

## The Clitheroe Line: A Picturesque Journey

**CRP:** Clitheroe Line (part of Community Rail Lancashire)

**Area Covered:** Ribble Valley, Blackburn with Darwen and Bolton Metropolitan Council

**Funding:** DfT/Community Rail Network 'Community Rail Development Fund' (CRDF), Northern's Community Project Fund and Community Rail Lancashire.

**Budget:** £9,004

### THEMES

- Diversity & Inclusion
- Education
- Promoting health and wellbeing
- Travel Confidence
- Heritage
- Sustainability
- Tourism



### KEY INITIATIVE

This initiative showcased the transformative power of art and community engagement in promoting sustainable rail travel, supporting the mental wellbeing of vulnerable adults, and strengthening inter-community connections along the Clitheroe Line through collaborative photography and storytelling.

### TARGET AUDIENCE

Members of Arts 2 Heal, we provide support to vulnerable adults, with a focus on those who are neurodiverse (70% of members involved in the project) and include those with physical disabilities, addressing the challenges of social isolation.

# WHY?

- **Strengthening Community Connections and Showcasing Local Heritage** – The Clitheroe Line links diverse communities. This project builds interaction between residents, encouraging a shared appreciation of local landscapes and heritage. Through collaborative photography and storytelling, it highlights the beauty of the Clitheroe to Bolton route, inspiring local tourism and exploration.
- **Building Rail Confidence and Encouraging Sustainable Travel** – Independent travel can be daunting for those with mental health challenges. By engaging participants in rail journeys, the project helped build confidence in using public transport, promoting sustainable travel as an accessible and eco-friendly alternative to car use.
- **Combating Social Isolation and Enhancing Mental Well-being** – Many vulnerable adults experience loneliness and mental health challenges. This project provided a supportive space where participants could connect, express themselves creatively, and build confidence. Research highlights the positive impact of art and social engagement in reducing isolation and improving overall well-being.
- **Empowering Participants and Creating a Lasting Legacy** – By actively involving participants in creating a public exhibition, the project gave them a sense of purpose and achievement, whilst developing key life skills. The resulting collection of photographs, stories, and online exhibition serves as a lasting record of the route's history, landscapes, and personal experiences—preserving and celebrating the Clitheroe Line for future generations.

# WHO WAS INVOLVED?

The Clitheroe Line: A Picturesque Railway Journey (part of the Framing the Features Community Art Project) was a collaborative effort, bringing together key partners to support, fund, and deliver the initiative:

**Arts 2 Heal** – A Blackburn-based charity that provided the core participant group and artistic direction, ensuring the project was inclusive, therapeutic, and impactful for vulnerable adults. Arts 2 Heal also managed the creation of the online gallery, marketing materials, and overall project logistics.

**Community Rail Lancashire (CRL)** – The lead project partner, offering organisational support, funding coordination, and expertise in community rail development.

**Local Community Members** – Residents from along the route including Clitheroe and Bolton contributed their knowledge and personal insights through guided tours, building connections between communities along the railway line.

**Department for Transport (DfT) & Community Rail Network** – Providers of the Community Rail Development Fund (CRDF), whose financial support made the project possible, reinforcing the role of community rail in social engagement and sustainable travel.



# WHAT HAPPENED?

## **Creative Workshops**

- Participants designed and crafted unique 3D picture frames using recycled materials and sculpture materials.
- Photography workshops provided essential skills and encouraged artistic expression.

## **Exploration & Photography**

- Participants travelled by train to ten stations along the Clitheroe Line.
- They captured photographs of local landmarks, scenic views, and cultural points of interest.
- Visits included collaborations with local residents.
- Guided tours by residents along the route encouraged inter-community interaction.

## **Storytelling & Reflection**

- Workshops provided a platform for participants to share personal experiences and reflections inspired by their photographs.
- These narratives, including poems, were incorporated into the exhibition to add depth and context.

## **Exhibition Development**

- A digital photography gallery was created by Arts 2 Heal.
- A portable physical exhibition was developed for display at various public venues.

## **Public Display & Promotion**

- The exhibition was launched at Blackburn Market.
- Pop-up promotional exhibitions planned across various stations and towns to raise awareness of the project.
- Photographs taken by participants were used in Clitheroe Line posters, and banners to enhance marketing efforts.

## **Marketing & Legacy**

- Community Rail Lancashire integrated participants' photographs into promotional materials for the Clitheroe Line.
- The project was featured in an article in the Lancashire Telegraph and shared across Arts 2 Heal's social media platforms, reaching a wider audience.
- A lasting digital and physical exhibition was created to celebrate local culture and landmarks.



## OUTCOMES

- Promotion of sustainable rail travel and local tourism.
- Increased confidence and independence in rail travel.
- Enhanced mental well-being and reduced social isolation.
- Strengthened community ties between Clitheroe and Bolton.
- Public recognition of participants' creative contributions, supporting empowerment and pride.

