

# Sustainability Report 2022

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

Sustainability means the world to us.

**AVANTI**  
WEST COAST



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# Foreword

01

# A note from our Managing Director

We're here to connect people and places with opportunity. We'll do that whilst creating a railway which generates nationwide pride and prosperity, reconnecting the United Kingdom in the wake of Covid-19.

Our services will help with the recovery and the creation of strong, vibrant and sustainable local economies in a way that is safe, accessible, efficient and resilient.

Two years ago, we published our Sustainable Development Strategy called Our Responsible Plan and this year we have advanced delivery against this strategy. At the core of this strategy is our statement: we believe a successful business is a responsible one, and we're on a mission; to make a difference today to look after tomorrow. There's a commitment from every single one of us at Avanti West Coast to deliver on this statement. We take responsibility for protecting our network and we're enhancing our services for this generation and future generations down the line.

We're introducing our new bi-mode trains that will replace our diesel-only Voyagers; substantially reducing our carbon footprint and air quality-related emissions. We've also delivered a number of exciting projects this year to build on our green credentials.

We're proud that the diversity of our people is increasingly reflective of the communities we serve, but we know we can go further and target those areas of the business that need more

diversification and we have worked hard to promote unqualified train driver opportunities to members of under-represented groups.

Our customers are always our focus and the ability to listen to our disabled customers, through dedicated accessibility panels, has allowed us to take steps to make it easier to travel with us. We provided disability awareness training to our frontline staff and have included designs in our refurbished Pendlinos recommended by, and intended to support, disabled customers.

The people and places we serve are essential in achieving our vision of putting the railway at the heart of communities. We continue to capitalise on our strong relationships with the Community Rail Network and this year have funded some exciting community schemes that will benefit our surrounding communities. There is much more that we are looking at doing as a responsible business and I am excited at what we can achieve by making a difference today to look after tomorrow.



**Phil Whittingham**  
Managing Director

# Introduction

02

# Introduction



Welcome to our 2022 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 2021 to March 2022 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 equality.

Our world is always changing. But what remains constant are the environmental and social challenges that we all face, many of which have been exacerbated by the pandemic and the uncertainties of our new world as we emerge from significant lockdowns. We're in this together 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 of 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 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 has incorporated the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The 10-year timeframe 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 129-strong 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, what our goals are and plenty of discussion on what initiatives are needed for us to meet our goals. This year, we have sought to build on this training through targeted interventions for our people relevant to each pillar, and we provide further detail on this throughout the report.

This year, we carried out a company-wide 12-month sustainable engagement campaign to raise awareness of Our Responsible Plan and to empower our people to drive this strategy forward. This has ranged from internal Yammer and Avanti Connect posts to e-learning opportunities, station roadshows in Autumn 2021 and sustainability conferences during Sustainability Week in March 2022. Engagement with our people has resulted in the development of many exciting new initiatives.

We want everyone at Avanti West Coast to have the opportunity to get involved and share their spark to make our operation as sustainable as we can. We want to win together and have 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 disabilities in order to make positive changes that benefit us all.



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our planet with our  
people at its heart,  
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# Our Responsible Plan

# 03

# Our Responsible Plan

It's our Responsible Plan to:



## protect our planet

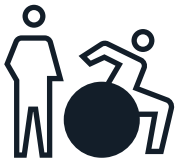
We can make rail travel greener. All of it, not just A to B. We'll find innovative solutions for the big stuff, and simply better ways of doing the basics every single day. We can and will leave a smaller footprint. That means tackling climate change head on. No more buy, use, throw; more reduce, reuse, recycle.

By 2031, our business will be net zero carbon.



## 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.



## 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.



## 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

04

# Our Planet



Our Environmental Management System was certified to both ISO 14001 and ISO 50001 the international standards for Environment and Energy in 2021. As part of our continued certification, we set annual environmental targets (published in our Environment and Energy Policy Statement, updated in May 2021) alongside interim 5-year targets on our pathway to our 2031 goal to become net zero carbon.

