

May 2025

Stakeholder Newsletter



““SPRING IS THE TIME OF PLANS AND PROJECTS” ANNA KARENINA BY LEO TOLSTOY (PHOTO:FREYA HUMPRIES, COVENTRY STATION ADOPTER)

Welcome to your Spring Heart of England Community Rail Partnership Newsletter! As a Chair who isn't particularly local to Warwickshire (I'm across the county boundary in Leicestershire running a steam railway!) the variety of activity that we undertake, all of which makes lives better in some way, is a constant delight.

Our Wild Rails Biodiversity Education Programme, delivered with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, continues to grow. In recent weeks, the Lapworth Bug Hotel has been a particular highlight, attracting both local interest and some positive coverage in the press. It's a good example of how we can use railway settings to support environmental education in practical and engaging ways.

We've also been building on our work with secondary schools around STEM and careers in the rail sector. Recent visit to Alstom at Oxley Depot & Porterbrook's Long Marston Rail Innovation Centre offered students the chance to explore different aspects of the industry. These kinds of experiences are only possible thanks to the commitment of our corporate partners, and they play a valuable role in helping to address the well-documented skills gap.

2025 is, of course, Railway 200 year, and we've been working with Chiltern Railways to help schools book visits to the Exhibition Train, which will be in at Birmingham Moor Street in July. With tickets now on sale, it should be a worthwhile opportunity for everyone to explore how railways have shaped and continue to influence society.

Finally, Heart CRP was invited to attend a Houses of Parliament event as contributors to the Feel Good Field Trip project with Avanti West Coast. It was good to see the work of CRPs recognised in this way, and to hear about other projects making a difference around the country.

Thanks to all those who've contributed to the work highlighted here and more besides—it's very much appreciated and really makes a huge difference.

Malcolm Holmes, Chair of Heart of England CRP

NEWS & STORIES FOR THIS ISSUE:

- Inspiration!
Exhibition Train & Railway 200
- Education
- Station & Neighbourhood Improvements
- Inclusivity & Community Links
- Sustainability
- Partner Updates



A secondary school receiving a free STEM trip to Oxley Depot, through Corporate Partners Alstom.

Railway 200



The Exhibition Train Inspiration, soon to arrive at Birmingham Moor Street

Railway 200 is in full swing and Birmingham Moor Street will welcome the Inspiration between Tuesday 8th-Thursdays 10th July 2025, hosted by the Chiltern Railways and Network Rail Central team.

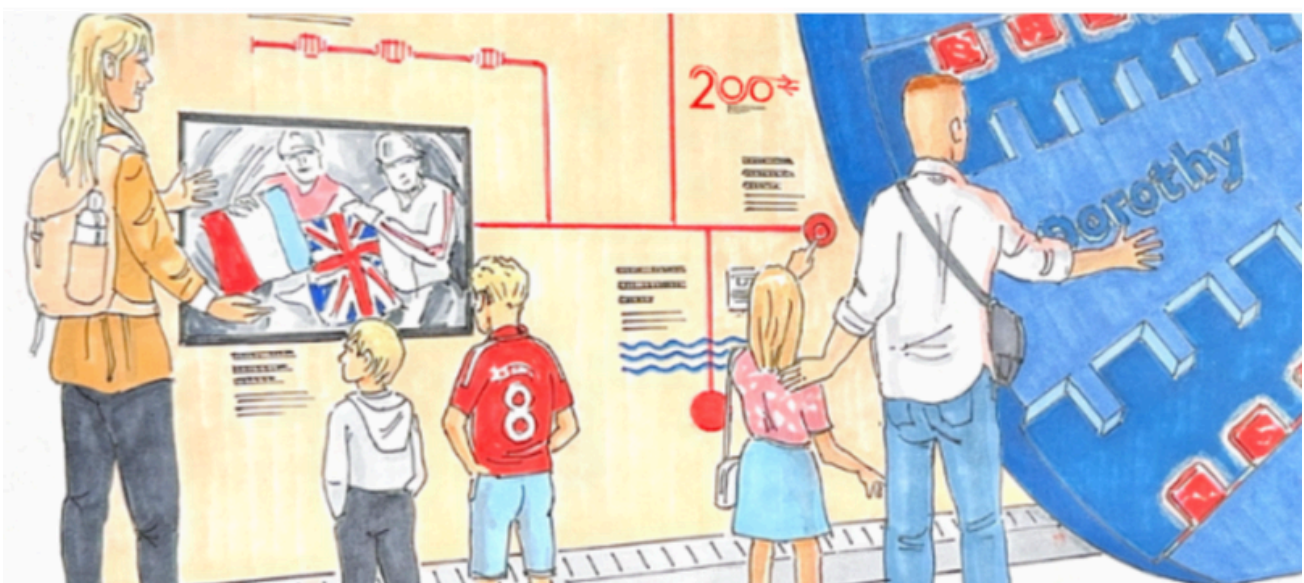
Ticket bookings are now open to the public at <https://railway200.co.uk/inspiration/> (scroll down the page), so don't delay.

