

Watford Miniature Railway Equipment Damaged in Flood



Equipment worth tens of thousands of pounds was damaged in the flooding (Dave Horton)

A report in the Watford Observer tells the sad story of how the very popular Watford Miniature Railway now faces damages estimated to be around tens of thousands of pounds due to the two-day flooding at the beginning of October. The popular attraction at Cassiobury Park was submerged in water over the course of the heavy rain that occurred on Saturday (October 3) and Sunday (October 4).

Dave Horton, a former member of staff of the miniature railway business, said that the flooding had damaged the track itself and locomotives, rolling stock and other equipment at the site.



The flood damaged lots of equipment

While Mr Horton estimates it to be roughly "tens of thousands of pounds" worth of damages, the current owner Charles O'Mahoney says that they are waiting to fully evaluate the damages.

Watford Miniature Railway has operated for 61 years and has been a staple attraction for families and visitors. This particular weekend was meant to mark the railway's Autumn Gala and would have featured three visiting locomotives – which were instead damaged in the flooding. Paid staff and volunteers were preparing for the event for many weeks.



Mr Horton in a letter to Watford Borough Council is pleading for help to prevent a future incident. In the letter, Mr Horton acknowledged that the park was always "prone to a mild amount of flooding", but never to something to this magnitude.

He wrote: "Immediate steps must be taken in the coming days and weeks to clear and dredge the river where necessary, and to ensure that all weirs, sluices and management procedures etc are functioning correctly - to prevent a re-occurrence. With half-term coming up, and the Christmas/New Year season not that far behind, we are fast approaching the period when the railway needs to make its money, especially having suffered such a massive loss of income due to Covid-19 this year. Every bit of help and support must be given by the Council, both practically and financially, to support Charles O'Mahoney and his staff/volunteers as they seek to clear up the mess and, as I have said, to ensure that this cannot happen again." He believes that the flooding was caused by the River Gade bursting its banks and that better management of the river system could prevent a future incident.

The railway, which has already felt the financial impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, reopened on July 28 following an initial delay as lockdown eased. Mr Horton continued: "The railway is a small business, a local well-loved institution, and to think that ineptitude on behalf of the relevant

authorities has caused such damage in a year when it has already taken such a knock from Covid-19, is making a lot of people very angry.”