Our interim 2026 environmental targets are:



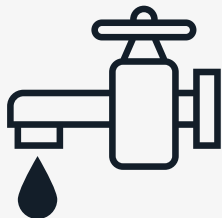
Improve the carbon efficiency of our trains by

**61%**



Reduce the energy from our stations & offices by

**23%**



Reduce the water from our stations & offices by

**20%**

## Our 2021/22 Performance

One of our 2021/22 targets was to improve our **trains' energy efficiency** by 3%; we went the extra mile to deliver a 4.7% improvement. As last year, we continue to promote eco-driving techniques with our skilled drivers. What's more, with the railway continuing to be less congested with reduced service following the impact of Covid-19, we were again able to run smoother and more energy efficient services. We also 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 begun the refurbishment of our Pendolino trains in collaboration with Alstom, increasing the efficiency of the fleet as well as ensuring their longevity.

We're continuing with plans to introduce our new Hitachi trains, although the introduction of this fleet has been delayed until 2023. This planet-friendly fleet is made up of new electric trains and new bi-mode trains which are both electric and diesel powered, and 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. In the meantime, we are exploring alternative fuels to reduce carbon and energy use and look forward to completing the refurbishment of our Pendolinos in 2023, which will help reduce our energy use through improvements such as energy efficient lighting.

COP26, the international climate change conference in Glasgow hosted during November 2021, provided us with an opportunity to showcase low-carbon travel on our trains. A special 'Climate Train' (now named 'Opportunity') ran between the Netherlands and Scotland carrying passengers to COP26, thanks to a partnership between Avanti West Coast, Eurostar, NS, ProRail and Youth for Sustainable Travel. Together with Eurostar, we were awarded a prestigious 'Golden Whistle' Award for this initiative. We have since entered into a climate change commitment with Alstom and Angel Trains, and we'll be working together to understand how we can further reduce energy use on our trains.

Moving away from our fleet, we had a 2021/22 target to reduce our **energy consumption** at stations and offices by 15%; we achieved an 11.2% reduction. Due to an unavoidable delay in installing LED lighting across our estate, we weren't quite able to meet our target, but this lighting project will be back on track next year to help us reach our target.

To enable us to reduce consumption, we installed a building management system (BMS) last year at all of our stations to improve our understanding of energy use and we will continue to expand and develop this system. Data from the BMS has already helped us make improvements. For example we replaced inefficient heaters with radiant heaters in waiting rooms and staff areas across eight stations, reducing energy use. Alongside this, we have completed 16 carbon neutral studies across our station portfolio. All this information will be used to create an energy efficiency strategy that ties in with our plans for reaching Net Zero. This complements our existing plans to introduce more LED lighting in the coming years.

We're also excited to be working with Network Rail on an innovative design for a solar panel car port at Stoke-on-Trent that could generate enough electricity to power electric vehicle charge points, lighting and supplement the station's other energy needs. As the first project of its kind, this pioneering solar car port could lead the way for further roll outs of renewable technology across the industry.

Our 2021/22 target for station and office **water consumption** was to reduce usage by 20%; we achieved a 13% reduction. We made good progress against a challenging target, which was impacted by a number of leaks at stations. Our use of smart meters helped us identify (and then fix) water leaks at a number of stations including Stafford, Lancaster, Macclesfield and Rugby. We're continuously working closely with Network Rail to help us sort leaks faster.

As reported last year, when Covid made our services quieter, we took the opportunity to trial water saving devices in the customer toilets at Crewe. These included low water flush and improvements to our taps, including sensor controls that reduced contamination. Although this trial wasn't a success as the technology used ultimately was not the right choice, it hasn't dampened our spirits and we have plans to run a new trial using different technology which will hopefully see us continuing to make progress towards our water targets.

Like last year, we achieved our **zero waste to landfill target** and our recycling rate improved 1% from the previous year to 54%. This year we also trialled the introduction of a waste segregation officer at Crewe station, with the job of making sure waste was properly segregated at the station. This led to a significant increase in recycling rates in Crewe! We plan to expand this trial to include more stations. We also trialled coffee cup segregation at stations and are currently analysing the results.

To help our onboard colleagues manage waste and improve recycling rates, we provided an onboard standard on packaging and recycling. We've also engaged with our onboard train presentation teams to identify and finalise a process for segregating waste onboard where possible.

We continue to monitor **air quality** at our stations and have installed diffusion tubes at each one to enable us to identify any hot spots where we need to take action. We're working with the Rail Standards and Safety Board (RSSB) to analyse the results, which we'll use to create air quality action plans over the next year. Our Green Champions play a vital part in this project as they make sure the tubes are replaced every month and sent for analysis.

