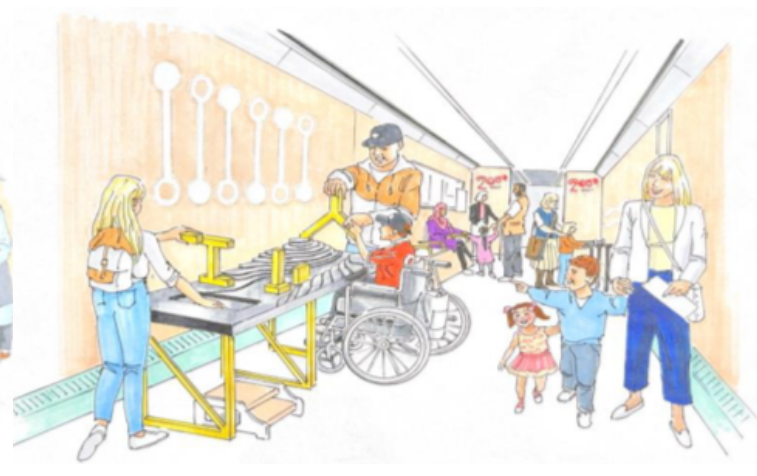
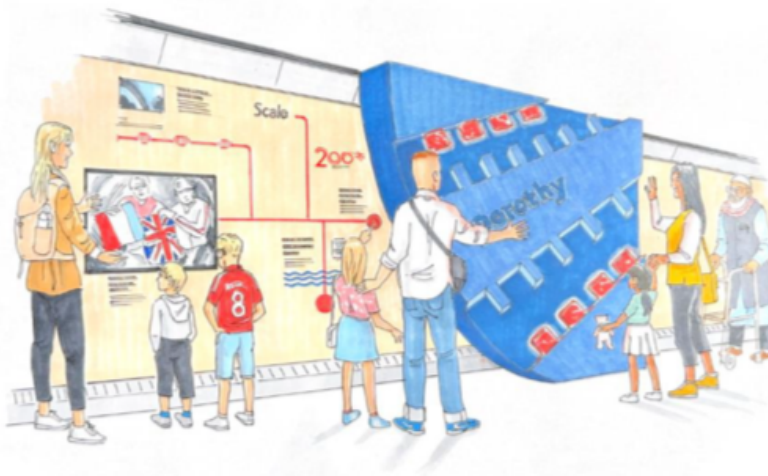


PRESS RELEASE



Railway 200: Unique touring exhibition train comes to The Bluebell Railway this July



- **Bicentenary train, Inspiration, will visit The Bluebell Railway between 23-29 July as one of 60 locations across Britain over 12 months, promoting rail innovation and careers.**
- **Inspiration will also visit Waterloo Station (18-19 July) and Margate Station (20-21 July) across Network Rail's Southern region over the summer.**
- **More than 200,000 visitors are expected. Register to receive updates before bookings open.**





PRESS RELEASE

A new and unique exhibition train will visit a heritage rail route, the Bluebell Railway, in Sussex, from 23 to 29 July, as part of a national celebration of the 200th anniversary of the modern railway called Railway 200.

The touring train, named Inspiration, is due to open to the public on 27 June at the Severn Valley Railway and is expected to visit 60 locations across England, Scotland and Wales over 12 months up to Summer 2026, creating a buzz of interest and excitement at mainline stations, heritage railways and rail freight sites. Curated in partnership with the National Railway Museum, it will be the only exhibition train on the rail network and will promote the past, present and future of the railway, helping to attract the next generation of pioneering talent.

Sporting an eye-catching livery, Inspiration will comprise four smartly reconfigured Mark 3 coaches, procured by Network Rail. The mobile Railway 200 exhibition is designed to inspire schoolchildren and others to consider a career in rail, shining a spotlight on the wide range of roles available, and to create a more diverse workforce.

Rail's innovation and pioneering pedigree will be explored in a 'Railway Firsts' coach, highlighting landmark moments in the development of the railway. Alongside will be a 'Wonderlab on Wheels', inviting visitors to test their engineering skills with a range of interactive exhibits. This will adjoin a carriage called 'Your Railway Future', showcasing some of the more hidden roles in rail and encouraging people to consider a career in rail to shape the next 200 years. There will also be a 'Partner Zone', offering free, flexible exhibition space. The carriages, which are currently being fitted out, are supported by a £250k grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund. The train will be operated by GB Railfreight.

More than 200,000 people, including many schoolchildren, are expected to visit by prior booking. Admission to the train will be free, but normal entry charges to heritage railways and private sites where it is located will apply. [Register to receive updates about Inspiration](#). Bookings will open shortly after Easter.

The train's launch schedule includes a visit to the North East of England in September, rail's 200th anniversary month, as part of S&DR200, a nine-month international festival inspired by the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway (S&DR) in 1825, a journey that changed the world forever.



PRESS RELEASE

The visit of *Inspiration* to the Bluebell Railway follows the signing of an agreement between the heritage line and Network Rail, which will see further collaboration between the two organisations – the first of its kind in the south of England. The landmark agreement will benefit the Bluebell Railway through the donation of redundant railway assets, with Network Rail providing railway materials such as rail and sleepers no longer needed on the mainline railway across Sussex.

