

Sustainability Report 2023

We're using Our Responsible Plan to make
a difference today to look after tomorrow.

Sustainability means the world to us.

AVANTI
WEST COAST



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Foreword

01

A note from our Managing Director

At Avanti West Coast, we know our services play a vital role in connecting people with places. We're proud to serve customers and communities across our route, and to help drive sustainable regional growth. We want to create a greener railway for the benefit of our customers and future customers, and we've made significant progress to deliver a more sustainable offer, with ambitious plans to go further.

Our work is guided by Our Responsible Plan, which lays out the number of ways we're driving sustainability improvements. This Plan is built on our core belief that a successful business is a responsible one. We're on a mission: to make a difference today to look after tomorrow, protecting our network and enhancing our services for this generation and future generations down the line.

As part of this, I'm pleased to report that we're working towards introducing our new bi-mode and electric trains that will replace our diesel-only Voyagers and significantly reduce our carbon emissions. We've also submitted for validation our new science-based targets for how we'll further reduce our emissions, which presents a significant step forward in capturing how change will be achieved. To support our work, we have produced a draft roadmap for achieving decarbonisation. We've also delivered a number of other exciting projects this year to build on our green credentials, for example installing LEDs and voltage optimisation units, and extending our building management system.

I'm equally proud that the diversity of our people increasingly reflects that of the communities we serve. But it's important we target traditionally less diverse areas of the business. For example, we've worked hard to promote train driver opportunities to members of under-represented groups, especially women.

My priority, and my passion, is to give our customers the best possible experience. We're determined to meet everyone's needs, including to enable independent travel for all, taking care to listen to our disabled customers through dedicated accessibility panels. We also provided disability awareness training to teams across the business, carried out detailed customer research into our passenger assistance provision and developed a ten-year action plan for supporting disabled customers.

We remain committed to working with communities, to support their needs and to help drive regional growth. I'm always inspired by our network of community partners across the UK, and it's great to see our relationships go from strength to strength. We continue to support exciting schemes that will benefit our surrounding communities. Plus, we completed our first detailed report into social value, which identified many inspiring opportunities in this space, and we're going to partner with external consultants to develop our social impact and further our commitments. We can't wait to do these opportunities justice.

Our Responsible Business Plan is delivering. There's still some way to go, but we're on the right track. I'm determined we'll go even further and I'm excited by what we can achieve working together.



Andy Mellors
Managing Director

Introduction

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Introduction



Welcome to our 2023 Sustainability Report, which provides an overview of our initiatives and describes our key results in line with Our Responsible Plan.

Here, you can find out how we performed from April 2022 to March 2023 including the carbon emissions from our trains, the energy and water we use in our buildings and what we do with our waste. Plus, you'll learn about how we support our local communities, our work with charities and our drive to promote inclusion.

Our world is always changing. But environmental and social challenges stay with us, many of which are still exacerbated by the long term effects of the pandemic and lockdowns. We're determined to do what we can to build a better tomorrow and, no matter what, we'll continue to provide a sustainable alternative to air travel and the use of private vehicles.

Our Responsible Plan is made up of four strategic pillars which help guide sustainable development in our business and deliver our goals. It's built on the people and places where we have the opportunity to make most impact as a train company and allows us to focus our attention on doing what matters, not what's easy.

It's there as a moral compass for all our people, guiding every decision and a useful reminder that every one of us is responsible for sustainable development. This plan is all of ours and every one of us can make a difference today to look after tomorrow. The central message of Our Responsible Plan is that:

We're going to protect our planet, with our people at its heart, by doing what's right for our customers and improving life in our communities.

Our Responsible Plan lays out our 10 year ambition to 2031 and incorporates the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The 10-year time frame has given us the opportunity to raise the bar and be big and bold with our approach, which means we can take pride knowing that we're acting responsibly.

In 2020 our senior leadership team all went through a full day's training course on what Our Responsible Plan is, why it is important, what the pillars are and what our goals are; with plenty of discussion on what initiatives are needed for us to meet our goals. This training was then adapted to an online resource for refresher training and new joiners and incorporated into induction training. Each year we build on this training through targeted interventions for our people relevant to each pillar, plus we provide further detail on this throughout the report.

