

Time for a Southern Railway Coach Group?

By Tim Preston, on behalf of the Rolling Stock Committee

With the centenary of the formation of the Southern Railway upon us, The Rolling Stock Committee has been considering ways to increase interest in the restoration and maintenance of the railway's collection of Maunsell and Bulleid carriages.

Our Railway has a long and successful history in the restoration of Southern Railway designed rolling stock, from Bulleid coach restorations in the 1970s through to more comprehensive restoration of Maunsell and Bulleid stock from the 1980s onwards. However, with a number of vehicles that have been in traffic now stopped for comprehensive overhaul, there is work to be done, to deliver the [Long-term Plan](#)'s objective of creating full sets of Maunsell and Bulleid carriages.

Other societies have created dedicated groups to develop interest, encourage volunteer recruitment and generate funding for rolling stock restoration around a specific theme. These include the LNER Coach Association based at the North Yorkshire Moors and the Great Western (SVR) Association at the Severn Valley Railway.

The question the Rolling Stock Committee has been considering, and which it is asking *The Bluebell Times* audience, is whether a similar approach would make a difference to the current resources available and planned programme of work for Southern Railway coaches in the future.

Would you be interested in supporting a Southern Railway Coach Group?

The objectives of the Group could include:

- ➔ External promotion activities and awareness through published articles and social media
- ➔ Newsletters, through subscription, as a mechanism to secure funds for restoration
- ➔ Leadership of campaigns for specific vehicle restoration in a similar manner to that adopted for [Restaurant Car 7864](#)



[Maunsell Corridor Composite No. 5644](#) is one of the carriages that could benefit from creation of a dedicated support group. Photo: Richard Salmon

- ➔ Working with the Carriage and Wagon Trustee, Director and Manager to identify the most effective approaches and timescales for restoration and maintenance programmes
- ➔ Working with the Bluebell Railway Trust to help secure external funding for vehicles and other fundraising activities
- ➔ Providing a focus for volunteer co-ordination for those with an interest in Southern Railway carriages

The current thinking is that a Southern Railway Coach Group would become an informal group under the umbrella of the Society in a similar way to the Bluebell Railway Goods Division. Money raised would be directed into Trust restricted funds. The Bulleid Coach restricted fund is already

in existence. A similar fund could be established for Maunsell vehicles on completion of 7864. There is no reason why the group could not develop further to include other vehicles from the constituent companies of the Southern Railway.

RESOURCING REQUIREMENTS

Through its discussion on this subject, the Rolling Stock Committee was very clear that the justification in setting up such an association was greater interest and support from members, adding to the work of those already helping to

restore coaches, rather than adding further pressure on them. If you have a desire to see more of our Southern Railway coaches restored and operating, could we ask you to take 5 minutes to answer 5 questions on the survey link below.

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/F8796JB>

The survey is live for the next month and the results will be considered at the next Rolling Stock Committee before making a recommendation to the Society.