

Cambrian Railway Station

Shropshire Council

CAMBRIAN HERITAGE RAILWAYS

Cambrian Heritage Railways (CHR) is a volunteer-led charity dedicated to preserving and revitalising Oswestry's rich railway heritage. The Cambrian Station Building, a Grade II-listed Victorian landmark dating back to the 1860s, once served as both Oswestry's principal station and the headquarters of the Cambrian Railway. Although still used seasonally by CHR, decades of deterioration meant the building required urgent intervention to make it safe, prevent further decay and secure its future.

To address this, Shropshire Council secured £765,250 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (Communities & Place) and the Rural England Prosperity Fund in November 2023, alongside £271,108 of its own capital. The funding enabled a substantial programme of essential external works, including replacing 300 ornate corbels, removing asbestos roof tiles and reinstating Welsh slate and fully repainting windows and doors in authentic Cambrian Railway colours. Ecological enhancements, such as bat roosting tiles and swift nesting boxes, were incorporated into the restoration. Local conservation specialists Phillips and Curry Ltd delivered the restoration, supporting heritage craftsmanship within the region.

The project had to be completed within a tight timescale and through challenging winter conditions, requiring careful coordination to keep the programme on track without compromising quality. As the Project Manager explained: *"The funding gave us the flexibility to do the work the right way, with a high degree of quality instead of just patching things up. The corbels will last over 100 years."*

Shropshire Council also commissioned Insall Architects to produce a conservation management plan, a full condition survey and a feasibility study. These now form the basis for future phases, including potential first-floor residential use and year-round operation with CHR.

The restoration has already achieved regional recognition, with the project winning the BAM Nutall Partnership Award at the National Heritage Railway Awards 2025. Judges praised the "outstanding" quality of the work delivered on a modest budget, commending the Council and its partners for safeguarding a landmark asset, working with local artisans and overcoming unplanned challenges while maintaining momentum.

Community response has been overwhelmingly positive. The Project Manager noted the public interest when the scaffolding was removed: *"We put out a press release and CHR planned a grand reopening at Easter. We were inundated with visitors, more people came to see what we'd done with the building than to visit the railway itself."* The reaction reflected a sense of local pride in seeing an iconic Oswestry landmark restored to prominence.

Without UKSPF and REPF investment, the Council would have been unable to address urgent safety issues or undertake the specialist studies required for long-term reuse. The funding has stabilised a highly significant heritage asset, enhanced Oswestry's visitor offer and laid firm foundations for future development and community benefit.

