

December 2024

Stakeholder Newsletter



**“THE THING ABOUT TRAINS ... IT DOESN'T MATTER WHERE THEY'RE GOING. WHAT MATTERS IS DECIDING TO GET ON.”
-CONDUCTOR, THE POLAR EXPRESS**

Welcome to our Christmas newsletter which reflects on an extremely busy year and embraces our tradition of installing the Heart CRP tree into the Leamington Tree Festival at All Saint's church.

It was a joy to see so many of you at the very enjoyable 5th Anniversary celebrations at the Royal Pump Rooms in Leamington Spa on 13th November. If I didn't already know the breadth of what our Community Rail Partnership does, then I would certainly have done so by the end of the evening! What was really humbling, though, was to be reminded of the real human impact of what you all do through your tireless work supporting the many strands of community rail activity. We make a significant difference to people's lives through the work of the CRP, which is what it's all about, and I'd like to reiterate my thanks to you all for contributions.

Our next 5 years kicks off with the celebration of another major anniversary, with Railway 200 in 2025. We are doing our bit in several, exciting ways, including new artwork by local artist Katie O'Sullivan and plans to collaborate with more local partners to deliver exciting Railway 200 projects.

Finally, I'm pleased to report that following a formal review by Community Rail Network (CRN) of how our CRP is performing, we have successfully passed our periodical reaccreditation. This ensures that we can continue to operate under the national CRN banner and, crucially, obtain government funding via our local Train Operators.

Thanks as always for your efforts, and for making our CRP what it is. Merry Christmas and best wishes for an enjoyable 2025.

Malcolm Holmes, Chair of Heart of England CRP

NEWS & STORIES FOR THIS ISSUE:

- Heart CRP turns 5!
- Railway200
- Rugby Colour Palette shortlisted!
- Education
- Station & Neighbourhood Improvements
- Inclusivity & Community Links
- Sustainability
- Partner Funding

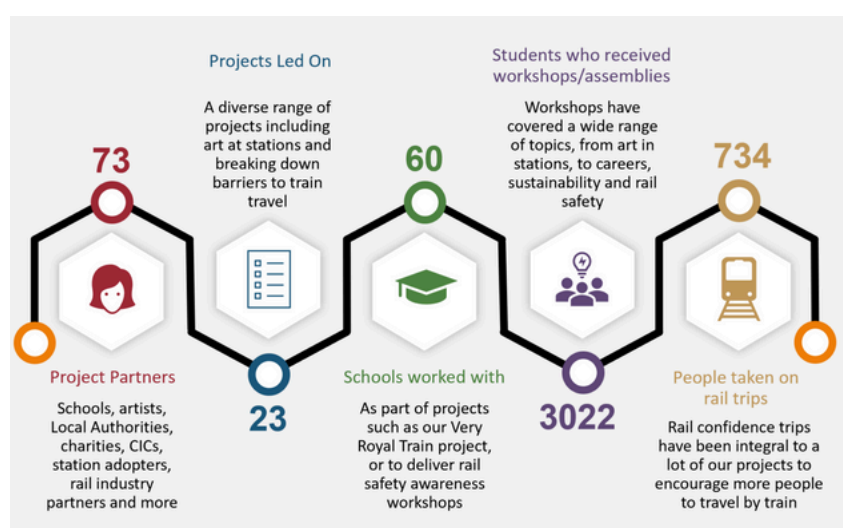


A school receiving free art workshops exploring the themes of Railway200 to create a banner for 2025 events



After much anticipation and preparation we feel we celebrated in style our last 5 Heart CRP years at the wonderful Royal Pump Rooms, which was fitting as that is where it all started in 2019! As the infographic below shows we have worked with an enormous number (73 and counting) and variety of partners and it felt very special to have so many of you in the room with us. A special thanks to those who joined us on stage Mike Lamport from Railway200, Lifepath Trust Manger Melanie Kemble with Phillip Thomas and Freya Humpries, KatieOArt and West Coventry Academy Careers Lead Joanna Kerr.

