

FROM LORD FAULKNER OF WORCESTER



I am delighted to accept your kind invitation to become a patron of the Downs Light Railway Trust and to support your Centenary Development Programme.

The DLRT is an excellent initiative which gives young people the opportunity to become engaged in really worthwhile practical activities of the sort that are vital for our nation's engineering, technology, and science industries. Like many others, the heritage railway sector depends for its future on the commitment and involvement of today's youngsters and it cannot afford to see any diminution or loss of skills.

Vocational education has a huge part to play in this. For thousands of young people it is as important as the traditional study of academic subjects in schools. The Downs Light Railway has provided opportunities to develop creativity, teamwork, leadership and responsibility for successive generations of children for over 100 years, and it's vital this work continues.

As President of the Heritage Railway Association I was delighted to help the Downs Light Railway join the HRA, not least because both organisations share mutual goals in youth engagement and in realising the huge potential that exists in heritage railways for engaging young people. This is a cause particularly close to my heart, and this is reflected in my sponsorship of an annual HRA award for young volunteers under the age of 26 "for significant achievement".

I endorse the Trust's Centenary Development Programme and wish it every success. I stand by ready to help with raising awareness of the DLRT, in connecting the Downs Light Railway with benefactors in the heritage railway sector, and in supporting fundraising activities. I want to see the railway provide bigger and better facilities, to engage more young people in railway engineering, and to join with other heritage railways to secure their future, and I commend these aims to everyone.

6 January 2021