

Coventry Railway Museum to Close

Tuesday 11th July 2017

The trustees and volunteers of Electric Railway Museum have announced that the Coventry attraction will close later this year at its current location.

Situated on Rowley Road on land close to Coventry Airport and the Warwickshire village of Baginton, Electric Railway Museum occupies a site earmarked for commercial development.

Landowners Coventry City Council have not renewed the Museum's lease and, despite concerted efforts by the trustees and volunteers behind the scenes, an alternative location for the attraction has not been found.

The trustees have said that the closure announcement is "not a done deal", but unless an urgent solution is found over the coming weeks, the Museum will open to the public for the final time on Sunday 8 October.

Celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, Electric Railway Museum aims to promote the heritage of all electric trains in the UK through traction and rolling stock restoration, display and operation, along with work in gathering historically relevant technical and photographic archives.

The trustees have said that it is "devastating" to think that the West Midlands region could potentially lose this "unique cultural asset", particular with Coventry and Warwickshire having a long history of being a centre of excellence for engineering.

Electric Railway Museum currently houses the largest private collection of electric trains in the UK and is the only railway museum in Great Britain dedicated to electric traction. A registered charity, the work of the Museum is entirely run by volunteers and funded through donations from the public.

Despite only open to the public on selected days throughout the year, the Museum attracted more than 2,000 visitors to the region in 2016, and is on course to exceed that figure in 2017.

Electric Railway Museum Chairman, Ian Brown CBE, FCILT, said:

"The closure of Electric Railway Museum in its current form is a real blow to the railway preservation movement and, unfortunately, it is unlikely we will be the last heritage centre to have to overcome such challenges in the near future.

"However, this is certainly not the end of the line for Electric Railway Museum and, even if a physical base has not been secured by October, we will remain as a residual - yet virtual - operation, and will continue to own our core assets.



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“We are already actively working with the railway heritage sector and external partners to ensure that locomotives and vehicles currently on the site are not endangered, with a view in the longer term to establish a new location for our core collection and privately-owned items.

“Electric Railway Museum remains determined to ensure the continued preservation and display of electric rail vehicles and we look to the wider transport and heritage community at this time to help us chart a way forward to achieve this.”

The Coventry and Warwickshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and joint venture partners Roxhill are hoping to move forward with revised plans for the Coventry and Warwickshire Gateway scheme. Electric Railway Museum is currently situated within the proposed site for this new development.

Railway historian and Electric Railway Museum Trustee, Graeme Gleaves, said:

“Despite increasing visitor numbers, the cost of a whole scale move is way beyond our funding capabilities at this point in time. We have been deeply humbled by the support – both financial and physical – that is already flooding in to help in the relocation of the Museum’s collection, and we are exploring all possible avenues in order for us to continue on with our unique preservation work.

“For the time being, it is business as usual, and we look forward to welcoming the public to visit Electric Railway Museum on one of our upcoming Open Days, which will be held on Sunday 13 August, Saturday 9 and Sunday 10 September for Heritage Open Days and, for the very last time, on Sunday 8 October.”

“As ever, there’ll be lots for families to enjoy during our remaining Open Days this year, including rides on our 7¼ inch gauge miniature railway, shunting demonstrations and the opportunity to explore our unique collection of electric railway vehicles and artefacts.”

Elsewhere, members of the public will be able to climb aboard the Class 457 and one of the Class 309s, complete with the museum display (Museum 309), a café – serving hot and cold beverages, snacks and light bites – and the Electric Railway Museum shop.

Visitors will be able to see the Victoria Line Signalling Centre, which showcases how trains were controlled on the London Underground line when it first opened in the late 1960s.

The display, which opened to the public last September, is housed inside the passenger accommodation area of the Museum’s Class 308 EMU vehicle and



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features the Victoria Line push-button control desk and line diagrams from the original control room at Cobourg Street.

Volunteers will be on-hand to explain more about Electric Railway Museum's diverse collection, which also includes British Railways Classes 307 and 308, as well as the power car for the record-breaking Advanced Passenger Train Prototype (APT-P), on loan from the National Railway Museum.

Electric Railway Museum was formed in 2007 to bring about the urgent need for a permanent home where the rich and lengthy history of electrically powered trains could be presented to the public on one site.

The collection of electric trains at the Museum's Baginton site represents over a century of technological progress and includes examples of commuter trains, battery-electric locomotives, underground carriages, high speed express units and some of the specialist line side equipment that made them work, such as signalling and current collection apparatus.

ENDS

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Media interviews and more images available on request

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NOTES TO EDITORS

Upcoming Open Days at Electric Railway Museum in 2017

Sunday 13th August

Sat & Sun 9th & 10th September (Heritage Open Day Weekend)

Sunday 8th October (Last Open Day)

10.30am – 4.30pm | Free Admission | Free Parking



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