



ON TRACK

Annual Progress Report of the North Staffs Community Rail Partnership



● Crewe

● Alsager

● Kidsgrove

● Longport

● Stoke

● Longton

● Blythe Bridge

● Uttoxeter

● Tutbury & Hatton

● Stone

● Stafford

● Peartree

● Penkridge

● Derby



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Community Rail
Accredited Partnership
2025-26

CHAIR'S WELCOME

A warm welcome to 'On Track', our report on progress during the past year – and, as ever, I'd like to begin by thanking everyone who has helped the North Staffs CRP in any way during the past year.

It has been another eventful and challenging year in terms of our staffing resources, as our relatively newly-appointed Community Rail Partnership Officer, Sam Burton Smith, left us for pastures new after being in post for seven months. However, the good news is that Sam was successful in becoming East Midlands Railway's Community Rail Ambassador, following Alexa Stott's retirement. As such, Sam will maintain strong links with North Staffs CRP and will be working with us to promote our activities and in helping to secure funding for projects at our stations. We wish him the best in his new role.

This development has meant that our remaining Community Rail Partnership Officer, Emma McIntosh, has been exceptionally busy – but (somehow!) has managed to maintain a significant level of ongoing and new projects whilst we went through the recruitment process to fill the vacancy. I'd like to thank Emma for her sterling work and dedication throughout the year – and also Sam, for helping to recruit his successor! The great news is that we have been able to successfully recruit to the post; our new Community Rail Partnership Officer is Charlotte Eccles (see photo below) who commenced her role on 14th July. Charlotte has extensive experience of working with various communities and I'm sure that you will all join me in extending her a warm welcome, if you haven't met her already.

I'm very pleased that several of our stations won awards at the national Community Rail Awards in Newcastle in March; it's really rewarding to see the hard work of our station adopters being recognised nationally and showcasing our efforts to a wider audience. I've also been actively seeking to build better links with local politicians, with the aim of getting their support for our future projects and issues and whilst it's early days, the signs are very positive so far.

Many of you will already be aware that this year we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the start of the modern railway. We are contributing towards 'Railway 200' – a series of partnership events showcasing how the railway shaped and continues to shape national life. At the time of writing, many of 'our' events are imminent, so it's definitely a case of crossed fingers and 'watch this space'! As ever, thanks are due to Emma and everyone involved in the organisation of the events and activities.

I hope that you enjoy reading the rest of this issue, which expands on some of the work and projects that we have been involved with delivering during the past year. In line with our remit, we continue to work in partnership with our train operating companies and enjoy supporting our many station volunteers in making our stations more attractive and rail travel more appealing.



David Dowbenko
Chair



David Dowbenko



Emma McIntosh



Charlotte Eccles



A HUGE THANK YOU ...

...to all our station volunteers and adopters, old and new, for everything you do including planting, weeding, watering, growing plants, litter picking, painting, reporting faults, helping passengers, helping at events, liaising with schools, local authorities and other partners and for supplying ideas! Your work makes a huge difference – you are amazing!

All of our station adoption groups were represented at our annual 'Thank You' lunch in April which was held at Kidsgrove Town Hall. It was a lovely opportunity for adopters to chat, share stories and tips plus take part in a friendly little competition with our quiz, which included lots of railway history questions for Railway 200!



NEW VOLUNTEERS

We were delighted to welcome new station adopters this year. A big community rail welcome to Rob and Jen at Crewe Station, Margaret and Simon at Stone, Simon and Anthony at Alsager, Jimmy at Derby and Rob at Peartree Station.

THE VALUE OF VOLUNTEERING

We estimate that North Staffs CRP volunteers have contributed 5039 hours to improving their stations and engaging in community activities this year (August 2024 to July 2025). At £15 per hour this equates to £75,585!



STATION IMPROVEMENTS

Penkrige Photography

Pupils at Wolgarston High School undertook a photography project to capture photos of interesting and historical landmarks in Penkrige to display in the poster cases at Penkrige Station. They did a great job of photographing the local area and photos include St Michael and All Angels Church, the canal and local shops.



