

Community
Rail Lancashire

Annual Report

2025

CRL 25
Community Rail in Lancashire 2001-2026



Community Rail
Accredited Partnership
2025-26



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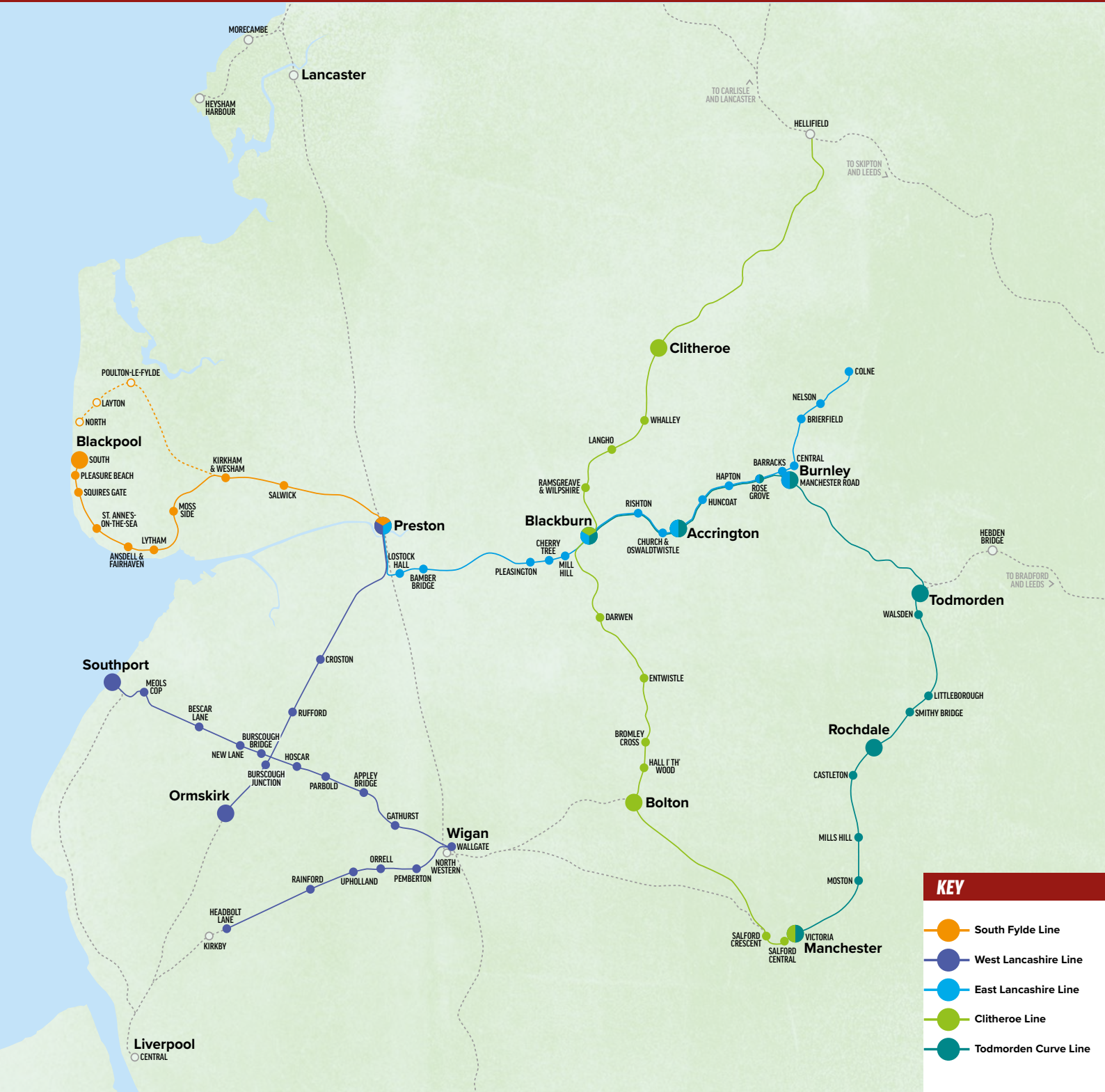


CRL would like to thank all the photographers for the use of images in this report.

CRL25
Community Rail in Lancashire 2001-2026

Lancashire's Community Rail Lines

Covered by CRL



Who's Who

CRL's main office is located in 'The Bunker' at Accrington Railway Station, Eagle Street, Accrington, BB5 1LJ

CRL Board

Richard Watts	Chair
Tony Ford	Vice Chair
Simon Clarke	Company Secretary
Melanie Taylor	Board member
Gerald Townson	Board member
Mike Cliffe	Board member
Banu Adam	Board member
Katie Douglas	Board member

CRL Staff



Richard Watts
General Manager



Karen Bennett
Team Leader
Education Team



Katie Douglas
Accessibility and
Inclusion Officer



Shahiesta Iqbal
Community
Rail Education
Development Officer



Catherine Kingdom
Community
Rail Education
Development Officer



David Savage
Community Rail
Officer



Caroline Holden
Community Rail
Development Officer



Simon Clarke
Community Rail
Development Officer



Beth Nolan
Community Rail Officer



Sophia Sanderson
SEND Officer



Paula Williams
Administrative Officer



CRL Chair's Report

By Richard Watts

It is once again my privilege to write the Chair's report and to welcome you to the 2025 CRL Annual Report. The report highlights the hard work of the Team in developing a large range of community-based projects across our 4 Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) and the North of England.

2025 got off to a very good start as we attended a Parliamentary Reception organised by Avanti West Coast to celebrate the completion of the Feel Good Field Trip project. This was an opportunity to thank Dave Savage and all those who had played a part in its very successful delivery.

In 2025 we embarked on two collaborative projects with the Motability Foundation, the RNIB, the Community Rail Network and CRPs across the country to deliver 'Travelling with Confidence' and 'On Track'. Katie Douglas has been heavily involved in the development and now the implementation of both projects for CRL.

2025 also saw us arrange and deliver the first meeting for all station adoption groups across our 4 CRPs. This interactive session was well attended and enabled groups to share ideas and also to be inspired by the various speakers. A further gathering is being arranged for 2026.

We have also worked with GBRTT which then became DfTO on a research project looking at the barriers to rail travel, and working in the rail industry, faced by diverse communities across Lancashire. This pilot project was championed by Odis Palmer, DfTO, and supported by the University of Lancashire, Katie Douglas and Shahiesta Iqbal. The report was launched in County Hall, Preston in December.



2025 has seen the consolidation of the Yorkshire Dales Explorer as a key way to access the Yorkshire Dales from Greater Manchester and Lancashire and also of the Northern Education Network, which has now held meetings across the north of England.



Re-Accreditation

Well, we did it again. CRL and the 4 Lancashire CRPs received notification from the Community Rail Network in November that we had been successfully re-accredited for a further year. The format for the accreditation meeting changed this year requiring the completion of a detailed self-assessment form prior to the meeting.

Accreditation recognises that we are delivering the 4 pillars of the Community Rail Development Strategy as well as having good governance and management arrangements in place. It is also testimony to the hard work done by CRL Directors, the CRP Management Groups, the CRL Team and of course the many volunteers who help at stations, organise guided walks, distribute leaflets and so much more.

CRL Staffing

During 2025 we welcomed three new members to the team. Sophia Sanderson has joined on a two year contract to assist with the development of SEND projects; Beth Nolan joined in November again on a two year contract as the Community Rail Officer for the West of Lancashire CRP and finally Paula Williams joined in December to assist Catherine Kingdom with the routine administrative work connected with the development and expansion of 'Try The Train'.

Two team members continued their secondments throughout the year with Karen Bennett working 2 days a week for the Community Rail Network and Dave Savage working 3 days a week for Avanti West Coast.

Funding and Grants

CRL is once again indebted to Northern for the core funding received for the work of the Lancashire CRPs. In addition, CRL also receives a grant to support the work of the education team. To ensure we keep on track the education team has developed a 'Four Year Strategic Education Plan' which is approved by the CRL Board and commented on by Carolyn Watson, Northern's Director of Stakeholder & Community Engagement, and by ComREG, the Community Rail Executive Group. The Plan sets out the key actions the team intend to undertake as well as any special projects they plan to initiate. The Plan is supplemented by quarterly update reports which are forwarded to the CRPs and also to ComREG.



We also welcome the core funding received from Avanti West Coast. Additionally I would like to place on record the support we continue to receive from Merseytravel and Blackpool Council.

Enhancing the core funding, we have also been very fortunate to secure grants from a variety of sources towards the many projects described in this Report. So, thank you to the DfT and Community Rail Network for the grants we have received from the Community Rail Development Fund and to Northern from their Project Fund. Grants have also been received from Avanti West Coast, Lancashire County Council's Active Travel fund and the Motability Foundation towards the 'Travelling with Confidence' and 'On Track' projects. We are also grateful for the continuing support from Northern for Try The Train.

Community Rail Awards

Prior to Christmas we received news from the Community Rail Network of our shortlisted entries for the Community Rail Awards. There was good news for:

- **The Clitheroe Line: A Picturesque Journey** in the Community Creative Projects & Station Arts (large) category
- **EcoEscapes: Tracks to Trails** in the Tourism & Leisure category
- **The English Queen** in Influencing Positive Change & Sustainability category
- **Railway 200 Legacy Award**
- CRL & Girl Guiding NE England
- 200 Stories of Railway Pride
- Gare du Nord and Avanti West Coast for Railway 200 The Show
- **It's Your Station (silver)** for Church & Oswaldtwistle station (East Lancashire Line)

We shall know the outcome on the 19th March 2026.

Membership

Between them the CRL team are members of a variety of organisations. I am a member of the DfT's National Community Rail Steering Group and represent the central area CRPs on Northern's ComREG. I am also a member of LancsCAN (Lancashire Climate Action Network) where I am part of the Leadership Team. Katie Douglas is a member of Northern's Accessibility User Group (NAUG); Dave Savage is a member of HyndburnCAN (Hyndburn Community Action Network); Shahiasta Iqbal is a member of the local Safeguarding Action Group and Karen Bennett is a member of the Rail Safety Week steering committee, the Rail Industry Early Engagement working group. CRL and the 4 Lancashire CRPs are also members of the Community Rail Network.