We continue to help our colleagues engage with Our Responsible Plan throughout the year, with everything from internal comms via Yammer to external social media posts and a dedicated sustainability week. These campaigns continue to spark thought, discussion and dedicated initiatives.

We want to give everyone at Avanti West Coast the opportunity to get involved and share their spark to make our operation as sustainable as possible. To us it's about winning together, which is why we've empowered our Green Champions, our Community Champions and our Accessibility Champions to create and deliver Local Station Sustainability Action Plans. We also have four inclusive internal networks that are designed to be a safe space where our colleagues can share individual stories about ethnicity and race, gender, LGBTQ+ and disability to make positive changes that benefit us all.



We're going to protect our planet with our people at its heart, by doing what's right for our customers and improving life in our communities.

Our Responsible Plan

03

Our Responsible Plan

It's our Responsible Plan to:

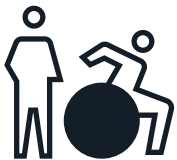


Protect our planet...

We can make rail travel greener. All of it, not just A to B. We'll find innovative solutions for the big stuff, and simply better ways of doing the basics every single day. We can and will leave a smaller footprint.

That means tackling climate change head on. No more buy, use, throw; more reduce, reuse, recycle.

By 2031, our business will be net zero carbon.



Doing what's right for our customers...

We'll raise the bar and deliver a more sustainable operation that works for all our customers. By reaching out, listening and acting on what our customers need, we can deliver better travel decisions.

By 2031, we want everyone to experience integrated, independent and low carbon end-to-end journeys.



...with our people at its heart.

Let's listen, empower and inspire sparks to fly. By talking more, we can encourage each other to take action. We can develop our culture of diversity even further and attract the best talent from all walks of life.

By 2031, all departments will be representative of society with zero pay gaps.



...and improving life in our communities.

We can help make life fairer, safer and that bit better for our communities. The more people who are onboard, the more progress we can make to develop prosperity across our network.

By 2031 we will have made a real difference to over 1m lives.

Our Planet

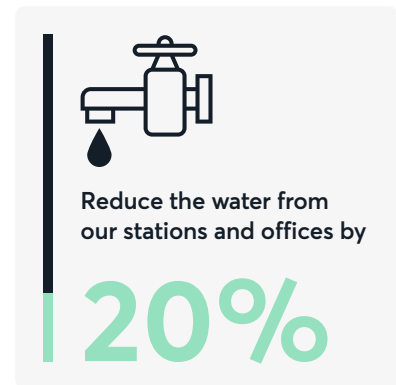
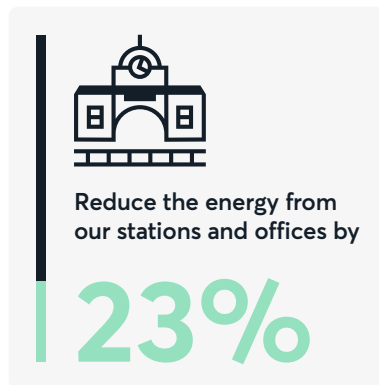
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Our Planet



Our Environmental Management System was once again certified to both ISO 14001 and ISO 50001, the international standards for Environment and Energy in 2022. As part of our continued certification, we set annual environmental targets (published in our Environment and Energy Policy Statement, updated in 2022) alongside interim 5-year targets on our pathway to our 2031 goal to become net zero carbon.

Our interim 2026 environmental targets are:



Our 2022/23 Performance

One of our 2022/23 targets was to improve our **trains' energy use by 5%** (all targets are against 2019/20 performance); we outperformed by achieving a **13.5%** reduction. As last year, we were again able to run smoother and more energy efficient services. We prioritised the use of our electric fleet as they are more efficient than their diesel counterparts, resulting in fewer carbon emissions. This, coupled with the continual decarbonisation of the electricity grid, made a large improvement in the carbon efficiency of our trains. We've also continued the refurbishment of our Pendolino trains in collaboration with Alstom, increasing the efficiency of the fleet through improvements such as energy efficient lighting, as well as ensuring their longevity.

