

Community Rail Report

June 2025

AVANTI
WEST COAST



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Introduction

Welcome to the Avanti West Coast Community Rail Report for 2024–2025.

This report celebrates the dedication and hard work of our Community Rail Partnerships, who continue to go above and beyond to enrich the journeys of our passengers and the lives of those in the communities we serve. Through their commitment to community-led projects, support for local initiatives, and the nurturing of lasting relationships, they drive meaningful change and create a positive, lasting legacy.

As you explore this report, we hope it offers a window into the remarkable impact of our partners, made possible by the funding we provide and collaboration that shape everything we do.

While we take great pride in this year's successes, we remain committed to growth, progress, and continuous improvement. By working closely with our partners and communities, we believe we can shape a railway that is inclusive, resilient, and rooted in the needs of the people it serves—today and into the future.



Andy Mellors

Andy Mellors
Managing Director, Avanti West Coast

Summary

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Jo Buckley
Community Manager

Avanti West Coast remains committed to supporting the goals of the Department for Transport, the Community Rail Network, and all our CRPs—continuing to rebuild rail confidence and advancing local rail development.

This report underscores the vital contribution of Avanti West Coast, which has made it possible to deliver a variety of projects that champion sustainable travel, foster community involvement, and support educational outreach. Our participation in meetings and timely industry updates reflect our dedication to strong and effective partnership working.

Our Community Manager will continue to oversee the coordination and management of all three funding streams. Meanwhile, our Regional Growth Managers will maintain their central role in stakeholder engagement and in driving forward the vision of a collaborative, community-focused railway.

We're excited to continue working alongside our 18 CRPs throughout 2025–2026 to deliver an ambitious programme of innovative projects that strengthen the connection between communities and their local railway.



Dr. Theresa Robberts
Social Value Lead

At Avanti West Coast, our mission to be the transport of choice connecting our customers and communities along the West Coast. As a responsible business, we're committed to delivering social value activities that add significant benefits to the communities we serve. To this end, we have now created over £1 billion worth of social value and are focused on delivering even more.

We use the Rail Social Value Tool (RSVT) as recommended by RSSB to measure the impact of social value. Over the past financial year we have made progress which shows an increase of £107 million in social value impact from the previous year. It's great to see how far we've extended our reach into our communities, with over 150 projects at our stations and offices. We are well on our way to reaching our goal of becoming the leading train operator in the UK when it comes to creating, measuring and reporting social value.

This year's Social Value Report highlights our achievements not only in community engagement, but also in our quest to create sustainable jobs, promote diversity and inclusion, and invest in innovation and technology. These combined efforts from our staff and stakeholders clearly demonstrate our commitment to supporting social development and meeting the needs of the wider society. We celebrate the positive impact that our business activities have on the lives of individuals.

From 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, we contributed a total operational, environmental and economic impact worth £452,207,750.27.

Key Highlights

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Thomas Brassey Statue

Project Aim:

Honour Thomas Brassey's legacy – Recognise his vital contributions to global railway construction, especially in the UK.

Enhance Chester railway station's heritage value and complement the station's visual environment – add a culturally significant and visually striking landmark in line with Chester City Council's goals for public art in the area.

Celebrate Railway 200 – Mark the 200th anniversary of the railways with a fitting tribute.

Support local regeneration – Complement the Chester City Gateway scheme and public art goals.

Promote tourism and community pride – Increase footfall and Chester railway station and attract visitors, as the statue becomes a point of interest, and foster a stronger sense of local identity and history.

Encourage education and engagement – Inspire schools and community groups through historical learning and related activities.

CRP: 3 Counties Connected CRP
Funding Contribution: £2,500



Rails to Trails

Project Aim:

Improving Mental Health and Wellbeing

Structured walking programmes tailored to specific groups help participants manage anxiety, depression, and other mental health challenges, supported by a Mental Health Practitioner or Walk Leader.

Promoting Social Connections

Walks offer a safe, inclusive space to reduce isolation and build a sense of community through shared experiences.

Encouraging Physical Activity

Participants join four progressive, four-hour walks over four weeks, with built-in rest breaks and increasing distance to boost confidence and fitness.

Building Resilience and Independence

The walks highlight the link between physical and mental health, equipping individuals with effective coping strategies.

Challenging Stigma

Starting from local railway stations, the programme sparks conversations about mental health and encourages openness within the community.

