



Dear Tim

I am exceedingly happy to write to you today to express our support for the Downs Light Railway and your Centenary Development Programme.

My main role at Ravenglass is the Operations Officer for Training & Education. I also have a secondary function as the Volunteer Liaison Officer for the company. It means that I coordinate all volunteering activity alongside training and education initiatives for both the staff and volunteers.

The Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway is situated in the western Lake District within the National Park. We run daily from March through to November, and our festive trains run at Christmas through to New Year. Our line is 7 miles long and has some challenging gradients and wonderful scenery for our passengers to enjoy.

We are one of several 15" gauge steam railways in the UK and we regularly meet to discuss common issues and share best practice. We are also part of a wider group of railways of varying gauges that meet annually to develop cooperation, networking, and dealing with common issues.

At Ravenglass, we have also had a long tradition of volunteer contribution to the success of the railway, many of whom have been young volunteers. We are keen to promote the benefits of volunteering to younger volunteers as a useful tool to gain life and job skills as they enter the employment market.

I first visited the Downs Light Railway in March 2020 and was immediately impressed with the children that operated the railway for us on that day. Their enthusiasm drives the future of heritage railways. We spoke to several children who were involved with the running of the railway during our visit. Their social interaction and practical skills that they displayed were both a breath of fresh air and an excellent example of practical skills learnt in a supportive environment.

The Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway has in the past improved its infrastructure and facilities to enable the railway to attract new volunteers to help establish a coherent and sustainable volunteer recruitment strategy. I believe that we can assist the Downs Light Railway with friendly advice based on our experiences in skill-based learning and competency management. We can also provide practical advice based on our relationships with other heritage railways.

The biggest threat to heritage railways is the sustainability of skills in the medium to long term. The Downs Light Railway's Centenary Development Programme offers such exciting opportunities to promote Youth Involvement in the heritage railway movement through competency-based skills and practical learning. The Downs Light Railway has the potential to become a national centre for excellence in the heritage railway movement through delivering workshops and residential learning for young people.

I am impressed with the desire of the Downs Light Railway to create an outreach programme to attract new young engineers, who will hopefully go on to become the staff and volunteers of the future in the heritage railway movement. I am looking forward to working with the Downs Light Railway to assist them with their growth and development to become a centre of excellence for young people in the heritage railway movement.

Peter Mills

Operations Officer Training & Education

Ravenglass & Eskdale Railway