

25  
2001–2026

S O U V E N I R   B O O K L E T

**CRL**  
*Community Rail in Lancashire*

# CRL

Community Rail in Lancashire

## 25 YEARS OF COMMUNITY RAIL IN LANCASHIRE

2026 marks 25 years of Community Rail in Lancashire. Starting with the West of Lancashire Community Rail Partnership in 2001, community rail has developed across the county. With the formation of Community Rail Lancashire in 2016 the organisation has developed ever closer bonds with its local communities and the rail industry.

Throughout 2026 there will be a series of events to mark this landmark year which will involve all our partners in Lancashire and across the north of England.

“

It has been a privilege to oversee the development of Community Rail in Lancashire from its beginnings in 2001, when I worked for Lancashire County Council, to the organisation I oversee and manage today. I would like to thank all our many partners and funders for their support and encouragement over the last 25 years – we simply can't do this without you! 2026 will also mark big changes for the rail industry with the setting up of Great British Railways. So, to mark the first 25 years of Community Rail in Lancashire and a look to the future we are developing an ambitious programme of events throughout 2026 to showcase what we do and why it is important.”

**Richard Watts,**  
Chair,  
Community Rail Lancashire



“

I am thrilled that Community Rail Lancashire (CRL) has achieved this milestone. Chairman Richard Watts, whose brainchild it was, should be extremely proud of what he and his team have achieved over this period. I know the organisation has ambitious plans to continue into the next 25 years. Congratulations.”

**Tony Ford,**  
Chair,  
South Fylde Line CRP

“

It's wonderful to take the opportunity to mark the 25th year of Community Rail in Lancashire and the ongoing role played in bringing life to our local railway network in East Lancashire. The importance of connecting with communities has never been greater and I look forward to developing the next batch of initiatives with all of our volunteers and partners.”

**Mike Cliffe,**  
Chair Clitheroe &  
East Lancashire CRPs

“

Community Rail has done so much good across Lancashire during the 25 years it's been in operation. It's been a privilege to be involved over the past few years and to see the positive difference Community Rail has made in West Lancashire. I look forward to continuing to work with partners in 2026 and let's hope we can keep on benefitting the local area.”

**Stephen Benge,**  
Chair West of  
Lancashire CRP



## A Potted History of Community Rail in Lancashire

2001

### **The beginning of Community Rail in Lancashire:**

Saw the launch of the **West of Lancashire Community Rail Partnership (WofLCRP)**, the first CRP in Lancashire and one of the first in the UK.

2004

*In November the Strategic Rail Authority launches the Community Rail Development Strategy.*

2005

In April ACoRP (Association of Community Rail Partnerships) produced its report on the East Lancashire line called an 'Agenda for Development' and dubbed the route as the 'Sleeping Princess'. It recommended setting up a Community Rail Partnership for the line.

*The ELCRP was formally launched on Community Rail Day 20th May with a special headboard attached to unit 156 461 following a ceremony at Blackburn station and in September the DfT designated the line as a Community Rail service and line, the latter only applied to the route between Gannow Junction and Colne.*

2006

The year also saw the formation of the **Clitheroe Line Community Rail Partnership (CLCRP)** replacing the Clitheroe Line Development Group.

2006 also saw the start of the **Education Programme** at Daisyfield Primary School thanks to Mike Billingham, committee member of the ELCRP and Peter Fenton, the Head of Daisyfield Primary School. This quickly developed and today the education programme covers the whole of the north of England.

Working with schools has been a major feature of the work of all the Lancashire CRPs. It all started at Daisyfield Primary School, Blackburn where the ELCRP and local artist Alastair Nicholson worked with the pupils of the school to create a significant piece of artwork that became known as the 'Great Wall of Daisyfield'.

2007

Saw the launch of the **South Fylde Line Community Rail Partnership (SFLCRP)** and its designation by the DfT as a community rail service.

In November the DfT also formally designated the Clitheroe Line, between Bolton and Clitheroe/Hellifield as a community rail service.