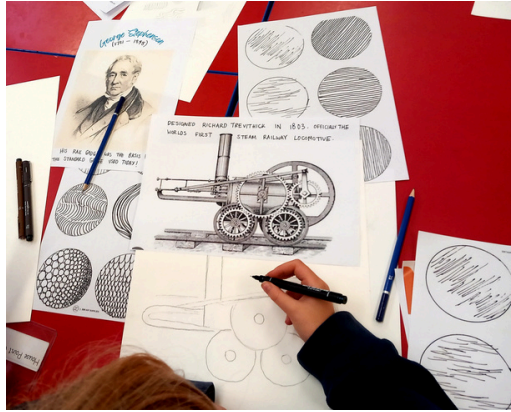
You can view some [Vox Pops filmed from guests](#) in attendance by CRN partners BA Events. Here is to 5 more years!





In preparation for Railway200, we worked with two local school - Earlsdon Primary in Coventry and Westgate Primary in Warwick running art workshops with Artist KatieOArt - Katie O'Sullivan. The four themes of Railway200 - Skills & Education, Innovation, Technology & Environment, Heritage, Culture & Tourism and Celebrating Railway People were explored with the students and used to create a banner which will be displayed at events during 2025.

We were delighted to unveil the banner at our celebration evening with KatieOArt on stage, alongside this short video of how this was made [view here](#) . The banner is being displayed at the schools this December, so students and parents have an oppoertunity to see the creation.



Rugby Colour Palette Shortlisted for CRN Award!

Heart CRP's Rugby Colour Palette project have been shortlisted for an Award! Thanks to the Community Rail Network (CRN) for recognising the value of the project under the Community Creative Projects & Station Arts category. Winners are due to be announced in March 2025.

The colours displayed within the subway at Rugby station celebrate several local figures and attractions, such as the original maker of the Rugby ball, the town's market, and Lady Dorothea Feilding, who was the first woman to be awarded the Military Medal for bravery in the First World War.

A huge thank you to Avanti West Coast who were our generous funding partners and artist Stacey Barnfield at the The Colour Palette Company. It was a pleasure working with you both. Launched in April 2024 you can watch a [short video](#) Avanti helped us make showcasing the Rugby colour palette in all it's glory!



Education



Wild Rails



Wild Rails

Wild Rails has engaged with 65 students to date and 2 schools during the start of its pilot year. Its aim is to engage with schools along the railway line from Leamington Spa to Birmingham Moor Street and help students to learn about improving biodiversity at stations through a variety of curriculum based activities, partnered with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust. In the Spring and Summer terms we will be building biodiversity interventions and installing nature inspired art at Leamington Spa and Lapworth Stations. Learning is really being brought to life through interactive games and experiencing the natural world.

The hope is Wild Rails will strengthen the relationships between HOE CRP, local schools, station adopter groups and the TOCs.

We are also investigating the possibility of a phase 2 Wild Rails biodiversity education project at Lapworth station, following the generously donated community land lease by Network Rail. Assessments are taking place by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust to ascertain what could be done and potential costs involved. Discussions are also taking place with the Tree Council to identify partners to work with.



If you have any information you would like to share on this newsletter, or if you would like to unsubscribe, then please email: heartcrp@warwickshire.gov.uk



Rail Tails Competition Winners Announced!

The Heart CRP and Stratford Literary Festival announced the winners of their collaborative competition 'Rail Tails' inspired by Railway200. Young people aged 6 to 21 years were invited to submit short stories inspired by trains or a railway journey. The entries were shortlisted by the Heart of England CRP and Stratford Literary Festival Director Annie Ashworth, before renowned children's author and Literary Festival Ambassador Philip Ardagh decided the final winners. Winners can be found at the link below and from here you can also listen to them being read by actor Charlie Hamblett, definitely worth a few minutes of your time. Congratulations to all those that entered and the winners, we hope you enjoy your prizes!

www.stratfordliteraryfestival.co.uk/competitions/rail-tales-creative-writing-competition

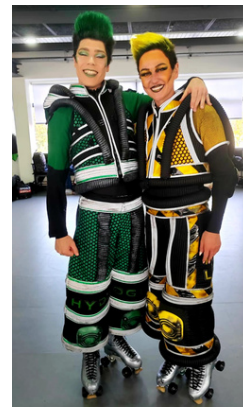


Feel Good Field Trips

Congratulations to Community Rail Lancashire who will have exceeded their milestone of 5000 students benefitting from the Feel Good Field Trips programme by the end of December 2024.

the Heart of England CRP have continued to support the delivery in our area of CRL's Feel Good Field Trips programme in partnership with Avanti West Coast. These trips take school groups out on the train to travel to incredible places.

