

Government grant a “lifeline” for heritage railway

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A heritage railway has received a grant for nearly half a million to help it go full steam ahead after the Covid pandemic.

The Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway received £451,500 from the most recent round of the UK Government's Culture Recovery Fund, helping it get back on track after lockdown.

From this round of funding, more than £100 million is set to be awarded in continuity support grants to over 870 previous Culture Recovery Fund recipients administered by Arts Council England, British Film Institute, National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic England.

£6.5 million will be shared by 57 organisations in need of urgent financial support. Grants from this emergency resource support will protect jobs by saving the future of important arts and cultural organisations.

The heritage railway said the money is a lifeline for its operations – one of the oldest and longest narrow gauge railways in England, known affectionately as La'al Ratty.

The attraction, built in 1873, is family owned and takes visitors on a seven-mile scenic ride through the Western Lake District. It says it felt the financial impacts of the pandemic on many areas of its business operations, including staff retention, covid safety measures and keeping up with its railway preservation projects.

The funding from the government will help the Railway with its recovery and give it a much-needed boost to get through the winter months ahead.

Director of Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway, Peter Hensman, said: "The Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway has had a very tough and difficult time through the pandemic, having had to reduce passengers because of social distancing and cut important maintenance work to conserve funds. This grant will be of enormous help in securing our infrastructure and rolling stock and will ensure that this much-loved little heritage railway continues to enchant Lake District visitors in the years ahead."

Managing director of Cumbria Tourism, Gill Haigh, said: "Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway is such an iconic attraction for the Western Lake District and Coast. It is great to see they have been recognised by the Culture Recovery Fund as it will help to safeguard this long-standing heritage attraction as we head into winter."

Photo by Mark Fielding