We're continuing with plans to introduce our new Hitachi trains in 2023/24. This planet-friendly fleet is made up of new electric trains and new bi-mode trains which are both electric and diesel powered. They will replace our diesel-only Voyager fleet. The bi-mode trains will reduce our use of diesel by approximately 80% and will go a long way to help us achieve our 2026 target.

We had a 2022/23 target to reduce our energy consumption at stations and offices by 1%; this year we delivered an 11.5% reduction.

Moving away from our fleet, we had a 2022/23 target to **reduce our energy consumption at stations and offices by 1%**; this year we delivered an **11.5% reduction**. We achieved this by completing our project to install LED lights at our stations and to integrate them into our building management system. We will continue to gain the benefits of these initiatives throughout 2023/24.

We're also expanding our building management system and plan to install meters in 2023/24 to measure the electricity use that was not monitored in the initial phase. We've also kept our 16 carbon neutral studies up to date and used the data to develop a draft energy efficiency strategy for reaching net zero. We also installed a voltage optimisation unit at Wigan and Warrington stations. These should help us to save energy by making sure we're not supplied with more electricity than we need. It's early days, but the first results look promising.

Our 2022/23 target for station and office **water consumption was to reduce usage by 1%**; we achieved a **2.1% reduction**. Our use of smart meters helped us identify (and then fix) a number of water leaks throughout the year at several stations.

We also began to install water fountains at our stations. These will enable customers to refill their own drinking bottles, reducing the use of plastic bottles and removing a significant amount of plastic from our waste streams. While this will increase water use at our stations, it will be tracked and it's for a very good reason!

Like last year, we achieved our **zero waste to landfill target and our recycling rate reached 52%**. Recycling continues to be a challenge, despite the continued success of our waste segregation officer at Crewe, who ensures waste is properly sorted for recycling at the station. Birmingham International station will be the next to benefit from this role, plus we'll be engaging waste segregation officers at two more stations this year. We're also working closely with our tenants to help them dispose of waste correctly. We've also done essential groundwork and made sure that we have the right skips in place.

To encourage colleagues to dispose of waste correctly, we developed and launched a Journey of Waste training module. This featured our Environment Team and gave our staff a clear view of our waste streams and why sorting waste is so important. The training was a key part of our Sustainability Week in 2023.

We continue to monitor **air quality** at our stations and took part in the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB)'s project to analyse the results from diffusion tubes at our stations. This project has now finished and we're waiting for RSSB to provide us with the results and recommend next steps. We'll use this guidance to develop an air quality strategy and action plan, and to see where we can improve our existing air quality management processes.

This year, we made significant progress on our plans for decarbonisation. Firstly, we set **science based targets** to reach net zero and submitted them for validation by the science based targets initiative. We're now nearing the end of this validation process.

Having set these targets, we worked with AECOM to develop a **draft roadmap to net zero carbon**. We'll continue to refine this roadmap over the next 12 months to make sure that the assumptions remain true and projects work towards timescales.

To meet our science based targets, especially our **scope 3** targets, supplier engagement is key. We're working with Eracura to develop a supplier engagement strategy that will encourage our suppliers to set their own science based targets and reduce their scope 1 and 3 targets.

Climate change continues to be a very real threat, felt keenly during a period of extremely hot weather in July. To understand the risk posed to our operations, we carried out a **climate change adaptation** survey at Carlisle, previously identified to be vulnerable to flooding. The survey showed that while the station isn't a cause for concern, there is a substantial risk to track and access. We continue to work with both RSSB and NR to address this and other risks.

Once again our Green Champions have been very busy this year, doing many great things on our network. For example, in May 2022, Green and Community Champions from Stockport and Manchester Piccadilly organised an event for World Bee Day. Working with the Bee Sanctuary Movement, they invited children from local schools to learn about bees at the Bee Sanctuary in Highfield Country Park. Focusing on wild bees and wildflowers native to England, the children were given the opportunity to learn about the pollinators and their importance in the ecosystem. Our Champions have also been hard at work on business as usual, identifying serial numbers for meters at stations, organising litter picks and more. While Lancaster's Green Champion used our waste resource catalogue to label all bins at station with the correct waste stream.