Some of the exciting destinations recently visited were Bletchley Park for a fascinating insight into how the enigma code was broken during WW2, visits to a working dairy farm in Staffordshire for a Young Carers group, and an extremely memorable visit to Starlight Express at the Troubadour Theatre in London with a choreographer and cast dance workshop included for good measure! Whilst at Euston station, the Starlight students also got to see the Asquith Avanti train, honouring Asquith Xavier's trailblazer efforts fighting racism in 1950s Britain, during Black History month this October (photo on next page).



Gracie - "It was the best once-in-a-lifetime experience."

Sathvika - "I never imagined the trip would be this good it was amazing. I loved it all. Thank you."

Isla - "I have never experienced something like this before."

Harry - "It was really good. When the scooters were doing the backflips it was so cool."

George - "I loved it so much my favourite character was Rusty. It was the best theatre I have ever been in. It was MAGIC"

Elsie - "I felt like I was in a different world"

"It was the best experience I have ever had"

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Education

Reading the feedback received (pictured on the last page) is a humbling experience. The Heart CRP are honoured to have been invited to join the Parliamentary Reception in January 2025 to celebrate the amazing achievements this Avanti funded project has delivered.

STEM 5

During the Autumn-Winter Term our partners the Smallpiece Trust have delivered 4 STEM activity days. These interactive sessions help students see the positives of an engineering career and identify opportunities in the Rail industry. These were days well spent designing gear or pulley motorised vehicles and their very own environmentally sustainable train station (see more under the Sustainability Section)



Students used foam cutting machines, Lego technic sets and were taught how to problem solve and get their creations moving! These excellent days have been funded by Cross Country Trains and have reached 240 students so far. If you'd like to see the work in action click [here](#).