Tickets are free but must be pre-booked

What's inside *Inspiration*?

Curated in partnership with the National Railway Museum, *Inspiration's* exhibition carriages are:

- **Railway Firsts:** Showcasing groundbreaking innovations in railway history
- **Wonderlab on Wheels:** Offering engaging hands-on activities to explore the science and engineering behind railways
- **Your Railway Future:** Uncovering some of the more hidden roles in rail and encouraging people to consider a career in rail to shape the next 200 years



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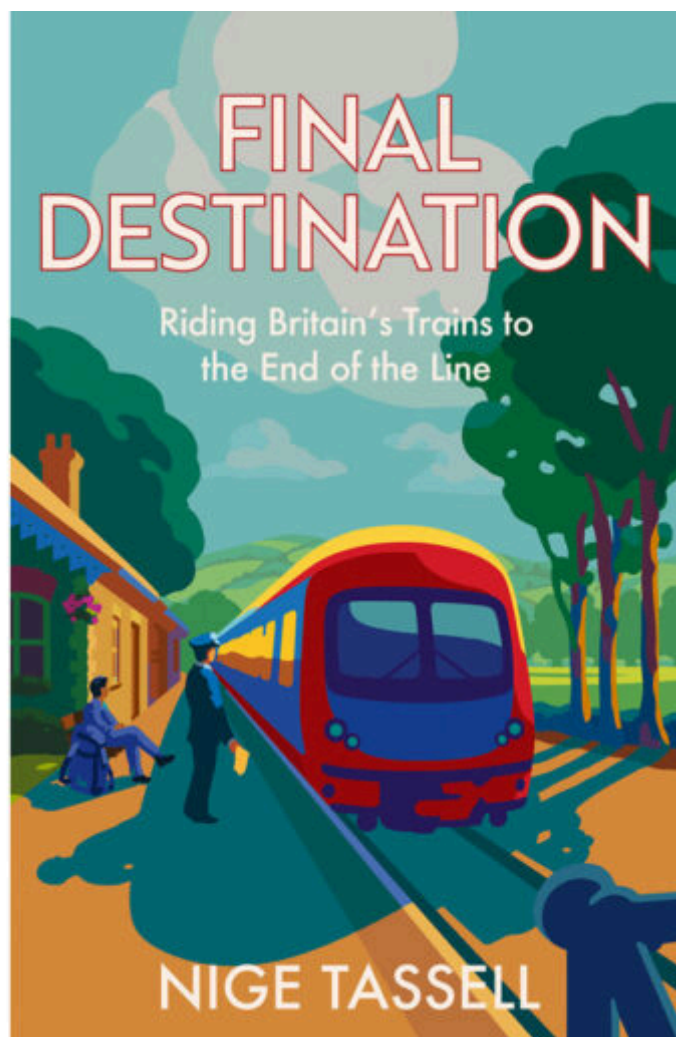
Railway 200