Strengthening Community Links

By exploring local surroundings, participants connect with nearby resources and appreciate what's on their doorstep

CRP: Conwy Valley & North Wales Coast CRP
Funding Contribution: £10,000



New Fleet of Refreshment Trolleys

Project Aim:

The refreshment trolleys had been in service for over 20 years and had become irreparable and needed replacing. The project was to replace six trolleys with new, bespoke models, made locally.

Providing the new trolleys has protected the local jobs of the seven people who work on the service, by ensuring the on-board service can continue.

We're supporting local independent suppliers of coffee, cakes, and snacks located along the line.

For local passengers and visitors exploring what Lonely Planet has hailed as 'The Most Scenic Line in Europe', our service enriches their travel experience—offering not just a memorable journey, but a welcome drink and snack for those boarding at some of England's most remote stations.

The project has strengthened the local economy along the route, while securing a sustainable future for employment and passenger transport services.

CRP: Settle Carlisle Railway Development Company CRP
Funding Contribution: £3,000

Hidden Gems

Project Aim:

Hidden Gems: Preston has been an art and photography project involving children and young people from two different schools in Preston.

The project has culminated in a permanent new artwork installed at Preston Railway Station on Platform 7 that celebrates the diverse people and places of Preston.

The children and young people involved conducted interviews, went on photography walks around Preston and took an active role in the design of the new artwork.

This large-scale artwork is a very visual display of the community's voice on what and who should be showcased and celebrated within Preston during the *Railway 200* year.

To celebrate their involvement in the project the children and young people visited Preston Railway Station, took part in a rail safety workshop, and went on train trip out.

Despite going to school and college within walking distance of the railway station for some participants this was the first time they had ever been to the railway station at Preston.

CRP: Community Rail Lancashire
Funding Contribution: £5,900



Wonders of Wigan

Project Aim:

To develop new artwork to celebrate the history and heritage of landmarks in Wigan (including links with Railway 200).

Working with the local community, the CRP created a campaign entitled 'Wonders of Wigan' and used social media, online surveys and post-boxes located in various town centre locations, asking people to nominate their favourite Wigan buildings of past and present to feature in a photographic mural.

The CRP worked with local photographers and university graduates to collect and commission a range of archive and modern images, producing black and white designs that celebrate a range of our iconic Wigan buildings.

The mural also features both Wigan North Western and Wigan Wallgate stations, and was created as part of Railway 200, marking the 200th anniversary of the birth of the modern railway.

CRP: South East Lancashire CRP
Funding Contribution: £19,000





Annual Community Rail Conference

Was held at the White Eagle Club, a venue managed by the Stafford and District Polish Association and used by people in the local area.

We showcased initiatives delivered across the West Coast Main Line and the value it has brought to local communities, highlighting collaborations with different organisations and people, including artists, poets as well as schools.

Attendees heard from Avanti West Coast's Managing Director, Andy Mellors, and Social Value Lead Dr Theresa Robberts, with presentations from Community Rail Network and CRPs who showcased projects they had delivered.



During the conference CRPs discussed the importance of connecting people with the railway and offered practical tips on how to do this.

They also took part in a session to create ideas for Railway 200, a year-long nationwide campaign that started in January 2025 to celebrate 200 years of the modern railway to encourage funding applications to deliver activities associated with the celebrations.

Feedback from our CRPs



Partneriaeth Rheilffordd
Cymunedol Dyffryn Conwy ac
Arfordir Gogledd Orllewin Cymru

Conwy Valley and North West
Wales Coast Community Rail
Partnership





As always, we are so grateful for the support given to us by Avanti West Coast.

Funding has contributed to the core running costs of the organisation as well as projects aligned with the four pillars of community rail.

We've had another great year 'Connecting Communities with their Railway' in so many ways. We've got 'Try The Train' trips up and running for schools and community groups, as well as providing online rail safety training for schools up and down the line, via our partner LearnLive UK.

Work continues to create a wildlife-friendly community garden in an unused piece of land at Garston Station, and further station enhancements are taking place with the upkeep of planters and exhibiting local art works, also a new Station Adoption group at St Albans Abbey Station.

We were grateful for the invitation to Avanti West Coasts' Community Rail Conference. We were inspired by the many projects showcased there, and are seeking to emulate the murals at Stafford station back at Watford Junction.

