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ALAN HINKES OBE BACKS 14 PEAKS FOR 14 ARCHES CHALLENGE #SaveSmardaleGillViaduct

Renowned Mountaineer, Alan Hinkes, throws his weight behind the campaign to Save Smardale Gill Viaduct.

Alan Hinkes is the first Briton to climb the world's highest mountains - the 14 x 8000m peaks, all of which are in the 'death zone', where human survival rate is measured in hours. They are the most dangerous mountains on the planet and only 12 people alive have achieved this feat, which is the same number of people who have stood on the moon. Many have perished attempting this challenge.

Eden Viaducts' **14 Peaks for 14 Arches Challenge** seems easy in comparison but the challenge is essential for the survival of the iconic Smardale Gill Viaduct.

Eden Viaducts still needs to raise over £100,000 for the first phase of the repairs to make the viaduct water tight and repair its surface.

People are asked to get themselves sponsored through Eden Viaducts' Just Giving platform by accepting the **#14Peaksfor14Arches challenge**, covering 90 miles (for 90 feet) in 14 phases (for the 14 arches of the viaduct). [SAVE SMARDALE GILL VIADUCT - JustGiving](#).

Alan Hinkes said 'I asked Eden Viaducts if I could support this essential fundraising campaign and am really pleased to get involved and help to Save Smardale Gill Viaduct. The Viaduct is a jewel in our Victorian heritage and an important monument in the most beautiful setting accessible to all. It would be a tragedy if the viaduct fell into disrepair and the walk across the viaduct had to be closed. I have joined the Challenge and will be walking all the peaks of the Challenge. I am hoping that people will join me in the Challenge and in my walks'

Neil Cleeveley, Chair of Northern Viaduct Trust said: "I am delighted that Alan is backing our campaign to save Smardale Gill Viaduct. I am sure he will have seen some magnificent sights during his travels, which makes it all the more impressive that he recognises the glorious setting of our viaduct."



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.

Everyone taking part in the **14 Peaks for 14 Arches Challenge** will receive a special T-shirt bearing an image of the Viaduct and Challenge logo.'

Notes to Editors:

Alan Hinkes book 8000 Metres Climbing the World's Highest Mountains won TGO Awards Outdoor Book of the Year.

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. 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 fundraiser a **#14Peaksfor14Arches** to #SaveSmardaleGillViaduct T-shirt to help publicise their efforts.

Smardale 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. **Smardale 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 Smardale, in which the viaduct is situated, was recently named the best nature reserve in Cumbria with around 400 species of plants. The viaduct has under-gone regular maintenance over the years but is now in need of a more extensive programme of maintenance and repair to ensure that **Smardale 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 Smardale Gill Viaduct. 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. 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.

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