Final words

Special thanks go to the CRL Team who do so much to help initiate and facilitate community involvement in our local railway, look after our websites and social media and much, much more.

My thanks also go to the many people we have worked with this year including Diane Muldowney, Susan Brownrigg, Gosha Gibek, Karen Allerton, Caroline Eccles, Banu Adam, Claire Sutton and Vicci McCann, and to the Community Payback teams in West Lancashire and Blackpool. Also, a big thank you to all the Try The Train facilitators and finally a thank you to the many people in the Community Rail Network we work with including Ian Davis, Paul Webster, Sarah Fatica, Dawn Bigland and Hazel Lavery. A special thank you goes to Jools Townsend for her help with the secondment of Karen Bennett and for the way she navigated us all through the applications to the Motability Foundation.

I extend a big thank you to all the volunteer station adopters and to those who help distribute the mini timetables. Also, to the Lancashire Rail Ramblers for the guided walk programmes and especially Craig Ward, John Barnes and David Pryer and to the Friends of the Settle Carlisle Line for the additional guided walks they provide from the YDE. In addition, to Ribble Valley Rail, especially Bill Briggs and Peter Eastham, for their support of the YDE and the Ormskirk Preston Southport Travellers' Association for the passenger counts on the West Lancashire lines.

A big thank you to the CRL Board which provides positive encouragement as well as a steadying hand, and to the CRP Chairs and Management Groups who oversee what takes place across our community rail lines. I would also like to personally thank Carolyn Watson, Rachel Kent, Owain Roberts, Martin Keating, Sarah Morgan, Euan Hilton, Austin Beasley, Richard Issac, Danielle Clarkson of Northern; Jo Buckley and Dhani Solanki of Avanti West Coast, Andrew Watkins from Transpennine and Andy Griffin, Network Rail for their support and encouragement.



Awards

During 2025 CRL received the following awards:

- **Try The Train** was highly commended in National Rail Awards (*Catherine Kingdom and Northern*)
- **Stations of Welcome** won first place in the BBC 'Making A Difference' Awards. (*Shahiesta Iqbal*)
- **Community Rail Lancashire** won first place in the 'Not For Profit' category in the **Hyndburn Business Awards**
- **Richard Watts** received the **Paul Harris Fellowship award** from the Rotary Foundation
- **Community Rail Lancashire & Partners** won a **Silver Award** for the **Yorkshire Dales Explorer** at the **Community Rail Awards** in March 2025.

Community Rail Week

19th to 25th May 2025

Celebrating Railway 200

Community Rail Week was organised nationally by the Community Rail Network and ran from the 19th to 25th May 2025. The theme for 2025 was to celebrate Railway 200. CRL and the Lancashire CRPs marked this week with a series of events which are illustrated in the following pictures. Highlights included school events at the Bunker and a performance by Gare du Nord of their play 'Railway 200'.



To find out more visit:
communityraillancashire.co.uk/cr-week-2025

East Lancashire and Clitheroe Line Community Rail Partnerships

By Mike Cliffe, Chair

2025 has again been a positive year for both the Clitheroe Line and East Lancashire Line, with a wide range of projects and initiatives which have helped to bring the best out of our communities and railway lines.

The build back of demand for rail travel to and from East Lancashire continues, with record passenger figures experienced for several of our stations including Burnley Manchester Road, Accrington and Rose Grove. There is a lot going on behind the figures which are a testament to the demand that is out there for rail travel. Coupled with recent investment in rail infrastructure and new services, we have seen a near doubling of passenger numbers at some of our busiest stations when compared to a decade ago.

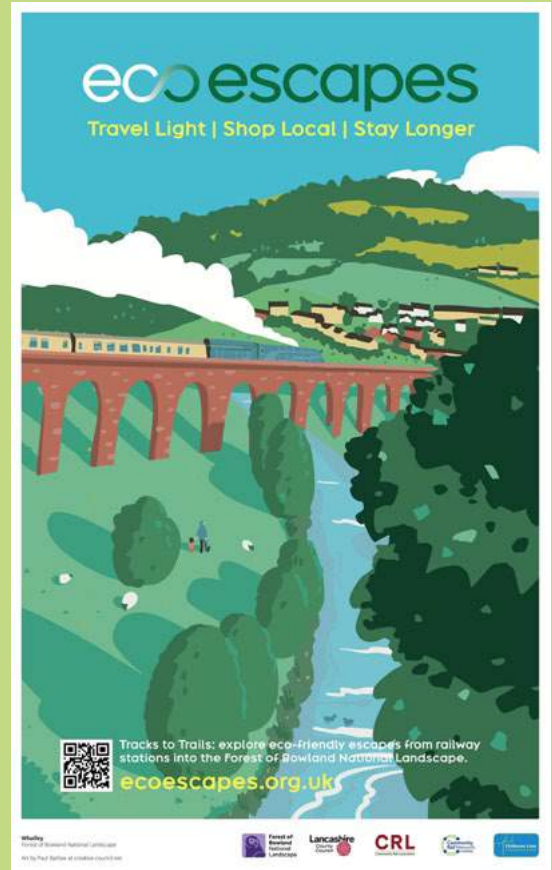
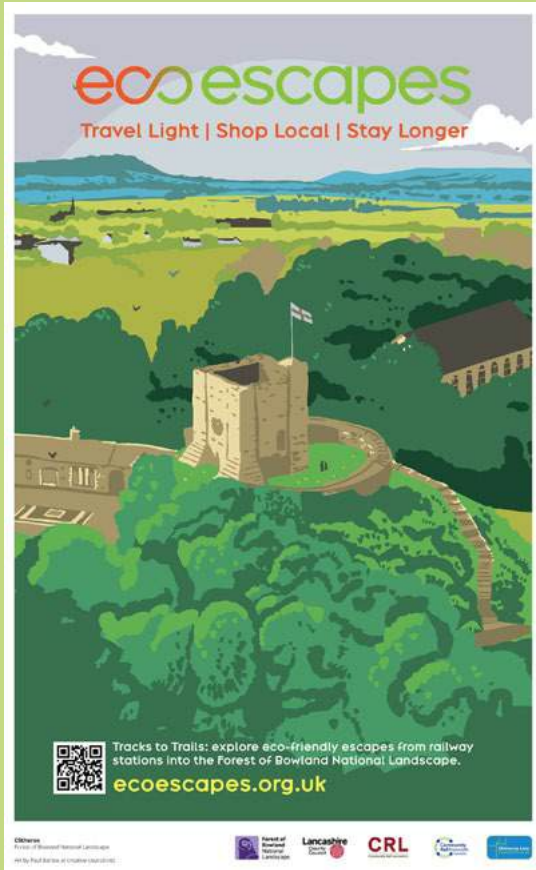
East Lancashire Line stations have shown the strongest growth, however, some on the Clitheroe Line have seen a slight drop over the last year, which is mainly attributable to Sunday bus service replacement which has been in the timetable since December 2024. I do hope that negotiations to finally deliver a 7 day a week railway reach a conclusion as we move through 2026.

Onto our activities: The Clitheroe Line **A Picturesque Railway Journey** project was launched in March 2025 at Blackburn Market Place. Led by Arts 2 Heal, a Blackburn-based charity which works with vulnerable adults, the project has brought people together and has built confidence in rail travel. Photography and poetry have captured individual insights of how people see the railway and how it relates to them. The artwork has since been on-tour visiting Bolton Station's Platform 5 Gallery and Blackburn Central Library.

In April 2025, tributes were given to railway stalwart **Derek Jennings** (1935 – 2024), with the unveiling of a special bench taking place at Brierfield Railway Station with Derek's friends and family. The bench provides a fitting memory to a gentleman who devoted so much commitment to the railways of East Lancashire over so many years.



East Lancashire and Clitheroe Line Community Rail Partnerships



May 2025 saw the launch of the **EcoEscapes** project which has been developed with the Forest of Bowland National Landscape. Part of “tracks to trails”, the project highlights how the railway at Clitheroe and Whalley links with events, destinations and activities using sustainable travel options.

A series of posters has been produced which have been installed at stations near and far, helping to promote the Ribble Valley. A best practice paper has been produced and can be viewed by scanning the QR code.



Community Rail Week in May 2025 saw a range of events taking along the East Lancashire Line including:

- Over 80 student visitors to Accrington Eco Station, taking part in hands-on educational activities and learning about sustainability and conservation
- World Bee Day: pupils from St John’s Stonefold Primary School in Baxenden attended interactive workshops delivered by the East Lancashire Bee Keepers Association. There is more about this in below.
- Eid Bazaar: Community Rail Lancashire teamed up with the Stations of Welcome ladies’ group to host a special bazaar for refugee families in and around Accrington
- Year 3/4 pupils from St Oswald’s Primary School wrapped up the school visits with a packed day of learning. They took part in railway safety and careers sessions and enjoyed a guided tour of the Eco Station



The **Yorkshire Dales Explorer** rail service continues to be popular with visitors to the Yorkshire Dales and Ribble Valley, with almost 10,000 passengers travelling since the launch back in June 2024. The service continues to be promoted and marketed by Community Rail Lancashire, Northern Trains and the Yorkshire Dales National Park. May 2025 saw the launch of the DalesBus service 80 which operates seasonally connecting Lancaster with Hawes and the Yorkshire Dales Explorer at Ribblehead station. Operated by Lonsdale Buses, this service provides direct access to the Yorkshire Dales for walkers and visitors.