Riding British Trains to the End of the Line at Stratford Literary Festival, taking Place this Sunday 11th May

We are proud to sponsor 'Final Destination: Riding Britain's Trains to the End of the Line with Nigel Tassell' at Stratford Literary Festival on **Sunday 11th May 4-5pm**, as part of our Railway 200 activities. A few tickets are still available here

<https://www.stratfordliteraryfestival.co.uk/.../nige-tassell>

On the 200th birthday of the world's first passenger-carrying railway, we're off to ride Britain's railway network all the way to its lesser-travelled-to corners, its seldom-visited outposts right to the end of the line. By delving into their histories and talking to their communities, Tassell reveals much about places that rarely have light cast upon them – from ferry ports to abandoned resorts, from tiny hamlets to towns being reclaimed by the sea – an odyssey that tells us much about Britain today. Nige is an author and journalist who has appeared in almost every major publication. Hopefully see you there!



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Railway 200



200 Journey's

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 bottom photo shows 60 students heading to Harry Potter World from Coventry station, where Heart CRP produced Railway 200 and Harry Potter themed activity books for the journey.

The 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! Photos and videos from the project will be displayed in an Exhibition at Coventry Transport Museum in Autumn 2025. If you know a school which might like to take part please see visit200.co.uk for more information.



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Education



Wild Rails



Insects Check into Lapworth Bug Hotel!

Wild Rails has engaged with 55 students to date and 2 schools during its pilot year. It's 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.

Spring saw the arrival of a large Bug Hotel at Lapworth Station which was the culmination of many months of work with Lapworth Primary. Not to forget all our fabulous partners including Network rail for the community leased land, EH Smith Builders Merchants

for the generous donation of volunteers and materials, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust for their learning support. Lapworth Station Adopters were also fundamental in preparing the land and sharing our vision. See the making of it in this video!

tinyurl.com/WRLapworth

The community leased land the bug hotel sits on is adjacent to Lapworth station, which meant we could be much more ambitious in our design and installation. See more information under [the Sustainability section](#).



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

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Education

Wild Rails Nature Inspired Art Prints for Stations

As part of the wider Wild Rails biodiversity pilot project we ran a cyanotype art workshop with the Eco-Club at Campion School, in Leamington. The idea was to create some nature inspired art work for their local train station, so there was a lasting legacy to let passengers know about the project. These were the results at various stages of creating the prints, which are being designed into posters for the station (coming soon).

For those curious about the Cyanotype process, it was invented in 1842 by Sir John Herschel and is credited as being the earliest form of basic photography. To create a print you place an object such as a flower, on special light-sensitive paper and expose it to UV rays from the sun. Where the object is laid over the paper a shadow is created.