Lucy McAuliffe, Network Rail’s Sussex route director, said:

*“We’re delighted to have *Inspiration* visiting Sussex alongside our partners at the Bluebell Railway. This special exhibition train will undoubtedly be a huge draw to this important heritage rail route and provide a fantastic experience for people across Sussex, particularly school children, as part of our wider Railway 200 celebrations. We look forward to welcoming *Inspiration* on its tour of Network Rail’s Southern region and we encourage people to make the most of and enjoy the many activities taking place this year as part of Railway 200.”*

Neil Glaskin, Chairman of the Bluebell Railway, said:

*“2025 is a very special year which includes not only Railway 200 but also the sixty-fifth anniversary of the Bluebell Railway. We are delighted to be welcoming *Inspiration* to the Bluebell Railway in July. The visit will be a highlight of our Railway 200 programme, which runs from June to September.”*

Emma Roberts, programme manager for Railway 200, said:

*“This special exhibition train will provide a unique visitor experience for hundreds of thousands of people across Britain, including many schoolchildren. ‘*Inspiration*’ will excite, enlighten, entertain and encourage people to take a fresh view of the railway, as part of its bicentenary celebrations. It will also invite visitors to consider a career in rail by showcasing the extensive variety of roles available. We look forward to welcoming them onboard for an unforgettable and potentially life-changing experience.”*

Charlotte Kingston from the National Railway Museum said:

*“The National Railway Museum is a proud partner of Railway 200 and we’re thrilled that ‘*Inspiration*’ will be touring the country, sharing our stories with so many people. Railways have shaped our world in so many ways, from what we eat to where we go on holiday, and to inspire people with that epic narrative and give them a chance to get involved in this celebration is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”*

PRESS RELEASE

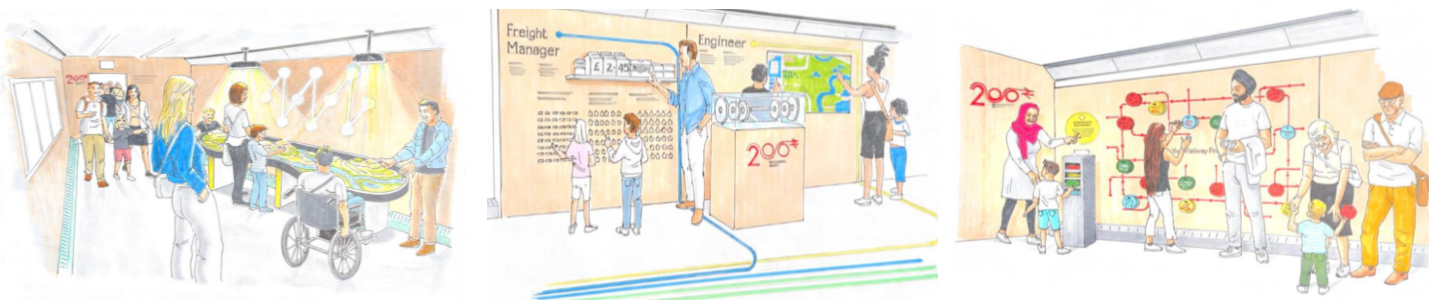
Britain's biggest train operator, Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR), has also joined forces with the Bluebell Railway, offering 9,000 schoolchildren and college students from Surrey and Greater London free rail tickets to East Grinstead with Southern and Thameslink for educational visits to 'Railway 200 @ Bluebell Railway' this summer. It is hoped these visits attract a new generation of youngsters from all backgrounds into the industry and build excitement ahead of the arrival of Inspiration to the Bluebell Railway in July. More details can be found at www.bluebell-railway.com/railway-200.

Angie Doll, Chief Executive Officer at GTR, said:

"Two hundred years ago the modern railway came into existence and utterly transformed our society. The inventions, science and technology that created it makes for fascinating learning, which the Bluebell Railway is the perfect partner to deliver in a fun, engaging way. Working together, we hope to educate and inspire young people in rail's past and future. We want to attract a new generation from all backgrounds into an industry with a rich heritage that remains relevant today. The railway is great for the climate, and helps our local communities thrive."

Rail's bicentenary kicked off with a Whistle-Up of more than 200 locomotives across five continents on New Year's Day, followed by the launch of a commemorative coin from The Royal Mint, a mega rail sale of discounted train tickets, and Railway 200-related train-namings. More than 275 anniversary activities and events are listed on an interactive map, which is regularly updated.

For more on Railway 200 and how to get involved visit www.railway200.co.uk





PRESS RELEASE

Editors' Notes

What is Railway 200?

The Stockton & Darlington Railway opened on September 27, 1825, connecting places, people, communities and ideas and ultimately transforming the world.

Railway 200 is a year-long nationwide partnership-led campaign to celebrate 200 years of the modern railway and inspire a new generation of young pioneering talent to choose a career in rail.

Railway 200 will showcase how the railway shaped and continues to shape national life.

<https://railway200.co.uk/about-railway-200/>

The Bluebell Railway

The Bluebell Railway is located in Sussex, and runs for 11 miles north from its headquarters at Sheffield Park to East Grinstead, where it connects with Network Rail and the national rail network. The Bluebell Railway is the oldest standard-gauge preserved public railway in the world, and celebrates its own 65th anniversary in 2025. The Bluebell Railway is one of Sussex's top tourist attractions and is the custodian of probably the finest private collection of heritage railway vehicles in Britain. The railway regularly features in films, on TV and in print, most recently in Blitz.

Visit www.bluebell-railway.com or contact jon.beardmore@bluebell-railway.com for more information.

In 2025 the Bluebell Railway will host a major event running from June to September to celebrate Railway 200, as part of the national Railway 200 celebrations (see www.railway200.com). Up to 18,000 school children will visit the railway at the end of the summer term to learn about history, STEM, rail safety and careers in the rail and logistics sector, with the event open also to the public over the summer. See www.bluebell-railway.com/railway-200 for more details.

All assets will be provided as attachments or associated links within the email sent with this release.

END OF RELEASE

Bluebell Railway | Sheffield Park Station, East Sussex, TN22 3QL