As well as empowering our Green Champions, we've also inspired many other staff through our sustainability engagement campaign. Environmental awareness remains part of our induction programme, plus the Summer Safety Brief featured a module on environment awareness which was completed by all frontline staff. Our e-learning training module Our Planet – Wasted Resource remains available to all staff, helping to build our people's understanding of the reasons for our focus on the environment and our approach to waste and recycling. The module also makes people aware of our Waste Resource Catalogue (a go to guide for what waste goes where) and Environment and Energy Policy. On top of this, our Journey of Waste video helped to boost people's understanding of how best to dispose of waste.

We also ran a detailed workshop with our Projects Directorate to provide training on the refreshed Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process. An EIA process must be completed for all projects so we can identify impacts on the environment early in the planning process. What's more, all business cases must also outline how the proposed project will impact all pillars of Our Responsible Plan.



Our People

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Our People



Our customers and colleagues, especially younger people, have an expectation that **inclusion and diversity** is at the heart of what we do. We'll continue to remain respectfully curious about individuals and will create safe spaces to have open, sometimes challenging, conversations across the business on subjects that matter to us all. Our four internal networks continue to drive us forward and promote equality, discussing our annual pay gap reports and creating annual action plans to improve them.

Our disability network – Disabled people make up an estimated one billion, or 15%, of the world's population. About 80% are of working age. However, the right to decent work for disabled people is frequently denied. Our disability network is working to change this. This year, our network supported delivering disability awareness training to staff across the business.

Our gender network – As made clear in the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, gender equality is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Our gender network has worked hard throughout the year to develop guidance and awareness on the menopause. This is crucial to ensure that all people affected by the menopause can access the support they need to work to their best of their abilities. This guidance was launched on International Women's Day and is fundamental to securing gender equality.

Our race and ethnicity network – The Black Lives Matter movement has raised awareness of the issues faced by black people and people from different ethnic minority backgrounds at work and beyond. It's important that we continue to create a safe space to respond and address those issues in the workplace. We celebrated Black History Month with a lunch and awareness session at Euston, accompanied by lanyards and messaging to raise the profile of race equality. The event aimed to bring people together to share their lived experiences, talk about their heritage and learn more about Black history and the achievements of the Black community across the UK and around the world. We also honoured Asquith Xavier at Coventry station. Asquith was a trailblazer who fought against the National Rail colour bar in 1966 to become the first Black guard at Euston station. We paid tribute to his legacy by erecting a plaque in his honour at Coventry station in October.

Our LGBTQ+ network – While acceptance has increased immeasurably in recent years, many LGBTQ+ people still do not feel safe to be out at work. Our LGBTQ+ network continues to promote Avanti West Coast as a safe place for LGBTQ+ people to work and travel. To demonstrate our commitment, we updated the interiors of Progress (otherwise known as the Pride Train) to show sources of support for those who need it and making our support for all members of the LGBTQ+ community even more explicit. We also attended Birmingham Pride to show our support.

Our networks are key in ensuring we have an inclusive work environment. It's also important that we have systems in place to increase diversity in our workforce. As with last year, we identified that our gender pay gap was in part impacted by the over-representation of men in the driver workforce. To address this, we ran a trail-blazing recruitment campaign for unqualified drivers in January 2023. Working with renowned street artist Akse, we installed a mural on Euston Station featuring Karen Harrison, who in 1979 overcame prejudice to be one of the first female train drivers in the UK. The mural was installed to tackle the stereotype that train driving is a job for men and was supported both by Karen's family and ASLEF. The campaign was also accompanied by a pledge by us to increase the percentage of female recruits to 50% by 2030 by breaking down the barriers for women entering the rail industry. This includes changing the way the business recruits to make it more female friendly. This campaign led to a significant increase in the number of women applying to be train drivers.