Other activities have included: Timetable and Rail Trail leaflet distribution, lobbying on accessibility issues on our local line, getting out and about at community events and during Community Rail Week, a travel survey and exploring what activities local residents would like the Abbey Line Community Rail Partnership to undertake. And finally kicking off our Railway 200 celebrations with the production of a short film and planned events and activities throughout 2025.

The core funding from Avanti West Coast, and other train operators, remains vital for the Leeds-Morecambe Community Rail Partnership (LMCRP) to function effectively. The majority of this funding goes towards the salaries of our most valuable resource, our two part-time Community Rail Officers, who are both employed for 22 hours per week. Without them, it would be impossible to undertake our wide range of activities. The remaining funding goes towards the many community-orientated projects undertaken by the officers and the running costs of the CRP from our headquarters at Bentham station.

The Leeds-Morecambe Community Rail Partnership (LMCRP) continues to work at good pace and with a positive effect across a wide range of projects. Some examples are set out below.

The officers undertake educational activities with the schools and colleges along the route. Recent rail safety, rail history and art educational projects have been undertaken with schools in Gargrave and Heysham. Cedar House Special School in Low Bentham have recently been Learn Live working with the partnership.

The LMCRP continues to develop its award-winning Dementia and Community Rail project. The partnership has made an initial enquiry of the Avanti Station Manager at Lancaster as we would still like Avanti staff to participate in our dementia awareness sessions. A number of our group visits for people living with dementia and their supporters use the line right through to Morecambe. This was the case with a visit, last month, by a larger group from a Calderdale dementia club in Halifax.

Two new large pictorial panels reflecting on the history of the local railways in the Lancaster area have now been prepared for the waiting room on platforms 4 and 5 at Lancaster. Their themes are 'Lancaster's Locomotive Legacy' and the 'Lancaster and Glasson Dock Branch Line'.

An travelling exhibition of 20 history posters relating to the Bentham Line has been created by the CRP which we have agreed to trail at Lancaster Castle station, on the over bridge and in the waiting room on platforms 4 and 5. The current canopy work has resulted in this being postponed for the moment.

In 2025 we have been, and will be, celebrating not only Railway 200 but also the 175th anniversary of the completion of the Bentham Line on 1st June 1850, when the last part of the route between Bentham and Clapham was completed. We celebrated the 175th anniversary of the completion of the route on 1st June with a special carriage on the 08:31 Leeds to Morecambe service and the return working from Morecambe at 15:39. LMCRP funders and stakeholders were invited to join us, along with local community groups and individuals, including some with hidden disabilities, for the commemorative ride, band concert and resort tour by vintage doubler-decker bus.

The LMCRP and the Friends of Bentham Station (FOBS) have featured strongly in all forms of media over the past month. There have been, articles, interviews and podcasts with Railway 200, the Alzheimer's Society, the Community Rail Network and the BBC across all its northern radio stations and website.

I can see 2025/26 being just as busy.





In 2024/5 the core contribution from Avanti West Coast enabled the Cambrian Railway Partnership to continue to work with the people who live and work close to the railway.

We have had a partnership refresh during the year and changed host to PAVO. We have a very active chair and Vice Chair.

We have also rethought what we want our Community Rail Officer to be and have recruited a new Community Rail Development Officer and she has been out meeting communities up and down the Cambrian line (Main and Coast) Since middle of February and re-engaged with them. We have just launched a Rail 200 grant for groups and communities on or near the Cambrian Line to apply to do a Railway 200 based project.

We are looking forward to working closely with communities in the next financial year building on the work we have been doing with your core contribution.



Core and project funding from partners, including Avanti West Coast, has been vital in delivering meaningful, community-rooted initiatives celebrating heritage, promoting inclusion, and fostering pride along the Chester–Shrewsbury–Crewe railway corridor.

With your support, we delivered Timeless Tracks in Minera, a heritage storytelling and arts project involving 30+ residents. It culminated in a printed booklet and Victorian-themed launch event attended by over 150 people. Booklet proceeds are funding local wellbeing initiatives, demonstrating lasting social and economic impact.

Confidence-building rail trips were provided, including a visit to Shrewsbury for mental health group KIM Inspire, reducing travel anxiety and inspiring future outings. In Wrexham, the Hiraeth project engaged people affected by exclusion and homelessness through art and storytelling, hosted at the Miners Rescue Station, a revitalised community venue now enjoying renewed footfall.