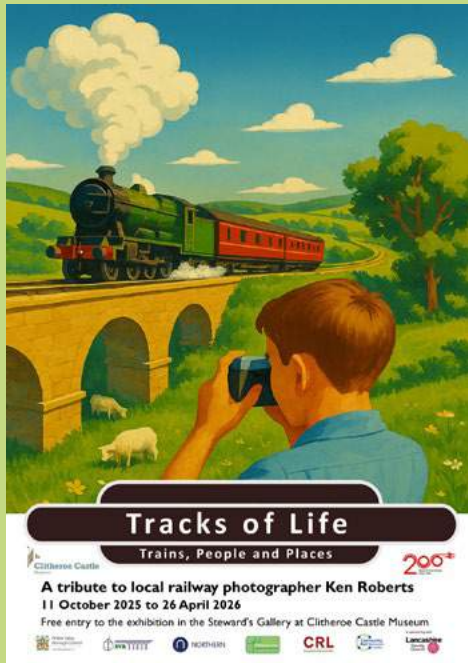
Thanks go to the Lancashire Rail Ramblers who provide a guided walk programme and opportunities to explore off the beaten track. Ribble Valley Rail continue to provide a weekly record of passenger usage and useful insights on journey purpose, with surveys showing that a quarter of passengers using the Yorkshire Dales Explorer service to access guided walks. The service was awarded 2nd place in the Community Rail Awards "Tourism and Leisure" category and was shortlisted in the Rail Business Awards "Regional Initiative of the Year" category.

Community Rail week saw Community Rail Lancashire staff taking out two separate groups on the Yorkshire Dales Explorer service from East Lancashire to the Yorkshire Dales. Women from local community group Aawaz enjoyed a scenic day out on the Yorkshire Dales Explorer train to

Settle and Carlisle visiting Settle Signal Box and museum before continuing the journey to Carlisle and back to Accrington.

On a sunny Wednesday morning in June 2025, Year 5 and 6 pupils from White Ash Special School in Oswaldtwistle walked from school to take a look at the artwork they had created as part of the **Through the Seasons** project, which is now displayed at Church and Oswaldtwistle and Accrington stations. The project highlights the Hyndburn Greenway from Spring to Winter and the access to it from the two nearby stations for walking and cycling. The pupils worked with local artist, Gosha Gibek and Sonja Bottomer of Prospects Foundation who provided the knowledge of the flora and fauna on the greenway to create the colourful artwork.





October 2025 saw the unveiling of the **Tracks of Life: Trains, People and Places** exhibition which celebrates the life and work of talented professional railway photographer and campaigner **Ken Roberts** (1929–2024). The exhibition, located in Clitheroe Castle’s Steward’s Gallery, showcases a remarkable collection of Ken’s images, capturing the essence of railways, landscapes, and communities across Lancashire and beyond.

As part of this railway exhibition, Lancashire children’s author, Susan Brownrigg visited Clitheroe Castle in November to talk about her recently published book “Wrong Tracks”. Peter Eastham, Chair Ribble Valley Rail, has also arranged follow-up tours which have been well attended, alongside flyers which have been distributed on the Yorkshire Dales Explorer service by Ribble Valley Rail.

Looking forwards into 2026 we have a number of projects to develop, including the Forged in Steam photographic exhibition, part of Railway 200 which is funded by the Community Rail Development Fund (CRDF). Work on the Explore the Clitheroe Line line-guide and timetable will also come to fruition and will be accompanied by events at Clitheroe Castle and the Haworth Art Gallery. The Hyndburn Greenway and Woodnook Trail walk guide will also be published.

There will also be further activities planned as part of 25 years of Community Rail Lancashire, and the development of a line guide for the East Lancashire Line.

Lastly and of core importance to both CRPs is a **thank you** the tireless efforts of our station adopters and friends of groups along both routes, which continue to make the difference to our rail passengers’ daily journeys. And thanks also go to our rail industry partners who are always on-hand to provide support and guidance for our activities.



Accrington Station Developments

By Dave Savage



Accrington Station Eco Garden

This year, Stations of Welcome worked in partnership with Sonja Bottomer to deliver a range of improvements to the Eco Garden. Sonja has also produced a comprehensive, easy to use guide to support the ongoing care and maintenance of the garden, enabling the ladies to look after the space confidently throughout the year.

A further highlight has been the addition of a beautiful, solid oak bench, expertly carved by Stations of Welcome through a project called Carving Connections, see below for more details.

The project represents a unique and meaningful twinning of Lancashire and Cumbria, leaving a lasting legacy that enhances the Eco Garden as a welcoming, reflective space for all who visit.

Education and Community

Throughout the year, the station has welcomed a wide range of visiting groups, including school groups, eco groups, Scouts, Cubs, and Rainbow groups. These visits play an important role in education, engagement, and raising awareness of sustainable travel.

A typical visit includes a rail safety talk, career exploration activities with dress-up opportunities, and a Rail 200 session, exploring the history of the railway and its development over time. Groups also take part in a guided station tour, highlighting the building's eco-friendly design and sustainable features.

To further enhance our educational offer, we have introduced an Interlino Smart Train set, helping students understand the basics of coding, alongside

a solar energy kit that demonstrates how the station's solar panels generate renewable energy.

Several GCSE Geography groups also visited the station to study the Eco Building in detail, using it as a real-life case study to support their curriculum learning.

In addition to its educational role, the station continues to be a valuable community space, hosting a range of regular activities throughout the year. Alongside the weekly Stations of Welcome meetings, the station also hosts a British Sign Language (BSL) group, which meets monthly in the bunker, providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for learning and connection.

Rail Safety Week

During Rail Safety Week in June, the station welcomed two groups of Year 4 students from Abraham Moss School in Manchester. For many, it was their first experience travelling by train. While at the station, the students designed rail safety posters, learned about Railway 200, and took part in career dress-up activities, exploring the range of roles in the railway industry.

Learning About the Importance of Bees

This year, the station hosted several educational sessions on the importance of bees, delivered by the East Lancashire Beekeepers Association, including a special World Bee Day workshop. Students had the opportunity to observe bees in a hive, try their hand at candle making, enjoy honey tasting, and create seed bombs to support local pollinators. These sessions provided a hands on, engaging way for young people to learn about bee conservation and biodiversity.

Carving Connections

By Shahiesta Iqbal

Empowering South Asian Women in Accrington through Craft, Community, and the Outdoors



Carving Connections was established in partnership with The Coppice Co-op in Silverdale to address the social isolation, cultural exclusion, and limited access to green spaces experienced by South Asian women in Accrington. The initiative focused on members of Stations of Welcome, Accrington's Station Adoption group, who often faced barriers to participating in public life, enjoying the outdoors, and engaging in creative activities. This resulted in their underrepresentation in craft-based projects, rural events, and public art.

Project Objectives

- To promote confidence, wellbeing, and a sense of belonging among participants
- To provide practical, creative skills through hands-on workshops
- To encourage social connections and collaborative learning
- To foster engagement with natural environments and public spaces

Key Activities and Achievements

The project, funded by the Community Rail Development Fund (CRDF) delivered a series of greenwood craft workshops in collaboration with The Coppice Co-op. Over four sessions, participants learned to use traditional tools and locally sourced timber, developing new creative skills and a greater environmental awareness. These activities provided opportunities for personal and cultural reflection, encouraging participants to consider their relationship with nature and the concept of belonging.

A total of 12 women took part, carving a range of meaningful designs into the backs of sculptural benches. These included their names in both English and Urdu, a railway track, a mosque, an acorn representing Accrington, and a Bittern symbolising Silverdale. Participants managed their time effectively to complete the work within the session limits. The finished benches were installed as permanent public artworks, acting both as practical seating and as lasting symbols of inclusion and shared ownership of rural space.



Carving Connections has made a meaningful contribution to reducing social isolation and promoting inclusion for South Asian women in Accrington.

Building Community Links

Carving Connections also played a significant role in fostering inter-community relationships. The Silverdale Station Adoption group visited the Accrington participants, creating opportunities for dialogue and understanding between groups linked by the railway. Six train journeys were undertaken between Accrington and Silverdale, with participants eventually leading one of the trips independently, demonstrating increased confidence and autonomy.

Impact and Outcomes

- Participants reported increased confidence, happiness, and a sense of connection
- The project enabled skill-building, agency, and emotional connection to place and community
- Permanent public artworks now reflect the identities and stories of the women involved
- New relationships and networks have been established across communities

Participants expressed gratitude for new experiences and opportunities for cultural exchange

Conclusion

Carving Connections has made a meaningful contribution to reducing social isolation and promoting inclusion for South Asian women in Accrington. By combining creative craft, environmental engagement, and community-building activities, the project has empowered participants to claim their place in public spaces and fostered lasting connections across communities.

All along, there were lots of great chats about different ways of life and what opportunities women have, as well as a real sense of excitement about seeing new places. There was even a friendly fellow passenger they met on the train each week, who ended up coming to the celebration at the Coppice Co-op, showing just how much the project brought people together.



South Fylde Line Community Rail Partnership

By Tony Ford

This year has been a very busy one for the South Fylde Line, with many activities taking place all along the route. Station Adoption groups have been ‘doing their thing’ whilst events and activities organised by third parties have drawn more visitors to the area.

There has been slightly less disruption to services caused by crew shortages on Sundays but even the two-hour timetable has experienced glitches. Confidence in the South Fylde Line is improving but there is still a long way to go.

In the autumn, **St. Anne’s** station was shortlisted in the Small Stations category at the National Rail Awards in London. It was a great honour for the station to receive national recognition with a Highly Commended Award.

Community volunteers have continued to make their stations as welcoming as possible with floral displays, artwork and historical posters adding context, information and creating interest for those who use Northern’s services and stations on the South Fylde Line. Lytham Station adopters are to be commended for recruiting two younger members who are hardworking and very enthusiastic.

Station groups, particularly **Squires Gate**, have supported events such as Rail200, Remembrance and key local events such as St Anne’s Music festival, Lytham Proms, the International Kite Festival and Fylde’s Ice festival which has moved around between the three main towns in the Fylde.

