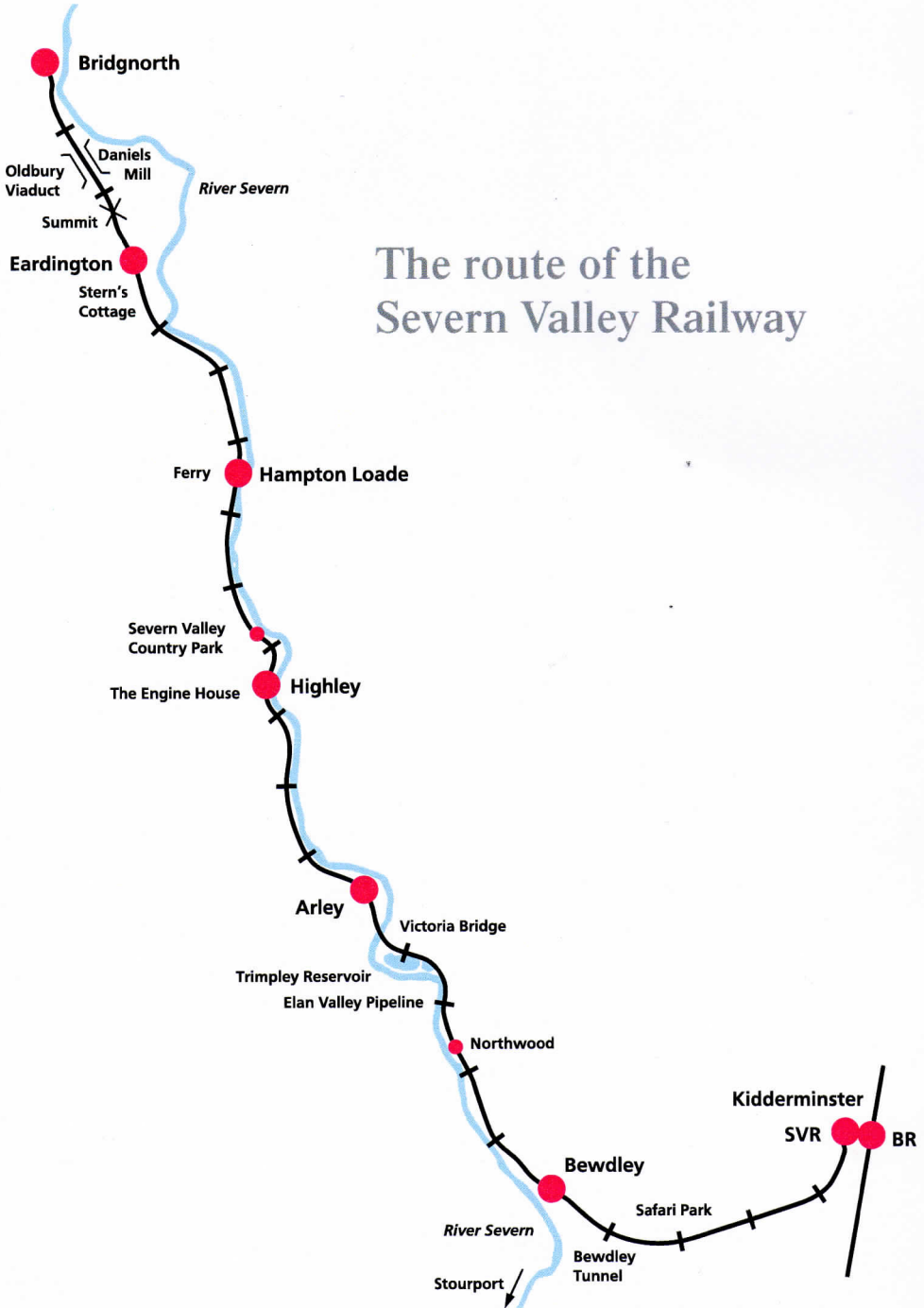




Volunteer Staff Handbook



The route of the Severn Valley Railway



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INTRODUCTION

This booklet is intended for all volunteers working on the Severn Valley Railway. Although it may initially appear lengthy, you will hopefully find it of value and helpful during your time as a volunteer.

The Severn Valley Railway has a large volunteer resource, to which it is indebted, and this booklet is a way of providing everyone with the essential basic information about being a volunteer on the SVR. It explains the nature of a volunteer's relationship with the SVR and sets out the code of practice on which staff-volunteer teamwork is based.