Beyond the core outcomes of promoting sustainable travel and enhancing wellbeing, the project also facilitated the development of key employability skills, such as teamwork and communication, alongside valuable digital skills in photography and online presentation, further empowering Arts 2 Heal members.

## IMPACT

The project had a profound impact on both the Arts 2 Heal members and the wider community, promoting personal growth, connection, and a renewed appreciation for the Clitheroe Line.

### **Impact on Arts 2 Heal Members (Target Group Feedback):**

#### **Increased Confidence and Independence:**

- "I was really scared of trains before, but now I feel like I can go anywhere! Taking the photos and traveling with the group made me feel brave." - (Arts 2 Heal Member)
- "I never thought I could do anything like this. Seeing my photos in the exhibition made me feel so proud." - (Arts 2 Heal Member)
- "For me, capturing the Clitheroe Line through my pen sketches was a way to really connect with the details, the textures, and the rhythms of the landscape. It wasn't just about drawing; it was about understanding and appreciating the world around me in my own way, and I'm so glad I could share that perspective." - (Arts 2 Heal Member)

- "I don't always talk much, but the train journey and the places we saw made words pop into my head. Like little stories, I wrote them down, like poems, about the hills and the stations and the people. It felt good to share what I saw, and how it made me feel." - (Arts 2 Heal Member)
- "Being involved in the Community Rail project was an enjoyable responsibility and it was good to explore our local community. Writing the descriptions for each location was sometimes challenging, but to know I was doing it for a worthy project gave me a positive feeling" (Arts e Heal Member)

### **Enhanced Mental Wellbeing and Reduced Isolation:**

- "Being part of this project gave me a reason to get out and meet new people. I've made some real friends." - (Arts 2 Heal Member)
- "The art workshops were so relaxing. It helped me forget about my worries for a while." - (Arts 2 Heal Member)
- "I'm a bit of a loner; I'm not really a joiner. I spent my life engineering but I've had fun writing poems... I can express in poems. I love making people laugh. The Clitheroe project for me was an opportunity for group involvement and self-expression and I won't be getting anywhere else and is lifesaving possibly for me" (Arts 2 Heal Member)

### **Development of New Skills:**

- "I learned how to use my camera properly and edit photos. I never thought I could do anything like that." - (Arts 2 Heal Member)
- "Making the frames was really fun, and I learned how to use different materials." - (Arts 2 Heal Member)

### **Empowerment and Recognition:**

- "Knowing my photos are going to be used to help other people see how beautiful the Clitheroe Line is, is amazing!" - (Arts 2 Heal Member)

### **Impact on Exhibition Visitors (Visiting People Feedback):**

#### **Increased Appreciation for the Clitheroe Line:**

- "I've lived near the Clitheroe Line for years, but I've never really explored it. This exhibition has inspired me to take a trip!" - (Exhibition Visitor)
- "The photos and stories are so personal and moving. It really makes you see the area in a new light." - (Exhibition Visitor)

#### **Positive Community Impact:**

- "It's wonderful to see a project that brings together different parts of the community. It's really inspiring." - (Exhibition Visitor)
- "The exhibition is a great way to promote sustainable travel and show off the beauty of our local area." - (Exhibition Visitor)

#### **Appreciation of the Art and Storytelling:**

- "The handcrafted frames add a unique and personal touch to the photography. It's a really creative idea." - (Exhibition Visitor)
- "Reading the poems behind the photos made the exhibition even more meaningful." - (Exhibition Visitor)

#### **Feedback from a Clitheroe resident:**

- "It was great to be involved, and to share my knowledge of my town with the group. They really captured the best parts Clitheroe." - (Resident – guide)

**The project's impact extended beyond the immediate participants, creating a ripple effect of positivity and connection within the wider community.**

# FUTURE PLANS?

There are plans to continue and develop the project, building on its success and expanding its impact.

## **Expanding the Exhibition's Reach:**

Explore opportunities to display the exhibition in a wider range of venues, including libraries, community centres, and other railway stations.

Continue promoting the online gallery to provide an immersive experience for those unable to visit in person.

## **Building Peer-Advocate Program:**

Formalise the peer-advocate program, provide training and support to Arts 2 Heal members who wish to lead their own rail trips and community activities.

Develop resources and workshops to empower peer-advocates to share their experiences and encourage others to use rail travel.

## **Continued Marketing of the Clitheroe Line:**

Continue to use the photography from the project in further marketing materials, and keep the profile of online gallery active.

Explore further ways to promote the Clitheroe line, and the stations along it, to tourists.

By implementing these plans, we aim to create a lasting legacy for the project ensuring its continued impact on the lives of Arts 2 Heal members and the wider community.