Rail Safety

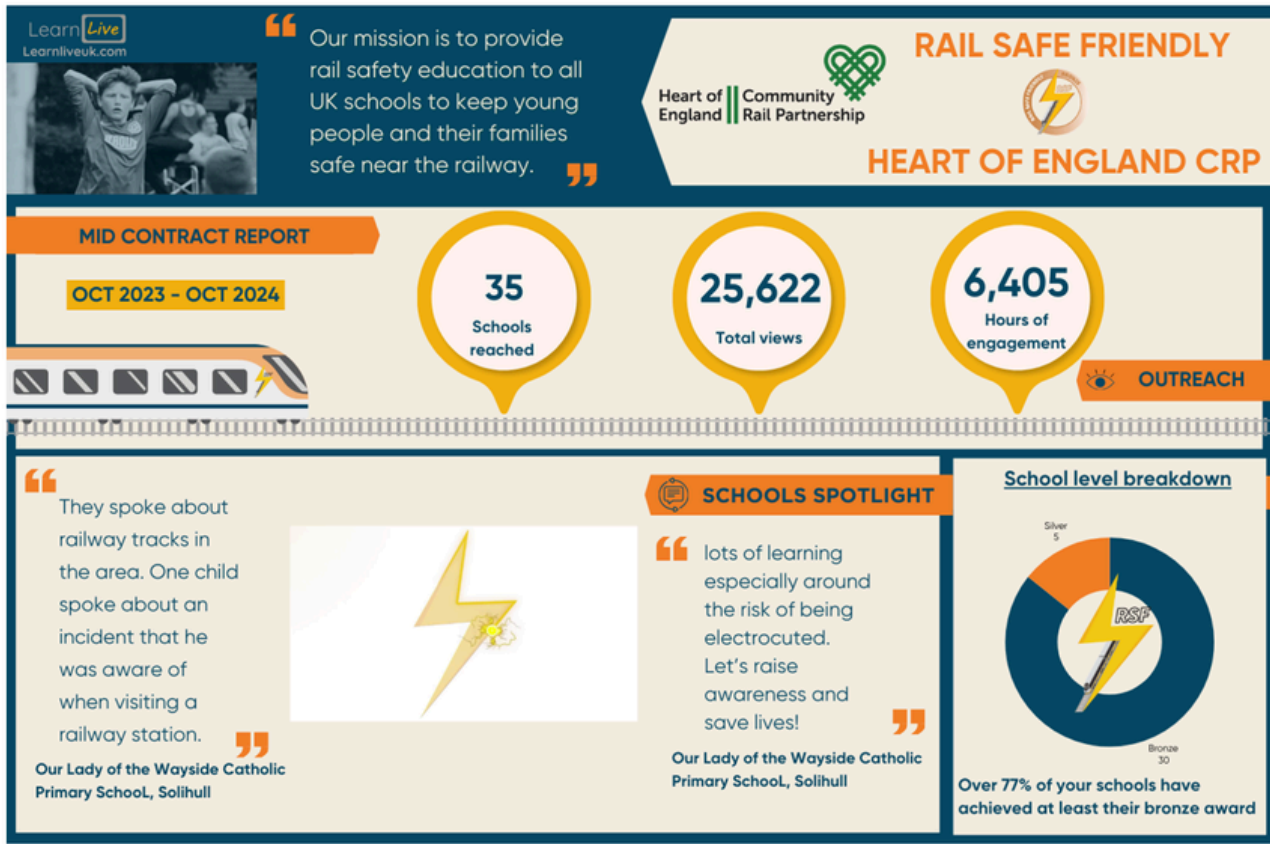
As part of Heart CRP's commitment to rail safety we have renewed our partnership with LearnLive to deliver the Rail Safe Friendly programme in the Midlands. Funding was provided to continue working with the 35 schools already involved on a Bronze or Silver level accreditation and a further target of schools to join the programme. This is alongside Heart CRP personally visiting schools, and giving pre-trip rail safety lessons.

With a total website views of over 25,600 (see infographic on next page), we are looking to build on this number in 2025. So if you know any Midlands based schools who might be interested please contact heartcrp@warwickshire.gov.uk



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Education



We are helping to promote an award winning rail safety competition called BackTrack with primary and secondary schools age groups. Please do help spread the word to those that might be interested in taking part, as the more impactful messages we can share from young people themselves on staying safe by the railways the better.

Award-Winning
**ANTI-TRESPASSING
COMPETITION**

BACKTRACK

CREATE IT, SHARE IT, SAVE LIVES

ENTER FOR A CHANCE TO WIN SOME GREAT PRIZES INCLUDING:
Rail cards, digital drawing tablets, action cameras, podcast recording equipment and much more!!!

Calling all artists, podcasters, musicians, writers and future YouTubers!
Have your work displayed and win great prizes, by creating clever rail safety messages

Details on what to create, how to submit and examples of past winners are all available at www.backtrackcompetition.co.uk

DON'T MISS OUT!

COMPETITION DEADLINE: 31ST MARCH 2025

SAFETY FIRST

The poster for the BackTrack Anti-Trespassing Competition features a blue and white color scheme. At the top, it says 'Award-Winning ANTI-TRESPASSING COMPETITION' in large, bold letters. Below this is the 'BACKTRACK' logo in orange, with the tagline 'CREATE IT, SHARE IT, SAVE LIVES' underneath. A central image shows a train track receding into the distance. To the right of the track is a collection of electronic equipment, including a GoPro camera, a digital drawing tablet, and a microphone. Below the track image, it says 'ENTER FOR A CHANCE TO WIN SOME GREAT PRIZES INCLUDING: Rail cards, digital drawing tablets, action cameras, podcast recording equipment and much more!!!'. The bottom section of the poster is blue and contains the text 'Calling all artists, podcasters, musicians, writers and future YouTubers! Have your work displayed and win great prizes, by creating clever rail safety messages'. Below this is a red circle with the text 'DON'T MISS OUT!' and a yellow diamond-shaped sign that says 'SAFETY FIRST'. The bottom of the poster features the text 'Details on what to create, how to submit and examples of past winners are all available at www.backtrackcompetition.co.uk' and 'COMPETITION DEADLINE: 31ST MARCH 2025' in large, bold letters.

