



Community Rail

Accredited Partnership

2025-26



ANNUAL REPORT

2025-26

Connecting communities with their railway



View from the Chair

April 1825 was pivotal in the building of the Newcastle and Carlisle Railway – the engineer tasked with building a canal to link the east and west coasts announced it would be cheaper to build a railway. 13 years later the Newcastle-Carlisle Railway was open with new stations, Newcastle Central and Carlisle Citadel, opening in 1850 and 1863 respectively. Many railway innovators of the 19th century including Thomas Edmondson, George Stephenson, Timothy Hackworth are associated with our area, and few people were aware that the iconic locomotive, Rocket, ended its working life at Brampton. 2025-26 gave us the opportunity to celebrate 200 years of railways as part of the national Railway 200 events. Read about some of our Railway 200 projects and the success of one project at the national Community Rail Awards in the following pages.

Following our long campaign, the December 2025 timetable saw improvements to the frequency of services stopping at some stations including Bardon Mill and Brampton which gained an hourly service. We asked for your opinions about the new timetable, and I am grateful to everyone who responded to our consultation. Your feedback will be considered as we strive for more improvements to services which will meet the needs of the passengers.

Recruitment of new Directors remains a challenge. To ensure the sustainability of the Partnership enabling it to meet the objectives of the Department for Transport's Community Rail Strategy, a recruitment campaign will be a priority in the year ahead.

The year brought personal challenges to key people in the Partnership, and I extend my thanks to CRP Officer, Fiona, the directors, the Water Tower Café team, our volunteers, rail industry and community rail partners for their support and commitment to our continued success.

Looking to the future, we will strive to maximise the opportunities created by Great British Railways for the benefit of communities of the Tyne Valley Railway area.

Malcolm Chainey

Finance

The accounts for 2025-26 confirm the Partnership continues to operate with a positive balance, albeit there has been a need to provide financial support to the Water Tower Café whilst the business develops. We appreciate the work undertaken by Finance Director, Peter Sloan, who as reported last year resigned from the role in October 2025. Colin Moore has undertaken the role of Finance Director until 31 March with Anne Ridley assuming the role from 1 April 2026.

Water Tower Café

Having opened the café in September 2024, our efforts have focussed on building a successful



business despite the well-publicised challenges impacting on the hospitality sector throughout the country. Now open six days a week, opening hours have been adjusted to reflect trading conditions. We strive to support the economy of the Tyne Valley Railway area; we employ seven part-time staff and use local suppliers whenever possible.

The café turnover benefitted from the **monthly makers markets** held on adjacent railway forecourt and in the Old Booking Hall. These also supported the local craft and food producers, who had a new venue to sell their products.



The 1861 water tower is a Grade 2 listed building and its restoration to transform it into a café was recognised with a Highly Commended Certificate in December at the **National Railway Heritage Awards**.

Celebrating 200 years of railways – innovation and inspiration for the future

The national Railway 200 celebrations provided us with the inspiration to undertake a series of projects.

Two of these involved working with schools in the Brampton area; The staff and children from Hallbankgate Village School and Lanercost CoE Primary School participated in the project entitled **Song for Edmondson**. Singer songwriters, Gareth and Bronwen Davies-Jones helped the children research the history of Brampton Railway Station, its association with 19th century railway innovator, Thomas Edmondson, and the reason why the station is so far from the town. Using their new found knowledge, the children helped to write the lyrics for new songs which they performed in Lanercost Priory. This project was awarded first prize at the national Community Rail Awards 2026.



The subsequent project with Brampton's William Howard School saw Gareth and Bronwen working with GCSE music students exploring the history and legacy of Stephenson's locomotive Rocket. The lyrics created during the project entitled **Rocket: Past, Present and Future** reflected on the history of Rocket; from its success at the Rainhill Trials to the end of its working life hauling minerals near Brampton; how it was saved for the nation and how it now provides inspiration for innovation for railways of the future. The three new songs were performed by the students in The Fraternity, Carlisle Cathedral.



There is now a display at Brampton Railway Station featuring the lyrics of the songs created during these two projects. Watch the performances at Lanercost Priory and The Fraty at <https://www.youtube.com/@tynevalleycommunityrailpar1598/playlists>.



