



## **Chairs Annual Report**

Well what another busy year! With continued recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic, we have seen businesses, commuters and communities balancing and juggling with the idea of getting back to 'normal' whilst embracing flexible and hybrid working and behaviours and the rail industry trying to align and progress to pre-pandemic passenger levels.

The Community Rail Lancashire team have excelled and been exceptionally busy in the delivery of a number of projects that have supported stations along both the Clitheroe and East Lancashire lines. As Chair of these two lines, I have been astounded with the number of delivery projects we have committed to and delivered over the past year and the number of engagement partners that have worked with us along the way. This has only been reflected with the success we had at the Community Rail Awards back in December 2021, where we took away 2 wins, a second and a third place – for the Ramsgreave and Wilpshire 'Along the Line' project. Although I would love to go through all the projects in detail, below gives a flavour of some of the fabulous work that has been undertaken over the past year along the Clitheroe and East Lancashire Lines.

**Blackburn Rail Station** Community Rail Lancashire and Crosshill Special School in Blackburn created artwork for the 2 metre long 'Welcome to Blackburn' sign, which was installed on Thursday 10th March and provides a wonderful colourful welcome to those visiting Blackburn and the railway Station.

After being awarded a grant from the Community Rail Development Fund (CRDF), Community Rail Lancashire Officers and Newfield School worked with a local artist to develop an art project that promoted sustainability and rail travel, named the 'Fantastic Plastic project'. Utilising the plastic from milk bottles, the artwork has now been completed and showcased at Blackburn Railway Station with a replica displayed at Newfield School.

**Darwen Rail Station** – 'Back on Track Project - The launch of this project took place in June 2021 and now provides Darwen Rail Station with some beautiful and inspirational art work. Working with Child Action North West, the project that actually took place during the autumn of the pandemic provided the young people the opportunity to think about the impact that lockdown was having on their lives both the highs and the lows and their hopes for the future. An inspirational piece of artwork that now shines at Darwen Stations and one that hopefully instils hope, confidence, ambition and potential in everyone who sees it.

**Accrington Station** CRL has been working with The Bahja Initiative and IMO (Inspire Motivate Overcome) on a wellness project for women in Accrington. A series of informal sessions took place at a local community centre and at the Bunker at Accrington Station. These included workshops on mental health and wellbeing, diet and nutrition, exercise, and travel for leisure. The women were given the opportunity to learn how to travel by train with

confidence and for the purpose of improving their physical and mental health by walking and using the train to travel for leisure instead of the car.

**Brierfield Station** On Thursday 2nd December 2021, in partnership with the Connecting East Lancashire Project and supporting partners, Northern and Pendle Borough Council, Community Rail Lancashire Officers launched a celebratory event to showcase the Pennine Cycleway and hidden gems that can be appreciated from Brierfield Station. A new Cycle Shelter showcasing some of the most picturesque locations around Brierfield Station was unveiled, featuring many local residents, businesses and community organisations.

**Nelson and Colne College** This academic year, CRL are working with the Business Studies Year 1 cohort at the college. The students have visited the Bunker to learn about how a not for profit organisation operates and also have some upcoming careers talks planned. Students will also be planning an event at either Nelson station or on a train on the East Lancs line to encourage more people to use the train.

**Rose Grove Station** Working with local creative film company Hucklebury Films, a film was produced highlighting a walk from Rose Grove station to the Memorial in Padiham, a 2.5 mile walk with plenty to see along the way. The walk takes you along canals and the Padiham Greenway. In addition a project based on the life and work of Rachel Kay-Shuttleworth with Padiham Green Primary School has been underway. Rachel Kay is one of the women who features in the booklet '*Discover Amazing Women by Rail*' and we hope to use this project to promote leisure travel to Rose Grove and Padiham to visit Gawthorpe Hall, the home of Rachel Kay-Shuttleworth. This will be launched during 2022.

And breathe..... I am sure you will agree that a lot of work has been delivered over the past year, and I would like to take the opportunity within my annual report to say a big 'thank you' to all the team at Community Rail Lancashire and all our partners and stakeholders who always help to ensure our projects are delivered to such a successfully high standard. I very much look forward to working with the team over the coming year, getting involved in more projects that make a difference and are at the heart of what Community Rail Lancashire and its partnerships is all about.

Melanie Taylor

Chair of East Lancashire and Clitheroe Line Community Rail Partnerships

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