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Station & Neighbourhood Enhancements

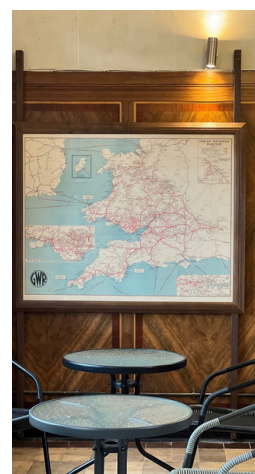


The Work of the Friends of Leamington Spa Station Widely Recognised

2024 has been a great year for the industrious Leamington Station Adopters group with a variety of awards to add to their shelves. Leamington won a Britain in Bloom Gold Award once again and the station garden got a special mention in the judges' comments. "Leamington Station as always is an excellent example of what can be achieved with a dedicated team of passionate and knowledgeable volunteer gardeners working in partnership with the Railway Company".



The refreshment room on platform 2 at Leamington Spa station received a superb renovation to its 1939 decor by Aasia Baig of the Centenary Lounge. It was recognised with an award from the Leamington Society, seen below left as Daniel Gillard from Chiltern accepted the award from the Mayor of Leamington. The railway tearoom has also secured a National Heritage Restoration Award with a plaque now installed to commemorate this achievement. Well done to FOLS and Chiltern for some great team work in action.



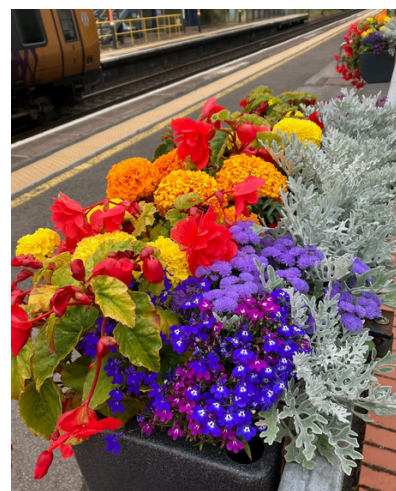
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Station & Neighbourhood Enhancements



Widney Manor Wins Station in Bloom Award!

Widney Manor Station won the North Western trains and West Midlands trains 'Station in Bloom' competition in October 2024. In addition to this, Widney Manor Station Soroptimists Gardening Group were presented the Solihull Civic Honours for Community Environment Award 2024 at an event hosted by the Mayor of Solihull, Councillor Shahin Ashraf MBE in October 2024 (pictured below far left). Congratulations to everyone involved!



Running in Boards Installed at Stations

Our partners Network Rail installed the Great Western Railways replica Running In boards at Claverdon and on the Shakespeare Line at Spring Road in December (pictured right). I think you'll agree they definitely look the part.



Remembrance Day Event Gives a Fitting Tribute to the Fallen

Chiltern Railways supported the Friends of Leamington Spa Station to hold a Remembrance Day Tea Party event at the Station, helping passengers pay their respects in the Railman's Hut. The beautiful cake pictured left was provided by Chiltern.

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Inclusivity and Community Links



Railway Explorations

We completed the final stages of our Railway Explorations project which has seen us partner with Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre, the Positive Youth Foundation in Coventry, and Solihull MBC's Refugee and Resettlement Officer. We delivered rail confidence sessions and more than 200 people from refugee communities have joined these sessions and days out.

We would like to thank Chiltern Railways for their generous funding and are proud to announce this project won the Chiltern Railway's Community Investment Fund Project of the Year Award!