During the year, we hosted a series of **talks** and events in the Old Booking Hall at Haltwhistle featuring a variety of rail related topics. These were extremely popular with some attendees travelling from as far away as Morpeth and Gretna.



We again participated in the **Tyne Valley Film Festival** with a railway-themed film, Hitchcock's Strangers on a Train, shown to a packed Old Booking Hall.

Sadly, our bid for a blue plaque recognising Thomas Edmondson, the first statonmaster at Brampton Railway Station (then called Milton), was unsuccesful.



Our project to install artwork and a **human sundial** at Haltwhistle Railway Station allowed us to illustrate how railways standardised time throughout the country in the 19th Century. Providing an educational tool during school visits, the sundial has also created a lot of interest to visitors to the station and the Water Tower Café.

Heaton Train Care Centre

Northern celebrated the 150th anniversary of the Centre in September. The doors were opened allowing people a rare chance to visit the Centre. We attended on both days. There was lots of interest in our work with communities, rail travel and the opportunities to get involved the new Northumberland Line Community Rail Partnership.



Northumberland Line Community Rail Partnership

Our efforts have continued to engage with communities along the Northumberland Line to recruit Directors and volunteers to support the accreditation of the new Community Rail Partnership. It is anticipated that new Directors will join the Board in coming weeks.

In the meantime, we have worked with Northern to produce artwork for the stations which opened along the route during the year.



Engaging with our Communities

Dialogue with and feedback from individuals, councils, businesses and tourism organisations is key to our work and projects.

We participated in a community/multi-agency meeting at **Wetheral** where discussions included the suicide prevent measures and anti-social behaviour associated with the railway viaduct over the River Eden.



Having been invited to officiate at one of a series of **Mayor Meets** events in the North East, our partnership officer oversaw the question-and-answer session with Mayor, Kim McGuinness held in Prudhoe. Also attended by representatives from Northern, bus companies and

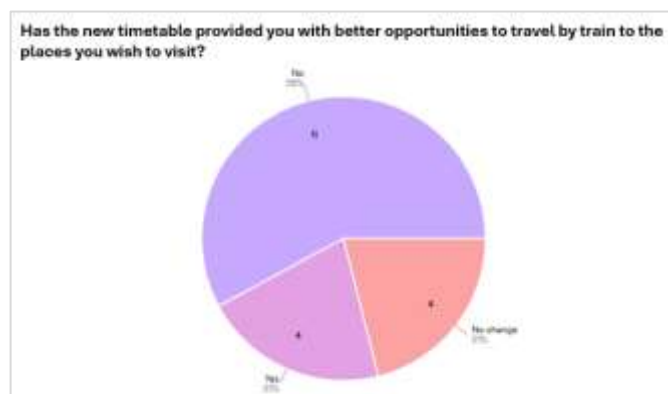


Image: North East Mayoral Strategic Authority

Northumberland County Council, many rail related questions were raised. The Mayor highlighted her aspirations for tap-in tap-out tickets and new trains. Read more about the event at <https://tvcrp.org.uk/news/news-2/587-mayor-meets-event-focusses-on-public-transport-in-prudhoe-area>

In early 2026, we conducted **a survey** of our members, volunteers and social media followers about the impact of the December timetable, recent engineering work and service reliability. There was appreciation of the additional services at some stations. Many people said the new timetable provided a poorer service. The responses highlighted the frustrations caused by the need to change trains at Hexham when travelling to/from stations between Corbridge and Dunston.

We will use the feedback as we continue dialogue with Northern about improvements to services meeting the needs of our communities.



Celebrations at Haltwhistle



In May, we hosted two events at Haltwhistle. **Celebrating Haltwhistle** gave us an opportunity to thank rail industry partners, contractors, volunteers and supporters who had helped to facilitate the extensive improvements at the railway station. The invited guests saw how the projects had transformed the former redundant buildings into studios/offices. They were able to meet some of the studio tenants, see the colourful displays in the improved waiting rooms and then see inside the Water Tower Café, where refreshments were served.

We were delighted that Haltwhistle had been chosen by Community Rail Network to host the launch of the national **Community Rail Week 2025**. With the assistance of Community Rail Cumbria, Bishop Line CRP, partners in the tourism and voluntary sector, this well attended event provided an opportunity to showcase many community rail related projects in the north of England.