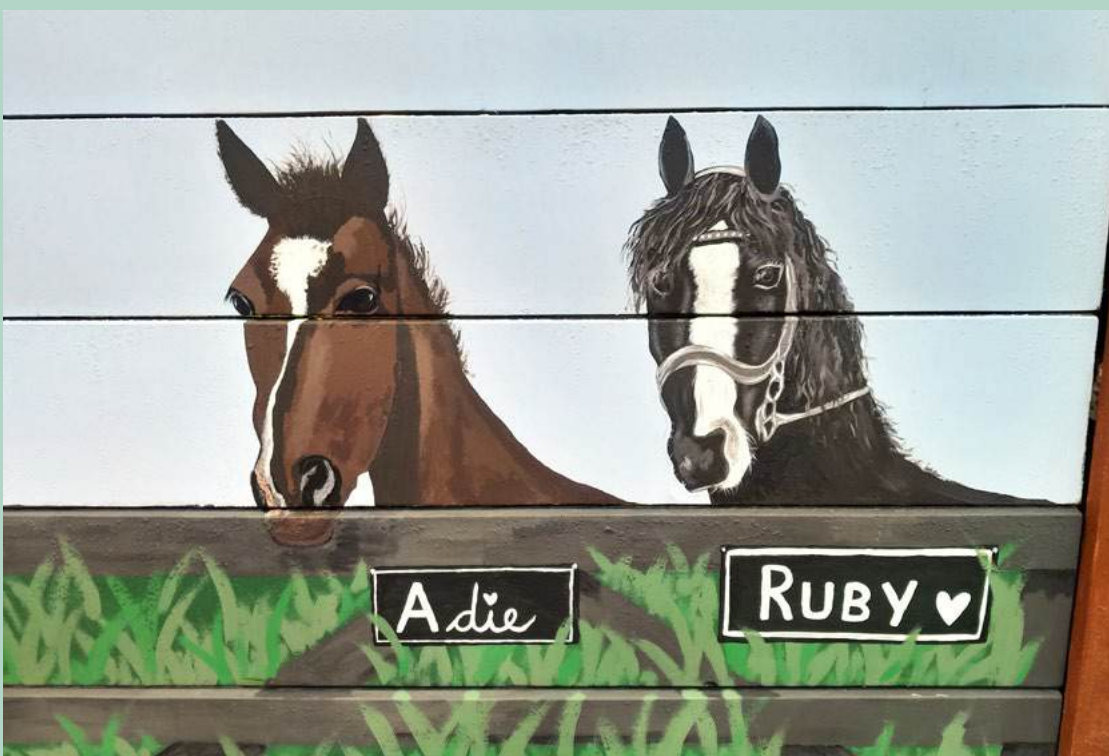
Several station adopters volunteered to assist with the Rail 200 Inspiration Train when it visited Blackpool North. They greeted people, talked about their work, handed out leaflets and encouraged visitors to ‘dress up’ in rail-related uniforms. The CRP was pleased to have contributed to the success of this event which boasted record numbers of schools and members of the public attending.

This was the year of the benches, with the installation of a ‘Chatty Bench’ at **St Anne’s** and a combined bench and storage unit at Blackpool **Pleasure Beach station**. The latter, jointly funded by Northern and Community Rail Lancashire, will enable volunteers to leave gardening tools and resources in a safe, easily accessible location. The group is enthusiastic in its endeavours with an artwork project with the Armfield Academy due to be delivered shortly.



St. Anne's station received a generous bequest from a past station user and now boasts four new planters in recycled plastic material to replace life expired wooden units. Martin Keating, through Northern's community grants awarded funds to cover the horticultural side of things (compost fertiliser winter bedding etc), for which we are very grateful.

Katy Warburton has created eye-catching artwork based on images of two local horses, Adie and Ruby at **Moss Side**. Her artwork attracts a lot of attention and her skills as a painter are much appreciated.



Station volunteers working in conjunction with Network Rail staff did a tremendous job in clearing up litter and debris to the rear of Platform 3 at **Kirkham & Wesham** station. The group are now considering developing a licence agreement for the land with Network Rail.



Volunteers have continued to spread the word about activities and events associated with and along the line. Facebook pages promote events to which people could travel by train and have carried information about alterations and disruptions to services. Thanks to Barrie Russell's regular report to local councils, councillors and stakeholders are helping to raise the profile of the Station Adoption Groups, their level of community involvement and the activities of the South Fylde Line Community Rail Partnership.

As Chairman I was pleased to welcome local author Steve Gerrill to the Partnership's AGM where he talked about what started him off on his quest for walks and how he succeeded in self-publishing his books using local designers and printers. Steve's book **'Walks along the South Fylde Line'** which promotes walking from the South Fylde Line's trains and stations continues to sell well and is a good advert for our line.

It was pleasing to see several station adopters at Northern's and Network Rail's stakeholder events, there is always something to learn and gain from these meet ups. The Blackpool & Fylde

Rail User group continue to active lobby for level access to Squires Gate station. This project, first mooted in 2018 is now sadly at the mercy of spending decisions made by a financially strapped Lancashire County Council.

We welcomed the reprinting of 'our' Railway Walks pamphlets and credit card sized timetables. We are going to experiment with display cases for our leaflets on selected stations to share information. The CRP plan to launch a new self-guided Walk from Kirkham & Wesham station in 2026 to coincide with Community Rail Week.

Once again, **Lytham** and **Ansdell & Fairhaven** stations gained 'OUTSTANDING' In Bloom Awards in the In Your Neighbourhood category whilst other stations chose to have a rest from being judged this year. **Ansdell & Fairhaven** station adopters have continued to build on their links with Ansdell Community Primary. There will be greater focus on the area in 2026 as the Ladies Golf is taking place and Ansdell in Bloom will be competing at national level for In Bloom awards this year. The CRP wish them well as the judges are bound to visit the station at some point.

Grants from the Co-op's Community Fund, St Anne's Town Council, Blackpool Borough Council Northern and Community Rail Lancashire have sustained volunteer activities along the line with planters, compost bins, plants and horticultural supplies. The CRP would like to extend its thanks.

The South Fylde Line has once again been well supported by Richard Watts, Caroline Holden, Simon Clarke and the rest of CRL Team during the year and we thank them for their continued involvement and encouragement in our endeavours.

Some ideas looking to the future

- Involving station groups in commemorating 25 Years of Community Rail in Lancashire
- Publication of a Self-guided walk in and around Kirkham
- Pursue projects that embrace Stations for Change
- Creating Nature Walks along the Fylde coast from Squires Gate & St Anne's stations
- Working with students from the University of Lancashire on developing a self-guided heritage trail taking in Blackpool South & Pleasure Beach stations.

Welcome to Blackpool Pleasure Beach



Armfield Academy Year 9 art students have been working with their dedicated class teacher, Jon Evans, with the support of Diane Muldowney, Lancashire fine artist and photographer, to create vibrant artwork that during 2026 will adorn Blackpool Pleasure Beach station for users and visitors.

The students have completed their work as part of their GCSE studies taking inspiration from the French illustrator Claire Rolett and the experimental approach of Robert Rauschenberg, whose work helped lead the way toward Pop Art. The images created by the students will be developed into a montage for display at the station during 2026.

The project has been funded by the SFL CRP; Blackpool Council and by the Community Rail Network through the DfT's Community Rail Development Fund.

West of Lancashire Community Rail Partnership

By Stephen Bengé, Chair

2025 seems to have passed quickly, with a number of ongoing projects, and some new developments.

The West of Lancashire Community Rail Partnership is very pleased to welcome Beth Nolan as the new Community Rail Officer working primarily in the West of Lancashire area (see page 23). Beth has expressed a desire to carry out the following in 2026:

- Connect with communities along the West of Lancashire lines and listen to their ideas
- Run a West of Lancashire-specific event for Community Rail Week in June
- Find ways to reduce antisocial behaviour at Croston Station
- Deliver a project in partnership with Southport residents for the ‘Books Alive!’ Festival in October

Here are some of the other highlights of 2025 in the West of Lancashire area:

In **Croston**, the CRP participated in the Croston Heritage Open Days in September, providing exhibition materials to highlight the history of Croston station and the Ormskirk to Preston line, as well as local and wider links to tourist attractions within reach of the line.

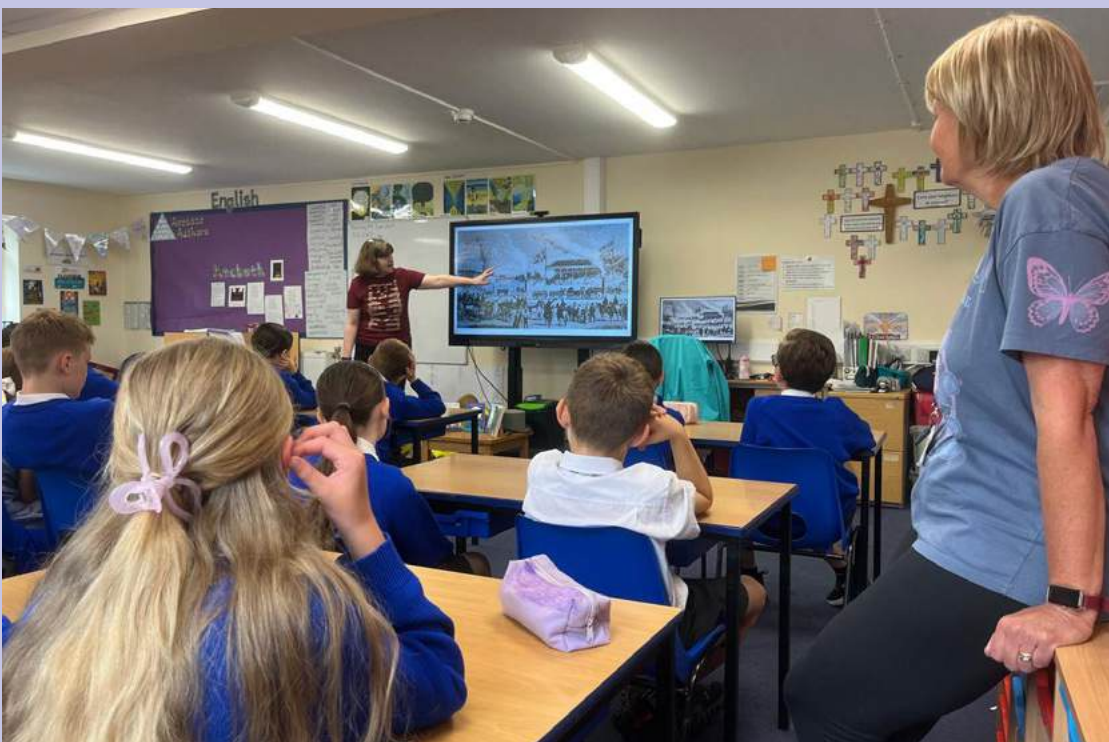
As with other ‘Friends of Station’ groups along the West of Lancashire lines, the Partnership continues to be very grateful for the fantastic work done by dedicated volunteers throughout the year, keeping West Lancashire’s stations looking attractive and tidy, and improving the experience for users of the station. This has been exemplified in Croston with beautiful planting on both the operational and unused platforms. However, we are sad to hear about antisocial behaviour at the station, and hope that partners can work together to tackle this issue.





