

Picture: PETER BACKHOUSE

Heritage railway hopes to be back on track with funds

Cash boost after Bo'ness line suffers economic hardship

NAINA BHARDWAJ

A heritage railway in Bo'ness has raised over £70,000 in less than a week through their Emergency Landslide Appeal.

The Bo'ness & Kinneil Railway suffered significant damage during the recent storms, halting plans for passengers to return for the first time this year and for the railway to claw back any profit lost during the coronavirus pandemic.

It has been estimated that it may cost up to £100,000 for repairs but the workforce of the Scottish Railway Preservation Society (SRPS) which runs the railway is largely made up of volunteers.

Amanda Kilburn, business development director of SRPS

said: "As a charity, we rely on visitors to enable us to continue to preserve Scotland's railway history. They buy tickets and enjoy a nostalgic journey by steam train and visit our museum, which is Scotland's largest railway museum."

"Many are surprised by what they discover when they come

"We don't get any other government funding or grants so without visitors, we do not have any income" AMANDA KILBURN

and we pride ourselves in offering a hands on experience with plenty of friendly interaction with our volunteers.

"We don't get any other government funding or grants so without visitors to welcome aboard, we do not have any

income and have had to rely on our reserves to cover any necessary overheads. Sadly this is not sustainable forever."

The award-winning railway has featured in productions such as *Outlander* and *The Railway Man*. However it is perhaps best known for its *Thomas the Tank Engine* and *Santa Steam Trains* events.

The Day Out With Thomas event usually sees children enjoy a ride on the fictional train character and meet The Fat Controller as well as participate in various other activities but the Covid-19 outbreak forced it to be cancelled this year.

Meanwhile, the Santa Steam Train has been welcoming thousands of visitors from across the country for more than ten years with decorated carriages, seasonal songs and a visit and gift from Santa for each child aboard.

The Bo'ness & Kinneil



SIDETRACKED: The Bo'ness railway suffered a double blow, with Covid and the landslide

Railway has been developed since 1979 on a reclaimed site on the south shore of the Firth of Forth and attracts around 60,000 visitors aboard its steam and heritage diesel trains and to the museum.

Steve Humphreys, SRPS chairman said: "It is heart-warming to receive such generosity from people of all ages who want the railway to re-open just as much as we do. We have built up a lot of loyal visitors and want to ensure we

can welcome everyone back as soon as possible.

"We really want to be able to celebrate next year, the 60th anniversary of our foundation at Murrayfield Station in 1961 with the trains running once again. We are very grateful for all the support we have received but we are still some way from reaching our goal.

"We welcome around 11,000 passengers on to our Santa Steam Trains every year alone and these events

are for families to enjoy year after year. If each of those passengers donated £3 we would be able to reach our goal. We know how hard it has been for everyone in this difficult year, so it is even more humbling to see the kindness of those donating towards helping us run our passenger trains again."

To donate to the Emergency Landslide Appeal, please visit <http://www.virginmoneygiving.com/fund/SRPSlandslide>.

Edinburgh News

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