We've also continued with our initiatives to help talented colleagues from under-represented groups reach their full potential. We're proud to be part of First Group's STEP and Reach programmes, career development programmes for female colleagues and colleagues from an ethnically diverse background. We're happy to report that 40% of attendees for STEP programmes for women have been promoted and 14% of attendees on REACH Development programmes for ethnically diverse colleagues have also been promoted.

The Safety Brief in Summer 2022 contained a specific module on inclusion awareness for all frontline staff. We continue to make our inclusion awareness e-learning module available for all staff, which covers the foundations of inclusion and diversity and brings the activities of staff networks together into one place.



Our Customers

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Our Customers



We play an important role in **social mobility** and driving down carbon from the transport sector. We want to upgrade our stations so that the railway is **accessible** for everyone, enabling seamless door-to-door journeys and encouraging rail travel. To do this, we need to think differently. Positive change demands innovation and new ways of thinking, incorporating different perspectives and our customers' real-life experiences. We continue to hold quarterly national Accessibility Panels alongside seven regional station accessibility panels. These provide lots of opportunities for our disabled customers to discuss and evaluate new proposals, products and services, and help us to do better.

Ensuring our **digital channels** are accessible is vital to our disabled customers. We therefore upgraded our systems to make it easier for people to book Passenger Assist, so that information entered on our website and app prepopulates data on the Passenger Assist webform that goes to our contact centre. We also have a process in place for continuous website audits and improvement. While our dedicated Accessibility Facebook group continues to provide information to customers, as does our Accessibility Hub on the website.

But it's not just about digital inclusion. We want to make sure we are communicating with our disabled customers through all forums in the most inclusive way possible. As such, we provided **training for brand and marketing teams** on accessible content in our communications materials as well as enhanced training for our Social Media and Customer Resolutions teams. All sessions were led by trainers with lived experience of disability. We are now looking to extend this to other teams. We also have new accessible customer screens at stations and onboard trains and are looking to install British Sign Language screens at our stations as well.

Ensuring we have a robust **Passenger Assistance** process is critical. Following a successful change last year, customers can book Passenger Assistance up to two hours before travel. This year, we began carrying out Passenger Assistance surveys to ensure we receive continuous data on our performance and can make improvements where necessary. We've also encouraged our staff to use the Passenger Assist app. This provides our staff with regular updates and provides a way for them to confirm that assistance is complete. We have also installed a Passenger Assist room at Carlisle station to provide a quiet place to wait before travelling.

One initiative that both received support from our panels and enabled us to support disabled customers was our **Travel Companion app**, launched in February 2023. This is a dedicated communications channel to provide disabled customers with instant support during their journey. Staffed by specialist members of our social media team who also have lived experience of disability, Travel Companion aims to improve journeys when the unexpected happens by giving disabled customers the opportunity to chat to a colleague in real time by messaging through WhatsApp. We've already had notable successes, in particular ensuring a train was stopped at an unscheduled station to enable a disabled passenger to alight.

The **refurbishment of our Pendolinos** continues to bring to life recommendations made by our Accessibility Panel. In the light of these we've made several improvements. These include a contrasting wheelchair-space carpet with a wheelchair user symbol, plugs onboard for charging powerchairs and scooters, a passenger detection system that alerts staff to luggage in wheelchair spaces (so they can ask customers to move it), hinged tables in wheelchair spaces for allow easier access to priority seating, and wireless mobile phone charging for wheelchair users via a cradle in the wheelchair space. Our new Hitachi fleet will have similar changes to make sure all our trains are accessible.

Our updated Accessible Transport Plan (ATP), which lays out how we assist customers with either a **physical or non-visible disability**, was re-approved by the Office of Rail and Road in January 2023 with no significant changes.

Following third party **accessibility audits** carried out at all our stations, we've used a dedicated budget to improve accessibility. Upgrades we've made this year include sourcing accessible seating to improve existing seats at stations, delivering new ramps to stations across the network and installing automatic doors at Stoke-on-Trent station.