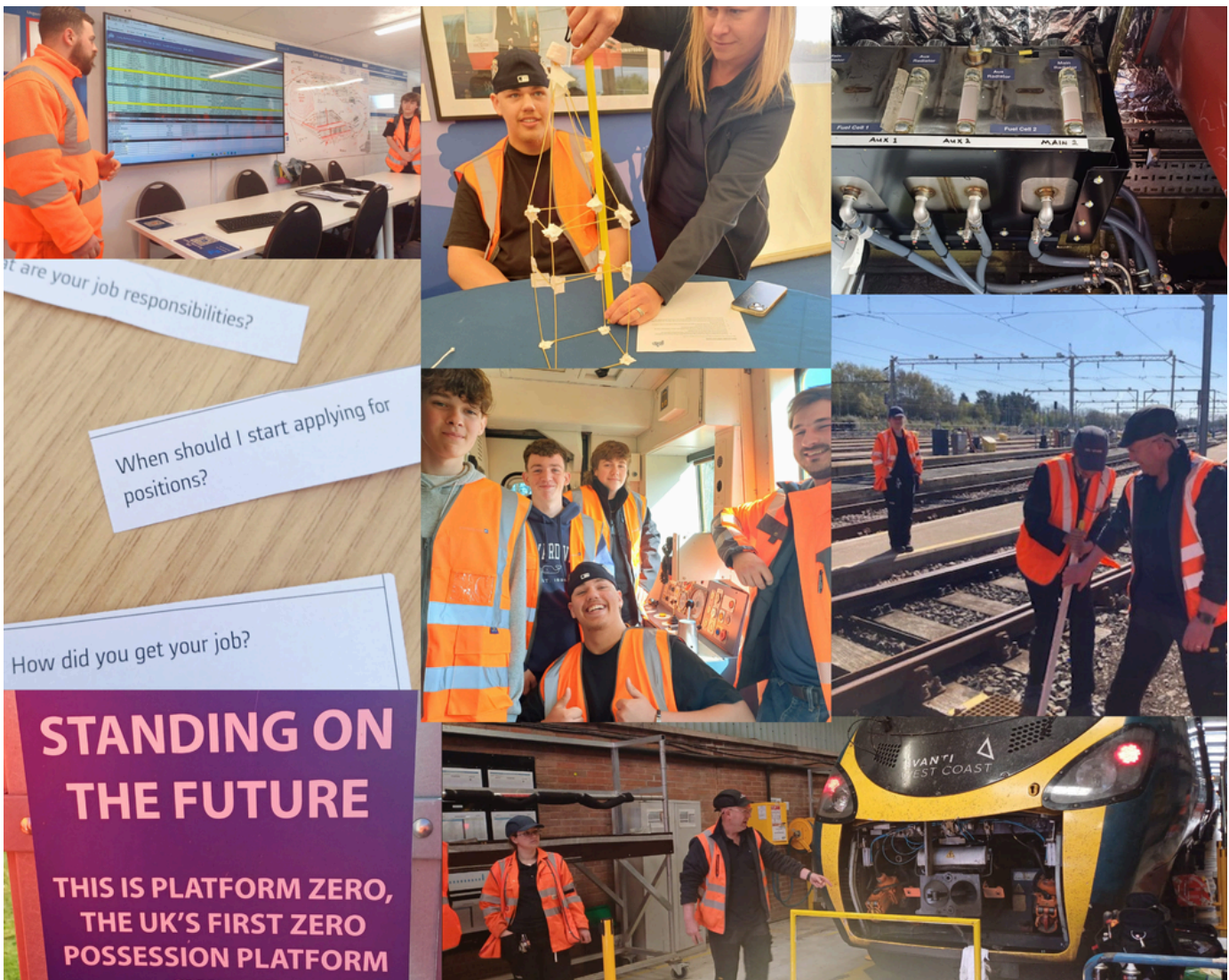
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Education

STEM 5

April was a busy month with two Year 10 STEM trips organised with our wonderful Corporate Partners Porterbrook and Alstom. Porterbrook hosted our at activities at Long Marston Rail Innovation Centre where we got to experience the HydroFLEX train, the first hydrogen-powered train to operate on the UK's network. This was an amazing opportunity for students to see behind the scenes ground breaking technology and talk with engineers, project managers and operational staff, in addition to finding out how apprenticeships and graduates schemes can provide a route into such careers. Watch the video here tinyurl.com/HeartSTEM

[Alstom hosted at Oxley Depot](#) where activities included a tour of the impressive site and train driver cabs plus an MTa Kit marble run challenge. With staff shortages in the rail industry and engineering posts across many sectors, we hope these trips inspire the next generation to consider this career path, broadening students awareness of local engineering and rail opportunities.



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Education

STEM 5

January saw the completion of the STEM activity days with partners the Smallpiece Trust, funded by Cross Country. 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. Over the 3 years running **739 students have undertaken the Rail Challenge** and an impressive 575 of them were awarded the recognised CREST Award! See the work in action click [here](#).



Emily the Engineer Primary STEM Engagement

Network Rail have produced an activity book called Emily the Engineer, aimed at primary school level STEM engagement. Heart CRP will hold a stall at Coventry station in the summer holidays (23.07.25) to hand out to young travellers. The books helps introduces STEM activities in a fun way, perfect for long or short train adventures.



