

KESR AGM 2024

Election of Directors – Candidate Information

Derrick Bilsby



My name is Derrick Bilsby, I am 68 years old and have been a member of the Kent & East Sussex Railway for 55 years. I joined the K&ESR in 1969 after first arriving at Rolvenden on my bicycle from school in 1968. I was a regular volunteer from that point for almost 20 years, taking a break in 1988 to focus on both my career and my family.

Between 1969 and 1988, I held several positions on the K&ESR, including being the railway's first Traffic Coordinator in the early 1970's. Then, in 1978, I became Permanent Way Manager and was responsible for the first major track renewal using concrete sleepers and deep ballast, after first stabilising the problematic wet cutting between Cranbrook Road and Rolvenden. I also served on the successful Steam & Country Fair Committees from mid-1976 until the early 1980's.

I returned to volunteering two years ago when I was asked to join the Fundraising Working Party. In that role I have worked with colleagues to successfully raise funds for the Wealden Pullman replacement kitchen car and the Great Western diesel railcar. I was also co-opted as a Director of CSRE about 18 months ago and in this role my particular focus has been to work with Trustees on building the relationship with Rother Valley Railway to ensure that we can make the Kent & East Sussex Railway ready for Robertsbridge. This included a co-ordination role for the 50th Anniversary Gala weekend and Inauguration of the Turntable at Robertsbridge.

I have spent my entire career on the railways and recently completed 53 years in the industry, 33 of these with British Rail. I started at Hastings station in 1971, moving through various operational roles and culminating with the position of Group Information Systems Manager,

where I was responsible for working with senior Department for Transport civil servants to setup Joint Venture Companies to own mission critical IT systems following privatisation.

I left this role in 2003 to create a startup company providing revenue protection and software development services into the rail and bus industry. I have been the Managing Director and CEO of that company since its inception. The business has grown over the last 20 years into a multi-million-pound company that now employs 45 people and has contracts with most train companies as well as Transport for London, Transport for Greater Manchester and West Midlands Combined Authority.

On a personal note, I have been married to my wife Gill for 43 years and have three grown-up children and four grandchildren.

I am putting myself forward to be a Trustee of the K&ESR because I believe that I can bring my considerable experience and expertise in both the public and private business sectors, along with an understanding of the K&ESR, to help our railway navigate its way through the challenging and difficult economic circumstances being experienced by all heritage railways and the tourist industry in general.