Image: Community Rail Network

Working with Young People

Our experiences with young people in the past had highlighted that many were unaware of the career opportunities available in the rail industry and its supply chain. The need for rail safety education continues to be highlighted through incidents, such as trespassing on or near the railway.

During national Rail Safety Week, with the support of the college, CrossCountry, Northern, LNER, British Transport Police and Bishop Line CRP we held a **rail safety and rail careers** awareness event at Newcastle College's Rail Academy; students from Hexham and Corbridge Schools attended. This was the first event for schools we had held at the Rail Academy and the consensus from all involved was that it should be repeated in the future.

Students from the Rail Academy were asked to make suggestions for **activities** that could be available in the Old Booking Hall, Haltwhistle, which could be undertaken by children on educational visits. The challenge was to identify rail-related activities that could be stored in the wooden drawers. Using their ideas, new activities are now available including a card game Train Teasers and a board game Trains, Tracks and Traps.



A **Careers Event** held at Carlisle College in January provided an opportunity to showcase what the employment and training opportunities available throughout the rail industry. This was an extremely busy event, attended by students and staff from secondary schools and colleges, their parents, as well as adults looking for a change of career.

Our inaugural **Try the Train** event took place in April. We were pleased to work with Bishop Line Community Rail Partnership and Community Rail Lancashire to provide an opportunity for a group of SEN learners aged 16+ from Learning for Life who are being supported as they learn skills and have new experiences to prepare them for adulthood. Sessions held at Learning for Life allowed the group to learn about travelling by train before they had a trip out to Haltwhistle, where they had a walk beside the river and enjoyed lunch prepared by the Water Tower Café.

Supporting Volunteers

A new initiative provided members of station adoption groups to learn about the work of station groups on other routes highlighting the common bond that station adopters want to enhance their local station. The first event was a **visit to Dumfries** when Tyne Valley station adopters were able to meet the members of DARG (Dumfries Adoptive Station Gardening group), learn about their extensive garden and explore the Visitor Centre. It is anticipated that the volunteers from Dumfries will visit stations along the Tyne Valley route during the forthcoming year.

We worked with Community Rail Cumbria and Settle Carlisle Railway CRP to hold a joint **conference** of station adoption groups. The event held in Carlisle was well attended by volunteers from the three routes – Tyne Valley, Cumbrian Coast and Settle-Carlisle. Attendees had the opportunity to learn from organisations such as Cumbria in Bloom, British Transport Police, the Samaritans, Northern and Community Rail Network.



Joseph, a member of Friends of Blaydon Station, gave an enlightening talk about how his experience as a station adopter has helped him achieve a career in the rail industry.

The positive impact of the efforts of volunteers was reinforced by many of the speakers and the informal discussions allowed attendees has opportunity to learn about the work of the various adoption groups. The feedback from attendees supported future conferences with a range of topics for presentations being suggested.

A New Year's Day Service

Normally, there is not a service along the route on New Year's Day. But engineering work and the closure of the West Coast Main Line had a beneficial impact for passengers on the Tyne Valley Railway on 1 January 2026. An hourly service operated providing services for both local and long-distance passengers.



We are looking for people to join our team of volunteer Directors in order that we can continue to our work to support communities throughout the Tyne Valley Railway area to meet the aspirations of the Community Rail Strategy.

Tyne Valley Community Rail Partnership needs you, we need local knowledge, enthusiasm, dedication and a willingness to help make our railway fit for the future and accessible to all.

To find out more about who we are and what we do, go to our website tvcrp.org.uk or email chair@tvcrp.org.uk



Your local organisation
with a
successful track record
connecting communities
and the railway
is looking for
people to join
its team of Directors

Would you like to see
the Tyne Valley Railway meet the
needs of its communities, be
accessible to all and support the
local economy?
You could help us ensure it does
today and tomorrow as part
of Great British Railways

Help us make things happen

Are you are looking for ways to
enhance your CV
or
approaching retirement
and would like a new challenge?

Your local knowledge and skills
can make a difference



To find out more about
community rail and what we do

- email chair@tvcrp.org.uk
to arrange a chat
- Scan the QR or go to
- tvcrp.org.uk/learn-about-tvcrp



Fiona, the Community Rail Partnership Officer, the team employed in the Water Tower Café and all the volunteers who make the Tyne Valley Railway so special



tvcrp.org.uk @tvcrp



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