

# Government 'roadmap' heralds Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway reopening

March 1, 2021



The Government's much-anticipated 'roadmap' for easing COVID-19 restrictions has opened the way for the Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway (GWSR) to reopen, on Tuesday 13 April, coincidentally marking the 40th anniversary since the railway company was formed.

Trains will resume following the same Covid-secure precautions as last year, when the railway safely carried families by steam train through the Cotswold countryside between Cheltenham and Broadway. The resumed service will again comprise pre-bookable round trips of the 14-mile railway, starting and finishing at Toddington.

Richard Johnson, the volunteer chairman of GWSR, said: "This is the news we have eagerly been waiting for. The restart is later than we had hoped and it misses Easter but of course, it's important that restrictions are eased cautiously and safely as the national vaccination programme is rolled out.

"We're looking forward to welcoming families back to the 'friendly line in the Cotswolds.

“Of course, our visitors and volunteers will still need to wear masks while on our station platforms and when on the trains, unless in their own social bubble in a closed compartment.”

Trains start and terminate at Toddington station, GL54 5DT\* and will only be pre-bookable online at [www.gwsr.com](http://www.gwsr.com). Services will run on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays with COVID restrictions in place. These restrictions are expected to continue until late June, depending on further Government guidance.

“Last year, we carried 29,000 passengers – a huge drop from the 125,000 carried the previous year. But to coin an entirely appropriate term, there is certainly light at the end of the COVID tunnel,” adds Richard.

“We have become well practiced in managing trains safely and securely, with a strict and effective cleaning and train fogging regime to minimise any risk of contamination and that continues.”

Trains comprise six carriages, five of which are of the ‘old-fashioned’ corridor compartment type. Compartments can be booked to seat a minimum of two and up to six people, accessed through a sliding door from the side corridor. This creates a natural ‘bubble’ for a family to enjoy. An open coach is also provided for individuals and couples who are socially distanced and are required to wear a mask unless eating.

Meanwhile a very limited number of volunteers have been working on the railway undertaking essential maintenance tasks, including preparing locomotives for their annual insurance examinations and infrastructure repairs and maintenance. As restrictions are eased a greater number of volunteers will be making preparations for the coming resumption of train services.

“I can’t think of a better way to celebrate our 40th Anniversary. Our company was formed in 1981, after British Railways had abandoned the route and removed all of the track and infrastructure. Many people thought the task of rebuilding the railway was an impossible dream. But without the vision and determination of those early volunteers, we wouldn’t have the wonderful Cotswolds railway we have today and which people will be once again be able to enjoy, from 13th April.”

\*Toddington station is close to the junction of the B4632 Broadway road and B4077 Stow road, 10 miles east of M5 Jn 9 at GL54 5DT or [What3Words.com/composers.turntable](http://What3Words.com/composers.turntable)

### **Train services from Tuesday 13 April 2021:**

One train timetable (steam)

Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays to the end of April

Trains depart Toddington at 10.00 and 13.20 (round trip takes approx. 2.5 hours)

Two train timetable (steam)

Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holiday (2 May) and from 4 May, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays until

30 June (except 25 April, 23 May and 27 June\*\*),

Trains depart Toddington at 10.00; 11.40; 13.20 and 15.00 (round trip takes approx. 1.5 hours)

\*\* Heritage Diesel Days Sundays 25 April, 23 May and 27 June

Trains depart Toddington 10.00, 12.30 and 15.00 using a variety of diesel motive power Details of train services from the end of June will be published on [www.gwsr.com](http://www.gwsr.com) when available.

*Photo credit: Ian Crowder*