Your funding also helped us gain national recognition, winning Best Kept Station (Nantwich) and the Art Project Award (Wrenbury) at the Cheshire Best Kept Stations Awards, reflecting the strength of our community and creative partnerships.

We also led Tourism Connect, a cross-border campaign promoting low-impact tourism under #3CountiesByRail. Working with regional partners, we produced bilingual maps, microsites, and a successful PR campaign, reaching over 45,000 readers and distributing 4,000+ maps.

This support has elevated our role in regional planning—we've been invited to join the World Heritage Site Management Group, highlighting our growing influence in sustainable tourism and place-making. Your investment continues to amplify the reach and value of community rail across our region.





Community Rail Cumbria (CRC) continues to value the strong and growing partnership with Avanti West Coast, whose financial and non-financial support enables a range of impactful community initiatives.

Core and project funding has supported collaboration with station staff at Carlisle, Penrith, Oxenholme, and Lancaster, contributing to infrastructure projects and award-winning campaigns like Feel Good Field Trips and Feel Good Futures.

Recent highlights include:

- Funding to co-host a Careers Event at Carlisle with Community Rail Lancashire
- Formation of a new station adoption group at Carlisle in partnership with Andy's Man Club, with potential expansion to Oxenholme
- Installation of student artwork from Kendal College at Oxenholme Station
- Display of local artist pieces in the Oxenholme underpass

Regular engagement with the Regional Growth Manager, Community Manager and Community Champions has strengthened ties.

Complimentary travel support is appreciated, allowing CRC to participate in conferences across the UK. The enthusiasm and involvement of Avanti staff continues to be invaluable in driving meaningful community engagement along the West Coast Main Line.





Feel Good Field Trips

Community Rail Lancashire (CRL), in partnership with Avanti West Coast, delivered over 215 Feel Good Field Trips, engaging 5,300 students aged 5–18 from 105 schools surpassing the 5,000 target. Dave Savage personally attended 120 trips, with support from CRL and Avanti staff on 40 more. These educational journeys explored destinations along the West Coast Mainline, supported by over 40 community venues and partners such as Fell Foodie (Lake District), The Dukes (Lancaster), and Soho Sonic Studios (London), enriching students' learning and supporting local economies.

Feel Good Futures

Building on this success, CRL has launched Feel Good Futures, a new STEM and careers-focused programme for Years 9–12. Funded again by Avanti West Coast, this initiative includes visits to Alstom depots and interactive workshops with Network Rail and the London Transport Museum aimed at inspiring the next generation of railway professionals.

Preston Station History Talk

On 14 April 2025, UCLan History students Emily and Josh delivered an engaging talk at Lancashire Archives on the development of Preston Station. Using sources from Lancashire Archives, Peter Fitton, and Winckley Square Friends, the event drew 50 attendees.

[More info](#)

The English Queen – Railway 200 Project

Marking 50 years since Queen Elizabeth II opened the West Coast Line electrification at Preston, pupils took part in immersive history sessions at Lancashire Archives, tracing the railway's evolution. Five primary schools have piloted the programme, now set to become a regular educational offer.

Preston Station Artwork

With Avanti West Coast's support, CRL collaborated with Project Search interns and St Stephen's Primary to produce a new large-scale artwork at Preston Station, under the artistic guidance of Gosha Gibek

CRL
Community Rail Lancashire



Both Core and Grant funding from Avanti West Coast is key to linking communities with their railway.

This year we were fortunate to be awarded money from Avanti West Coast which has allowed collaborative working with Conwy Mind, supporting local people living with poor mental health and struggling to engage with others and the outdoors through wellbeing and map reading walks. T

The project was aimed at three different groups to include Men, Women experiencing perimenopause/menopause and young people aged 18-24. During the walks, the programme integrated tailored activities to address various issues such as social anxiety, depression, isolation, loneliness, confidence, low mood and community engagement.

The series of walks allowed people to come together, learn new skills, meet new people, and rebuild their confidence in public transport. Most importantly, it improved participants mental and physical health and formed new lasting friendship groups.



