

Culture Recovery Fund – £9million Awarded to Heritage Railways

A total of 36 heritage railways and tramways – all Heritage Railway Association (HRA) members – have been awarded grants totalling £9million! They are among 433 organisations in England that have received a share of £67million in the first round of awards from the Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage. The grants – which, for heritage railways, range from £20,000 to £906,000 - will protect rail heritage and save jobs from the impact of the Covid-19 crisis. A total of £88m was allocated to support the UK's heritage sector and a further batch of Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage grants, up to £3m, will be announced shortly. The list of awards is shown below.

“These grants throw a crucial lifeline to many of our well-loved heritage railways and tramways”, said HRA Chief Executive Steve Oates. “While some have been able to reopen over the past three months, others have had to remain closed. But as furloughing ends and what's left of the 2020 tourist season winds down, all are facing a very uncertain winter. The funding injections announced today will give recipients essential cash to help retain staff and maintain key skills. Cash will also be directed at maintaining rolling stock and infrastructure during the closed winter season, while some will be allocated to a variety of projects and improvements to increase the resilience of heritage railways to ensure they emerge fit and ready for the 2021 season.”

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; it 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 vital when we start to emerge from this incredibly difficult time.”

The funds are drawn from the Government's £1.57billion Culture Recovery Fund, designed to secure the future of Britain's museums, galleries, theatres, independent cinemas, heritage sites and music venues with emergency grants and loans. to safeguard cultural and heritage organisations across the UK from the economic impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis.

Here are some of the reactions from HRA Members who have received their grants:

The Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway, which received £900,000 responded by saying, “This money is crucial to getting us through the next six months. It's gonna make a huge difference because this year we're facing potential revenue losses of £2.5 million pounds, so you can see that the money from the Culture Recovery Fund, £906,000, is going to really help us to get over that.” Lesley Carr Severn Valley Railway head of communications.

Richard Winstanley, the voluntary Finance Director of the GWSR, says he is “absolutely delighted and relieved” with the grant to the popular volunteer-run railway, which operates steam and heritage diesel trains through 14 miles of Cotswold countryside between Cheltenham Racecourse and Broadway.

“The grant is intended to help us continue vital maintenance, run the business and pay the bills including the salaries of our seven staff, at a time when the railway has suffered the huge financial impact of cancelling services and special events for five months, during what would have been our peak season.



3850 which is currently undergoing a major overhaul and has benefited from a Here for Culture grant, piloting 7820 'Dinmore Manor' with a train for Celtenham during the GWSR's Cotswold Festival of Steam, May 2014 (pic: Malcolm Ranieri)

“And, although we are running trains once again, fare income is much reduced thanks to the need for social distancing, which halves the capacity of our trains. It will be a vital boost in helping to overcome financial shortfalls as the railway emerges from lockdown, whenever that happens. The fund is a key initiative and I applaud the government in recognising the importance of underpinning the security of a wide range of organisations, including the GWSR, for the future.”

Dinmore Manor Locomotive Ltd, which is based at the GWSR, also received £26,100



GWR 2-8-0 no. 3850 heading away from Toddington in May 2014 just before being withdrawn for a heavy overhaul at Toddington (Malcolm Ranieri FRPS)

A spokesman for The Severn Valley Railway said, “This £900,000 from the Government will help us to recover from the impact of the coronavirus pandemic and is crucial to us surviving through the next six months.”



The West Somerset Railway (WSR)'s recent application to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's (DCMS) 'Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage' support has been successful. The Plc will now receive a grant of £865,000, all of which will help the 23-mile former GWR branch line recover from the enforced closure of the railway since March during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The NLHF grant will also enable the Plc to either fund or undertake a number of small schemes put forward by the WSR's Stations and Friends Groups, Station Masters and WSR family organisations, including the West Somerset Railway Association, West Somerset Steam Railway Trust and the Diesel and Electric Preservation Group

The Bodmin & Wenford Railway has received an award of £260,000 has secured the future of one of Cornwall's most popular heritage attractions, which had up to now been hanging in the balance. The railway closed the doors in early 2020 at the start of the covid-19 crisis and has yet to fully reopen. While Bodmin General, the railway's 1950s Cornish branch line station has recently reopened to the public on select dates, the railway has not seen steam or heritage diesel engines carrying passengers along its branches to Boscarne and Parkway since February.

David Nelson-Brown, Chairman of the Bodmin & Wenford Railway PLC said: "This year has been hugely challenging for all here at the railway. We're hugely grateful for this award, which is absolutely vital to the survival of the railway beyond this winter. The money received will cover our core costs, enable us to continue a small amount of essential restoration work and support us as an organisation to adapt for the future including reopening costs, covid-19 measures and digital ticketing."



4555 gingerly creeps through Staverton on the first train up the branch for three years: October 1965.

The South Devon Railway Trust chairman, Jon Morton, said: “We are all bowled over to have received this fantastic grant support thanks to the Department of Culture Media and Sport, the National Heritage Lottery Fund and Historic England. It will certainly provide us the vital financial lifeline needed for the railway’s continued survival. From all sources, we have now raised or received a wonderful total of financial help all told of £831,432.39 and we are still raising money to try and get to our next target of £1 million!”

Name of Organisation	Recommended Grant Award
Aln Valley Railway Trust	£21,300
Bluebell Railway PLC	£727,200
Bodmin & Wenford PLC	£260,000
Cambrian Heritage Railways Limited	£20,000
Colne Valley Railway Preservation Ltd.	£20,000
Epping Ongar Railway Holdings Limited	£98,000
Gloucestershire Warwickshire Steam Railway plc	£318,000
Great Northern & East Lincolnshire Railway Ltd T/A Lincolnshire Wolds Railway	£25,000
Helston Railway Preservation Company Ltd	£76,100
Hollycombe working steam museum ltd	£895,000
Keighley & Worth Valley Railway Preservation Society	£231,600
LYNTON AND BARNSTAPLE RAILWAY COMMUNITY INTEREST COMPANY	£79,300
Mid Hants Railway Ltd / Mid Hants Railway Preservation Society Ltd (MHRPS)	£600,000
Middleton Railway Trust	£79,900
Modern Electric Tramways Ltd (Seaton Tramway)	£435,100
North Norfolk Railway plc	£360,000
Northampton Steam Railway Limited	£46,000
Plym Valley Railway Company Limited	£27,900
Ribble Steam Railway Ltd	£207,200
Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway	£470,000
Severn Valley Railway (Holdings) Public Limited Company	£906,000

Sittingbourne and Kemsley Light Railway Limited	£26,500
South Devon Railway Trust	£332,300
South Tynedale Railway Preservation Society	£84,300
Swanage Railway Company	£223,200
Tanfield Railway Company Limited	£245,500
The A1 Steam Locomotive Trust	£153,000
The Kent and East Sussex Railway Company Limited	£301,500
The Mid Norfolk Railway Preservation Trust	£190,500
The Whitwell & Reepham Railway Preservation Society Ltd	£49,000
Vintage Trains Charitable Trust	£194,800
Waltham Abbey Royal Gunpowder Mills Company Limited (The Company)	£104,600
Wealden Railway Company Limited (Spa Valley Railway)	£153,900
Wensleydale Railway Plc	£90,000
West Somerset Railway Plc.	£865,000
WyvernRail plc	£85,000
Total	£9,002,700