We have continued to partner with the West Lancashire Prison and Probation Service Payback Team who have undertaken vital tidying-up of weeds, etc. on the disused platform at **Burscough Junction** with help from Rufford St John's Catholic Primary School pupils, and at **Rufford**. In Rufford the Friends Group has continued to enhance the station in its attractive setting close to the canal marinas, fishing lake and countryside, looking after planting and the station's artwork. The CRP continues to liaise with Lancashire Wildlife Trust, promoting the attractive walking route from the station to Mere Sands Wood Nature Reserve.

One highlight of the year was discovering a newly published book by Susan Brownrigg, an author from West Lancashire (Skelmersdale). 'Wrong Tracks' is a children's adventure story based around the 1829 Rainhill Trials and the competition between different engineers looking to develop a passenger locomotive for the new Liverpool to Manchester line. This historical tale tied in well with the 'Railway 200' celebrations taking place during 2025. We got in touch with Susan and arranged for her to visit Rufford C of E Primary School in June, where she delivered a very engaging session with the year 6 pupils, and we were able to give a copy of the book to each child there. Susan has since been able to promote her story at various other CRL-led events across Lancashire.



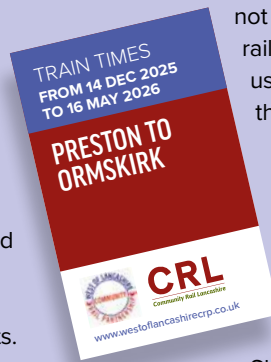


Mini timetables for the Ormskirk to Preston line have continued to be printed twice a year and distributed to various locations close to the route and local stations. These are always well-received, for example by Ormskirk library. Thank you to the volunteer distributors!

On the **Southport to Wigan** line, the various dedicated Friends of Stations groups at Meols Cop, Bescar Lane, New Lane, Burscough Bridge, Hoscar, Parbold, Appley Bridge and Gathurst stations continue to work hard benefitting their stations, with plants and flowers, information, local history, maintenance, and other enhancements. We have continued to liaise with Martin Mere Wildfowl and Wetland Reserve over the promotion of the footpath link between Burscough Bridge station and Martin Mere. Representatives from Martin Mere joined us at Manchester Piccadilly station during Community Rail week in May to showcase the attraction.

The West of Lancashire CRP continues to offer its support to the community of Southport, following the tragic events of July 2024. The Partnership has reached out to Sefton Council for Voluntary Service to look at how we can work alongside other organisations to contribute towards helping the recovery process. The Partnership remains grateful to our former Chair, Marion Atkinson, now Leader of Sefton Council, who helped make the initial introductions.

On a happier note, we are delighted that Southport is one of the places where the Railway 200 Inspiration Train is visiting in January 2026 as part of its national tour, thanks to the 'lobbying' work of CRL and other partners. We hope this may inspire some local people to find employment on the railways.



Other activities by the Partnership:

It has been challenging to find groups in West Lancashire to take up the offer of the 'Try The Train' initiative, which helps people who are not confident in using the train to have a go at rail travel, gaining enough confidence to start using the train, with the aim of enhancing their job prospects and social mobility.

The Skelmersdale Trainlink project continues, with regular services connecting Skelmersdale town centre with Headbolt Lane station on the Merseyrail network, and integrated ticketing. Of course, we would prefer a rail link into Skelmersdale, but delivering the rail link remains challenging, and we are grateful for the efforts to provide the bus service as an alternative.

The Partnership was delighted to receive confirmation in November 2025 that it has been reaccredited by the Department for Transport for a further year.

We have already mentioned the continued dedicated work of the different station partnerships / friends of stations along the West of Lancashire lines through all the seasons. We are also grateful to the Ormskirk Preston Southport Travellers' Association (OPSTA) for their ongoing work in carrying out passenger counts, liaising with customers to find their views, and we acknowledge their campaigning for improved rail transport and facilities in this area. And we thank the different professional bodies represented on the Partnership for their continued support.

We look forward to working with our partners throughout 2026.

Introducing Beth Nolan

Community Rail Officer for the West of Lancashire CRP



In November 2025, Beth Nolan joined the CRL team as Community Rail Officer for the West of Lancs lines. Since she has started, she has engaged with Croston, Rufford and Southport Station Adoption Groups as well as organisations such as Community Payback, Sefton Council and attended Croston’s Parish Council meeting.

Station Development: In November Community Payback did a fantastic job of tidying the Rufford Station car park. Since then, there are arrangements in progress for Community Payback to paint the fencing around the car park.

Beth has been in contact with St John’s Catholic Primary School in Burscough which has adopted the disused platform at Burscough Junction. Year 4 and 5’s attended the Inspiration Train in January 2026, using a Northern train to get to Southport Station. We hope that this trip will reignite the school’s passion to take care of the disused platform and Beth will be on hand to help the school to achieve this.

Some hopes for 2026 on the West of Lancs lines:

- Collaborate with Croston’s Trinity and St Michael Primary School in a station art project with trip along the West of Lancs line and rail safety workshop (Summer 26)
- Make connection with Bishop Rawstone in Croston to further develop the potential for collaboration
- Work in Southport to produce a community project tying into the Southport 2026 programme (Autumn)
- Work with Disability Equality (Preston) in an event for Community Rail Week (Summer)
- Develop Try The Train to reach across the West of Lancs (Ongoing)
- Support the Rail Experience, CRL’s SEND rail confidence building project, which will take place with ‘Buddy Up’ in Southport (Spring)

Station Adoption

By Simon Clarke & Richard Watts

Station adoption is a nationwide movement that sees volunteers taking on responsibility for some aspects of station maintenance, including gardening, planting, creating biodiversity projects, litter picking, and removing graffiti, creating heritage displays, connecting with local schools and in some circumstances acting as “eyes and ears,” monitoring for unusual activity, and reporting faults or maintenance needs.

Northern has well over half their stations adopted and across Community Rail Lancashire (CRL) there are around 35 active station adoption groups covering the four community rail partnerships. CRL encourages groups to send in regular quarterly reports of their activities and these are used to create news items on the CRL website.



Some stations just have a single adopter and some have large groups of 10+ members. There is also a small number of groups that look after disused platforms under licence from Network Rail including Brierfield, Burscough Junction, Croston, Lytham, and Squires Gate. The two big examples of this are Croston and Squires Gate stations where incredible work has been carried out to clear and bring back the original surface ready for planting and displaying artwork.

The group at Brierfield has made great strides towards uncovering the old platform and have plans that may include restoring the signal box that once stood guard over the crossing.

Northern and the Community Rail Network promote station adoption and encourage groups to become members or to be officially recognised as this provides access to various funds to help them with their work at the stations.

Many of the stations across the country enter the Best Kept Stations Awards each year and in the CRL area several friends groups have walked away with awards, including perennials such as the Croston, St. Annes and Lytham groups amongst others.

Community Rail Lancashire would like again to place on record our thanks for all the hard work that the volunteers carry out on the stations across the four community rail partnerships.

Stations of Welcome

By Shahiesta Iqbal, Community Rail Education Officer

This year was a busy one for Accrington's Station Adoption group, Stations of Welcome.

The group was invited to collaborate once again with The Coppice Co-op in Silverdale. This time they designed and created two oak benches which were installed in the Arnside and Silverdale National Landscape and at Accrington Station Community Garden. This CRDF funded project was completed over five weeks and gave the group the opportunity to develop their crafting skills by using a variety of hand tools to carve the backrest of the benches.

During the Muslim month of Ramadan Stations of Welcome were seen distributing bottles of water and packets of sweets to train passengers at Accrington and Blackburn Station. Ramadan is a month of fasting for Muslims and is also a month of charitable giving so this was a great opportunity for the group to create awareness of the importance of this month to their communities. It gave the women a chance to talk to people about what they were doing and why.

World Hijab Day was spent at Manchester Victoria Station where the group showed passersby how to wear the hijab and had many conversations about its significance to Muslim women. It was a very successful event with lots of interest in the various headscarves and several Northern staff wore the hijabs as they went about their jobs.

Community Rail week saw the group transform the Bunker into a bazaar for

refugee families to visit and buy and take preloved clothing and accessories with the proceeds going to charity.

The women were invited by the Settle - Carlisle Line to join The Border City Express, a steam train travelling from Bradford to Carlisle as a celebration for winning the BBC Make a Difference Award. This was the first time any of the group had travelled on a steam train and it has become something they will remember forever.