Partneriaeth Rheilffordd
Cymunedol Dyffryn Conwy ac
Arfordir Gogledd Orllewin Cymru

Conwy Valley and North West
Wales Coast Community Rail
Partnership





The Community Rail Partnerships continue to hold a number of meetings at Stockport Station using the Conference Room, on platforms 3-4, as this is a convenient and welcoming room to use. Meetings include the majority of our Management meetings & The Crewe to Manchester Station Friends Group meeting. We also meet with our colleagues from The High Peak and Hope Valley CRP as we're working on our joint project – The Steel Cotton Trail – a rail/walking route between Sheffield and Manchester, which hopefully will be launch in late 2025. The station has also facilitated meetings of the Cheshire Best Kept Stations committee.

Thomson Street Bridge Mural

The Community Rail Officers have work on a number of project with the Avanti team, at Stockport, such as the Thompson St Bridge mural project, led by Cheshire Wildlife Trust along with ARC Network Rail, local artist Lucy Burgess and a team of volunteers, which was complete in the summer of 2024 and has been extremely well received by the local community and commuters.

View Through a train window/Edgeley Approach art project

Avanti staff have continued to provide support, help and advice with the View Through a Train Window art project, especially during the installation of the artwork in Sept 2024 and with the official launch, which took place in Oct '24, hosted by Avanti with refreshments and a photographer organised by them for the event. This project has had a huge impact on the Edgeley approach to the station with many positive comments received and a booklet, both hard print and online versions, has been produced to accompany the project which includes all the artwork, details about the groups and artists who have contributed to this project. Link to online version of the booklet - [flipbook link](#)

We continue to discuss, with Avanti West Coast and partner organisations such as Mid Cheshire CRP, Groundworks and Plastic Shed, other project ideas (for Stockport station) including the development of a bee garden on platforms 3 & 4 and also the possibility of installing artwork to bright up the underpass areas.

Crewe 2 Manchester CRP are also working with North Staffordshire CRP on the possibility of developing and holding a Railway 200 event at Crewe station in early 2026.

All this wouldn't be possible without the funding and the goodwill provided by Avanti West Coast and their staff.





2024 marked the 5th anniversary of the Heart of England CRP, celebrated with a special event reflecting on key achievements and the vital support from funders like Avanti West Coast.

Core funding enabled the continuation of our educational programme and the launch of the Wild Rails initiative. We also supported a further year of the LearnLive Rail Safe Friendly programme, engaging 45 local schools to promote safe rail travel.

We're especially grateful for Avanti's continued backing, from supporting Coventry Station Adopters to offering use of the Avanti Community Room.

Highlights included a visit to the Coventry Model Train Club for Life Path citizens, where the Avanti Pendolino Pride model made a popular appearance.

The 200 Journey's project which aspires to take 200 groups of Coventry and Warwickshire school children to visit 200 stations on the UK rail network over the course of 2025 is underway. The first trip, like many of the journeys started from Coventry and was supported by Avanti West Coast and West Midlands Trains. Avanti CEO Andy Mellors attended and hosted a 'Meet the CEO Session' which was lots of fun!





Marston Vale Community Rail Partnership (MVCRP) is very grateful for the continuing core funding provided by Avanti West Coast.

The core funding has enabled MVCRP to produce a new Marston Vale Line Guide with details of attractions along the Line & discounts for rail passengers and a simplified timetable. The Line Guide has been widely distributed across the area and is available to download from the MVCRP website.

The core funding has also facilitated the launch of MVCRP's 'Try the Train' programme giving a wide range of community groups to experience an accompanied journey to Ridgmont Station Heritage Centre and other destinations. Participating organisations have included Autism Bedfordshire, the PLACE Programme (support service for home educating families), and Passport to Leisure (a group of adults with learning difficulties and on the autism spectrum from St Albans).

The MVCRP Officer attended the Avanti West Coast Community Rail Conference held at Stafford on 11th December 2024, which proved to be a really inspiring and enjoyable event with great networking opportunities.

We look forward to continuing to work with Avanti West Coast in particular promoting travel to and from Milton Keynes Central and supporting the new 'Feel Good Futures' programme for secondary schools to visit locations on the Avanti network linked to railway careers. We also look forward to working together to celebrate Railway 200.





In 2024/25, Avanti West Coast's Core Funding empowered the Heart of Wales Line Community Rail Partnership to continue to engage with those who live and work near the railway.

Our Make and Trade Network from independent businesses now features over 100 innovative shops, producers and makers who are a vital part of the social and economic development in the rural areas served by the line. Each business has a listing on the website and the project has seen our website and social media visitors rise by 20% in the last 3 months of the financial year. Work began on a guidebook featuring each town on the line, along with the businesses based there and this will be released in Summer 2025.

