



CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE – WEEK COMMENCING SAT 21st OCTOBER 2023

Well another wet week has passed us by, and I have to say I do hate this wet weather. It also impacts on our revenue as people simply and understandably avoid going out in such conditions.

Saturday

It was a busy day operationally with service 'C' operating plus a Wealden Rambler, Diesel Footplate Tasters, and a Golden Arrow. The special trains were all very popular and well-loaded and the normal service train was also reasonably loaded throughout the day.

Sunday

Another day with plenty of things going on, including a Golden Arrow lunch train and more Diesel Footplate Tasters.

The ice rink was doing OK - it seems to be picking up, which is of course welcome news. The unseasonably mild Autumn weather hasn't helped us on this, as most folks are probably not (yet) thinking about such winter pastimes as ice-skating!

Monday

Half-term week, so we were running every day. Today was not as busy as we might have hoped, but the weather is not in our favour.

Tuesday

Slightly busier today, but still slow and the changeable weather was not helping. The ice rink was a little busier than previous days.

Wednesday

It was the first of three consecutive days at the Railway for me this week - I am covering for Chris Knibbs today and tomorrow, as he is having some well-earned holiday.

The train loadings were better today than for the rest of the week.

Thursday

My second day covering for Chris and again the weather was all over the place. It did turn out brighter today though, and that was reflected in the number of visitors we saw. The ice rink was quite busy too.

There was the usual 'Thursday shunt' during the course of the day as well.



Friday

I was at the railway for the PLC annual general meeting. This had been delayed since July owing to the accounts being delayed, for reasons I have previously highlighted, and the related issues we were addressing.

The meeting went very well and the business was discharged very quickly. I hope that everyone attended felt it was a worthwhile event.

After the AGM we had a PLC Board meeting, which was also a good session where we covered plenty of ground. Although nothing out of the ordinary was discussed, there was plenty associated with the day-to-day business of keeping the railway running, which is by no means an easy task.

Revenue from Christmas bookings is currently good in terms of anything departing Sheffield Park but is not so good for E Grinstead departures. We are working on pushing sales on the Grinstead services. Meanwhile, Golden Arrow and Steamlights are selling well.

The railway was quite busy and again it seemed we had picked up quite a lot in terms of visitors since the start of the week. We also had a supper train which was very well-loaded.

And finally...

We now have some respite as we aren't operating trains until we start the Steamlights in mid-November. This does not mean there isn't a lot going on... we have to decorate the stations and trains, get the lights for Steamlights set-up, get presents ready – it's an enormous list of things to be done.

Once again, I want to say a big thank you to all those who are involved in any way in getting ready for our festive season. This is a massively important time of year for us... we take 25% of our revenue in a six week period, and it is critical we give all of it our very best shot to support this crucial period for the business

I cannot believe that it's fast approaching November and then December – Christmas is nearly upon us, and I'm really not sure where this year has gone!

Paul Churchman
Chairman
30th October 2023