This booklet is also available as a download from our website –
www.svr-vlo.org.uk

If you would like more detailed information on any aspect of your volunteering, or have any queries about your role, please talk to the member of staff/volunteer to whom you report or to the Volunteer Liaison Office at Bewdley Station – tel: 01299 401776 and email vlo@svrlive.com.

Your gift of time, skills and enthusiasm is appreciated.

Thank you

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS – A Balanced Partnership.

The success of the Severn Valley Railway is wholly dependent on the people who work for and with us and who contribute to its success.

Preservation of the line dates from 1965 when a group of enthusiasts formed the Severn Valley Railway Society at Kidderminster. They raised £25,000 to purchase the line from Bridgnorth to Alveley. Since that time the railway has prospered in terms of passenger numbers and won various tourist awards, none of which would have been achieved without volunteers.

Volunteers are an integral part of the Severn Valley Railway, contributing skills, talents and experience which the full time staff may not possess. Volunteers also help to contain costs, raise income, achieve tasks that otherwise could not be afforded and, above all, keep the trains running!

The success of the Severn Valley Railway, however, is not solely attributable to the volunteer input it receives. There are currently over 100 full time employees providing the structure, organisation, maintenance and day to day management required to keep the Railway functioning. Volunteers contribute a wide range of important and supportive roles plus time, flexibility and many specialist skills in addition to filling all the operational duties.

The importance of developing and maintaining a balanced and effective partnership is vital to the continued prosperity of the SVR. We aim to make every effort to ensure that a volunteer's experience with the Severn Valley Railway is happy, productive and mutually beneficial.

THE VOLUNTEER ROLE

A Bit of Give and Take.

In order to become a volunteer, you need firstly to become a member of the SVR Guarantee Company. This means that, when you are working as a volunteer, you are covered by the Company's insurance.

Other than when you have trained, passed out and are involved in duties requiring rostered turns, there is no enforceable obligation for volunteers to attend or do the tasks suggested. Your obligation for covering rostered turns will be identified elsewhere in this document. Likewise, the Severn Valley Railway does not provide regular work or payment for any activity undertaken in a voluntary capacity. Our arrangements with volunteers are typically binding in honour only and not intended to create a legally binding contract.

Any reimbursements of expenses and/or training support you may receive are purely discretionary and do not affect the fact that volunteers give their time and skills freely to the Severn Valley Railway.

Mutual Support and Expectations

Although you give your time and skills freely and without obligation, there is also a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are raised and recognised – both what you can expect from the SVR and what the SVR can expect from you.

What you can expect from the SVR

The SVR recognises that both new and existing volunteers need:

- A member of staff or volunteer to guide you and with whom you have regular contact.
- A clear explanation of the help and assistance you have volunteered to provide.
- Supervision and support to enable you to carry out your tasks.
- Safe working conditions.

- Training where appropriate to perform our tasks including relevant induction
- To be listened to – SVR operates a Suggestion Scheme to enable ideas from volunteers to be shared.
- Confidentiality of volunteer records
- Reviews of your volunteer role to ensure both you and the SVR are happy with current arrangements. (Question and Answer sessions, medicals, re-examinations etc.)
- A chance to work with, and meet, directors, full-time staff and other volunteers.
- A clear system for the induction of volunteers.

What the SVR expects of you

In common with all our volunteers you are asked to:

- Learn about the SVR, its basic structure, its aims and how your role fits in
- Attend recommended training sessions
- Maintain a high standard in all aspects of your role
- Sustain good relations with other volunteers, staff and public.
- Work within and support SVR policies and procedures
- Have regard to decisions made by SVR Holdings and Guarantee Companies and be aware that ultimate responsibility for management rests with the SVR full time staff and the Board of Directors.
- Observe SVR policies and practices on Health and Safety, security, working with young people and the constraints of working around listed buildings and in conservation areas.
- Protect cash, assets and securities from theft, loss or damage, so far as is reasonably possible.
- Try to give a reliable time contribution by attending as regularly as you can.
- Safeguard confidential information about the SVR and seek to uphold our good reputation and image at all times. In this regard we also refer you to the Social Media Policy SMS Policy 137. (Please refer to page 14 for SMS Policy access)

Guidance and Support

Whatever department you work in, a nominated member of staff or volunteer will be directly responsible for your contribution. This is the person in charge of our work and to whom you report. For the purpose of this booklet, they are described as our department head. They should ensure that you know what to do, where to find equipment and how to carry out your tasks safely. This remains the case no matter how long you have been a volunteer.