Planters from Pallets

Staff from Network Rail and Avanti West Coast joined us at Stafford Station to build planters and bird boxes out of recycled pallets to create a wildlife area for the Scout Garden that will be cared for by a local Scout group. We had sunshine and we had rain and, with the help of our colleagues, we now have a large planter and bird boxes!

Thanks to funding from Avanti West Coast, the planters will soon be planted up with bee friendly plants, selected by the Scouts following a session with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust where they learnt about the best plants for pollinators. The Squirrels, Beavers and Cub Scouts have also started growing flowers from seed to be planted in the garden later in the year, worked on a re-wilding area and completed several litter picks!



Staffordshire Wildlife Trust at Stafford Station

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust have been working with local groups in Stafford on a project that will see planters installed on the platform at Stafford Station. Thanks to funding from CrossCountry Trains, they offered a bird, bat and bug box building workshop for budding volunteers, to provide some training in woodworking ahead of the planters being constructed by volunteers and planted up.



Peartree Projects

St Martins Sixth Form in Derby have regularly visited Peartree station and worked enthusiastically to improve the station environment. Alongside litter picking and planting, their major projects this year have included refurbishing the bug hotel with new areas for wood chip loving insects and designing a pitched roof to prolong the life of the hotel. They have also repainted the railings which lead from street level to the platforms.

As part of the Platforms for Change Programme, Scouts of the 125th Littleover Cubs took part in an interactive rail safety session and then over the course of several weeks, refurbished birdhouses for use at Peartree Station; this involved researching what colours birds are most comfortable with, sanding down existing bird houses and then repainting.

Well done to all involved and thank you to Cross-Country Trains for funding the Peartree projects.



Peartree Bug Hotel



Longport Clean Up Day

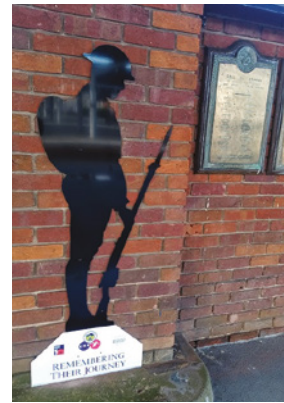
Station adopters and our colleagues from Network Rail joined us at Longport Station to clear fly tipping and litter from the woodland area. There was a lot of rubbish to clear however, we filled the skip in record time - no wonder Network Rail look after 20,000 miles of track!



Tommies on Guard

We are pleased to share that the longstanding remembrance area on platform 1 at Derby Station has been added to with the installation of two 'Tommie's on Guard' silhouettes. The silhouettes were installed to honour the courage and sacrifice of those who served and they stand guard over the names of railway colleagues who made that final single journey to protect us. Our thanks to East Midlands Railway and CrossCountry Trains in supporting this project.

Several North Staffs station adopters attended EMR's Remembrance Service at Derby Station on 11th November; standing with fellow station adopters, railway colleagues and partners to remember and honour those who perished in the line of duty.



Tommies on Guard Silhouette

Derby Planters

Visitors to Derby Station can enjoy a welcoming entrance to the station following the installation of new cladding and replanting of the old metal planters. We commissioned Engineered Learning, an alternative education provider, to design and construct cladding which celebrates the changing seasons and pays tribute to the railways. The Derby Station Adopters replanted the planters with new plants, providing an inviting welcome to the station. Our thanks to CrossCountry Trains for funding this project and to EMR's Station Service Technicians for their help with installation.



RAILWAY 200

2025 saw the 200th year anniversary of the birth of the modern railway. To mark the occasion, a year-long nationwide partnership-led campaign, Railway 200, celebrated the past, present and future of rail. The NSCRP and partners were pleased to be a part of the anniversary supporting and delivering a range of activities and events throughout the year.

The Knotty Line

A fully illustrated A4 booklet titled 'The Knotty Line' was produced to celebrate Railway 200. The booklet features a series of articles relating to the Crewe-Stoke-Derby line, including a history of the line up to the present day along with some fantastic historic photographs. The souvenir booklets, sponsored by East Midlands Railway, North Staffordshire Community Rail Partnership and the North Staffordshire Railway Study Group, were given away at The Greatest Gathering in Derby and during Railway 200 events at Stoke Station and Crewe Heritage Centre.



