

# The Severn Valley Railway receives lifeline grant from Government's £1.57bn Culture Recovery Fund

October 9, 2020



The **Severn Valley Railway** is one of 445 heritage organisations across the country set to receive a lifesaving financial boost from the government, thanks to the £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund, to help them through the coronavirus pandemic.

As the announcement was made on Friday 9 October, the railway was preparing to welcome the Minister for Sport, Tourism and Heritage Nigel Huddleston MP. The Minister will meet the footplate crew of one of the SVR's steam locomotives and visit a unique mobile exhibition inside a specially adapted brake van. He'll also talk to some of the 1,800 volunteers who, alongside its paid staff, are crucial to the success and continuation of the SVR.

445 organisations will share £103 million, including the Severn Valley Railway to help restart vital reconstruction work and maintenance on cherished heritage sites, keeping venues open and supporting those working in the sector.

The railway will receive £906,000 to help it through the next six months. The money will pay for staff salaries, and enhanced security measures to protect the heritage assets owned by the SVR. These will include CCTV and fire detection systems, as well as fire and intruder alarms. As part of the SVR's survival plan, the grant will help improve its digital and social media communications to better interact with communities and engage a wider audience. The railway will also recruit a health and safety specialist to ensure it can operate to the best standards both behind-the-scenes and in customer-facing environments, with the additional safety demands that are necessary because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This vital funding is from the Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage and the Heritage Stimulus Fund – funded by Government and administered at arm's length by Historic England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund. Both funds are part of the Government's £1.57 billion Culture Recovery Fund which is designed to secure the future of Britain's museums, galleries, theatres, independent cinemas, heritage sites and music venues with emergency grants and loans.

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden said: "As a nation it is essential that we preserve our heritage and celebrate and learn from our past. This massive support package will protect our shared heritage for future generations, save jobs and help us prepare for a cultural bounce back post-COVID."

The Chairman of Severn Valley Railway (Holdings) Plc Nick Paul CBE said: "This funding will play an essential part in the SVR's survival through the pandemic. We expect to have lost around £2.5 million in revenue this year, as a direct result of the lockdown and subsequent restrictions. Although we've been running services again for more than two months now, we won't be able to make up for such a severe drop in income. The Severn Valley Railway plays a huge part in the Midlands economy and is close to the hearts of the 250,000 visitors who come to us every year. Thanks to this generous government funding, we'll be able to keep the railway running so it can continue to be a source of community pride in the future."

Ros Kerslake, Chief Executive of the National Lottery Heritage Fund said: "It is absolutely right that investing in heritage should be a priority during this crisis and this support by Government is crucial. Heritage creates jobs and economic prosperity, is a major driver for tourism and makes our towns, cities, and rural areas better places to live. All of this is so important for our wellbeing and will be particularly vital when we start to emerge from this incredibly difficult time.

"Our heritage is still facing a perilous future – we are not out of the woods yet. But this hugely welcome funding from Government, and the money we continue to invest from the National Lottery, has undoubtedly stopped heritage and the organisations that care for it being permanently lost."

*Photo credit: Tom Clarke*

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