



26th February 2021

Dear Tim,

I am very pleased to be writing in support of the Downs Light Railway's Centenary Development Programme.

I have been the Operations Manager of the Bluebell Railway for over 20 years. My role is managing all aspects of train movements on the railway and the resources needed to achieve this. I have also been involved for many years in the operation of the Ingfield Light Railway which operates for the Ingfield Manor School provides education for young people with cerebral palsy.

The Bluebell Railway commenced operation on a 5 mile section of ex British Railways track between Sheffield Park and Horsted Keynes in 1960. Since then the railway has extended to 11 miles with an end on connection with Network Rail at East Grinstead. Over the years the railway has saved and restored over 30 locomotives and countless items of rolling stock. We have recently completed a project called 'Steamworks' which has been specifically designed to give a greater understanding of the steam locomotive to young people with interactive displays as well as full sized exhibits.

We have a youth group called the '9F Club' (9 to 15) to encourage young people to get involved with the railway in a controlled and organised way. There is, however, limited scope for them to get involved in some aspects of the railway's activities due to minimum age requirements. We are therefore in the process of developing a miniature railway that will not only be an added visitor attraction but an opportunity for young people to learn all aspects of railway operation and engineering in a safer environment. This is where we clearly align with the ideals set out within the Downs Light Railway's Centenary Development Programme.

We also welcome a wide range of school groups to the railway as part of their STEM education. We will be looking at integrating the miniature railway into the experience we give to all young people.





To help with all of the above I am very keen to work with the Downs Light Railway Trust to develop teaching and training programmes for the Bluebell Railway to encourage an interest in engineering and railways, which could hopefully create enthusiasm that may mean they may become the railway engineers of the future. I would also like to see a sharing of ideas between the Downs and the Bluebell in developing future opportunities for young people's skills and prospects.

I would like to offer my full support to the Downs Light Railway's Centenary Development programme and if there is any way that the knowledge and skills that have been developed over 60 years of the operation of the Bluebell Railway can help, I can assure it would be very keen to do so.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Knibbs

Operations Manager

Bluebell Railway PLC