

Severn Valley Railway Charitable Trust grants £132,000 to two major projects

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The Severn Valley Railway Charitable Trust has agreed a major funding boost totalling £132,000 for repairs to a serious landslip at Sterns, near Highley, and to complete the restoration of GWR Hawksworth coach 2242, both on the Severn Valley Railway.

The Trust's director of development Shelagh Paterson said: "We are delighted to be able to fund these two projects, thanks to the generosity of our donors. One will ensure the continued safe operation of the Railway, and the other will extend its accessibility to all members of the community."

At Sterns, between Highley and Bridgnorth in Shropshire, the railway has suffered a serious landslip which, if left unchecked, would result in the closure of the line to passenger trains. Rainwater on adjacent land is 'lubricating' a slip plane below the railway. The Charitable Trust has agreed to fund a vital £120,000 project that's already underway, which will stabilise the land by installing drainage to direct this water away from the line.

The SVR's infrastructure manager, Chris Bond, said: "We are hugely grateful to the Charitable Trust. Without this project there would be a likelihood that we would have to cease passenger trains between

Highley and Bridgnorth once the winter weather returns. That would have isolated the engineering hub at Bridgnorth from the rest of the railway, which in the current circumstances could have been catastrophic for the financial viability of the SVR. The stabilisation of the area will maintain the required safety and permit full line journeys to be maintained.”

The Trust will also give £12,000 funding to bring forward the introduction of Great Western designed coach No 2242 into traffic. This will ensure that the railway’s historic GWR coaching set includes a large brake vehicle in its formation which is needed to accommodate prams, bicycles and other large equipment.

The funding will ensure the vehicle is in service in 2021. The coach, Hawksworth Large Brake Third No 2242, was purchased by the Great Western (Severn Valley Railway) Association from the estate of the late Dennis Howells. The Association has already funded a mechanical overhaul in the railway’s workshops and the Charitable Trust’s grant will see this important project to completion.

The Severn Valley Railway, one of the UK’s leading heritage attractions, is open and again running daily steam trains after its enforced closure because of Covid-19. However managers do not expect to see a return to sustainable levels of passenger revenue until well into next year. The SVR’s Fight Back Fund appeal has raised more than £800,000 and it has received an emergency grant of £250,000 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Photo credit: Matt Robinson

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