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HELP SAVE SMARDALE GILL VIADUCT

Smardale Gill Viaduct in Cumbria's Upper Eden Valley is at risk. The stonework on this iconic building is severely damaged by water and needs urgent repair. Northern Viaduct Trust, which operates as Eden Viaducts, has just launched a Just Giving fundraising campaign.

Smardale Gill Viaduct was designed by Cumbrian engineer Sir Thomas Bouch for the South Durham and Lancashire Union Railway in 1861 to carry coke to the steel works in Barrow. Constructed of local sandstone it towers 90 feet above the valley and its 14 x 30ft arches span 553ft across the valley.

Thirty years after the Trust saved it Smardale Gill Viaduct is once again in need of substantial renovation. In a recent comprehensive survey structural engineers found that water penetration has caused significant damage to the stonework. The viaduct deck is in urgent need of waterproofing and new drainage to prevent further deterioration. Only then can the major repairs to several of the stone piers of the viaduct be conducted.

The estimated costs of all this vital work to preserve Smardale Gill viaduct is around £1million. Initially, Eden Viaducts needs to raise in the region of £90,000 to make the viaduct water-tight.

Eden Viaducts is asking for help to raise the funds needed for this important Victorian monument and has launched a Just Giving fundraising campaign.

Donations can be made via www.justgiving.com/campaign/savesmardalegillviaduct

Every single donation helps.

Neil Cleeveley, Chair of Northern Viaduct Trust said:

“We desperately need to make sure that water can no longer penetrate from the surface of the viaduct into its stonework. Until we have the funds to do this the viaduct remains at risk. Some of the piers are in a poor state and we cannot allow things to get much worse. We are a small charity, run by volunteers and with no income. I hope that people will rally round and help us save this iconic piece of our Victorian heritage.

To find out more and get involved www.edenviaducts.org.uk

Ends



Notes to Editors:

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 in order 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 was formed in 1989 to acquire, restore and maintain the spectacular Smardale 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 viaduct (actually a two-arch bridge), to become a permissive footpath. It is now listed Grade II*, and has won a National Railway Heritage Award.

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