

The Severn Valley Railway launches appeal to get 'Home & Dry'

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Rapidly deteriorating conditions at the Severn Valley Railway's locomotive works in Bridgnorth have prompted the launch of an £425,000 appeal to fund much-needed improvements. The Home & Dry appeal will enable essential restoration and maintenance work on steam locomotives to continue in a safe, dry and efficient environment in the decades to come.

Current conditions for more than 100 volunteer and paid staff who work at the site have been described as 'difficult' and 'challenging'. The main issues centre on the extremely bad condition of the building's roof, the poor lighting levels and the lack of a fit-for-purpose method of carrying out the many heavy lifting tasks that are required.

Peter Munger, one of the volunteers, explained, "The roof is literally full of holes and gaps, and when it rains, we get pools of water on the floor and on anything inside the building. Things are getting damaged all the time, such as the cylinder blocks for our flagship locomotive 4930 Hagley Hall. These were spoiled by dripping water, along with some of the newly painted components. It meant a lot of extra work."

The badly aged roof and outdated lighting systems mean that staff often struggle. Fitter machinist Max

Green said, "In some places the natural light is non-existent, and I've often had to resort to using the torch on my phone to see what I'm doing."

Heavy lifting operations are needed all the time, but staff must either borrow or hire in expensive equipment such as cranes, and they waste time in shunting rolling stock around to enable the lifts to take place.

Martin White, the SVR's head of engineering summed up the situation his teams are facing: "I've got staff dodging puddles and drips, as well as rolling stock and machinery suffering water damage. The lighting is completely inadequate, and we're wasting time and money by not having a permanent, heavy lifting capability on site. Various piecemeal improvements have been made here over the years, but these are now life-expired. The Bridgnorth loco works needs help now to secure the SVR's ability to look after steam locomotives in the years to come."

The SVR Charitable Trust's Home & Dry appeal aims to secure the investment needed, as Shelagh Paterson, director of development explained:

"The money we will raise for the Home & Dry appeal will transform the locomotive works at Bridgnorth. It will fund a new roof with insulated panels, at least 15% of which will be translucent to maximise daylight. People, rolling stock and machinery will be properly sheltered and protected. New, energy-efficient LED lighting will be installed, saving electricity costs, and providing well-illuminated conditions. And very importantly, the appeal will fund an overhead travelling crane for the works, so that engineers can move heavy items safely, efficiently and quickly."

The Charitable Trust is appealing for donations to the Home & Dry fund, and will also seek to raise money from grant-making organisations.

Donations of any amount are welcome, but those giving £75 or more will receive a signed, limited-edition print depicting Bridgnorth locomotive works by resident artist Alan Reade, and donations of £1,000 or more will be acknowledged on a permanent scroll of honour within the building.

For more information and to make a donation, please go to www.svrtrust.org.uk

Photo credit: Severn Valley Railway