Once again, our Green Champions have been very busy this year. As part of Mental Health Awareness Week, they organised over 10 litter picks along the West Coast Mainline, with over 100 bags of waste collected. Later in the year, Green Champions volunteered at the Story Garden in Camden, cleaning hundreds of plant pots so they were ready

for use. Green Champions at Euston also supported our onboard crews, helping them to understand the focus on recycling in the new menu roll out. One of our Euston Champions has also raised the bar by proactively looking for ways we can reduce carbon emissions in our catering offer.

Green Champions also organised focal events during COP26. For example, Preston station hosted an event to celebrate Lancashire and promote sustainability, engaging both staff and customers to talk about COP26. Stockport station followed suit with a COP26 engagement event and Glasgow station held a COP26 Environmental Fun Day on 30 October.

As well as empowering our Green Champions, we've also inspired many other staff through our sustainability engagement campaign. We dedicated June 2022 to Our Planet, the first pillar of our Responsible Plan, and launched the e-learning training module *Our Planet – Wasted Resource*. This is available to all staff, helping to build our people's understanding of the reasons behind our focus on the environment and our approach to waste and recycling. The module also made people aware of our Wasted Resource Catalogue (a go to guide for what waste goes where) and Environment and Energy Policy. On top of this, we produced a reduced wasted resources catalogue for tenants to educate tenants on our stations as they use our waste facilities too.



# 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 all station and onboard staff and will be expanding this training to HQ staff next year. Our network has also been establishing close links with special educational needs schools on our route to support students' understanding of the railway and to encourage young disabled people to consider careers in the industry. Next year, we aim to be accredited as a Disability Confident Employer (level 2), building on the strong foundations of our Disability Confident (level 1) accreditation.

**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. Building on the listening groups and surveys from last year, our gender network has been working to advance gender equality at work, culminating in the launch of 'Lean In' groups. These groups are safe spaces for colleagues to openly discuss challenges pertaining to their gender. One of the key challenges identified has been the impact of the menopause at work and appropriate support will be developed throughout next year. For International Women's Day, we addressed stereotypes of who might work in control, publishing a video featuring an all-female control room. We also worked with a local college to arrange work experience for a female student who was interested in working in the rail industry.

**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 have continued our Tea & Talk initiative from last year, holding bi-monthly virtual conversations around a number of subjects ranging from the celebration of Ramadan and Easter, to awareness of Gypsy,

Roma and Traveller history, to racist language unknowingly used in football commentary and wider language. We marked Black History Month with a programme of events including sharing the histories of black role models on the railway, the stories of our people currently working with us and a Tea & Talk session around career development. We also held a careers panel featuring colleagues of black heritage at a local school with high levels of ethnic minority diversity to show students there were role models they could look to in the rail industry.

**Our LGBTQ+ network** – While acceptance has increased immeasurably in recent years, many LGBTQ+ people 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. During the year, we hosted talks for our people on mental health awareness in the community and awareness of trans identities. We also had a significant presence at Birmingham Pride, collaborating closely with Network Rail and releasing news and social media articles to underline the reasons for our participation. Progress (otherwise known as the Pride Train), dressed head to toe in the UK's largest progressive Pride flag, continues to travel our network every day, raising awareness of LGBTQ+ acceptance.

Our networks are key in ensuring we have an inclusive work environment and it's important that we also have the 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, before we ran a recruitment campaign for unqualified drivers in January 2022, we advertised the opportunities to local community groups relevant to under-represented groups, advertised on targeted jobsites such as workingmums.com and showcased female driver role models on our social media and in targeted media. Significantly, we also held a recruitment webinar where one of our female train drivers spoke positively of her experiences at work. We also answered questions on what it is like to be a female train driver and how autism might impact on being a train driver. We are currently analysing the impact of these activities on the diversity of applicants and successful recruits.

We've also implemented initiatives to help talented colleagues from under-represented groups reach their full potential. Our leadership mentoring scheme continues to grow and is promoted via our staff networks. We also have bespoke leadership courses for women and colleagues from ethnic minority backgrounds, called STEP and REACH respectively. There have been a number of successes following completion of these courses, including a promotion to Head of Department.