It's also vital that we **empower our staff** to support disabled customers. We're making strong progress towards this goal. For example, last year we provided disability awareness training to our stations and onboard colleagues. This was supplemented with a disability awareness module on the Summer Safety Brief. We also extended training to HQ staff, plus we developed an introduction to British Sign Language (BSL) e-learning module that's available to all staff to enable basic communication with deaf customers. An accessibility awareness module also featured on the Summer Safety Brief for all staff and is a theme in our induction material.

As last year, our staff continue to support customers with non-visible disabilities by promoting the use of the Sunflower lanyard and Just A Minute (JAM) card. These schemes allow customers to discreetly indicate they have a non-visible disability while travelling.

To make our services fully accessible, we know we need to have a **long term plan**. Using research carried out with Savanta into the ideal accessibility customer experience, and detailed feedback from our accessibility panel, we developed a 10 year plan for improving accessibility. This plan is a living document that now informs our annual actions.

We're encouraging more people to use trains to help reduce the use of private vehicles. To support this, we've developed a series of **station travel plans**. A station travel plan is a strategy for managing the travel options of customers going to and from the station, with the aim of reducing their environmental impact and promoting growth and sustainability. These plans are accompanied by an action tracker, showing our commitment to delivery and outlining funding opportunities. The next stage is to create integrated travel plans across all train operations to identify future opportunities. We've also collaborated with Network Rail to produce surveys across all our stations to identify how customers travel to and from our stations and their future needs.



Our Communities

07

Our Communities



The people and places we serve are a vital part of achieving our vision of putting railways back at the heart of community. We continue to develop the strong relationships we built in 2020/21 with the 20 **Community Rail Partnerships** (CRPs), who are dedicated to supporting community-based groups and partnerships that connect their community with the railway and deliver social benefits.

In September 2022, we hosted our annual **Community Rail Conference**, bringing together key stakeholders across the West Coast Main Line in England, Scotland and Wales. The virtual conference was held as part of our commitment to the Community Rail Network, where we looked at the role community rail can play in recovering passenger confidence. We continued to support CRPs in this work by providing annual core funding and, last year, we also invested in two dedicated community funds. An innovation session at the conference was held to help CRPs identify projects for funding. Here are two of the year's successes: last year that the CRPs can bid for to finance their projects. Here are two of the year's successes:

Dick, Kerr Ladies

In collaboration with Community Rail Lancashire (CRL), we helped young people in Lancashire to tell the forgotten story of the most successful women's football team in history – Dick, Kerr Ladies. The project, funded through our Community Project Fund, involved the release of a short film, *Granny*, which commemorates Lizzy Ashcroft, one of the members of the Dick, Kerr Ladies team. It was released as England's Lionesses prepared for the Women's Euro 2022 Final.

To build youth engagement around the film and document an important part of history in a new way, CRL teamed up with a group of young people on a supported internship programme, DFN Project SEARCH, to create a series of specially made postcards. Delivered in partnership with Lancashire County Council, Preston College and Hft (a national charity providing services for people with learning disabilities), the internship is a transition to work programme for young people with learning disabilities and autism. Six unique postcards were produced. The young people distributed these postcards, handing them out at Preston station as well as writing and delivering the cards to care home residents and members of the community to spark conversations and support those who may be experiencing loneliness.

RHS Bridgewater Bus Project

In Summer 2022, we supported south east Lancashire CRP to develop car-free access to RHS Bridgewater. Through our Community Project Fund, we provided funding so an affordable and reliable shuttle bus service could operate between Manchester Piccadilly train station and RHS Garden Bridgewater, stopping at Salford Crescent and Walkden train stations. The goal of this project was to deliver environmental benefits by reducing the number of car journeys to the site and to promote active travel as a viable option.

Eight further CRP projects were also completed throughout the year. These included a celebration day at Coventry Station, artwork at Holyhead station and a family walk around Stoke-on-Trent.

