



PRESS RELEASE



Network Rail signs landmark collaborative agreement with The Bluebell Railway



Network Rail and the Bluebell Railway have signed an agreement which will see further collaboration between the two organisations – the first of its kind with a heritage railway in the south of England.

The landmark agreement will benefit the Bluebell Railway through the donation of redundant railway assets with Network Rail's Sussex Route providing railway materials such as rail and sleepers no longer needed on the mainline railway across Sussex, so that materials that would otherwise be recycled elsewhere can be re-used and can find a new purpose.



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With heritage railways such as the Bluebell Railway running passenger services at slower speeds, the materials can be safely re-used and re-purposed for a new lease of life, ensuring the Bluebell Railway can continue to welcome around one hundred and fifty thousand visitors each year.

During 2025 and into 2026, the bicentenary of the railway, Network Rail and the Bluebell Railway will also work together on supporting exhibitions at London Victoria Station and at the Bluebell Railway in Sheffield Park, Sussex. Network Rail will provide historic and now disused assets to help deliver the exhibitions as part of the Railway 200 celebrations. Under the agreement, Network Rail will also use the Bluebell Railway's facilities as part of its community engagement activity including hosting rail experience days to help promote the role of rail to people considering a career in the industry. In return, the Bluebell Railway will benefit from Network Rail's in-kind expertise and time, with staff being able to use volunteering leave to support the maintenance and running of the Bluebell Railway.

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

"Wherever we can, we will work with heritage railways across our network to forge a new partnership so that materials that would otherwise be recycled elsewhere to be re-used can find a new purpose. In turn, the Bluebell Railway also has some excellent facilities which, because they are separate from the mainline network, provide the perfect opportunity for our colleagues to contribute to the local community. Working together through this 'Route Agreement' provides a clear framework and we are excited about the possibilities it brings, not only to Network Rail and the Bluebell Railway, but wider society – and what better time to do it than in 2025, the bicentenary of the railway."

Neil Glaskin, Chairman of the Bluebell Railway, said:

"The Bluebell Railway is delighted to enter into this Route Agreement with our friends at Network Rail. There is a great deal of scope for cooperation between the national rail network and heritage railways. This Route Agreement provides a framework for a deeper collaboration which will benefit us both."



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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

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