



## **CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE – WEEK COMMENCING SAT 18<sup>th</sup> MAR 2023**

So last week I wasn't appealing for anyone to do anything – this week I am again. We need a CDM (Construction, Design & Management) manager for our building projects across the railway – this is a specialist job and if you are qualified in this field you will know what this is about – so if you are and can spare some time to help your railway, then please get in touch <paul.churchman@bluebell-railway.com>

### **Saturday**

We were running trains and it was not that busy, but we had a Golden Arrow lunch train as well. At 5pm the Staff Forum took place in the Birch Grove Suite, and it was very pleasing to see such a good turnout. The event lasted for about 90 minutes, and I won't go over any details here, as a separate document has already been circulated giving a summary of what was said, and especially focusing on the questions asked from the members and the answers that were given. After the formal business was over, it was great to see people congregating in the Bessemer, partaking of food, having a drink, and chatting.

I am not making any promises here, but once we have the sleeping accommodation fully back up and running at Sheffield Park, I would like to see if we can open the Bessemer again on a Saturday evening. This is just an idea right now but, if we do proceed, we will need people to support it.

### **Sunday**

Mothers' Day and the railway was again quite slow for passenger numbers, we did have a Mother's Day Golden Arrow lunch train though and I was on this with Mrs C and Lady C (Lady C being my mother; Mrs C said you can't say two Mrs C's, or people will wonder what sort of life you're leading!). it was a fabulous meal, and the service was excellent. We have a fantastic product here and we can be justifiably proud of it and of the people that deliver it - so well done to Megan, Sarah, James and all the team.

### **Monday**

Filming started in earnest after all last week's setting-up, so it was early starts for everyone!

I was at Sheffield Park in the afternoon as a Safety Review Group meeting took place. This covers all the safety and change management issues across the whole railway. This forum is core to our Safety Management System and is the oversight body for significant changes, for new procedures, as well as dealing with the investigations and recommendations following any incidents.



I then had to get home and eat my dinner fairly rapidly, as there was a Bluebell Railway Trust Governor's meeting at 7pm, which I attended via Zoom. As we hadn't had a proper meeting for a few months and there was a lot to go through, we didn't finish until 9.40pm. But, although quite a long session, it was very productive.

### **Tuesday**

I actually managed to spend most of the day on my day job! Filming continued at the Railway - and it was a case of 'so far, so good.' The film company seemed happy, and I am looking forward to the large sum of money they will be paying us at the end. I take my hat off to Jon Beardmore for his meticulous management of the financial charging process with the film company.

Neil Glaskin and I had a meeting at 6pm with a company that wishes to develop a business opportunity with the Bluebell, involving the use of some of our land. If this is successful, it will generate an excellent financial return for both parties. I will share more information about this initiative when I am able.

### **Wednesday**

Very little to report – other than I think I only dealt with 18 bluebell emails and 2 phone calls! Meanwhile, the usual behind the scenes Bluebell admin machinery just carried on doing what it does every day.

### **Thursday**

Day 4 of filming, and all still going well - so that is a success. I was unable to spend my usual Thursday at the Railway as I had other things to do, but all was well, with the usual – and often unsung - mid week heroes keeping the place rolling along, doing the many tasks that are so important but which most people don't think about.

This day was also a very important Bluebell anniversary, being exactly ten years to the day since the first Bluebell passenger train rolled into a rather cold and snowy East Grinstead station. To mark this event a dinner was held, attended by those former directors of the Railway who had overseen the execution of the Northern Extension Project. Sadly, not all could be present - and we should take a moment to remember the huge contribution made by the late Chris White, whose leadership and dedication to the project as infrastructure director was a major driving force.

### **Friday**

Filming again went very well and finished quite early today. Next week will see the last of it and, although it has been a lifesaver for the income it will generate, it will be good to see everyone return to focusing on their main roles and running the Bluebell.

I am off to Burgess Hill tonight as every few months a number of people who have been working on the railway for many years have a meal and some drinks... tonight it is Italian.



**And finally...**

In another 'Bluebell first' we will be holding a Dinosaur Weekend the first weekend of April (that's next weekend folks!). Tickets are selling like the proverbial hot cakes – so we might be onto a winner... watch this space.

I hope you all have a lovely weekend.

Paul Churchman  
Chairman  
24<sup>th</sup> March 2023