

Bluebell Railway awarded more than £700,000 in Government grant

October 9, 2020



The **Bluebell Railway** has been given a lifesaving Government grant to help it rebuild its business.

The total sum awarded to the not-for-profit heritage line from the Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage is £727,200.

Bluebell Railway Trust chairman Vernon Blackburn said: “We are grateful to the Culture Recovery Fund for giving us this money which will help us bounce back from COVID. It will see us through the lean winter months, particularly the post-Christmas period.

“The money will give the Bluebell Railway a chance to modernise as a business and diversify by looking at new sources of income.”

The money will pay for some of the railway’s costs between now and next March. It includes heritage staff salaries, overheads, an improved online presence, some special events and financial assistance to generate additional revenue beyond steam train rides.

The latest grant comes on top of £250,000 given to the Bluebell Railway by the National Lottery Heritage Fund to cover some of the costs for the period from August to November and £400,000 raised in its own emergency appeal from members, supporters and the public.

The Bluebell Railway closed in March because of coronavirus. The largely volunteer-run line shut for five months and began running steam-hauled train services again in August as part of a phased reopening.

The Sussex railway is mostly running at weekends with some weekday services as it slowly recovers from the shutdown. It relies on fares income for the majority of its revenue each year.

The railway has a number of events planned for autumn/winter including a transport-themed gala at the end of October, illuminated trains called 'SteamLights' from mid-November to early January and its ever-popular Santa Specials.

Details of the Bluebell Railway's services are at www.bluebell-railway.com

The Culture Recovery Fund for Heritage is part of the £1.57bn rescue package announced by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport to safeguard cultural and heritage organisations across the UK from the economic impact of coronavirus.

Photo credit: David Cable

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