Representing the Severn Valley Railway

As a volunteer you are an important ambassador for the SVR and should always try to represent its best interests. For many visitors you may be the first member of staff they meet so you become “the face” of the SVR. A warm welcome and being treated with respect and courtesy will usually result in a satisfied visitor even when things around you may be going wrong!

The high profile of the Severn Valley Railway is one of our most important assets.

You should aim to safeguard its good image when acting in any capacity where you are, or might be seen to be, a representative of the Railway.

If writing an article about the SVR, be aware that the audience is much larger than you think, particularly if posting on the internet. Please avoid making statements on controversial issues unless you have thought through the consequences very carefully. If in doubt ask someone and ensure that compliance with our Social Media Policy is observed.

It is hoped that all volunteers will show a sense of loyalty to the SVR and feel able to support its policies and management decisions. There is usually a good reason behind most decisions. If you should happen to disagree with any of them, please raise your objections privately with your department head rather than publicly in print, in conversation on a platform, or on social media sites. Members of the public have usually come for a pleasant day out and not to hear negativity.

BECOMING A SEVERN VALLEY RAILWAY VOLUNTEER

Open Access to Volunteering

Historically railways were a male dominated preserve but the Severn Valley Railway is actively developing its equal opportunities policy and aiming to dispel the myth that only men can do certain jobs!

We believe that volunteering should be open to all regardless of sex, sexual orientation, race, marital status, age, religion, community background or political beliefs. However, as some departments on the railway are not considered suitable for every volunteer, placements are made on merit with the sole selection criterion being the individual's ability to carry out the specified task in the context of the needs and limitations of the location.

Age of Volunteers

The SVR is split into two divisions – operational and non-operational.

Operational departments comprise motive power depots, traffic-guards, station staff, signalling and permanent way. Volunteers in these departments are required to complete a training course and together with some station staff and permanent way, to pass a medical examination. They must retire on their 75th birthday from those departments (except, platform and P Way staff). This age has been chosen following advice from the Company Doctor as the upper age limit by which the ability to translate a situation can be assessed. After age 70 operational volunteers have to undergo an annual enhanced medical examination. Those reaching 75 are welcome to carry on volunteering in other departments that do not require a medical standard or a specified level of safety competence.

As the non-operational side of the railway covers the balance of jobs not included above and are not medically critical, the Railway does not specify an upper age limit and recognises the valuable contribution made by older volunteers in terms of knowledge and experience. However, volunteers are discouraged from continuing beyond a point detrimental to the health and safety of themselves or others or when their tasks become too onerous.

The SVR also welcomes young volunteers from the age of 11 to 14 into the Junior Apprentices. At 14 they can then progress into the Senior Apprentices until the age of 16, subject to a place being available. The former gives guidance and support through regular meetings to nurture and maintain the interest of young volunteers until they reach the age where they can begin one to one training.

Induction Process

Your induction into volunteering with us can either be on an Induction Day (usually held monthly during the running season between March and October, depending on numbers) or by visiting the Volunteer Liaison Office at Bewdley Station which is open most Tuesdays and Thursdays throughout the year. Either route should enable us to organise a placement for you hopefully in the department of your choice. It may be necessary to join a waiting list for some departments prior to training beginning.

Attendance

Attendance is not compulsory and you may give as little or as much time as you wish. However, it is important to indicate your anticipated availability when you start. For some tasks, regular attendance is expected e.g. in operational departments requiring training and maintenance of levels of competence.

Reliability is important so please let your Head of Department or roster clerk know if you are running late or are unable to do your rostered turn. If you are unable to come on the day you are expected, make sure that you contact the station/department concerned so that they can find someone else quickly and aren't waiting for you to turn up. In the interests of safety a sickness note may be required where longer term illness is concerned and the department manager considers this necessary.

The SVR recognises that volunteers may cease their involvement at any time but, should you feel unable to continue volunteering, we would be grateful if you could let the Volunteer Liaison Office or your department head know your reasons. There may be something that can be easily resolved or there may be a wider issue which requires addressing by the SVR companies. It is much better to tell someone than just to stop coming.

