



8 November 2021

14 PEAKS FOR 14 ARCHES

Eden Viaducts launches a new event to help raise funds to #SaveSmardaleGillViaduct

Smardale Gill Viaduct stands in the Westmorland Dales near Kirkby Stephen, its 14 arches soaring majestically 90 feet above Scandal Beck. Sadly, this iconic monument to Victorian engineering could be closed to the public unless Eden Viaducts can raise the funds for essential repairs. Closure would mean walkers and visitors would no longer be able to use the permissive path across it.

Following a recent inspection by structural engineers, Eden Viaducts have been advised that water penetration from its deck has caused a good deal of damage to the structure. Urgent repairs are required to the viaduct's surface to improve the drainage and make it water-tight to prevent further damage. Only when this is complete can the work start on much needed repairs to the stonework – at least 3 of the 15 stone piers require urgent attention as they are at risk of becoming unsafe.

Eden Viaducts still need to raise over £100,000 for the first phase of the repairs and are looking for people to help its fundraising efforts by accepting the **#14Peaksfor14Arches challenge**, covering 90 miles (for 90 feet) whilst doing so.

The challenge takes in some of the most popular fells in the areas surrounding Smardale Gill viaduct: Nine Standards Rigg, Wild Boar Fell, High Cup Nick, Smardale Fell, Tailbridge Hill, Great Asby Scar, Crosby Garrett Fell, Blease Fell, Murton Pike, High Seat on Mallerstang, Green Bell, Dufton Pike, Cross Fell and Little Fell.

People who, for whatever reason, cannot scale the 14 fells can still join in by covering 90 miles in 14 stages in their garden or high street, on an exercise bike or however they choose.

You can take part in the fundraising challenge by clicking on the Start Fundraising button on the Eden Viaducts website [SAVE SMARDALE GILL VIADUCT - JustGiving](#). Then simply set up your fundraising page and ask your friends and family to join in by sponsoring you. You can then keep your friends, family, and Eden Viaducts up to date with your progress by posting videos and pictures as you take on the challenge. If you are signed-up to Strava, you can embed it on your fundraising page so we can all follow your progress on a map and cheer you on.

Eden Viaducts will send every fundraisers a #14Peaksfor14Arches to #SaveSmardaleGillViaduct T-



shirt to help publicise their efforts.

The message from Eden Viaducts is help us #SaveSwardaleGillViaduct by accepting the #14 peaksfor14arches challenge #BeAFundraiser

Neil Cleeveley, Chair of Northern Viaduct Trust said:

We have a mountain to climb to raise the funds to carry out these urgently needed repairs to Swardale Gill viaduct. We have already received generous contributions from the Railway Heritage Trust and Kirkby Stephen Town Council, which are really appreciated. But we still need to raise over £100,000, so I hope as many people as possible will join us in what should be a fun activity.

We have chosen some of the most beautiful walks in Cumbria on lesser known but glorious fells in the Westmorland Dales, Yorkshire Dales National Park, and the North Pennines AONB. What better way to help save this iconic Victorian viaduct than enjoying these amazing walks? If you can't do the 14 peaks, you can still have fun covering 90 miles in 14 sessions wherever and however you choose.

It's a great way to raise funds to save this vital piece of our heritage and have some fun too. If you do take part, don't forget to use your fundraising to keep everyone up to date with your progress. I'll be taking the challenge and I'll be posting my progress.

Notes to Editors:

Swardale Gill Viaduct curves its way across the narrow valley of Scandal Beck about three miles west of Kirkby Stephen. Constructed of locally quarried stone the viaduct has 14 arches of 30 feet span, and a total length of 553 feet. It carried the railway 90 feet over the beck below. The deteriorating state of this viaduct in the 1980s, some 20 years after final closure of the railway, was the impetus to the formation of the Northern Viaduct Trust in 1989. **Swardale Gill Viaduct** was acquired from the British Railways Board and its restoration completed in 1992.

The viaduct is now surrounded by a nature reserve much favoured by walkers and those who love railway history. Cumbria Wildlife Trust's Reserve at Swardale, in which the viaduct is situated, was recently named the best nature reserve in Cumbria with around 400 species of plants.

The viaduct has undergone regular maintenance over the years but is now in need of a more extensive programme of maintenance and repair to ensure that **Swardale Gill Viaduct** is preserved for future generations as an important part of Cumbria's industrial history and the UK's railway heritage.

The Northern Viaduct Trust, which operates as Eden Viaducts, was formed in 1989 to acquire, restore and maintain the spectacular Swardale Gill Viaduct which, 90ft high on fourteen stone arches, crosses the dramatic valley of Scandal Beck a few miles west of Kirkby Stephen in



Cumbria. It was designed in 1861 by the Cumbrian engineer Sir Thomas Bouch as part of the South Durham & Lancashire Union Railway, which crossed the Pennines to carry coke to the iron and steel furnaces in the Barrow area and West Cumberland. The line was closed in 1962, after steelmaking finished. For over twenty years the viaduct stood disused, deteriorating from lack of maintenance and exposure to the weather. When it was noticed that masonry had fallen from several of the piers British Rail decided to demolish it. Eden District Council promptly arranged for it to be listed, and at a subsequent public enquiry retention of the viaduct was upheld. Four people formed a trust, registered it with the Charities Commission, and set about raising funds by way of grants from a number of organisations, including local authorities, the Countryside Commission and English Heritage. Several piers had to be 'stitched' using over 100 stainless steel rods, masonry needed repair, a new waterproof deck was required, and handrails had to be erected along the low parapets before the structure could be reopened. The trackbed for several miles at each end of the viaduct already belonged to Cumbria Wildlife Trust as a national nature reserve, and the viaduct was vital link between the two sections. In 1992 it was formally handed over to the trust by the late Lord Whitelaw, together with the nearby Drygill bridge, to become a permissive footpath. It is now listed Grade II* and has won a National Railway Heritage Award.

For further information please contact: 07341 838653