



MAKE BLUEBELL BLOOM AGAIN!

Help the Bluebell Railway restore 323 'Bluebell' back to its former glory

29th July 2024



The Bluebell Railway Trust is launching an appeal to raise funds for the restoration and return to service of one of its favourite and most popular locomotives.

SECR P Class Tank Engine No. 323 'Bluebell' is the flagship locomotive of our line and we intend to bring it back to working order, however, we need your help!

'Bluebell' has languished out of the limelight for five years since its last spell in traffic but now it is time for re-awakening and, in 2023, a bold decision was taken to return it to service. It was thought – optimistically, perhaps – that this restoration could be completed in only 5 months at a minimal cost.

The initial plan was to take the boiler from fellow classmate no. 178 as this was thought to be in much better condition than 'Bluebell's' own boiler thereby speeding up the restoration. The first step was to carry out a full inspection of 178's boiler. However, when the now compulsory Non-Destructive Testing was carried out it was

discovered that the boiler back-head was in poor condition causing it to be condemned.

What to do now? Abandonment of the project seemed to be the only realistic answer but that would have been so disappointing as 'Bluebell' is the iconic symbol of the Railway. To return it to its slumbers was almost unthinkable.

However, a revised restoration plan was drawn up. Inevitably, this would require much more time and money to achieve the objective of seeing 'Bluebell' running once more. This is where our 'Make Bluebell Bloom Again' appeal was born.

We have chosen to carry out a heavy boiler repair. After looking at alternative suppliers, we decided to place an order with an outside contractor for this repair. Timescales are tight because the contractor only has a limited 'slot' available for the work required.

In addition to repairs to the boiler itself, many parts & components were needed for the restoration. Some of these can be recovered from 'Bluebell', some are held in-store and others will be manufactured as new.



How much will all of this cost and how long will this take?

With the necessary work required to return Bluebell to working order, we are looking at a cost of around £150,000. With your help and kind donations, we would wish to get the locomotive into the workshop as quickly as possible with the hopeful intention of being available for Rail 200 in 2025 or 2026.

Similarly, the original timescale has gone and now we are hoping for completion in late summer 2025, possibly for an appearance at the national 'Rail 200' celebrations

or more probably for another event in the Autumn. Perhaps even the returning debut of 'Bluebell' might be held back for it to be the star attraction at Branch Line Weekend in Spring 2026.

Where will the money come from and how can I help??

The Bluebell Railway Trust is launching an appeal to fund this project that, hopefully, will meet the target of £150,000 by donations from members, shareholders and friends of the Railway that are supplemented by gifts from legacies and other sources.

HOW TO DONATE

If you can support this project – THANK YOU! – you can donate in one of three ways: via the Bluebell Railway Trust website at

<https://www.bluebell-railway.com/trust/make-a-donation> selecting “Make Bluebell Bloom Again” on the drop-down menu

Or by bank transfer to The Bluebell Railway Trust Account no. 61059056 Sort code 60-10-26

Please quote the reference ‘Back on Track’

or by cheque payable to The Bluebell Railway Trust, Sheffield Park Station, East Sussex, TN22 3QL

Please quote reference ‘Back on Track’

If you would like The Bluebell Railway Trust to claim Gift Aid on your donation, please tick this box.

If you require a Gift Aid declaration form, please download the form at:
<https://www.bluebell-railway.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/BluebellRailwayTrustDonationForm.pdf>
or contact funding@bluebell-railway.com