

# Bluebell Railway launches £500,000 appeal to put the sparkle back into Horsted Keynes station

October 5, 2021



The **Bluebell Railway** has launched an appeal for at least £500,000 to help in the restoration of a key station which has featured in scores of TV programmes and films.

The heritage line is asking for public support to finance the repair of leaking roofs and replacement of rotting beams at the Grade II-listed Horsted Keynes station in West Sussex.

The railway's appeal co-ordinator Trevor Swainson said: "The station buildings were built in Victorian times and are now showing signs of wear and tear. We view Horsted Keynes as our 'jewel in the crown' and we hope this appeal puts the sparkle back into the station."

Many film crews and TV production companies have used Horsted Keynes station as a location for period dramas because of its look and feel. The station has appeared in the *Downton Abbey* TV series, *The Woman in Black* film, *Poirot*, *Grantchester* and a remake of *The Railway Children*. Among the stars to have visited the station for filming are Daniel Radcliffe, David Suchet, Dame Maggie Smith and Jenny Agutter.

The Bluebell Railway is known as 'The Line to the Stars' because of its long history of filming dating back to 1961.

Horsted Keynes station was built in 1882 by the London Brighton and South Coast Railway as part of the Lewes-East Grinstead line. It was bought by the Bluebell Railway in the 1960s and the preserved railway has maintained it and decorated it in the style of a Southern Railway junction station from the 1930s.

The railway has carried out a major survey of the station and calculates the first phase of the repair work will be at least £500,000. The initial repairs will be to the station house and Platform 5. Later work will cover the other platforms.

Members of the Bluebell Railway Preservation Society have already pledged £20,000 and the railway's charitable arm is promising to match-fund on a pound-for-pound basis all public donations between now and the end of January up to a total of £150,000.

Mr Swainson said: "For its age, Horsted Keynes station is in remarkably good condition but now is the time to get on top of the deterioration. We believe it is one of the largest stations on preserved railways and the only junction station in preservation."

The station has also played host to a number of famous visitors including the Rev W Awdry (who wrote one of his Railway Series books called 'Stepney the Bluebell Engine'), British Railways

chairman Dr Beeching (who lived nearby in East Grinstead), former Conservative prime minister Harold Macmillan and broadcasters Michael Portillo and Michael Palin.

The Bluebell Railway is the oldest heritage railway of its type and opened in August 1960. It runs on 11 miles of track from Sheffield Park in East Sussex to East Grinstead in West Sussex. Further details of the appeal and how to donate are at [www.bluebell-railway.com](http://www.bluebell-railway.com)

*Photo credit: Mick Blackburn*