Time to settle in

Experience has shown that many volunteers find they enjoy and continue their work with the SVR for a very long time. To ensure that your expectations, and ours, are met the Volunteer Liaison Office will check with you after a settling in period to assess how things are working out.

At the end of this time, if you have found some difficulties which need addressing we will endeavour to resolve these issues. Maybe you would like to be re-assigned to a different department or location which option is always open to you as a volunteer. You can work in more than one department at any time.

Volunteer Staff Pass

Once you have settled in as a volunteer and have been attending regularly over a period of time (usually six months and /or a minimum number of turns), subject to your Head of Department's agreement you will become eligible for a volunteer staff pass. This entitles you, as the holder, to travel 3rd class without charge on any SVR train during normal service and whilst in the course of your duties.

Documentation comprises an identity card containing your photograph and a separate card, issued annually to recognise your status as a current working volunteer and subject to you maintaining attendance requirements. It does not entitle guests to travel for free or give you unlimited trackside access.

Another benefit of a staff pass is that it enables you to travel at reduced rates on some other heritage railways throughout the country.

Long Service passes with enhanced benefits are issued to retiring volunteers who have completed a minimum of 15 years regular service and have the support of their department manager.

Volunteer Records

Volunteer details are held on computer records at the Membership Office at Comberton Place, Kidderminster and at the Volunteer Liaison Office, Bewdley Station. These are based on the information you supplied when you first volunteered, a copy of the Volunteer Liaison staff form being sent to you with new volunteer notification to your department. Please let the VLO or your department manager know of any change of address or contact details.

Apart from recording your voluntary involvement, we may use the data to access information about skills you may have and which could be relevant to certain projects being carried out by the SVR.

Data Protection legislation applies to this data and we promise that your personal details will be treated as confidential. You may request a copy of the information we maintain either from your department head or the Volunteer Liaison Office for which a charge may be levied.

Keeping in Touch

We aim to keep you informed of current news and developments.

As a member of the SVR you will receive quarterly issues of Severn Valley Railway News. As a volunteer you will have access to Express Points, the Working Members Newsletter published monthly and Notice Board Issues carrying current news items. Copies are circulated to all departments for you to read. Access to the Newsletter is also available at www.svrlive.com. This website is regularly updated with news and information.

There may also be occasional opportunities for volunteer and staff to meet together or for the exchange of information eg social events, Q and A sessions and quiz nights.

Suggestion Scheme

If you have any ideas for improvements which could be made to the service we offer visitors to the SVR, or constructive ways in which to improve working practices, there is a Suggestion Scheme operated through the Volunteer Liaison Office. They will receive your idea and pass it on to the relevant department for attention. If you've got a good idea, then don't keep it to yourself!

Confidentiality

Whilst volunteering, you may sometimes be party to confidential or sensitive information about SVR activities or personnel which is not public knowledge. Your full co-operation is expected to ensure that this material remains confidential. You are asked to respect the trust accorded to you and not to misuse such information or communicate it outside the SVR. Our Social Media Policy sets out the Railway's position in this respect.

Long Service Badges

You become eligible for a long service badge after 10 years of regular and consistent volunteer work. There are badges at 5 year intervals from 10 years to 50. You can apply via your departmental manager to the Volunteer Liaison Office for the relevant badge as soon as you are eligible. You will need to state the number of years continuous service and which department/manager is involved. The badge will be sent directly to you from the Volunteer Liaison Office after all details have been verified from the Company records. On reaching the next level of long service you are kindly asked to return your badge in exchange for the new one.

Volunteer Facilities

As a volunteer you are able to purchase certain items at reduced price in the station buffets at Kidderminster, Bewdley and Bridgnorth. You will be expected to show your volunteer staff pass and identity card as the buffet staff also serve members of the public and cannot realistically be expected to remember everyone.

Some stations have washing and showering facilities provided for volunteers in addition to the usual public facilities. Please show respect for these facilities and to leave them as clean as you would expect to find them.

Most stations have overnight sleeping accommodation specifically for volunteers. This has to be booked some time in advance of your visit through the station of your choice for which a small charge applies.

A staff discount scheme operates in Kidderminster and Bridgnorth shops including The Engine House (some items are excluded) on presentation of your volunteer staff pass and identity card.

