



PRESS RELEASE

The appeal of historic La'al Ratty railway reaches overseas visitors

IT'S full steam ahead for one of the UK's oldest railways as it prepares to welcome more global visitors than ever before once international travel fully reopens.

Built in 1859, Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway, Britain's narrowest gauge railway, is now a popular tourist attraction with people across the world wanting to clamber on board the steam locomotives on the iconic La'al Ratty - Cumbrian dialect for Little Way.

With the help of match funding from the government's Department for International Trade, the historic railway has spread its profile beyond European tourist markets and successfully reached out to visitors in Japan, China, India and America.

The Department for International Trade, supported by the Cumbria LEP, offers Cumbrian businesses wishing to export goods or reach international markets match funding up to £9,000 through its Internationalisation Fund, with the railway using the fund as a contribution towards its large scale marketing campaign for overseas audiences.

With previous funding in 2019, members of the railway team visited China and India to showcase the wonders of La'al Ratty to potential new visitors and the attraction has benefitted from further funding this year to allow it to invest in improving its website and produce media content to raise its profile to international audiences in preparation for the return of inbound travel.

Rachel Bell, Head of Marketing and Business Development at Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway, said: "The Covid-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on the railway as we haven't been able to welcome some guests to enjoy the attraction over the past couple of years, especially those from other countries - more specifically from different continents.

"We are delighted to receive further funding from the Department for International Trade's Internationalisation Fund which we used to improve our website, IT consultancy, ticketing systems and marketing and photography to showcase the railway to our chosen target countries.

“Before the pandemic, we travelled to China and India, again with support from the Department for International Trade, and we have been able to build on the contacts we made. Our additional marketing has put us in a position to attract more potential visitors from these countries.

“La’al Ratty is a wonderful, historic attraction which brings so many people a lot of joy when they pay a visit, so we’re putting in the work now to make sure we are fully prepared to host our overseas guests.”

Rachel said the funding application for the Internationalisation Fund was very easy to navigate, and she would recommend any Cumbrian business targeting international audiences to inquire about the grants available.

She said: “The funding has been such a huge benefit to us in our aim of reaching overseas markets and has allowed us to reach a wider audience. This is a fund more Cumbrian businesses should be using as it can really help change the dynamics of how they work.”

Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway is just one of the many Cumbrian businesses reaching international customers supported by the Department for International Trade.

Sarah Peak, the Department for International Trade’s Export Manager for Cumbria, said: “Many people think that companies need to ship out products to be classed as an exports business, and don’t realise that services are also a highly exportable commodity.

“Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway is the perfect example of how a locally based company can export its services to such a large, worldwide audience and reap the benefits of doing so.

“The railway is a huge success story for Cumbria and something we’re all rightly proud of, and we are here to assist other local businesses get their profile and services known more widely across the globe.

“The Department for International Trade offers free support and we’re always on hand to assist all Cumbrian businesses with their export ambitions and potential.”

Cumbrian businesses wishing to access free support and guidance should contact Sarah Peak, the Department for International Trade’s Export Manager for Cumbria, on sarah.peak@tradenw.org

More information about Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway, which will host its popular gala over the first Bank Holiday weekend in May, can be found at www.ravenglass-railway.co.uk.

ENDS

Photos:

The La'al Ratty railway attraction is proving a hit with international visitors from countries such as Japan, China, America and India.

Rachel Bell, Head of Marketing and Business Development at Ravenglass and Eskdale Railway.