



## **CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE**

As promised this is the first of my weekly updates and what a manic week, I actually do think I have spent more time on Bluebell this week than my day job!

So it has been a fairly fast paced week and we are making some in roads, but equally we have had some more challenges face us. So here is what has happened through the week.

### **Monday**

I and a number of the Directors of the PLC we held a meeting with paid Managers and Supervisors to make them aware of the situation and some of the challenges that we are facing and the need to take some fairly drastic action as well as informing them that we literally must only spend money on essential items at the moment. The meeting seemed to go well, but naturally it left everyone with a sense of fear and worry. I have said to them that we may get to the point where we have to look at reducing the paid workforce. As much as I want that to be something we don't get to, that may be a course of action we have to take.

### **Tuesday**

Paul Lelew, Commercial Director, resigned with immediate effect due to personal reasons and no longer being able to dedicate the time to the role. I would like to thank Paul for everything he has contributed in the last 3 years and for the improvements he has brought, especially in the Shop. Neil Glaskin has assumed the Commercial Director role as well as Operations in the interim. The thought process behind this was Neil was Retail & Catering Director until 2020, so understands that side and with the review of services he will be heavily involved in that.

So this started the day needing to find a new Commercial Director! In the evening the Society Board met via Zoom and I updated the Trustees of what was going on and also the support that they could give to the PLC.

### **Wednesday**

Neil Glaskin met with Chris Knibbs, Lisa Boyle and Ruth Rowatt to review the Commercial and Service Plans for 2023. The aim was to look at where we can make savings by combining trains, reducing under used services but also adding extra Golden Arrows and Wealden Ramblers, where we know we will sell them and we know these trains are highly profitable. There was also a review of some of the event and changes have been made. The Diesel Gala will now not go ahead but we will have Giants of Steam in the autumn.



### **Thursday**

I spent the morning with Carriage & Wagon and we made changes to this year's programme through the workshop and I also met with the paid staff. It was a productive morning and Rowan and the team have done a great job in quickly coming up with some cost reduction measures for the year.

I then went to Sheffield Park and saw a number of managers and had discussions.

### **Friday**

I am sat in my office at work typing this – there is still a lot going on.

I really want to make it known how much Steve Trigg, Finance Director, is doing. He is spending a lot of time at Sheffield Park with the Finance team and working closely with Lisa Boyle so that in the coming weeks we can make informed decisions on what we do to ensure that we not only survive, but that we actually thrive again. All of the Directors are working so hard at the moment to get us through these times, the sheer hours we are all putting in each week is mind blowing, but they do it without resolve and with a passion.

I know everyone, paid and volunteer, is feeling apprehensive about all of this. Everyone in the paid staff and the Directors and Trustees are working very hard to get a clear picture with options that we can take to get this right and ensure that we are a fantastic railway.

Each week I will continue to update you all on what is going on and I will also ask for help on things. So here is what we really need help on this week:-

1. PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE be careful with the use of Electricity. If it doesn't need to be on please turn it off. Our electricity costs are over £1,000 a day – we need to get these down as by doing so this will save us a considerable sum of money every month.
2. We will be advertising for Director roles next week – so if you think you can do something to make the changes we need to and be part of the leadership team please apply. Your Railway Needs you!

Have a lovely weekend everyone and I will communicate again next week.

Paul Churchman  
Chairman