Work with the Life Path Trust & Leamington Tree Festival

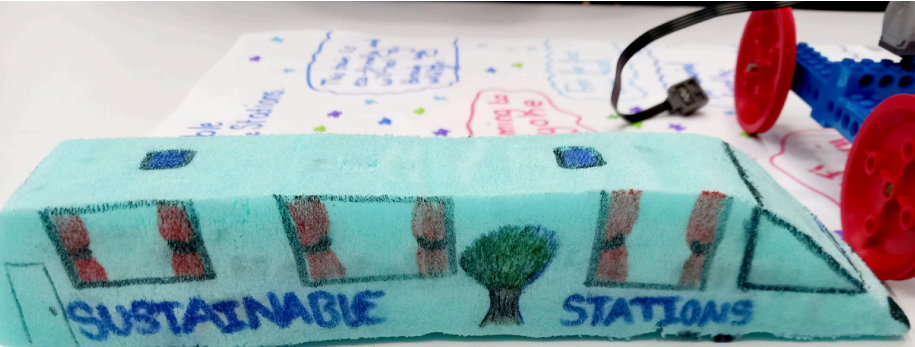
Our work with the Life Path Trust (LTP) and the Coventry Station Adopters group has continued and we were fortunate to have some very special speakers from LPT - Phillip & Freya - at our 5th birthday celebration (both pictured below). As the weather turned colder more sessions were held indoors and we did a very popular Christmas decorations making session. Mince pies provided some inspiration for making decorations for the Heart CRP Christmas tree which has been entered into the Leamington Tree Festival. The festival attracts 3,000+ visitors, supports lots of local charities and is open till Sunday 15th December at St Mary's Church, Leamington Spa. See a [decoration making video here](#) and our [tree at the festival video here](#) (on Instagram)



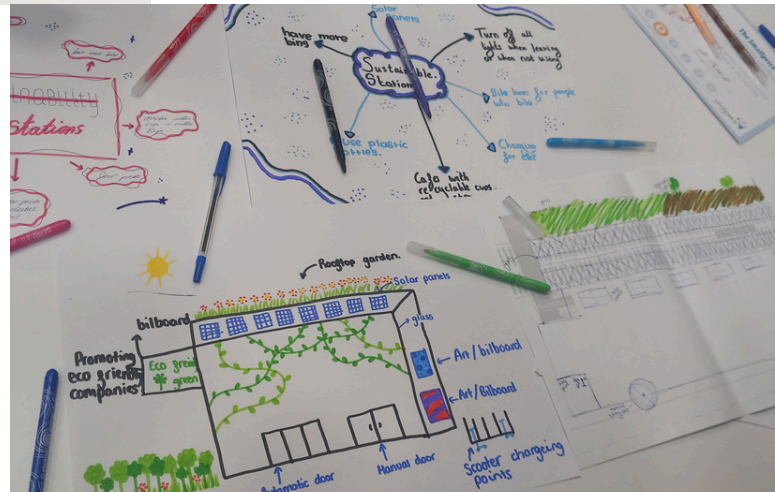
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Sustainability Stations Sessions in Secondary Schools



Our STEM sessions with the Smallpiece Trust in Secondary Schools include a substantial section about how the design process of railway stations is changing around the world to reflect the industries commitment to sustainability. Students get an opportunity to learn about new design



features like solar panels, wind turbines, LED lighting, living green roofs, sensory well-being gardens and rain water harvesting. In addition to this they learn about increasing local transport integration to encourage more arrivals at stations by more sustainable methods like walking or cycling, and more bike racks and EV charging points to help facilitate that. The students have an opportunity to present their findings in a presentation at the end which was recognised alongside their creation.

Lapworth Community Lease

As mentioned in the Wild Rails update, environmental assessments of land gifted by Network Rail are taking place at Lapworth station. Options to support nature and develop it into a biodiversity education space are being investigated. Watch this space!



Upcoming Partner Events & Funding Schemes

Avanti West Coast have launched their Customer and Community Improvement Fund (CCIF) scheme to support community projects for the fifth consecutive year.

Applications for funding are open and aimed at supporting community projects to enhance local areas along its route. The deadline is 10th January 2025 and more information can be found below

<https://www.avantiwestcoast.co.uk/about-us/sustainability/community-hub/ccif>



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