The year also saw the development of projects funded by our Customer and Community Investment Scheme. This funds projects which address regeneration challenges and tackles social needs across the regions we serve. In 2022, we continued to fund a key project for the Railway Children charity: creating a safety net for vulnerable children. Operating in the West Midlands, the Railway Children created a referral system with the British Transport Police to identify vulnerable young people in need of support. Many other projects continue to receive funding under this scheme, including the courtyard development at Coventry station and the installation of a new customer information screen at Crewe station which displays details of Community Rail Partnerships linked to the station.

April marked the end of our charity partnership with Action for Children. During our partnership, we successfully raised over £50,000 for the charity and a thank you was sent to all Community Champions. Since December, we've supported local charities and community groups nominated by our Community Champions, who have detailed knowledge of the help needed in their local communities. We've also continued to support the Railway Children charity, with a sponsored sleepout at Manchester Piccadilly and Birmingham New Street stations along with sponsored challenges to cycle in Vietnam and trek through the Himalayas. One of our Community Champions from Crewe completed the Elizabeth Walk Rail Trail (15 miles!) in aid of the Railway Children in October 2022.

Community Champions

Our Community Champions continue to act as ambassadors for Avanti West Coast. These outstanding people work closely with our Community Manager, their Station Manager and the local community to get involved in events, providing support where it's needed most. They also do great work keeping our customers and colleagues up to date with their activities through station community boards and online social groups.

Community Champions started the year off in superb fashion organising celebrations for the Queen's Jubilee. Stations across the West Coast route were decorated with bunting, colourful artwork by local schoolchildren, Union Jack flags and well-wishes for Her Majesty, to commemorate 70 years on the throne. Live entertainment from local bands and dance groups added to the party atmosphere. And our customers were invited to take part by bringing their own picnics and afternoon teas to enjoy at stations.

Our Community Champions also invited local business to have pop-up shops and organised raffles and competitions to raise awareness and funds for local causes. A Jubilee-themed activity pack was created to keep children royally entertained. Plus, we provided a dedicated space at stations where little ones could get creative and make their own colourful card crowns.

Our Community Champion at Runcorn station has been pivotal to establishing the station's Community Hub, working with a mental health community support group, 'It's good 2 talk'. The group continue to use the room twice a week to hold walk in sessions for customers and the local community. Fidget toys, pens, pencils, sketch pads and adult colouring books are provided to create a safe space and to actively encourage conversation. They also hosted podcasts and an event for Blue Monday in January.

Christmas is always a busy time for our Community Champions and this year was no exception. Stockport station looked particularly festive with decorations drawn by a talented Champion. Christmas Jumper day took place on 8th December and our people were encouraged to wear a festive jumper to work and donate to one of two charities: Samaritans and Railway Children. All funds raised on the day were match funded by First Group. Our Champions also selected a local charity to support at Christmas with company donations.

More of our people continue to be recognised for their work in the community. Community Champions from Manchester, Stockport and Runcorn were finalists at the 2022 Rail Staff Awards in recognition of their innovative work. Our Rugby Community Champion collected the awards for Rugby station's entry in the "Rugby in Bloom competition". The station was honoured with a Gold Award in the environmental category.

Avanti School Programme

Launched in 2021, Avanti West Coast's school engagement programme is committed to engaging with at least 25 schools and 4,000 students each financial year to promote careers in the rail industry. The programme is led by Avanti West Coast's Diversity and Inclusion Engagement Consultant. Engaging with students provides an excellent opportunity for us to reach out to young people who have not previously considered working in the rail industry, particularly students from lower socio-economic backgrounds and those who speak English as a second language. A key aim of the scheme is to encourage diversity in our future talent pipeline and support social mobility.

Since April 2022, we've engaged with 35 primary and secondary schools, reaching at least 5766 children across the West Coast Main Line to promote railway careers, raise awareness of rail safety and inspire young minds as well as supporting them to develop their employability skills.

The programme also provides a great opportunity for our colleagues across the network to develop new skills by volunteering to deliver sessions at schools as well as hosting groups of children at stations. Many of our colleagues are experienced in working with children in various capacities from previous jobs or volunteering outside of work. Everyone is encouraged and supported by us to be creative and bring their own ideas to how we can engage with schools. Examples of activities that colleagues can take part in include attending careers fairs and careers panels, supporting with mock job interviews in secondary schools, delivering rail safety sessions and early careers talks in primary schools and enabling school visits to stations.

