

## South Tynedale Railway Hits Hard Times



*South Tynedale Railway Preservation Society acting chairman, David Granath*

The South Tynedale Railway Ltd, which runs a railway line between Alston and Slaggyford, has gone into administration and five jobs have been lost. The popular tourist attraction cancelled its railway operations in March due to the pandemic, however the South Tynedale Railway Preservation Society plans to keep the site open in the future after it received emergency funding.

“That money has been a lifeline for us,” the society’s acting chairman David Granath, said, “We’re in such an uncertain situation. “ It is quite clear that if we run trains on a socially-distanced basis we would only achieve around 20% capacity, which means we would be losing money every time we ran a train.”

The railway received a Gold in the North East England Tourism Award for their efforts towards becoming an ethical, responsible and sustainable tourism attraction in April. However, David expressed concerns about the future of volunteer-led organisations who have suffered because of the pandemic. He said: “It opens up the question as to whether a volunteer-run railway in a remote part of the North Pennines can run without paid staff. The pandemic is useful in a way that it allows us to pause and review our business model. Now we have the opportunity to look at the viability of the railway going forward in 2021.”

Although the railway’s limited company has gone into liquidation, David said the railway’s charity will run operations. The railway has received £5,000 in donations after it launched a Covid-19 appeal to help secure its future.

David added: “If we can run it regularly, reliably and safely then the five miles of Alston to Slaggyford with a steam locomotive is a good package. But we have to achieve sufficient passenger numbers to make it financially viable.”

