



Green Light for Bluebell Railway

The Bluebell Railway is delighted to report that our application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for our **ASH (Accessible Steam Heritage) Project**, has received a first round pass. The project will revitalise the way we show the locomotives through substantial repairs to the Running Shed which will be converted into an Exhibition Hall. There will be provision for footplate access by both pedestrians and wheelchair users to static locomotives. There will also be an exciting exhibition of how steam engines work. The exhibition is planned to include a footplate driving experience based on a mock-up of locomotive 55 Stepney, alongside the original 19th Century engine. Finally to release space in the Running Shed and provide more undercover space for routine locomotive maintenance, the project will build a new maintenance facility over the wash-out pit and adjacent siding in the locomotive yard.

A first round pass means the HLF have agreed initial support of £30,000 to develop the project in order to make a second stage application for the full grant in 11 months' time. The total project cost will be in excess of £1million. That includes a substantial amount of "effort in kind" put in by many members of the Bluebell Railway's 700 strong volunteer labour force.

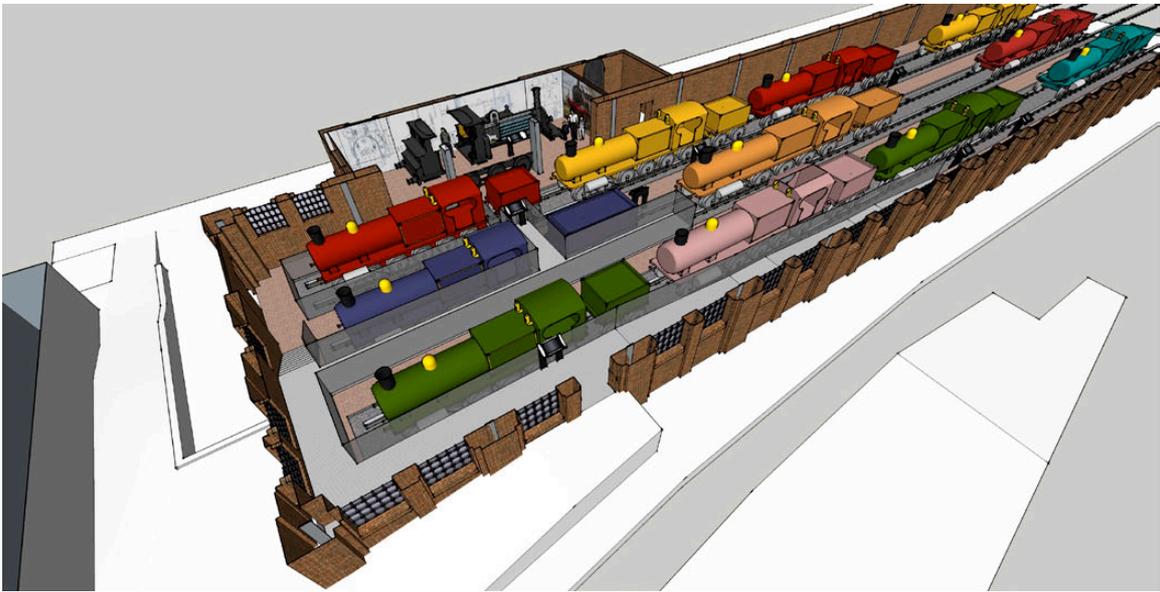
Funding Director Roger Kelly said "we are delighted by this endorsement of our Railway by The HLF. When completed we will have an educational and entertainment facility based around steam locomotives that will be accessible to everyone and unique in the South of England. There is now a lot to do to develop the project and to raise the matching funding to go with the full HLF award before a second round application for that grant can be submitted. We have a strong team ready to go and the work starts now".

Explaining the importance of the HLF support, Stuart McLeod, Head of HLF South East, said: - *"We are extremely pleased that, thanks to National Lottery players, we have been able to give the green light to this exciting project which will allow many more people to explore the history of steam locomotion."*

Local M.P. Maria Caulfield said *"I'm delighted that the Bluebell Railway has been successful. The proposal is exciting and innovative and of great educational value. This will give everyone one more reason to visit the Bluebell Railway and learn more about our wonderful heritage"*

Lewes District Council is making a £1,000 grant to the development of the project. Chair of the Council Ruth O'Keefe stated *"She was very pleased to hear the good news about the award made to the Bluebell Railway for their interesting and well thought out proposals for the Locomotive Exhibition. I am sure that it will be a great addition to what is already a very popular attraction. I really enjoyed my recent visit and am looking forward to returning to see the exhibition in place"*

The artists' impressions below give a rough outline of some of the ideas which will be developed in detail with the help of the first stage funding now awarded, in preparation for a full second-stage application.



Main exhibition area, taken from the feasibility study. The blue locomotive will have footplate access.



Impression of the new exhibition area, taken from the feasibility study. It shows the Driving Experience and the cut away boiler to demonstrate how a steam locomotive works



New locomotive maintenance facility