BRIDGNORTH 150 - THE MASTERPLAN

Your comments requested on:

Project 1 - SteamWorks

Project 2 - Buffet, Station facilities and multi-purpose space

Project 3 - Bridgnorth Station building

Project 4 - Station approaches

Project 5 - Overflow field car park

Project 6 - Loco Yard, Shed and Workshops

Project 7 - Volunteer accommodation

Project 8 - Platform and track layout alterations

Project 9 - Cottage and garden

Project 10 - New footbridge, Works viewing gallery and links to field car park

Project 11 - O gauge model railway

Bridgnorth 150: A summary of proposals and progress

We are at the start of some exciting times for Bridgnorth.

It is time that there is significant investment to improve facilities and the attractiveness of the station as a key destination on the SVR and as an efficient place for paid staff and volunteers to work.

There have been a number of proposals over the years which for one reason or another have not come to fruition, but one factor has probably been the failure to get total agreement and commitment from all involved.

This time things must be different. The Bridgnorth working group has involved the input of a number of senior directors and we have a very creative package of proposals emerging which can be presented to the holdings board shortly.

Our chairman Nick Paul has indicated his support for the ideas that have been developed by the Bridgnorth working group, and proposes that they should form the focus of Bridgnorth 150 next year, when we will celebrate the railway's opening.

In order to do this, to assist in the proposed new share issue and to assist other funding bids, we have some challenging deadlines to meet, including the preparation of a development prospectus by the late spring.

A key underlying objective of the development programme will be to boost visitor numbers, secure the SVR's position as a premium heritage railway and family day out experience, and to increase profitability to secure the railway's future and ability to invest in the future.

These are the proposals and options currently under consideration.

It's not all cut and dried, and we welcome constructive comments up to 23 December at feedback@svr.co.uk, or on paper.

We are talking of a ten year programme with a start in 2012 on a number of smaller volunteer driven projects. At the same time detailed design work will be progressed for major projects with a start on site towards the end of 2013.

The key projects are as follows:

Steamworks
This is a theme that will be projected into our marketing material and it will capitalise on what we believe is a unique part of Bridgnorth's attraction for visitors - the behind the scenes story of the skills and practices involved in the maintenance, operation and building of steam locomotives operating in the 21st century.
Under the title of Steamworks, we propose to allow visitors to see what goes on behind the scenes using a variety of interpretation techniques. These could include the construction of a high level viewing platform in the works, possibly (subject to detailed feasibility) connected to platform 1 via a new footbridge, the use of conventional interpretation boards, and the use of the latest phone and video wall technologies to provide the visitor with an explanation of what goes on, with minimum disturbance to the traditional station scene.

New buffet, shop and station toilets
The need to replace and re-group these existing facilities is seen as an urgent priority. Every credit is due to the paid and volunteer staff who operate these facilities, but the time for major improvements is overdue. The buffet was supposed to be temporary when erected 30-odd years ago. These new facilities will be located on the site of, and extend north from, the existing buffet.

A restored station building
This will form the focus of a submission for a heritage lottery funding bid, and involve the restoration of the former waiting room, following the relocation of the shop. This relocation, together with that of the ladies and gents toilets, will also allow the extension to the bar lounge and better behind-the-bar facilities for staff, the provision of dedicated toilets, and the provision of office accommodation and other facilities for paid and volunteer staff.

The station approach
This is to be the subject of a comprehensive environmental improvement scheme with the removal of clutter, provision of new fencing and gateway on the main road frontage, a new pedestrian pathway to remove conflicts with traffic, and improved signage and interpretation boards. It is hoped that a first phase of works, co-ordinated by Chris Thomas, can commence in spring 2012 with the work largely undertaken by volunteers.

The field car park
New gates have been put in place, and a further scheme is being prepared which will see visitors loop around on the site and depart along Station Lane. This will be upgraded with improved surfacing and demarcated parking and passing spaces. It is proposed to undertake these works in 2012.

Locomotive shed and works
A number of improvements are in the pipeline, focused on improving work space, storage facilities, and paid and volunteer staff areas, and a number of measures will be an essential precursor to the installation of the viewing gallery. Developments to be undertaken soon including the relocation of the works manager and boilershop manager offices to a new location in the link building between the machine and boiler shops, and the replacement of the Exeter shed storage container with a new building that will provide secure and efficient storage space. In addition we are looking at opportunities to relocate messroom and staff training facilities, to allow the future construction of the viewing platform in the works.

Track and platform
A number of alterations are under consideration, including the extension of the north end of platform 1 to remove the present platform gap and allow longer trains, and to lengthen the south end of platform 2. Other possibilities include providing a new run-round link utilising the storage line which runs alongside the boilershop, and the connection to running lines of the siding currently occupied by volunteer sleeping coaches. This siding could then house coaches including the Venturer dining car and make the attachment to or removal of coaches from trains easier than at present. This proposal depends on finding a suitable location for improved volunteer accommodation.

Hanbury Cottage and garden
A feasibility study to find the best use for the cottage and garden is to be undertaken since a variety of ideas have been suggested for what is in practice a difficult site to develop. One idea has been to locate the O gauge model railway here but this has been objected to by English Heritage who are concerned about the possible adverse impacts of the development on the setting of the historic Panpudding Hill which is next door. Consideration continues to be given whether there is an appropriate site for this attraction at Bridgnorth.

New footbridge
Associated with the viewing gallery within the works we are examining the feasibility of a new footbridge link between platforms 1 and 2, the works building, and a possible onward connection to the field car park.

Please submit constructive comments to
mailbox@bridgnorthstation.co.uk
by 23 December.