We have provided guided walks for wellbeing as part of our core activities. Walking Connections was initially funded by Avanti West Coast in the previous financial year, and we have continued this in 2024/25. We have supported a group of asylum seekers based in Swansea for a walk in Llandeilo, and also worked with mental health support groups and will continue to work with other groups who could benefit from quality outdoor time and travel training in the future.

We have been celebrating Railway 200 with an evolving display at Llandrindod Station, collecting stories, photos and memories from people, looking for new connections with the line. This will continue through the celebration year and will include an 8-metre model of Llandrindod Station made by a local community group, and a mobile heritage display that will be exhibited in towns close to the line.





We thoroughly enjoyed the Avanti West Coast Community Rail conference in December,, thank you for having us. Since then, we've begun developing a new project connecting Stockport to the Buxton line, collaborating with 'No Jobs in the Arts' to work with young artists on a *Creative Journeys* initiative for Railway200.

We continue working with South East Manchester CRP on the Steel Cotton Rail Trail, a walking route from Sheffield to Manchester Piccadilly via the canal network. We regularly meet at Stockport station and appreciate both the meeting space and supportive staff. We also share promotional materials with South East Manchester CRP and Stockport Railway station.

We were awarded Silver at the Community Rail Awards, for our successful marketing campaign on the Buxton line. This included artworks by Stockport artist Eammon Murphy and a short film showcasing the highlights along the route to encourage more visitors as well as a prolonged campaign on social media.

Thanks to Avanti West Coast funding, we've been able to support our new freelance marketing co-ordinator, Vicky Frost, whose social media work has greatly expanded our reach. We look forward to further collaboration with Avanti in 2025/26.





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The key initiatives and outcomes achieved in 2024-2025 were:

Following consultation with Partners, and the valuable support of Cheshire West Voluntary Action, the Partnership successfully transitioned from an unincorporated association to a Community Interest Company, appointing its initial Directors and establishing functioning governance from 1 April 2025. The recruitment began for a new Community Rail Development Officer to provide the "engine-room" to drive the Partnership forwards, with the intention that the successful candidate would be in post by the end of the first quarter of 2025-2026

An updated strategy for the Partnership was developed in close consultation with Partners, and adopted at the end of the year. This has four themes which support the Partnership's Vision of "Everyone Proud of our Railways": Stations in their Place; Access to, and Promotion of, affordable Journey Opportunities; Health and Wellbeing; and Research, Education & Employment. The strategy also explicitly committed to working with the whole of the Runcorn and Warrington communities, and thus extended the footprint to include Runcorn and Warrington Bank Quay stations where it is intended to develop initiatives in 2025-2026

Community projects progressed during the year included: Travel research with University of Chester; Outdoor Gym equipment for Elton; Design for Active Travel information at Frodsham station with development work underway for a number of other initiatives that were due to be implemented in early 2025-2026, including partnership with Frodsham's 2025 Festival of Walks and the support to the installation of the new Thomas Brassey statue at Chester station.



The Mid Cheshire CRP is extremely grateful for continued funding from Avanti West Coast, which enables us to deliver station improvements and inclusive community projects along our line.

Mid Cheshire CRP aims to promote rail confidence in groups who may face challenges to travelling by train. This year we used part of our funds to contribute towards costs for special music train events for Cheshire and Warrington Carers Trust, Opal Carers Trust and Chester Vision Support. These groups enjoyed specially organised day time Music Train events where they enjoyed live music on the train and a pub meal with the majority of costs covered by the CRP.

In 2025, we'll continue supporting station enhancements, accessible rail days out, and activities marking Railway 200.

Recent projects include work at Stockport station with Crewe to Manchester and South East Manchester CRPs to create a bee-friendly garden at Platform 3, transforming a shrubbed area into a pollinator haven. We also plan to collaborate with a local artist to install underpass artwork at Stockport station.





North Staffordshire Community Rail Partnership appreciates the ongoing support from Avanti West Coast including their contribution to the core costs of the CRP, project funding and the wider support of the Avanti team.

The core funding contributes towards the employment of two part-time Community Rail Officers and enables us to engage with communities, educational establishments, charities and other partners and continue our work in promoting rail travel, improving stations and supporting station volunteers.