In summer 2021, we refreshed our Inclusion Impact Assessment process and re-briefed our project team to make sure meaningful assessments were carried out. This resulted in positive changes to projects, notably making physical environments more accessible for disabled people.

July saw the sustainable engagement campaign focus on Our People. We launched

an e-learning module available for all staff covering the foundations of inclusion and diversity and bringing the activities of staff networks together into one place. We also produced infographics and posters for stations and office space explaining the importance of an inclusive workplace. Finally, we developed a mythbusting guide for managers to support conversations about inclusion with their teams.

Our hard work was recognised in March 2022 when we were accredited with an Investors In Diversity Foundation Award. This legitimises our approach and means we can take confidence in our progress in this area. But we know there's more work to do and we're collaborating with Investors In Diversity to develop a programme of action for the upcoming year.



# Our Customers

06

# 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 to provide numerous opportunities for our disabled customers to discuss and evaluate new proposals, products and services, and help us to do better.

One initiative that both received support from our existing consultative panels and enabled us to reach more disabled customers was the launch of our dedicated social media forum for disabled customers. In April 2021, we launched the group called 'Accessible Rail Travel with Avanti West Coast' on Facebook, becoming the first UK train operator to provide this service. The forum enables disabled passengers on the West Coast Main Line to connect with each other and with our social media team, who are on hand to provide specialist support. To ensure this group was a success, our social media team received specialist training from Furner Communications on how to communicate with disabled people. This helped to make sure the team were equipped with the knowledge and skills they needed to assist disabled people in the best possible way. We have further plans to expand and develop this group.

The refurbishment of our Pendolinos will also bring to life recommendations made by our Accessibility Panel. In the light of these we've made several improvements, including: a contrasting wheelchair-space carpet with a wheelchair user symbol, plugs onboard allowing the charging of powerchairs and scooters, a passenger detection system indicating to staff if the wheelchair spaces have items in them (so they can ask customers to move any luggage into the appropriate spaces), hinged tables in the wheelchair space to allow easier access to priority seating, and wireless mobile phone charging for wheelchair users via a cradle in the wheelchair space.

Our updated Accessible Transport Plan (ATP), which lays out how we assist customers with either a physical or non-visible disability, was approved by the Office of Rail and Road in June 2021. The main change was to strengthen the wording around our rail replacement obligations.

In December 2021, we became the first train operator to be awarded Shaw Trust Web Accreditation – a mark confirming our website has been tested by people with a wide range of disabilities and found to be accessible. To address the requirements needed to obtain the accreditation, we changed our coding to make the content accessible to keyboard only users and assistive technologies, including screen readers. In addition, changes were made to the design of webpages to provide sufficient colour contrast between text and background for visually impaired users. Our website conforms to WCAG 2.1 Level AA – going above the minimum requirement of WCAG standards and making it accessible to more people.

We've also worked hard with industry partners to improve accessibility on the railway. In May 2021, the Passenger Assistance app for customers was launched as an industry-wide initiative to provide an improved Passenger Assistance service to customers. At the beginning of April 2022, we cut the notice needed to book Passenger Assistance to 2 hours before travel, down from 12 hours. We worked collaboratively with our contact centre to allocate additional resource to make it a reality, as this improvement actually required 24-hour Passenger Assistance service. This has been regarded as a welcome improvement for disabled customers.

Following third party accessibility audits carried out last year at all of our stations, we've used a dedicated budget to improve accessibility. Upgrades we've made this year include the resurfacing of ramps at Rugby, replacement of wheelchair ramps across all of our stations, a radar lock at Runcorn station and low-level mirrors in all of our lifts across our stations to allow safe wheelchair/scooter reversing. Significantly, we've also installed Changing Places toilets at Carlisle and Preston stations.

It's also vital that we empower our staff to support disabled customers, and we're making strong progress towards this goal. By July 2021, we'd provided disability awareness training to our stations and onboard colleagues providing them with an understanding of, amongst other things: the social model of disability, different visible and non-visible disabilities, and the barriers faced by disabled customers and how staff can offer support. We aim to continue this next year by extending this training to our HQ colleagues. 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.

