

## Friends of Squires Gate Railway Station (Fylde) January 2026 - Team Update



A somewhat different approach to our report at this time due to the unfavourable weather conditions during this period, but we need the water to fill our reservoirs ready for another hot summer this year.

### November 2025

- **Station Maintenance:** We were concerned about the state of the bins on Platform 1 being constantly “holed” by predatory seagulls and asked Northern for some new bins to counter the attacks and the mess. Northern kindly obliged and arranged for ISS to provide new bins and now the seagulls have to scavenge elsewhere! Success.



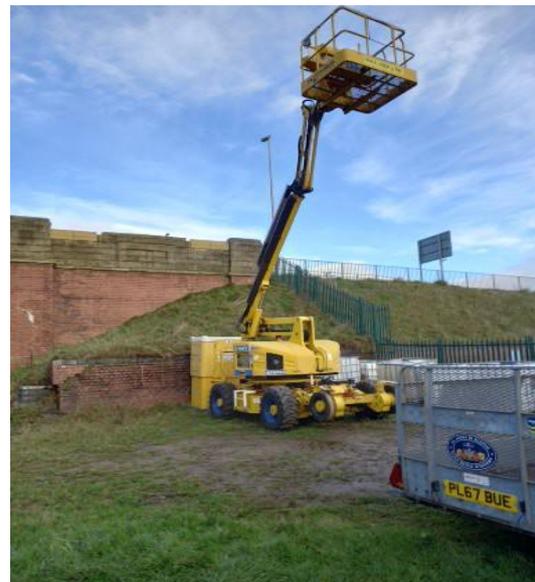
We were also concerned about the neighbouring mess behind the garages on the Homestead Estate and sought assistance from Fylde Council but unfortunately due to it being a private estate there was nothing they could do. However, as if by magic the mess has since been cleared away and it looks really tidy. Another successful outcome.



- **Wildlife & Gardening:** We discussed our "non-hardy" plants and when to replace them as they were expected to die off during the first frosts of the winter. We planned to purchase some replacements as soon as the heavy rain stopped to allow us to do some work on the beds.
- **Community Involvement:** Paul represented our group at the "Railway 200 Inspiration Train" event at Blackpool North, which hosted over 1000 people exploring the train over the four-day period.
- **Weather Challenges:** Heavy rain led to flood alerts in Lytham St Annes, and working sessions were cancelled as the station and gardening areas became saturated and unsafe to do our routine activities.



- **Infrastructure:** The group took advantage of the 10-year-old decaying wooden raised beds from St Annes Station so that we could cut them up eventually during 2026 and create "bug havens" which in turn would help to feed birds and hedgehogs during the year. All part of our bid to develop biodiversity. We do frequently have Network Rail equipment in the compound, this "cherry picker" being a regular visitor.



## December 2025

- **Gardening:** Despite "volatile" weather, we used a brief clear spell to refresh the Platform 1 (P1) beds with bulbs and more winter bedding plants.



- **Christmas Prep:** The group installed Christmas trees on Platform 2 (P2) using screws and staplers, though it was done in between the very damp conditions.



- **Activities:** Barrie suggested a break from formal station activities from mid-December until January 5th, though members continued to "keep an eye" on the station when passing.
- **Training Opportunity:** Members were invited to a First Aid accreditation course scheduled for late January, though some members declined, Mike offered to attend on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> January – it was being organised in association with St Annes on the Sea Town Council one of our stakeholder partners.

## January 2026

- **Annual Review:** The group recorded a total of 277.41 volunteer hours for 2025, a decrease from the 368 hours recorded in 2024, primarily due to weather conditions.
- **Weather Impact:** Extreme icy conditions at the start of the month made the station slopes dangerously slippery ("sheet ice"), causing the cancellation of sessions. However, team members took the opportunity to travel from Blackpool South to Blackpool North on a "rare route" to experience the journey in a direct fashion without having to change trains – it was definitely different for them!

- **Post-Holiday Cleanup:** Once the ice melted, the group removed the Christmas trees and moved them to a local resident's garage for temporary storage.
- **Station Improvements:** We discussed the need for a second coat of paint on P1 station fencing where the dry wood had soaked up the initial layer we put on in August/September. It is to be done during the summer months when everything is dry.
- **Gardening:** We picked up three rooted Christmas trees at the start of the month and planted them behind P2 where they would be sheltered from the prevailing winds (wind burn) and managed to get them in the ground during a gap in the wet weather. There are three more to be dug in when time allows. Shirley was heeling them in so the roots will eventually grow. Though it might be quite some time before they put up any visible height (approximately 12” per year once established), though we are not sure if they will survive with the amount of sea driven wind we get. We can but try.
- **Class 156 - 156420** having been refurbished, looked absolutely stunning.



- **Future Planning:** Our ongoing Project Plan has been updated, and as most of the hard work is complete, it is really just a case of routine care and attention with maybe a few extra refinements to our existing layouts. We intend to make the area approaching our compost bins on P2 “foot-safe” for our own safety and when “step free access” is eventually delivered we hope to get some new beds at that end of P1 just to brighten it up and make it more welcoming. Creation of art work on the station will continue using repurposed materials where available. So, if you have any old car park signs or poster cases you know where we are.

*All our activities at the station are completed in association with St. Anne's on the Sea Town Council, Northern, Network Rail and Community Rail Lancashire, as part of our stakeholder relationship.*

Barrie Russell/Paul Nettleton

January 2026