Knotty Line Booklet

The Greatest Gathering

Alstom opened their factory doors in Derby for the first time in over fifty years for a three-day festival called 'The 'Greatest Gathering' - to celebrate the 200-year anniversary. Thousands of people with a passion for railways came from far and wide to see the iconic trains and vehicles. The Knotty Trust had a stand at the event and invited us to join them so Charlotte attended on the first day of the Gathering to promote the NSCRP, where she spoke to hundreds of people about the amazing work that our volunteer adopters do across the partnership. Lots of happy visitors left with a copy of our special Railway200 souvenir Knotty Line booklet!

Charlotte and Mark at 'The Greatest Gathering'.



Heritage Colours in Derby Station Underpass

The underpass at Derby Station was transformed in heritage British Rail colours to celebrate Railway 200, with funding from East Midlands Railway, and EMR staff and local MP, Catherine Atkinson, couldn't resist joining in with a paintbrush!



Derby underpass painting.



Derby Underpass GB Heritage Colours.



Stone Heritage Centre Railway Exhibition

Stone Heritage Centre put together a specially curated exhibition of railway items to explore the history and development of Stone Station, including artwork depicting the railway buildings in Stone, past and present. Local community members also kindly loaned items for the exhibition including a paid ticket for a dog to travel to Stone on London, Midland and Scottish Railway! As Stone Heritage Centre is located at Joules Fire Station on Newcastle Street, the exhibition also offered a rare opportunity to view the scale model of the horse drawn steamer engine Edith Mabel, a machine closely associated with the history of Stone. Thank you to Stone Town Council for organising the exhibition.



Edith Mabel

TOURS, TALKS AND WALKS

We had tours, talks and walks galore to celebrate Railway 200. The events took place during Heritage Open Days national festival of history and culture in September.

At Stafford Station Robin Mathams and Dave Barrett gave a talk on the establishing of the Trent Valley Railway Company and the building of the railway including its largest single civil-engineering item,

Shugborough Tunnel. Robin also gave a fully-illustrated history talk on 'The Quest for Speed on the UK's Railways', sharing how UK railway engineers designed locomotives and trains to run at ever-faster speeds.



Trent Valley Railway Talk

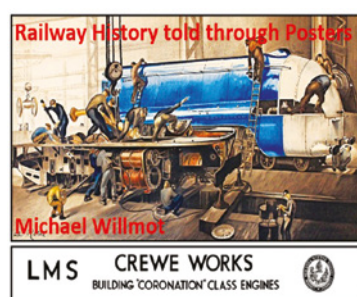


The Quest for Speed on the UK's Railways

Avanti staff at Crewe Station hosted tours of the station, sharing information from Crewe's long railway history and including areas not normally accessible to the public. Our former Chair, Michael Willmot, gave an illustrated talk on 'Railway History Told Through Poster Art' at Crewe Heritage Centre which featured artwork from a glittering array of artists and poster designers stretching back over 180 years.



Behind the scenes at Crewe Station..



Crewe Works Poster Art

Mark Smith, Chair of the North Staffs Rail Study Group, led guided tours of Stoke Station, which was the headquarters of the North Staffordshire Railway, where attendees were able to compare historic views of the station with the Grade 2 listed building that remains today.



Stoke Station Tours



In Stone, local historians Philip Leason and Steve Booth led a guided walk sharing the history of Stone Station, the town and canal. Attendees were also treated to a special visit to the remains of Stone Priory, hosted by Timothy Gillow, High Sheriff of Staffordshire. The guided walk concluded at Stone Heritage Centre where refreshments and a special railway themed exhibition were available.



At Stone Station



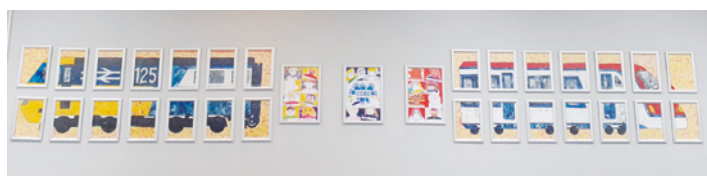
At Jervis Mausoleum

THANK YOU!

We would like to thank all of our partners who offered their ideas, time and funding to enable such a fantastic selection of events to be offered in celebration of Railway 200. We had more than 200 attendees across all events – thank you for celebrating with us!

