



## CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE – WEEK COMMENCING SAT 1<sup>st</sup> ARIL 2023

Well, there goes another manic week! This week's update is a bit late as I am sitting at Sheffield Park on Sunday writing it. I am Operations Supervisor for the second time this weekend. I was rostered as 'OS' on Good Friday, but had to step-in as Sheffield Park signalman instead, so my best laid plans went out the window.

Following my appeal for help, a few people have come forward for Customer Services – for which we are extremely grateful - but, as always, we still need more. So, if you feel you are suited to this, and can offer to help, then please get in touch... [paul.churchman@bluebell-railway.com](mailto:paul.churchman@bluebell-railway.com)

### **Saturday**

Day 1 of 'Dinosaurs' and wow what an event! It was incredibly popular and clearly everyone enjoyed it. We were far busier than on a normal weekend at the beginning of April and, even when you take the costs of having the dinosaurs here, we were well into profit. Fare revenue was at more than double that of a normal weekend, plus the 'secondary spend' in Catering and the shop goes up as well when there are more visitors on site.

### **Sunday**

Day 2 of Dinosaurs and another busy and successful day. We have booked to do this again late summer and we have also learned a few things we need to do differently (such as not feeding so many people to them!).

So, a resounding success and well done to the Commercial & Marketing teams for putting this together - and to everyone working over the weekend who helped make everything run smoothly.

### **Monday**

I arrived back from Alicante with a nice tan and feeling relaxed, even though my plane was an hour late.

We are running trains today as its now the school holidays and it was a fairly busy day at the railway. Hopefully this will continue all week.

### **Tuesday**

I've had to come back to work today in the day job. There's a lot to do here as we approach the summer season - our busiest time of year. Meanwhile, at the railway, work continues to improve our customer offer throughout the year and on how we can improve the offering we have in Catering, making best use of the entire catering facility at SP.



### **Wednesday**

Today is the official re-naming of 'electro-diesel' loco 73133 as '*The Bluebell Railway*' – the name she carried between 1999 and 2004 - and this is taking place at Eastleigh works where she has been undergoing work preparatory to heading to the railway, which should happen in the next couple of weeks. 73133 is owned by one of our drivers, who has made a significant investment in this loco. 73133 will be housed at the railway on a similar commercial arrangement to the '09' diesel shunter.

Neil Glaskin and Roy Watts attended as I was unable to do so. I had too many 'day job' meetings to deal with. Also, it was fitting for Roy to lead the naming ceremony as it was he who worked hard to bring the first diesel to the railway.

### **Thursday**

So today I had intended to spend just the morning in Carriage & Wagon, doing my weekly meeting with the team and seeing how we are progressing on various projects. That plan didn't quite work-out, as I ended up heading to Sheffield Park to see Lisa and then Chris Knibbs. Hence, I finally departed for home at gone 6pm. Thankfully Mrs C was also held up at work, so I still managed to get home before her (she had said to me I would be there all day when I left in the morning, but I had been adamant I wouldn't be!)

The railway was quite busy, and the trains had good loadings.

### **Friday**

So, I was Operating Supervisor today and I had great intentions of doing some admin and going round talking to people, but instead I ended up as Sheffield Park signalman! The day was busy, and there were a lot of families around. We had a mobile farm this weekend at Kingscote and this has gone crazy on social media. Another example of a low-cost event which clearly appealed to younger families, raising our profile and of course attracting them to make a visit.

The trains ran to time, and everyone seemed happy and positive. There was a lovely atmosphere among the staff at Sheffield Park today in all departments. We did have a little excitement when the fire alarms went off in the loco shed, works and 'Steamworks', which saw Andy Sabin running around in his fire marshal role! Thankfully, there was no fire though.



**And finally...**

As always, a big thank you to everyone. We are heading in the right direction, and everybody's contribution is very much appreciated. We still have a mountain to climb, but we are gaining traction and the climb has begun. Next week I hope to be able to update you on sleeping cars at SP and the completion (I hope) of the year-end audit.

Wishing you all a lovely Easter.

Paul Churchman  
Chairman  
9<sup>th</sup> April 2023