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Education

Rail Safety

As part of Heart CRP's continued commitment to rail safety with partners LearnLive, to deliver the Rail Safe Friendly programme in the Midlands, a further 6 new schools have been worked with since Christmas reaching a total of 2,843 new young people. This in addition to the 35 schools already involved on a Bronze or Silver level accreditation, and alongside Heart CRP personally visiting schools, and giving pre-trip rail safety lessons.



Westgate Primary in Warwick achieved Gold status last month, and some of their rail safety poster designs have been included on this page. With a new total website views of over **28,443**, we are looking to build on this number each month. So if you know of any Midlands based schools who might be interested please contact sarahdavison@warwickshire.gov.uk



Date for your Diaries: Rail Safety Week (16-22 June 2025)

We look forward to sharing the winning Back Track rail safety competition entries during Rail Safety Week, which celebrates its 10th anniversary in 2025. These always deliver impactful messages we can share from young people to young people, in helping to keep themselves safe by the railways.



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Station & Neighbourhood Enhancements

William Makes an Appearance Along the Shakespeare Line!

Over 40 station volunteers along the Shakespeare Line between Birmingham Moor Street and Stratford upon Avon supported the installation of life-size William Shakespeare statues at 18 stations! The "Bringing Shakespeare to the Shakespeare Line" project was conceived by the Trustees of the Friends of the Shakespeare Line and included each station adopting their very own Shakespeare Play e.g. Wythall has Macbeth and Henley in Arden has Romeo and Juliet.



With each station adopting its own Shakespeare play, the volunteers will develop themes around 'their' play at 'their' station. This initiative not only brings Shakespeare and dramatic art into the mainstream but also serves as a valuable resource for National Curriculum and English GCSE students, signposting the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust as a key educational resource.

The project has effectively brought the route to life, living up to its name of 'The Shakespeare Line' and making the journey to Stratford upon Avon even more exciting for the visitor.

The project is supported by Network Rail, West Midlands Trains and the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust. Come and take a look soon!

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Station & Neighbourhood Enhancements



A Little Bit of History Returns to Claverdon



CLAVERDON

A new Running in Board has been installed on Platform 1 at Claverdon Railway Station, made from oak by a local carpenter. Whilst the board is not an exact replica of the Great Western Railway type, it has been modelled on drawings and research from various sources within heritage railways.

The space below the board has received a large, wooden planter and a curious helper looking to get stuck in with planting the seasonal flowers! The Station Adopters at Claverdon are deeply grateful for the financial support from Claverdon Parish Council and the Friends of the Shakespeare Line (FoSL), that enabled this project to be completed.



Stations in Bloom This Spring

Spring is always a great time to celebrate some of the hard work that has taken place behind the scenes, as the flowers blossom and the sun shines. These are some pictured shared by Canley, The Lakes & Leamington Spa Station Adopters.