We value the relationships that we have built with Avanti staff particularly the Community Manager, Regional Growth Manager, Station Managers and Community Champions. Staff are actively involved in community rail activities at their stations and support us during our annual Heritage Open Days activities by providing spaces and access for the tours and talks we organise and, at Crewe Station, staff lead tours sharing the station's rich railway history.

Avanti staff recently supported a volunteering day at Stafford Station, alongside staff from Network Rail, to build planters from recycled materials which will contain pollinator friendly plants and be maintained by a local Scout group. Station staff collected pallets which were broken down to build planters and bird houses to create a garden area. Avanti provided funding for the compost and plants and assisted with the dismantling of the pallets and build of the planters. Avanti have also recently confirmed funding for additional projects at Stafford Station and we look forward to working with them on these over the next twelve months.





South East Lancashire Community Rail Partnership are grateful to have received a range of support from Avanti West Coast over the past 12 months. Firstly, we are thankful for the essential annual core funding that contributes to the employment of our full-time officer and our recently appointed part time officer, so they can undertake both ongoing daily tasks and specific project management for the CRP.

Secondly, South East Lancashire Community Rail Partnership are pleased to have been granted CRP Project funding for 'Wigan Mural Phase Two', to produce artwork for a different part of the underpass at Wigan North Western Station. In this project we have been asking the local community to nominate their favourite Wigan buildings of past and present, to form part of a unique photographic mural. We then worked with local photographers and University graduates to collect and commission a range of archive and modern images, producing black and white designs that celebrate a range of our iconic Wigan buildings. The mural also features Wigan North Western, Wigan Wallgate, Hindley, and the old Wigan Central station, and links to this years 'Railway 200' celebrations.

As well as financial support, South East Lancashire Community Rail Partnership also values the relationships that have been built and maintained between Avanti staff and the CRP, in particular with our CRP Officer. Going forward we are hopeful this will extend to our new part-time Officer who is an expert in social history and creative writing as well as having a detailed knowledge of local traditional foods. Additionally, we are grateful to have been invited to the Avanti annual Community Rail Conference which gives us an opportunity to share our work and learn about other fantastic initiatives being supported by Avanti West Coast.

We therefore greatly value the ability to approach, ask for assistance and input from Avanti in a variety of ways, and are pleased to continue into this financial year with Avanti West Coast as a key stakeholder for our community rail partnership.

Thanks to Avanti's continued support, Rail74 CRP delivered another year of creativity, connection and community-led action. Whether it's a first train ride to London, a smile on the platform, or a volunteer's voice shared through a plaque – we are building pride, inclusion and lasting rail confidence across South Lanarkshire.

Non-financial support from Avanti included:

- Collaboration with Avanti's media team for press coverage, storytelling and national profile-raising of our initiatives.
- Advice and encouragement throughout the year, helping us link into the wider CRP network and overcome local delivery challenges with confidence.
- Strategic input that strengthened our approach to rail inclusion, especially for children and passengers with additional support needs.
- Recognition of our innovation, resilience and people-focused work – helping Rail74 CRP go further and connect deeper.

Our core funding support this year has allowed the following to happen in our communities:

- Hosting collaborative and inclusive community meetings
- Growing awareness of community rail
- Securing over £42,000 in funding
- Taking a group of pupils from St Charles Primary School (Newton) on an unforgettable trip to London, made possible by Avanti's support.
- Engaging with pupils from an Additional Support Needs school
- Delivering Phase 2 of the Travelling Classroom: Inclusivity Matters project
- Running our onboard Conversation Café
- Creating and launching "Hope in Hamilton", our first carriage-side interactive artwork.
- Taking our volunteers on a behind-the-scenes visit to the Alstom depot
- Rolling out the "Sound Like a Volunteer" project
- Reaching over 5,000 pupils through rail safety sessions in 14 schools
- Continuing our partnership with 6VT Youth CRP
- Boosting our digital reach





The support of Avanti West Coast has enabled the Settle Carlisle Railway Development Company CRP to improve and enhance our passenger experience when travelling along 'The most scenic line in Europe', as named by Lonely Planet Publishers.

The funding provided by Avanti West Coast for our on-board refreshment service has allowed us to replace our worn out 20-year-old trolleys with new ones that will ensure the continuation of this service, which our passengers really appreciate.

We are very grateful for the support we receive from Avanti West Coast with guidance, advice and the opportunity to discuss community rail project ideas at the annual Community Rail Conference.