Stations of Welcome has sparked the interest of the media as the only station adoption group in the country that is made up of South Asian heritage Muslim women. The group has been approached by Lancashire Life Magazine and BBC Sunday morning Live resulting in some of the group as well as CRL's Education Development Officer, Shahiesta Iqbal being interviewed. Topics covered included how the group started, how it has helped the women involved to improve their physical and mental health and how their faith has encouraged them to look after their community station. The group was nominated for the BBC Make a Difference Award which they won. Shahiesta Iqbal appeared on BBC Breakfast to talk about the group's work.

In January 2026 the group will appear in Channel 4's Britain's Favourite Station with Si King as part of Railway 200.



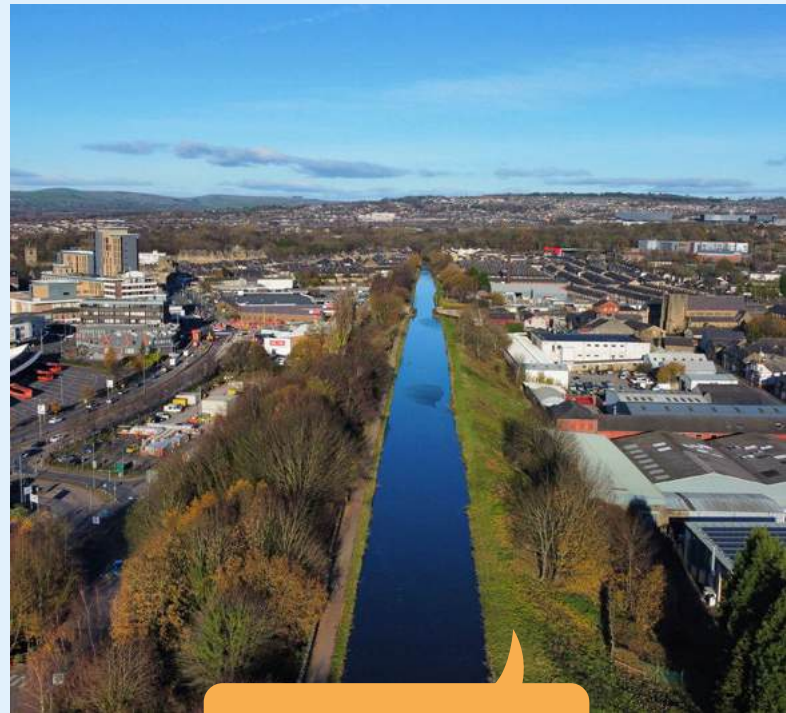
Explore Lancashire by Rail

By Simon Clarke

A local award-winning creative film company **Huckleberry Films** has been working with **Community Rail Lancashire** to make some short films with the aim of encouraging people to put on their walking boots and discover the fantastic and varied countryside in Lancashire by using the train.

A series of ten films have been created so far that cover eight different walks across Lancashire including East Lancashire, the South Fylde and the West of Lancashire. To date the films have had 13,817 views up from last year's figure of 10,980 with the walks from Darwen station to the Jubilee Tower high on Darwen Hill and from Lytham to St. Annes both recording 3.6k views.

The films and walks have been promoted using news items on the CRL website and Facebook to increase numbers of views and hopefully participants. CRL also uses its branded poster boards at many of the stations in Lancashire to advertise these walks along with other self-guide walks that are available to download off the website. The Lancashire Rail Ramblers also lead a series of guided walks that cover most of Lancashire.



'Yet another wonderful commentary on a Lancashire Walk. There are many other walks in the series bringing the past to life. Well done Huckleberry Films.'

Darwen Tower walk

'Brilliant video'

Lytham walk

'Some stunning views of our local area here!'

Burscough walk



Explore Lancashire by Rail

Education and Youth Engagement

By Karen Bennett,
Education Team Lead



2025 has been an exciting year for the education team at CRL. Whilst celebrating 200 years of the modern railway, 11,667 people were educated in rail safety, careers, sustainability, and rail confidence through a wide range of exciting and engaging projects.

Schools, colleges, and community groups across parts of Lancashire and Yorkshire have been visited by members of the team delivering rail safety education sessions, with many people also having the opportunity to go on a rail journey free of charge courtesy of Northern. The team has also linked up with other stakeholders to support rail education at events such as the Lancashire Science Festival and Accrington Ecofest, as well as taking part in the national ‘Rail Safety Week’ campaign in June.

Catherine Kingdom has continued to manage CRL’s Northern Education Network by planning in-person meetings across the region looking at a range of themes including working with the deaf community and neurodiversity. For Railway 200, Catherine designed a badge in collaboration with Girl Guiding Northeast that was launched at Hopetown with Michael Portillo in attendance. Catherine continues to manage the Try the Train project, and the CRL team is delighted that further funding has been awarded to continue the good work. The project has been joined by new team member Paula Williams who will be an administration officer.

Karen Bennett has spent two of her working days at the Community Rail Network where she hosts the Community Rail Education Network and continues to support other officers with their youth engagement work. On the three days she is at CRL, she has worked with local groups, launched another anthology project working with the LGBTQ+ community called 200 Stories of Railway Pride. She has also worked with LNER and Bradford City of Culture on a design project named “Seaty

of Culture” giving young people the opportunity to design a new moquette which will be installed on a train in Spring 2026. For Railway 200, Karen sat on the Early Engagement steering group and supported the production of the Inspiration Train – including filming a video about being a Railway Teacher – which features in the careers carriage.

Katie Douglas has spent a lot of the year focussed on specific projects that have received outside funding. She has also spent a lot of time writing funding bids to bolster CRL’s external funding. To continue the work Katie has begun with SEND groups, CRL employed Sophia Sanderson in the spring. Since being in role, Sophia has developed the “Rail Experience Project” which she has delivered to groups in the North.

Shahiesta Iqbal has continued to work with ethnic minority community groups and organise events to develop greater understanding of Islam for passengers and rail staff alike.

Dave Savage has continued to work with Avanti West Coast. After reaching the goal of 5000 pupils for “Feel Good Field Trips”, Dave put together the “Feel Good Futures” project. Dave has spent a good chunk of the latter part of the year organising the Inspiration Train’s visit to the North West linking up with Network Rail and relevant TOCs and reaching out to school groups and designing an education programme for their visits.

During Community Rail Week, CRL organised many engaging projects to give local communities the opportunity to learn about their local railway.

The team are looking forward to another year of railway education and engagement in 2026 coinciding with the celebration of 25 years of Community Rail Lancashire.



Accessibility & Inclusion

By Katie Douglas, Accessibility & Inclusion Officer

On Track for Inclusive Train Travel

is a national project led by Community Rail Network in partnership with RNIB, with Community Rail Lancashire playing a key role in developing meaningful relationships with both local communities and the rail industry. Funded by the Motability Foundation, the project focuses on improving accessibility by embedding disabled people's lived experience into staff skills including confidence-building, communication practices and awareness training.

Disabled people consistently tell us that barriers to rail travel are not always the physical infrastructure. Unclear information and not feeling listened to or respected often make the difference between a positive journey and a stressful one. On Track was established to centre these lived experiences and explore how they can inform practical and meaningful change across the rail industry.

Over the past year, Community Rail Lancashire has engaged with disabled people through conversations, supported rail trips and focus groups, building trust and creating safe spaces to share experiences. Alongside this community engagement, we have had conversations with accessibility leads and senior colleagues from several Train Operating Companies to understand what is currently working well, identify ongoing challenges and explore opportunities to improve passenger experiences.

A key strength of On Track is the role of Community Rail Partnerships as trusted connectors. By bringing communities and rail partners together, we are able to share lived experience while recognising operational realities of the rail industry. Our joint aim is to work towards a more accessible, welcoming, and reliable service for everyone.

Travelling With Confidence

is a national programme supporting disabled people who aren't confident to travel by train to develop the skills and confidence to do so. Delivered locally by Community Rail Lancashire, the programme strengthened the established Try the Train initiative with tailored support for disabled participants, working with specialist colleges and schools. Structured classroom sessions, alongside supported journeys, helped learners develop practical skills such as journey planning, ticket purchasing, station navigation and knowing how to ask for help.

For some learners this meant stepping on a train for the first time. For others, it enabled independent navigation of busy stations and train changes. Staff and families described the programme as "opening up their world," helping learners develop resilience and confidence in train travel.





Barriers to Train Travel and Working in the Rail Industry for Diverse Communities in Lancashire

was commissioned by the Department for Transport and delivered in partnership with the University of Lancashire. Over five months 261 participants including young carers, refugees and asylum seekers, South Asian women, disabled people, school pupils and those at risk of homelessness, contributed through surveys, focus groups, and interviews. Engagement in familiar community settings encouraged participants to share openly.

The research revealed how cultural and social norms shape travel and career choices. In some households the car is the default, and gendered expectations can limit women’s independent travel. Supported trips offered participants both freedom and reassurance with one reflecting, “By going on arranged trips with staff, there is a level of protection against the world.”

Practical barriers such as confusing ticket machines, platform gaps and crowded trains intersected with social factors. Awareness of rail careers beyond “seen roles” was limited and peer-led, culturally sensitive programmes helped participants progress to independent travel and even explore part-time rail work.

The project concluded with a sharing event at Lancashire Archives, bringing community members and industry leaders together to discuss findings and solutions. The work highlights that inclusive railways rely on both accessible infrastructure and community-led approaches that listen to lived experience.



Hidden Gems: Preston

brought 62 children and young people with additional needs together to explore their town through art and photography. Participants went on photography walks, conducted interviews, and co-designed a permanent artwork now installed on Platform 7 at Preston Railway Station, celebrating the city’s diversity.

For many, it was their first visit to Preston Station. Rail safety workshops and train trips helped build confidence in public transport with one young contributor saying,

“I can’t believe my pigeon drawing made it onto the artwork! It looks amazing.”

The final artwork provides a vibrant feature in Preston’s historic station, giving participants pride and ownership of public space. Rail staff and passengers praised the work:

“Wow! It looks fabulous, so colourful. I’ll need to come back and take a good look at it.”