Railway 200 Artwork

A number of our stations have been exhibiting Railway 200 themed artwork provided by local schools, Scout groups and community groups. At Crewe Station, Cheshire Buddies created a fantastic multi-panel collage picture which is displayed in the waiting room on platform 5.



Cheshire Buddies visiting their artwork at Crewe Station

SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION

Skills Builder Programme

Thanks to funding from East Midlands Railway, CrossCountry Trains, Community Rail Network and NSCRP, 240 pupils from a school in Stoke took part in the Skills Builders Accelerator programme. The programme teaches 'essential skills', similar to our rail industries 'non-technical skills', and trains teachers for future delivery in schools. Rail industry professionals took part in Skills Builders Career week, providing the pupils with real life examples of how essential skills keep the railway running safely and rail safety sessions were delivered in school with pupils creating social media graphics about trespassing, which were entered into the Backtrack Railway Anti-trespassing Competition.



Railway safety artwork by pupils created as part of the Skills Builder programme



Rail Safe Friendly

Ten schools and over 2800 pupils took part in the Rail Safe Friendly programme which educates young people to stay safe around the railway. Thanks to funding from East Midlands Railway, eight schools achieved their Bronze award and two schools achieved Silver certificates.

Please don't sit on the flowers!

Pupils from Christ Church C.E. First School in Stone visited Stone Station and then created colourful artwork kindly requesting people to be careful of the plants and to not sit or put bags on the planters. Several of their designs were printed on Dibond panels and installed on the planters at the station.



Educational Resources

We now have an educational resources section on our website which features links to a range of fun and educational resources for different age groups, created by our industry partners, with topics including staying safe on the railway, sustainable travel, engineering challenges and railway careers.

Please visit www.northstaffsrail.org.uk/education and share with family and friends who may find them of interest.

COMMUNITY AND EVENTS

Stone Community Open Day

In July we held a Community Open Day at Stone Station to celebrate the station projects, the work of the station volunteers and Railway200. We were joined by partners London Northwestern Railway, Network Rail, Stone Heritage Centre and the Bumblebee Conservation Trust, with Futures2gether providing refreshments and pupils from Christ Church First School sharing their Railway 200 themed poems. There were creative activities on offer as well as a quiz featuring Railway 200 and Stone Station themed history questions. It was a great day with approximately 90 people joining us throughout the morning and lots of positive feedback for the station and the event.



Pottery Plates Competition

To celebrate Stoke-on-Trent's centenary – 100 years since it received city status – we ran a Pottery Plates competition for young people to design a pottery plate depicting what Stoke means to them. We received 103 entries across the three age categories, 8 and under, 9-13 and 14 to 18. The winning entries in each category will each receive a visit to Emma Bridgewater to recreate their design in paint on a pottery plate along with tea and cake! The runners up will receive two tickets for a day out at Gladstone Pottery Museum. A selection of the entries will be displayed at Stoke-on-Trent station over the autumn months. Many thanks to Emma Bridgewater and Gladstone Pottery Museum for sponsoring the competition.



Kelvin the Kiln, the city's Centenary mascot, with the competition template

Tales in the Park

Emma and Charlotte attended Tales in the Park, an annual storytelling festival for families organised by the National Literacy Trust in Stoke-on-Trent. We were joined by Naresh and Simona from Stoke-on-Trent City Council's Active Travel Team and we spent four very busy days chatting to families about train travel, railcards and local tourist attractions that are accessible by train, as well as giving away Arlo's Adventures railway safety story books and EMR's Miles railway safety activity booklets. The events were well attended and we were joined by lots of children eager to enter our Pottery Plates competition!