The financial and non-financial support we receive from Avanti West Coast is vital in improving and developing our work with communities along our line, and we are grateful for their support.





Avanti West Coast's ongoing support is crucial in helping to fund an officer and provide a revenue budget for TVCRP.

2024-2025 saw two major capital projects, which received financial support from Avanti, come to fruition. The long-term project to improve waiting rooms and convert the redundant station buildings at Haltwhistle into offices/studios saw tenants move into the four new studios in autumn 2024. In September 2024, TVCRP opened the restored Water Tower at Haltwhistle as a café and events space. This new facility is proving very popular. Monthly makers markets are being held on the adjacent forecourt area with other events utilising both TVCRP's Old Booking Hall and the Water Tower. The café is providing support for the local economy with new jobs, use of local suppliers during the building restoration and for the food offer as well as the new venue for local makers at the monthly markets. Both projects have given Haltwhistle a makeover encouraging more people to travel by train.

Our Officer had the opportunity to join two Feel Good Field Trips. This helped TVCRP to develop a better understanding of the programme and to develop links with schools with whom they had not previously worked. During one of the trips, it was apparent that students had very limited knowledge of the career opportunities provided by the rail industry resulting in a project idea to develop a rail safety/careers day at Carlisle in partnership with Community Rail Cumbria.

Attendance at both the Stakeholder and Community Conferences are both learning and networking opportunities. Providing an opportunity for officers and volunteers to meet and sometimes travel together – useful work time to discuss and create new projects. The Stakeholder event in 2024 provided an unusual opportunity for us, taking Edmondson the Sheep to Liverpool was quite an experience for the TVCRP team, rail staff and passengers. Quirky but it did help us to showcase how rail travel can get people to Hadrian's Wall Country.



Principles of Funding

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Community Rail Network are pleased to have worked closely and collaboratively with Avanti West Coast again this year.

We confirm that the allocations of CRP core funding (the 'CRP Amount') as listed in this report were discussed with ourselves and that sufficient account has been taken of our views and recommendations.

Recognition for the need to protect these amounts demonstrates the value placed on community rail by staff at all levels of the business and assists CRPs address running cost challenges and to make longer-term funding plans.

Provision of a generous fund for community rail projects is a welcome aspect of the offer to community rail organisations with several high profile projects supported and making an impact across the network this year

Over the last year we have been pleased to share ideas and work closely with the Community Manager and Regional Growth Managers on station adoption, joint funding schemes for CRP projects and to deliver workshops at Avanti West Coast events and their annual Community Rail conference.



Paul Webster
Regions Support Manager
Community Rail Network

Core Funding

Funding allocation guidance from the DfT and Community Rail Network was sought, the table details the funding plans in relation to the CRP amount provided to each of our Community Rail Partnerships:

CRP	Annual Allocation
Abbey Line CRP	£7159.35
Bentham Line CRP	£7159.35
Bolton & South Lancashire CRP	£7159.35
Cambrian Railways Partnership	£7159.35
Chester-Shrewsbury Rail Partnership	£14,318.69
Community Rail Cumbria	£14,318.69
Community Rail Lancashire	£14,318.69
Conwy Valley Rail Partnership	£7,159.35
Crewe 2 Manchester CRP	£14,318.69
Heart of England CRP	£14,318.69
Heart of Wales Development Company	£7,159.35
High Peak Hope Valley CRP	£7,159.35
Marston Vale CRP	£7,159.35
Mid Cheshire CRP	£14,318.69
North Cheshire CRP	£14,318.69
North Staffordshire CRP	£7,159.35
Rail 74 (South Lanarkshire)	£7,159.35
Settle-Carlisle Development Company	£7,159.35
South East Manchester CRP	£7,159.35
Tyne Valley CRP	£7,159.35
Total	£193,302.37

Project Funding

In accordance with the Franchise Agreement, we made available three sources of funding to our CRPs:

- CRP Amount
- Station Community Fund
- CRP Project Fund

The CRP Amount refers to the funding to be paid (as determined by Community Rail Network) to each CRP as previously detailed. Payment is made on an annual basis and is payable within 30 days of the contract year start date. These funds are intended to support CRP operations and activities are made without pre-conception to their use.

In 2024/25, we allocated £37,400 to support the implementation of five projects, as detailed in the case studies featured earlier in this report.

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