Hidden Gems demonstrates how creative engagement can inspire young people, strengthen community connections and encourage inclusive, confident use of public transport. Community Rail Lancashire will continue to bring schools and community groups to Preston and other stations, using art to make stations welcoming and inclusive spaces for all.



Northern Education Network

By Catherine Kingdom

During 2025, the Northern Education Network held four successful meetings with attendees from various CRPs, station adoption groups, TOCs and Network Rail. As part of the network, we also created resources for CRPs to use.

The first meeting of the year was held in Manchester at the Transport for Greater Manchester offices. The topic was Deaf Awareness, and attendees gained a greater understanding of how travelling on the rail network can be challenging for people with hearing loss.

In April, we visited the High Peak and Hope Valley line to learn how an art project at the station was successfully delivered and to find out more about a trail created between stations along the line. The meeting concluded with advice on planning trips for groups of schoolchildren, which led to ideas for the resources outlined below.

Our July meeting was held in Accrington at The Bunker. The theme was sight loss and navigating the railway system. Kelly from the Thomas Pocklington Trust provided participants with a great deal of useful information, followed by an opportunity to try vision simulator glasses to better understand what it can be like to travel with sight loss.

The final meeting of the year took place in York in October. This meeting explored what it is like to travel by train as an autistic person. Case studies were shared highlighting young people's experiences and how rail travel can be made easier for them.

Various members of the team also worked with new CRP officers as they started their roles, offering advice and support as required.

In addition, the CRL team produced a resource for children travelling by train called All Aboard. This includes a range of activities for children to complete during their journey and will be launched at the first Northern Education Network meeting in 2026 before being distributed to CRPs.

NORTHERN EDUCATION NETWORK 2025



NUMBER OF IN PERSON MEETINGS: 4

LOCATIONS: MANCHESTER, HOPE, ACCRINGTON, YORK

TOPICS: DEAF AWARENESS
ARTWORK AT STATIONS
WALKING ROUTES BETWEEN STATIONS
VISUAL IMPAIRMENT TRAINING
USING THE RAIL NETWORK AS AN AUTISTIC PERSON

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT ATTENDEES: 27

NUMBER OF ATTENDEES: 54



NORTHERN

ORGANISATIONS WHO ATTENDED MEETINGS:

CR CUMBRIA
TYNE VALLEY CRP
HIGH PEAK AND HOPE VALLEY CRP
PENISTONE LINE PARTNERSHIP
CREWE TO MANCHESTER CRP
FRIENDS OF HINDLEY
NORTHERN
NETWORK RAIL
THOMAS POCKLINGTON TRUST (SIGHT LOSS COUNCIL)
COMMUNITY RAIL NETWORK
TRANSPENNINE EXPRESS

SETTLE & CARLISLE
NORTH NOTTS AND LINCS CRP
YORKSHIRE COAST CRP
BENTHAM CRP
SE MANCHESTER CRP
SYMCA

Try The Train

By Catherine Kingdom

2025 was another really positive year for the Try The Train (TTT) programme, supported by Northern, with strong engagement, great feedback and some fantastic outcomes for participants across the North.

Over the year, 311 people took part in TTT activities, supported by 22 facilitators. We delivered 96 journey planning and familiarisation workshops alongside 64 supported rail excursions, giving people the chance to build confidence through hands-on experience. Participants ranged in age from 14 to 93, showing how the programme works for people at all stages of life.

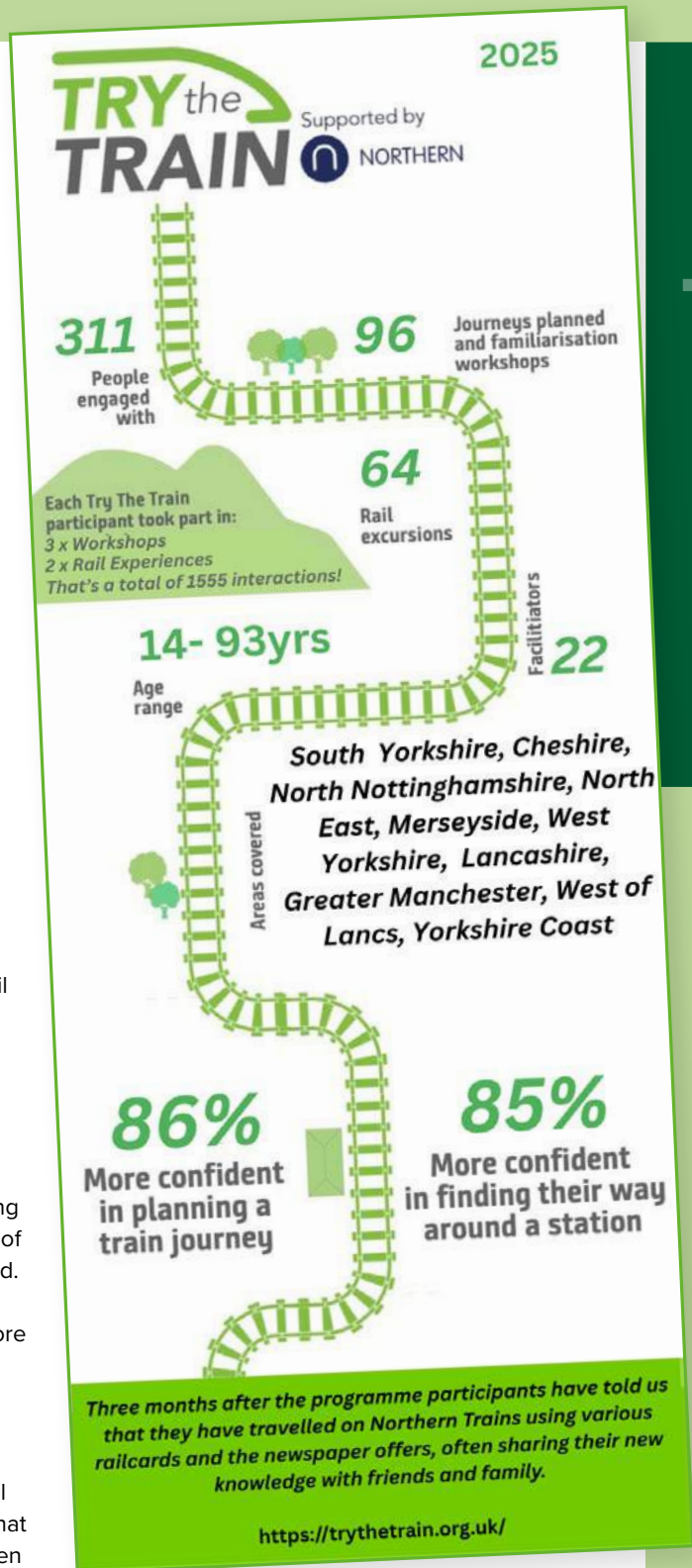
TTT was delivered across a wide area including South Yorkshire, Cheshire, North Nottinghamshire, the North East, Merseyside, West Yorkshire, Lancashire, Greater Manchester, the West of Lancashire and the Yorkshire Coast. Each participant took part in three workshops and two rail experiences, adding up to a total of 1,555 individual interactions during 2025.

The focus of the programme is on helping people feel comfortable and confident using the railway. Sessions cover topics such as planning a journey, buying tickets, navigating stations and understanding what to expect when travelling by train. The impact of this approach was clear in the feedback we received. 86% of participants said they felt more confident planning a train journey and 85% said they were more confident finding their way around a station.

Importantly, this confidence lasted beyond the programme itself. Three months after taking part, many participants told us they had gone on to travel independently on Northern services. They shared that they were using railcards and special offers and often passing on their new knowledge to friends and family.

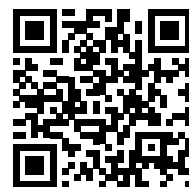
2025 was also a year of national recognition for TTT, with the programme being highly commended in the Accessibility Achievement of the Year award at the National Rail Awards. This was a real achievement and a reflection of the dedication of everyone involved, from facilitators and partners to the participants themselves.

To support the programme's ongoing delivery, Paula Williams joined the team in December 2025 as the TTT Administrator. Her role has helped strengthen coordination and day-to-day support, helping the programme continue to grow and reach more people.



We also received funding from The Motability Foundation as part of the Community Rail Network's Travelling with Confidence programme which has allowed us to deliver more TTT to disabled people during 2025.

Overall, 2025 showed just how much TTT can make a difference, helping people feel more confident, more independent and more able to use the rail network.



Try the Train Website

Working with Avanti West Coast

By David Savage

Feel Good Field Trips

Avanti West Coast's 'Feel Good Field Trip' project concluded in January 2025. Over the course of the two-year programme, the initiative successfully provided free educational rail travel to students visiting venues along the length of the West Coast Main Line.

The following table shows what was achieved.



Feel Good Futures

Feel Good Futures was launched in April 2025 and funded by Avanti West Coast. The project aims to inspire students aged 14 to 18 to explore STEM subjects and careers within the rail industry. The project provides students with free travel by train, educational resources such as the Feel Good Futures booklet and opportunities to visit rail industry sites and events.

In 2025, visits included Alstom depots in Glasgow, Liverpool and London; a STEM workshop in Milton Keynes; the Inspiration Train and Inspire Engineering days at the London Transport Museum. Over 400 students have participated so far, with many additional trips planned for 2026.

Feel Good Field Trips Facts January 2023–January 2025

- 5289** students been on a Feel Good Field Trip
- 877** staff to support the students
- 215** trips at **45** different venues
- 455** Avanti West Coast train journeys
- 50,000+** miles covered on the WCML



On the 13th January 2025 to mark the project's achievements Avanti West Coast arranged a special Parliamentary Reception in the House of Commons. The hard work of Dave Savage was fully recognised at this event along with a number of special presentations



Railway 200: Inspiration Train at Blackpool North

By David Savage

4th to 7th
November
2025

Case Study



As part of the Railway 200 celebration a special 'Inspiration Train has been touring the country. The train consists of 4 parts covering the Past, Present and Future of the railways along with a Partner Zone.

