway Trust, is being undertaken by civil engineering firm Walsh Construction, which has carried out repair work on a number of the railway's bridges and earthworks over recent years.

Explains GWSR Finance Director Richard Winstanley: "These steel bridges are really beginning to show their age. This one is suffering leaking decks following failure of the waterproofing which has led to corrosion. In addition, the ballast walls at the deck ends are being rebuilt while there are other brickwork

repairs too. The bridge is also being shotblasted back to bare metal, rust proofed and completely repainted.

“When complete, the bridge will be a much more attractive feature for drivers passing beneath it and it should last perhaps another 100 years.”

Work started the day after the railway’s 2022 season ended on 3rd January by lifting the track over the bridge before contractors moved in. Repairs are scheduled to be finished before train services resume on 4th March.

“The project is on schedule and I’m impressed with the high standard of the work,” adds Mr. Winstanley.

“I would like to take this opportunity to firstly, apologise for the long diversions that drivers are having to take because of the road closure and secondly, express my appreciation for the generous support of the Trust, which has helped fund a number of projects on the railway.”

Without revealing the full cost of the bridge repair, Mr Winstanley pointed out that maintaining a historic railway is extremely costly. “The generosity of the public in supporting the railway both by travelling and contributing to the Trust means that we can undertake such works to a very high standard. Visitors can be assured that the railway will operate to the highest safety standards both today and for future generations to enjoy.”

Other work being carried out on the railway during its winter break includes some track replacement, painting and repairing stations and other structures, maintaining locomotives and carriages and a significant amount of drainage and landscape management works to ensure that water runs freely across the railway from the Cotswold hills to the rivers Severn and Avon.

“Much of this work is carried out by our skilled volunteers. The railway is extremely fortunate that it is supported by around 850 volunteers in a wide range of roles, many of whom are happy to be out in all weathers to undertake this vital but rewarding work.

“Many of our visitors have little idea of what goes on behind the scenes to ensure they enjoy their journey through the Cotswolds on our wonderful heritage railway.”

The GWSR resumes train services over the weekend of 4th March 2023. It will be running race trains for Classic Hospitality over the Cheltenham Festival and has a number of special events planned throughout the year including its Cotswold Festival of Steam, 12-14 May.

More information can be found on the railway’s new website at www.gwsr.com where train tickets can also be booked.

Photo credit: Jonathan Taylor