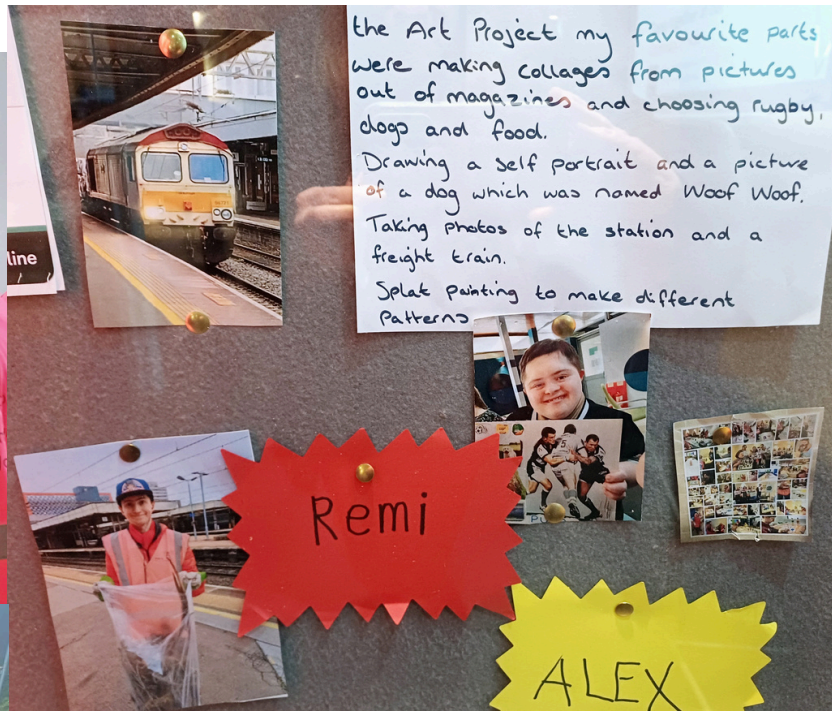
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Inclusivity and Community Links



Work with the Life Path Trust

Our work with the Life Path Trust and the Coventry Station Adopters group has continued in 2025 and the Station Adopters are now full members of the Community Rail Network. Life Path citizens have been busy creating a Member Wall in the Avanti Community Room at the station, showcasing the work they are doing.



A refresh of the planters at Coventry station has taken place and with Spring in the air they look like they are set to flourish.



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Sustainability

Lapworth Community Leased Land

As mentioned in the Wild Rails Education update, Friends of Lapworth station has been leased some community land by Network Rail which is adjacent to the station. The land was previously over-ran with rubbish and brambles and will hopefully in time become a biodiversity haven.

The Friends of Lapworth station have been very busy clearing huge amount of rubbish with their volunteers and preparing the ground for some planting. A big thank you to Network Rail for much of the rubbish disposal alongside paying for the site safety features (steps and safety fencing) enabling community use such as the school bug hotel.

Watch this space for future developments!



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Sustainability

Active Travel Roadshows Looking to Help Rail Passengers

Our Warwickshire County Council Active Travel colleagues are holding a series of sessions at Leamington Station this July, offering rail passengers the opportunity for FREE bike health checks, security marking and active travel maps and resources. The sessions will occur at the same time (Thursday 4.00-6.30pm) over two consecutive weeks, giving passengers the chance to bring their bike back the following week if the offer is of interest.

Heart CRP have the promotion of active travel alongside rail travel, at the heart of the work we do so we are keen to support and publicise these events. The overlap between those who travel actively and those who use the railway presents an exciting opportunity to both celebrate 200 years of the railway in Britain, whilst also connecting with those who enjoy the benefits of multimodal travel.

Active Travel prizes
Bike health checks
Security marking

WARWICKSHIRE
ACTIVE TRAVEL

200
Years of Train Travel
Since 1825

24/31st JULY 2025
4-6.30PM
Leamington Station

If you would like further information please get in touch at activetravel@warwickshire.gov.uk

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Upcoming Partner Updates, Events & Funding Schemes

New Avanti Train Wrap Lighting up the Rails

Avanti West Coast has unveiled a train wrapped in a bespoke artwork designed to celebrate the ethnicity of employees and communities across its network.



The "Together We Roll" wrap - a brightly coloured tapestry - was produced following an idea from Avanti frontline employees to celebrate and represent people who live and work on the West Coast Main Line with a unique train. Created by digital artist, Baraka Carberry, who describes the design as "scenes of people, culture, colours, and joy".

Cross Country Biodiversity & Community Improvement Funds

CrossCountry is pleased to welcome applications for both the Biodiversity Improvement Projects (BIP) fund, and the Customer and Communities Investment Fund (CCIF) **from Tuesday 6 May until Friday 6 June 2025.**



Guidance and applications are available from

<https://www.crosscountrytrains.co.uk/xc-community-hub/biodiversity-improvement-projects-fund>

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