

# Bluebell Railway appoints new chairman and locomotive engineering director

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Experienced railway executive Geoff Mee has been appointed as the new chairman of the board of the Bluebell Railway.

Geoff began his railway career as an engineering student on British Rail's Southern division in 1971. He was the last graduate engineer taken on in the Southern region. His initial training was at Selhurst and he also worked at Eastleigh Works, Derby and around the country.

His managerial career included being Managing Director for Network South East's South East Division. He wrote the timetable for the opening of the Channel Tunnel. He later became the privatisation director for the British Railways Board and, after privatisation, was the Managing Director of Connex Rail.

Geoff has also been an adviser to Transport for London, deputy chief executive of Qatar rail and has been a railway management consultant since 2012.

He first visited the Bluebell Railway in 1971 and is now a life member.

Geoff said: "I feel really privileged to be part of the Bluebell Railway and I am grateful to the directors for appointing me. It was as rigorous an appointment as I have had in 50 years of working for the railways or being associated with the railways."

He added: "I have had 50 years' experience of running businesses and when this opportunity came up to help all of you and the Bluebell Railway Preservation Society and Bluebell Railway Trust, I jumped at it with both hands. I intend to be here for some time and I look forward to working with you all."

"From my perspective, it is a great railway. It has a superb past and a very, very bright future. But we have a lot to do in order to make sure we continue to meet our operational and maintenance costs."

He takes over from Graham Flight who has been the interim chairman since January.

Graham said: "We welcome Geoff to the Railway and wish him well. He offers a wealth of experience and I will help him as he settles into the role and assist in any way I can in the transition period."

The board gave a vote of thanks to Graham Flight for taking on the interim chairmanship. Graham remains Company Secretary and will stay on the board as a director.

And chartered electrical engineer Paul Russell is to join the board of Bluebell Railway Plc as Locomotive Engineering Director.

Paul has worked for more than 30 years on the management of maintenance operations and major construction projects within the cement industry.

He has been volunteering for more than 40 years at the Bluebell Railway working through the grades to Locomotive Driver and has also worked on many locomotive restoration projects such as the North London Tank Adams, E4, Baxter and also the steam crane. He is also the Diesel Traction Engineering Co-ordinator for the Locomotive Department and part owner of the class 09 and class 33 diesel locomotives at the Railway.

Paul said: "The Bluebell has been a major part of my life and through my many years of volunteering I understand the challenges involved in the overhaul, restoration and maintenance of steam locomotives. Coupled with my professional experience in running maintenance operations and projects and working with the Works Manager, I hope to use these skills to further develop the safety, quality and efficiency of the loco works operation."

He takes over as Locomotive Engineering Director from acting locomotive director Bob Pamment who has been in the role since January. Bob remains on the board as rolling stock director. The board thanked Bob for filling the gap and continuing to help on locomotive matters during the transition.

Both appointments were confirmed at the Bluebell Railway board meeting on 29 July.

*Photo credit: Bluebell Railway*