In August 2021, the 12-month sustainability engagement campaign focused on Our Customers. This included the launch of both a sign language e-learning module, which had been requested by a number of colleagues, and a video featuring three members of the Avanti Accessibility Panel (including Dame Tanni Grey-Thompson) talking about their experiences of travelling with us. These opportunities were communicated to our staff via internal comms channels as well as posters and infographics on stations and in offices.

To make our services fully accessible, we want to keep making positive moves forward. This year, we started to work with Savanta to carry out exciting research into the ideal accessibility customer experience, gathering invaluable information about how we can provide integrated and independent services for all our customers. The research, conducted early in 2022, consisted of five expert interviews with stakeholders from organisations representing disability groups, 40 in-depth interviews with disabled customers (and non-customers), and five days of accompanied journeys for a pan-disability approach. This was followed by a further 20 in-depth interviews to test ideas and initiatives. We've now received the initial results of this research and are working with Savanta to put in place relevant actions and plans.

We're encouraging more people to use trains to help reduce the use of private vehicles. In the near future, we'll create integrated transport plans for each of our stations and work with the people and local businesses to ensure stations are at the heart of community. We will also review the end-to-end journey and increase capacity for cycle parking, install electric vehicle charging points and improve wayfinding to and from our stations. To support this, we're working with partners and other transport operators to create station travel plans at some of our stations.



# 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 21 **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.

On June 7 2021, we hosted our second 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 specifically looked at the role community rail can play in recovering passenger confidence. We continue to support CRPs in this work and support our wider strategic vision and goals by providing annual core funding. We're also continuing to invest in the two dedicated community funds we launched last year that the CRPs can bid for to finance their projects. Here are two of the year's successes:

## **Llandudno Community Hub**

The new hub at Llandudno station was officially opened by Lesley Griffiths, Welsh Government Minister for Rural Affairs and North Wales and Trefnydd in November 2021. The hub is managed by housing association Cartrefi Conwy and its not-for-profit subsidiary, Creating Enterprise. It provides a job café and job search support, a Ready for Employment training programme, advice on work placements and volunteering, and skills building sessions. The hub also hosts the Conwy Valley Community Rail Partnership, extending their reach to Anglesey and accessing more communities in Wales.

## **Wigan Art Mural**

In November 2021, we unveiled a new mural at Wigan station. The artwork is a representation of the town and was created by a local artist as part of a project by South East Lancashire Community Rail Partnership. The A-to-Z mural design gives a vibrant introduction to Wigan – from the local delicacy (Wigan Kebab) to the town's landmarks,

as well as celebrating the local language Wiganers use in everyday conversations. It also offers the community an opportunity to rediscover their heritage. Words and phrases for the mural were nominated by the community through workshops supported by organisations, including Wigan Youth Zone; social media; and purpose-made post boxes hosted by independent businesses. A lettering artist then used these as the basis of the artwork.

Six further CRP projects were also completed throughout the year and another ten projects have received financial support from our community funds, but not yet delivered, including a celebration day at Coventry station, a STEM studio for Settle Primary School and a stress relief campaign at Manchester Piccadilly station.

This 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. Of particular note, in 2021, we funded a key project for the Railway Children: creating a safety net for vulnerable children. Operating in the West Midlands, the Railway Children created a referral system with the British Transport Police, whereby vulnerable young people are identified as needing support. In the first six months of the scheme from September 21 until February 22, the Railway Children accepted 124 referrals from BTP, 81 of these referrals were successfully contacted and 14 young people went on to have long term support from staff. Multiple additional projects continue to receive funding under this scheme.

In addition, September saw our sustainability engagement campaign focus on Our Community. Infographics and posters were distributed to our people via Yammer and Avanti Connect, and displayed on office and station noticeboards. These explained why it is crucial we support our local communities and where our CRPs are located. This campaign was accompanied by a video of customers who have benefited from our charity support, especially those facing health challenges. To empower our colleagues to fully engage in this work, we also launched e-learning modules, available to all staff at the same time to help make sure everyone was on the same page.

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

Community Champions are active year round and there are many examples of their hard work. Early in the year, our Community Champion at Macclesfield built close relationships with Silklife Foodbank to provide emergency food boxes to support members of the local community. Elsewhere, Community Champions at Crewe brought their community garden back to life to welcome customers back to the station. They installed a new watering system, planted scrubs, grasses, plants, bird feeders and a Bee and Bug Hotel which sits proudly on the tree sculptures, which will also encourage biodiversity.