White Ribbon

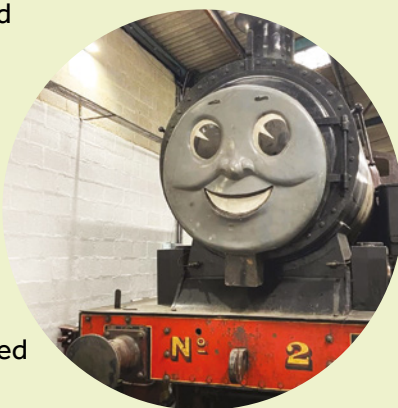
We joined London Northwestern Railway at Stone Station in November to promote White Ribbon, a charity engaging with men and boys to end violence against women and girls. More information on the campaign can be found at:

<https://www.whiteribbon.org.uk/>



Foxfield Summer Fun Days

Foxfield Railway put on four family fun days during August which were very well attended with around 1500 people attending across all events. There were lots of fantastic activities on offer including steam train rides, meet the owl experience, face painting and craft activities celebrating Railway 200. Network Rail also attended with their VR headsets to share information about railway safety. Thanks to sponsorship from CrossCountry Trains; 350 children, referred by Stoke Foodbank and the Hubb Foundation, received free picnic lunches whilst attending the events. In addition, Stoke Foodbank separately funded free food for parents. Thank you to the many partners that supported these events and particular thanks to Foxfield Railway and CrossCountry Trains.



Stronger Starts at Kidsgrove Station

Kidsgrove station adopters, Friends of Kidsgrove Station, were selected to take part in the Tesco Stronger Starts public voting at Tesco's Kidsgrove store. Thanks to the many votes from the local community we are pleased to share that they won the vote and will receive a grant for station enhancements, including plants for the sensory garden. Many thanks to Tesco and all those who voted for the project!



Kidsgrove Station Adopter's gardening in the station gardens



AWARDS

David, Emma and Sam attended the Community Rail Awards in Newcastle upon Tyne in March, accompanied by station adopters Rachel and Sue from Stone Station and Ian, from Peartree Station.

Stone, Peartree, Uttoxeter and Kidsgrove station adopters all received a Silver certificate in the 'It's Your Station' category and we came second in the photo competition for a photo showing school children at Crewe Station with their poetry booklets featuring rail related poems, from a project funded by Avanti West Coast. Congratulations to all!

Uttoxeter Station Adopters have been recognized with a 2024 It's Your Neighbourhood Award from the Royal Horticultural Society and Heart of England in Bloom. This award, given at 'Level 5 – Outstanding', acknowledges the hard work and dedication of the adopters in making Uttoxeter Station a vibrant green space for the community.

Stone Station volunteers won London Northwestern Railway's Stations in Bloom 2025 competition recognising their work in making the station a colourful, welcoming place for people and pollinators!

Well done everyone!!



Uttoxeter, Peartree, Kidsgrove and Stone Station Adopters with NSCRP Chair, David, receiving their 'It's Your Station' certificates.



Sue and Barbara with their LNR 'Stations in Bloom' certificate and goodies!

NORTH STAFFS COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP INCOME AND EXPENDITURE SUMMARY
(1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025)

We are pleased to report that North Staffs CRP was in a financially secure position at the end of the 2024/25 financial year. £77,017 was carried over to the new financial year, which exceeds the reserves target of £58,924.

INCOME £		EXPENDITURE £	
Brought forward from 2023-24	75,163		
ANNUAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO RUNNING COSTS		RUNNING COSTS EXPENDITURE	
Annual contributions from local authorities (April 2024 - March 2025)	9,500	Salaries (including on-costs)	59,025
Annual contributions from train operators (April 2024 to March 2025)	61,128	Running costs and project expenditure	7,464
TOTAL GRANT INCOME AND OTHER PAYMENTS	20,142	TOTAL EXPENDITURE OF GRANT INCOME (includes commitments from 2023/24)	22,427
TOTAL INCOME	165,933	TOTAL EXPENDITURE	88,916
		TOTAL INCOME minus expenditure	77,017
		Ongoing Commitments	8,284
		Reserves target (increased in line with salaries increase)	58,924





Special thanks to:

As well as our funding and project partners, we would like to thank the following organisations for their support:

- R.D. Cresswell and Co Ltd - for providing tool storage and water for our station adopters.
- Streetscene at Stafford Borough Council - for their support in clearing Station Approach in Stone and for providing wood chippings.
- Bumblebee Conservation Trust - for their support at events and with planting guidance.
- Access Storage at Peartree, Derby - for allowing us to park our vehicles in their access drive when attending Peartree Station.
- Crewe Heritage Centre - for hosting one of our Heritage Open Days talks.
- Nestle Tutbury – for supplying our Tutbury and Hatton Station Adopters with water.