PRACTICAL MATTERS

Health and Safety

The Railway is responsible for ensuring, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of its staff, its visitors and neighbours. The directors of SVR Holdings PLC carry personal liability for our safety. Additionally, every member of staff also has three particular responsibilities:

- To be responsible for their own safety and that of others.
- To ensure that their own actions do not endanger others
- To co-operate with the Railway's policies for providing and maintaining a safe place of work.

Like so many other things, Health and Safety has to be seen as a partnership between the railway and its staff – neither can achieve very much without the active help and participation of the other. We are constantly striving to ensure that none of the Railway's activities will be injurious to anyone's health and that no one is unduly exposed to the risk of an accident.

To achieve this goal, the Railway encourages all members of staff to make suggestions, to report anything that could be detrimental to health or safety such as defects in tools or equipment or potentially dangerous situations, trip hazards etc.

The SVR has a Safety Committee consisting of representatives of operational departments and chaired by the General Manager. Should you have any concerns regarding Health and Safety issues please address these to the Volunteer Liaison Office who will pass them on to the appropriate representative.

Disability Policy

The Railway has a Disability Policy full details of which can be obtained from the VLO.

Certificates of Competence

These are issued to operational volunteers when they have passed examinations for various safety critical operations (e.g. signalman, guard, fireman). PTS (Personal Track Safety) qualification is issued to operational volunteers after being assessed as competent. They are required to be renewed every 3 years.

Dress Code

The SVR aims to maintain a standard of dress in keeping with its endeavours to emulate steam railways of the 1950's. Where, for example, a TTI, signalman, platform staff or guard require a uniform, facilities are available for two or three piece made-to-measure suits. Booking Office staff and Buffet Car Stewards can order trousers and shirts in the same way and footplate crews have the same facility for jackets and bib and brace. For those areas where high visibility clothing is a requirement of volunteering stocks of coats and vests are carried by the railway. The Guarantee Company pays one half of the cost. Details for all clothing matters are available from the Volunteer Liaison Office. Full details and order forms are available on the VLO website.

Volunteers in other departments provide their own clothing but are still expected to maintain a good and appropriate standard of dress.

You are asked to refrain from wearing overalls in station buffets and bars as these are public areas and are required to maintain hygiene standards.

High Visibility Clothing

In order for the SVR to maintain its Dress Code, high visibility clothing (overalls, jackets, "viz" vests) **should not be worn** on platforms, footplates, as train crew or on recognised walking routes such as barrow crossings and main walking routes to loco sheds and workshops. High visibility clothing **should be worn** for safety reasons in all other applications on and around the running lines.

Smoking

In 2007 a law was introduced to make all enclosed public and workplaces in England smoke free. The Railway falls within this legislation and you are thus requested to help in ensuring that the law is upheld at all times by other volunteers, staff, visitors and contractors. This also applies to e cigarettes.

INSURANCE

Liability

The SVR maintains insurance cover for protection against legal liability for claims made against it following damage to property or injury suffered by employees, visitors, contractors and volunteers.

Personal Possessions

Volunteers' personal possessions (including money) are not insured by the SVR against accidental loss or damage, except in instances of theft where a claim may be made against the company's insurer subject to policy time limitations.

It is most important that when you arrive for duty **you must always sign on** a department attendance sheet **and sign off** when your day is finished. This ensures your insurance cover for the period you are signed on. You must not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs whilst signed on. Our Drugs and Alcohol Policy SMS 137 refers.

Road Vehicle Usage

Volunteers using their own vehicles for SVR business should ensure that their policy carries cover for this. The Railway does not carry contingency cover in the event of loss, damage or injury to the volunteer, his/her property or third party. Road vehicles owned by the SVR may only be driven by volunteers aged over 25 who have provided their licence for inspection and have acceptable claims and conviction records and are authorised by Railway management.

SVR/personal equipment.

All equipment supplied by the SVR in connection with volunteer projects is insured by the SVR while in use by volunteers. The Railway has a legal obligation to ensure that tools are appropriate for the job in hand and are properly maintained (and hence safe).

SVR staff, both paid and volunteer, should avoid the use of their own tools for work on the Railway (particularly electrical equipment). Each department has an approved equipment list and if staff really do need to bring their own tooling, it needs to be entered on the departmental list and a check made with the relevant supervisor that it is acceptable to use on SVR work. Relevant legislation applies to all tools. It is sensible to inspect tools to ensure that they are fit for purpose before use.

DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

With colleagues

The SVR relies on, and is appreciative of, the goodwill of its volunteers and aims to treat them all fairly, objectively and consistently.

Most SVR volunteers find their work enjoyable and fulfilling and any difficulties are normally resolved spontaneously and quickly between colleagues.

Departmental heads are initially responsible for handling any problems regarding volunteer conduct or complaints, referring to the SVR Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures. In essence, if you have a problem you should take this up directly with your department head who will seek to ensure that your views are heard, noted and acted upon aiming for a positive and amicable solution wherever practicable. Avoid resorting to complaining and not seeking a resolution.

With members of the public

Most of our passengers are not railway enthusiasts and in many cases not familiar with train travel, timetables or even purchasing tickets. They expect a relaxing enjoyable day and our objective is to ensure that this is achieved so that they will wish to repeat the experience. Inevitably things do not always go according to plan and this can lead to stress, dissatisfaction and occasional anger. Most difficult situations can be resolved relatively quickly if dealt with immediately and calmly.

Tensions are most effectively diffused by listening carefully and using open body language (e.g. avoid standing with arms folded) and by the use of plain language delivered in a conversational tone. If faced with an issue you cannot resolve you should involve your department head or other senior member of staff. If appropriate, courteously suggest the matter is referred in writing to the General Manager and provide contact details.

Occasionally it is necessary to instruct passengers but wherever possible explain why the request is being made. For example, many modern railway travellers are only used to sliding doors on trains and do not realise they may be at risk from opening doors whilst standing on a platform.

Grievance/Discipline

From time to time, volunteers may be involved in disciplinary proceedings for one reason or another. This particularly applies to ‘safety critical’ staff but can include others. Department heads are initially responsible for handling any problems regarding volunteer conduct or complaints, referring to the SVR Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures. The Code sets out the steps which are to be taken both by the SVR Company and the Volunteer. A separate Code of Conduct applies to Operational Departments.

OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES

Working with Children and Young People.

The SVR takes the matter of protecting children and young people very seriously and has in force a Child Protection policy. The Junior Apprentices staff are all DBS, formerly CRB, checked and the activities undertaken by the children in their care are monitored very carefully.

Departments should be alert to any risks to a young person’s safety which are associated with their lack of experience, lack of awareness of existing risks or immaturity. Such considerations could bar young persons from work which:

- Is beyond their physical or psychological capacity
- Involves exposure to toxic or carcinogenic substances
- Involves risks of accident which young persons may not reasonably recognise due to their insufficient attention to safety, lack of experience or training
- Involves a risk to health from extreme temperatures (hot or cold), noise or vibration

Our SMS Policies 111 and 130 deal with Young Persons and Child Protection respectively.

Environmental Practices

The SVR is an organisation with a growing awareness of conserving the environment and continually striving to develop policies and practices for its protection and enhancement. Many of our structures have listed building status, some stations are in conservation areas and some sections of the line run through sites of special scientific interest.

You should be aware of the sensitivity of the environment in which you are working and the types of actions and/or materials to be avoided. Please have respect for the constraints on working practices which may have been placed on the SVR by outside agencies.

SMS Policy 132 refers to this.

MOVING ON

Changing to an other role

As a volunteer you are welcome to change roles or move to another department provided a suitable task is available. Keep an eye on noticeboards, Express Points, SVR News or contact the VLO via their website.

Becoming a Long term Volunteer

After 10 years of regular and consistent volunteer work you become eligible for a long service badge (see page 9).

The longer you volunteer the greater your understanding of what makes the railway tick. If you experience working in a range of departments, or gain promotion within your department, e.g. can work all signal boxes, move from fireman to driver, you may wish to stand for election as a Director on the board of the Guarantee Company.

Applying for Employment with the SVR

All jobs within the Railway are advertised in the Working Members' Newsletter and on notice-boards in addition to newspapers and related magazines. Speak to your department head or the VLO for advice if necessary.

Bibliography

All safety/corporate/policy matters referred to in this booklet and embraced within SMS are available for all registered volunteers to view/download from **www.svrlive.com**. Your Head of Department will arrange access.

We hope that you have found this booklet clear and useful. If you have any suggestions for other matters which should be covered in future editions please let the Volunteer Liaison Office know either by telephone 01299 401776 or email **vlo@svrlive.com**.



Contact our Volunteer Liaison Office

on

01299 401776

or email them at vlo@svrlive.com

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