Our Community Champions have also been celebrating this year. In Oxenholme, our Community Champion worked in partnership with Community Rail Cumbria, Lakes Line Rail User Group (LLRUG), industry partners and local authorities to support the unveiling of a commemorative plaque at Oxenholme station on September 21 to mark the 175th anniversary of the Lakes Line, a 10-mile branch line from Oxenholme to Windermere. In Lancaster, our Community Champion worked in partnership with Community Rail Cumbria, Lakes Line Rail User Group (LLRUG), industry partners and local authorities to mark the 175th anniversary of the Furness Line at Lancaster station on November 3. Our Rugby Community Champion won two certificates for their "Rugby in Bloom" entry this year: gold prize in the environmental category and first prize in the industrial category (two places better than in 2019). And our Community Champion at Runcorn celebrated after organising and choreographing colleagues in a dance routine to Love Train by The O'Jays. This brilliant video won the Railway Children's Rail Aid dance challenge.

More of our people continue to be recognised for their work in the community. For example, one of our Warrington station team members was presented with a Railway Benefit Fund Heart of Gold on a surprise visit to Warrington Bank Quay station by the Prime Minister. This was in honour of the multiple lives they have saved in the course of their career. In April 2021, four Avanti West Coast employees were featured in an exhibition organised by the National Railway Museum that celebrated the contribution of rail workers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Christmas is always a busy time for our Community Champions and this year was no exception. Events and charity donations were organised at multiple stations, including Wolverhampton, Euston, Warrington Bank Quay, Stockport, Manchester Piccadilly, Glasgow and Preston.

Our charity work continues at pace, and we're proud to have continued to support Action For Children in 2021. In one fundraising initiative, 14 members of staff 'Boycotted their Beds' on July 9, raising £1216 for Action for Children. This, combined with donations from other First Group colleagues, saw over £10,000 going towards the charity's Enrichment Fund, giving children who would otherwise miss out the chance to take part in fun activities from cooking to craft classes and days out with their friends. In addition, two colleagues secured places in the London Marathon in October 2021 to raise funds for the charity and a team of colleagues completed the Three Peaks Challenge on September 9-11 to boost our fundraising, with a target of £3,500.

In 2021, our colleagues received a GOLD Payroll Giving Quality Mark Award in recognition of the generous support they give to charities. An impressive 13% of Avanti staff donate through their salary each month to numerous charities and good causes of their choice.

In April 2021, we launched our Avanti School Programme. As part of this scheme, we aim to partner with one primary and one secondary school within one mile of each of our

stations to promote careers on the railway. We're working with schools with high levels of pupil premium (essentially free school meals) and a high proportion of students who speak English as a second language, as a key aim of the scheme is to encourage diversity in our future talent pipeline and support social mobility. By the end of the year, we had engaged with 28 schools and 5,900 students, including hosting a virtual STEM work experience for students at Warrington Technical College.

As part of our school engagement programme, for World Book Day in March 2022 we supported Little Box of Books to donate hundreds of titles to primary schools across our network to help improve reading skills. Books provided were specifically chosen to be representative, so children could see more of themselves in the stories, helping better their understanding of the world and their place in it. Boxes containing 100 storybooks were delivered to 11 schools across the West Coast Main Line route.

To complement our schools' engagement programme, we wanted to bring our ambition of supporting young people to life. Lockdowns meant many had spent the last two years trapped at home and we were keen to help make up for what they'd missed. So, 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

Our Feel Good Field Trips give pupils aged between 4-18 the opportunity to enjoy hands-on learning, fun and culturally diverse days out, travelling on the West Coast Main Line. Some of these children have never left their local town, never been on a train, visited our big cities or even seen the countryside. In a first for a UK train company, we're connecting 5,000 children with the world beyond the classroom, with chances to enjoy everything from exploring the science of sound in a state-of-the-art London recording studio, to art workshops in Coventry City of Culture 2021 and cooking on Manchester's famous Curry Mile.

We're planning more trips with our Community Rail Partners for the next two years, including outdoor adventuring in the Lake District and fashion upcycling in Glasgow. We can't wait to connect more children with exciting, life-enriching opportunities.



# 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. Next year, we'll carry out a 12-month internal campaign designed to include everyone at every level, encouraging 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.