In November the train came to Blackpool for 4 days and CRL's Dave Savage coordinated visits for 15 school groups from Blackpool, Preston, Accrington, Manchester and other locations across Lancashire to visit the train. Many of the schools travelled to the event using Northern services. In total 335 students, aged between 7 and 18, from 15 schools participated in the school sessions.



During the week CRL also hosted the Partner Zone, providing interactive activities that enabled schoolchildren to explore a wide range of career pathways. The rail safety Arlo book and career information were distributed during the school sessions. As part of the public sessions, local walk leaflets were made available with additional support provided by Tony Ford and local station adopters from the South Fylde Line.



Railway 200: The Railway Challenge

By Catherine Kingdom

The Railway Challenge, created by Girlguiding Northeast England in collaboration with Community Rail Lancashire and Railway 200, aimed to engage young people, especially girls, in exploring 200 years of railway history, technology, and engineering. By encouraging interest in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), the initiative sought to empower young women to consider careers in traditionally male-dominated fields like transport and railway engineering.



A key feature was a downloadable activity pack, enabling Guiding units, schools, and community groups to take part. Activities covered railway history, modern innovations, safety and sustainability. The challenge officially launched at Hoptown, Darlington, attracting over 900 girls aged 4–18 and industry guests, including Michael Portillo.

With nearly 1,000 pack downloads and 4,000 badges sold to date, the project had wide community reach. Participants developed STEM knowledge and essential skills such as teamwork and problem-solving. Many girls reported increased confidence and interest in STEM careers. Testimonials highlighted how the all-girl environment encouraged participation and helped break gender stereotypes.

Community engagement and media coverage further amplified the project's success. Supported by major railway partners, the Railway Challenge not only celebrated 200 years of history but inspired future generations to see themselves as part of the evolving rail industry.



Working With Ethnic Minority Communities

By Shahiesta Iqbal

CRL has continued its valuable work with a variety of community groups from ethnic minorities around Lancashire. From working with people who are new to the country to working with people who may have been in the UK for several years but have never travelled by train.

The confidence building sessions at the Bunker and on the train have helped people to access green spaces across Lancashire for leisure as well as places for work like Manchester and Preston.

The work with asylum seekers and refugees continues as does the work with domestic violence organisations and ESOL classes, bringing opportunities to isolated parts of the community to improve their physical and mental health. New organisations such as Rewire 360 ESOL group, Rosebuds Women's group and Their Stories have become part of the CRL portfolio. Other groups with whom CRL has worked for a few years now such as Aawaz, Humraaz and DARE continue to benefit from the various rail confidence programmes.

This year has seen the first Muslim women's hiking group travel on the Yorkshire Dales Explorer (YDE) to Appleby where they took part in a guided walk with The Lancashire Rail Ramblers. It was a first for Zee's Defence Academy but hopefully not the last trip they will make. The group thoroughly enjoyed the trip and have since taken many trips to a variety of green spaces by train. Shahiesta is on a mission to introduce more groups to the YDE.

Shahiesta was asked to participate in a local radio programme on Radio Rossendale where she was interviewed about her work with CRL and ethnic minority groups. This was a great opportunity to promote the work of CRL and hopefully introduce more people to rail travel.

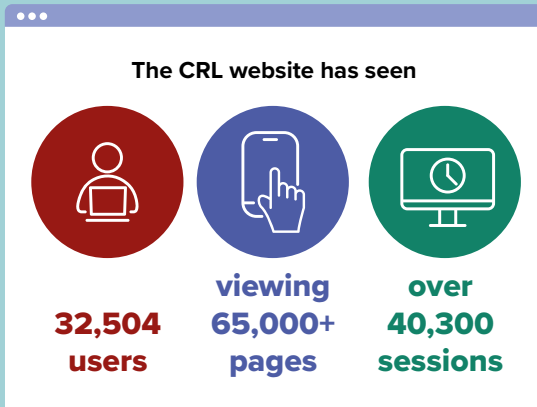


CRL Websites

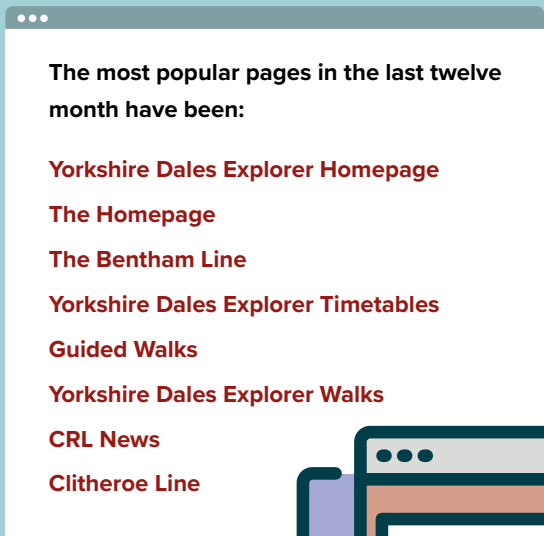
By Simon Clarke and Karen Bennett

communityraillancashire.co.uk

Website

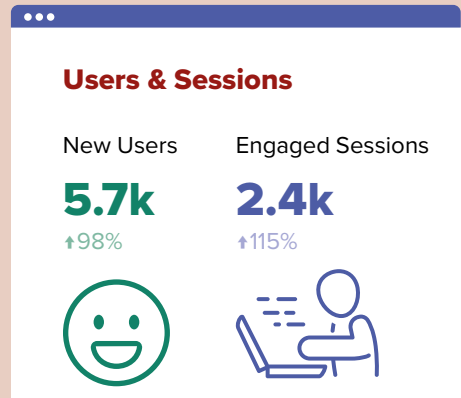
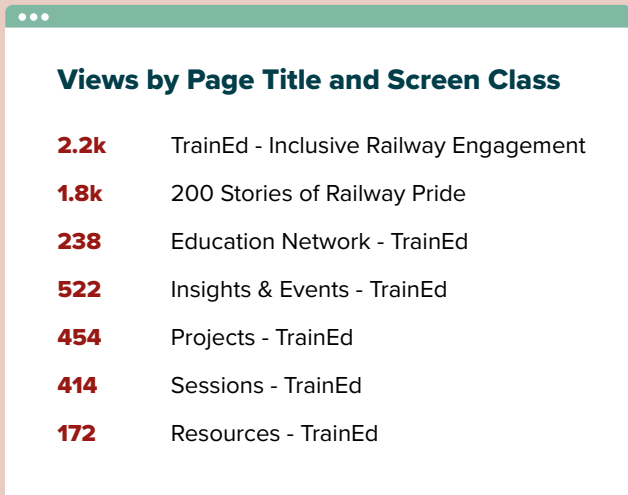


The website is updated on an almost daily basis and features pages for each individual community rail partnership, a large section on guided and self-guide walks, and our regularly updated events page which features local events accessible by rail.



TrainEd.website

Analytics





Social Media



The Community Rail Lancashire Facebook page

facebook.com/communityraillancashire has also been busy during 2025



with **731** followers



seeing **138** posts or shares.

The split of gender is roughly 50/50 and the age of followers is:

18 – 24:	1.4%
25 – 34:	11.3%
35 – 44:	18.5%
45 – 54:	24.7%
55 – 64:	23.9%
65+:	20.2%



Social Media



Financial Report

Prepared by Andrew Cowking, PM&M

5 year Income and Expenditure Account Summary

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021
	£	£	£	£	£
Income	543,772	551,436	506,412	399,423	251,391
Expenses					
Wages and salaries	(257,555)	(266,454)	(244,690)	(210,001)	(165,697)
Project costs	(222,044)	(244,964)	(209,113)	(159,008)	(54,170)
Overheads	(33,114)	(40,018)	(52,609)	(22,890)	(16,476)
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	-	-	-	-	-
Increase/(decrease) in income	(7.02%)	8.89%	26.79%	58.89%	(28.91%)
Wages as a % of income	50.23%	48.32%	48.32%	52.58%	65.91%
Project costs as a % of income	43.31%	44.42%	41.29%	39.81%	21.55%
Overheads % of income	6.46%	7.26%	10.39%	5.73%	6.55%

Income and expenses have remained consistent during the year at £544k (2024 - £551k), which reflects a healthy level of projects ongoing within the business..

The surplus or deficit is Nil for each year as the accounting policy is to match the income to the monies spent in the respective year and then carry forward any surplus to a subsequent year to fund future Unrestricted projects.

5 Year Balance Sheet Summary

	2025	2024	2023	2022	2021
	£	£	£	£	£
Fixed assets	727	1,085	1,532	1,631	2,435
Debtors	189	272	269	412	6,408
Cash at bank and in hand	249,182	220,552	351,993	337,783	247,984
Current assets	249,371	220,824	352,262	338,195	254,392
Current liabilities	(9,671)	(9,983)	(9,521)	(8,117)	(6,147)
Net current assets/(liabilities)	239,700	210,841	342,741	330,078	248,245
Total assets less current liabilities	240,427	211,926	344,273	331,709	250,680
Accruals and deferred income	(170,489)	(178,426)	(310,773)	(298,209)	(217,180)
Net assets	69,938	33,500	33,500	33,500	33,500
Reserves					
Charitable restricted funds	36,438	–	–	–	–
Other reserve	33,500	33,500	33,500	33,500	33,500
Members' funds	69,938	33,500	33,500	33,500	33,500

The Balance sheet is largely represented by cash held in the business, however, an element of the cash received is to be used for future projects. This income, which is effectively deferred to be used in future periods on future projects, is included in the line 'Accruals and deferred income' in the above Balance sheet summary.

Restricted funds

During the current year, the Company received funding from the Mobility Foundation towards the Travelling with Confidence Project. At the reporting date £49,626 of monies had been received and £13,188 had been expended, excess funds therefore of £36,438 had been received by the company which is to be used against future spend on this particular project. These unspent funds are held in a separate restricted reserve and will only be released in future periods in line with the agreed objectives of the project.



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