2009





**Accrington Eco Station** was formally opened in November, and the 'Bunker' became the base for the Lancashire Community Rail Team and a destination for its educational programme. The station was part of the SusStations (Sustainable Stations) project which was part funded by the EU's Interreg IVb programme.

**2010**

23rd September saw the designation of the **West of Lancashire Community Rail Partnership** at the Community Rail Awards held in Sheffield as a line and service. The line designation applied to the Preston to Ormskirk line.

**2011**

Saw the creation of the animation 'Darren's Day Out' which formed part of the People, Planet, Film project that culminated in the Darwen Film Festival. The animation was created by over 150 pupils from schools in Darwen, Blackburn and Accrington and it was launched at a special premier at the Film Festival.

**2013**

Saw the opening of the new station building at Burnley Manchester Road. Funded as part of Citizens' Rail, a project developed as part of the EU's Interreg IVb programme.

**2014**

*Padiham Green CofE Primary School joined the celebrations to mark the opening of the new booking office and community facilities at Burnley Manchester Road station and the new Manchester service.*



Sunday 17th May saw the introduction of the new hourly 7 days a week Blackburn to Manchester Victoria via Burnley Manchester Rd service and the recently restored Todmorden West Curve.

**2015**

**2016**

11th February sees the formation of **Community Rail Lancashire (CRL)** as a company limited by guarantee. CRL covers 4 Lancashire CRPs and employs a team of specialists to deliver Community Rail on the ground.

Also saw CRL set up the Education Network which is now looked after by the Community Rail Network.

CRL launched its first educational website [downtheline.org.uk](http://downtheline.org.uk) the forerunner of today's [trained.website](http://trained.website)

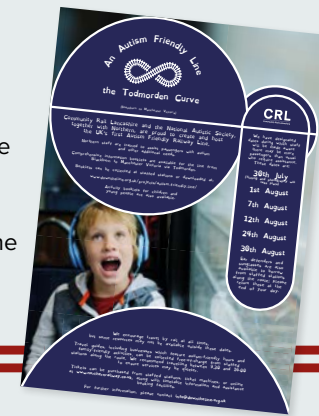
2017

In September the DfT launched 'Connecting Communities with Railways: The Community Rail Development Strategy'. This introduced the Accreditation process for CRPs which replaced the former line and service designations.

2018

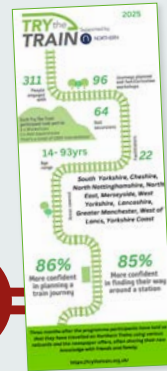
Working with the National Autistic Society, CRL set up the first Autism Friendly Railway Line between Blackburn and Manchester via Burnley and the Todmorden Curve.

2019



2020

CRL in partnership with Northern and PWLC set up a pilot programme called 'Try The Train'. This was a great success and the project continues to expand across the north of England.



Due to Covid lockdowns, it was not possible to continue live meetings of the Education Network so it was decided to move it online and invite other CRPs and railway staff to take part. The Education Network remains online and meets monthly but is now hosted by the Community Rail Network.

2023

2022

Saw CRL team up with Avanti West Coast to deliver **Feel Good Field Trips (FGFT)** to 5,000 students over two years. The total was beaten with over 5,300 students taking part in a FGFT.



**CRL in the community** - the opening of the Clitheroe Line A Picturesque Journey on the 6th August 2025 at the Platform 5 gallery at Bolton Station managed by the SE Lancashire CRP.

2024

2025

2026

CRL sets up the **Northern Education Network for CRPs**, railway staff and educationalists with live meetings taking place across the North of England. The inaugural meeting was held in Carnforth.

8th June saw the launch of the Saturdays only **Yorkshire Dales Explorer** between Manchester and Ribbleshead via Clitheroe. CRL is proud to support this service.

13th January Avanti West Coast arranged a Parliamentary reception to celebrate delivering 215 FGFTs to over 5,300 students, beating the original target of 5,000!

With Great British Railways to be set up this year, we look with excitement at the opportunities this presents for Community Rail Lancashire.





# CRL25

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[communityraillancashire.co.uk](http://communityraillancashire.co.uk)

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