Our Community Champions were also heavily involved in our schools engagement scheme. For World Book Day, our Runcorn Champion invited children from the local school to spend an afternoon in the community room whilst staff read various books that we donated to the children. Our Runcorn Station Manager joined the session and took questions from the children about the station and railway. Champions at Lancaster station supported employability workshops at Morecambe High School and inspired one of the students there to apply for a work experience placement with us in summer 2023, which we're supporting. While our Holyhead Champion visited his local primary school to talk about his job as Train Manager, plus other careers on the railway and to read to students from the books we donated. Along with this, he organised visits from the local primary school to Holyhead station where the children were taught about how the driver cab works and rail safety.

Feel Good Field Trips

Last year, we created Feel Good Field Trips; a unique initiative that broadens children's horizons with a once-in-a-lifetime experience at destinations across our network. Facilitated by Community Rail Lancashire and funded by us, Our Feel Good Field Trips give pupils the opportunity to enjoy hands-on learning, fun and culturally diverse days out, travelling on the West Coast Main Line.

This year, approximately 650 pupils aged 5-16 went on a Feel Good Field Trip. Feedback has been extremely positive, especially as many pupils on these trips have never been on a train before and have had little opportunity to travel out of their home town. Each trip starts with a rail safety/confidence session before the children board the train. Trips have so far included visits to Bolton Wanderers, Gladstone Pottery Museum in Stoke-on-Trent and the Food Sorcery cooking school in Manchester. We're incredibly proud to connect children with exciting, life-enriching opportunities like these.

Social value

Social value is the value that people place on changes they experience in aspects of their wellbeing. As a responsible business, we're committed to delivering social value activities that add significant benefits to the communities we serve.

We measure our social value through the RSSB's Rail Social Value Tool (RSVT). The RSVT is a framework that helps rail companies like us measure and report social value. It also enables us to identify areas where we can improve our impact on communities and the environment.

By using the RSVT, we've been able to quantify the social, economic and environmental benefits of our operations, such as reducing carbon emissions, supporting local employment and training opportunities and investing in community initiatives. This enables us to demonstrate our contribution to wider society beyond just providing rail services.

Each year, we produce a report setting out our social value in detail. This year's social value report can be found in the Our Communities section of our website. This report is a testament to our social impact and positive contributions towards sustainable development. It highlights our achievements in community engagement, reducing environmental impact, creating and sustaining jobs, promoting diversity and inclusion and investing in innovation and technology. It's also an endorsement of our commitment to supporting social development and meeting the needs of the wider society.

Above all, this report shows the positive impact that our business activities can have on the lives of individuals. From 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, we contributed a total operational, environmental and economic impact worth **£212,715,728.55**.

In view of our success in creating significant amounts of social value, we propose to change the goal of the 'Our Community' pillar in 'Our Responsible Plan' from 'By 2031 we will have made a real difference to over 1m lives' to 'By 2031, we will have created £1billion or more of social value for our communities'.

This change is appropriate and relevant as social value provides the method for measuring the difference to our communities and is now a standard measure within the rail industry. Given the amount of social value we have created over the last two years, we're confident we'll be able to meet, and hopefully exceed, our new goal. We'll now work with the Department for Transport to make this change happen.



Looking Forward

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Looking Forward

We're all in this together. Big or small, every single one of us can make a difference. We're working hard to ensure that every team, colleague and partner representing Avanti West Coast understands Our Responsible Plan with a real sense of ownership – inspired and empowered to make responsible business decisions. We're continuing to work with colleagues across the business to understand roles and responsibilities in this area and to provide the necessary awareness and training. We continue to encourage feedback and ideas on what we can do as individuals, and as a business, to meet our four ambitious sustainable development goals.



Together, we will make
a difference today to
look after tomorrow.



Sustainability Report | June 2022
Sustainability means the world to us.