

Q Class 541 To Undergo 'Priority' Overhaul At Leaky Finders

10th July 2023



Q class 541 left the Bluebell Railway on Thursday 6th July to undergo a 'Priority' overhaul at Leaky Finders in Devon. The overhaul is being funded by the Bluebell Railway Trust and the Maunsell Locomotive Society who own the locomotive; the locomotive being the subject of a long-term operating agreement with the Bluebell Railway.

The Q class was R.E.L Maunsell's last loco design, 20 were constructed at Eastleigh works in 1939. 541 was the 54th loco to depart Barry Scrapyard back in 1974 and some restoration work was undertaken at Ashchurch, Gloucestershire, prior to the then-owning group merging with the Maunsell Locomotive Society in 1978 and the loco moving to the Bluebell Railway for the conclusion of the restoration project. It first ran in service at the Bluebell between 1983 and 1992. After a major overhaul, it re-entered traffic in 2015 but had to be withdrawn in December 2022, in need of boiler repairs, attention to the tyres and a new tender tank. In its two periods of service at the Bluebell Railway it has covered over 70,000 miles in traffic and proved to be a strong, reliable, and economical loco to operate. On a visit to the Great Central Railway, it was described as like 'a Midland 4F on steroids' by one of their loco crews.

The loco underwent a full piston and valve exam and repair in early 2022 and the bottom half of the loco is reported to be in good condition, other than the need for attention to the tyres. The tender will remain at the Bluebell Railway for overhaul. The tender tank will need to be replaced and the tyres will require attention.



Maunsell Locomotive Society Chairman, Ben Coughlan, said.

"The Maunsell Locomotive Society is very pleased that agreement has been reached for the Bluebell Railway Trust to fund the overhaul of this popular and useful locomotive. 541 is a unique survivor of the Q class, Maunsell's essay in designing a simple to maintain, medium power, go anywhere loco".

Bluebell Railway Trust Chairman, Vernon Blackburn, said.

"The Trust is pleased to be able to support the overhaul of 541, which will help provide Bluebell with an economical, medium-sized loco, in a short timescale".

The Bluebell Railway Trust and Maunsell Locomotive Society are keen to raise funds to help overhaul the locomotive. Online payments to the appeal can be made by clicking the **DONATE** button on the Bluebell website and following the online payment instructions. Select Q Class 541 Overhaul in the drop-down box. Otherwise please send a cheque, made payable to the 'Bluebell Railway Trust' (and a Gift Aid Form – if appropriate – downloaded from the Bluebell Railway website) to the Bluebell Railway Trust, Sheffield Park Station, Near Uckfield TN22 3QL. Please add a note to say it is for the 541-overhaul appeal.