

PRESS RELEASE

25th ANNIVERSARY OF THE RETURN OF TRAINS TO CLITHEROE

The 30th May, 1994 saw the restoration of a regular train service between Blackburn and Clitheroe calling at new or refurbished stations at Ramsgreave & Wilpshire, Langho and Whalley. To mark the occasion Community Rail Lancashire held a reception in the Ribble Valley Council Chamber on Thursday 6th June which brought together the people and organisations involved in the restoration of the service back in 1994 and have overseen its subsequent development.

Richard Watts, Chair, Community Rail Lancashire said:

"Today is a celebration of 25 years hard work in developing the Clitheroe Line which plays such an important part in the lives of the many people who depend on it. Many people and organisations have been involved over the years. I was part of the campaign that ultimately saved both the Settle Carlisle & Blackburn to Hellifield lines, and as a former officer of Lancashire County Council I was part of the team that brought back the trains to Clitheroe."

Richard went on to say; "The key to the continuing success of the line is the partnership between the local community, the rail user group, station volunteers, local authorities, the railway industry and the Clitheroe Line CRP pooling resources to further develop the stations and services on the line. I look forward to the next 25 years when I hope that through our combined efforts we will see more frequent services with trains and stations fit for the 21st century."

Chris Jackson, Regional Director Northern, commented:

"It's fantastic to be able to celebrate 25 years of continuous rail services between Blackburn and Clitheroe. The return of these services, in 1994, provided a lifeline for local communities and Northern is justifiably proud to be part of that community and the anniversary celebrations.

We echo the commitment of our partners and rail user groups in working to make this line, its stations and services, the best they can be and are working hard to improve journey opportunities, our stations and our trains.

In just a few weeks the first of our brand new trains will enter service and we will start to retire our Pacers; the refurbishment of the rest of our trains is also gathering pace, ensuring that all customers across our network, whether their route has new trains or not, will soon travel on carriages fit for the 21st Century."

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Cllr Andrew Snowden, lead member for Highways and Transport, said:

"I was absolutely delighted to be part of these celebrations and announce that our officers are now working with Transport for the North and the Rail North Partnership to develop the business case for two trains to run hourly along the Clitheroe to Blackburn line.

"We've also been involved in several successful projects, which include the Sunday Ribble Valley Rambler, linking Blackpool and Preston to Hellifield with connections to/from services on the Settle Carlisle line, school engagement projects and marketing initiatives such as the 'Gateway to the Ribble Valley' campaign.

"The council is also part of the 'Connect East Lancashire' project with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council where schemes to improve the stations at Clitheroe, and Ramsgreave and Wilpshire, are being looked at."

Councillor Stephen Atkinson, Leader Ribble Valley Borough Council said:

"As a Council we were a part of bringing the railways back to Ribble Valley and it's a real pleasure to celebrate that achievement. Our communities seek better and more reliable connections to the wider world and our Economic Partnership has highlighted the importance of good rail links for a prosperous future. We will continue to work with partners to ensure transport is high on the agenda and are particularly keen to see a shift to half hourly services to Manchester and direct connections to Preston and the West Coast mainline."

David Hoggarth, Strategic Rail Director for Transport for the North, added:

"Transport for the North is delighted to be able to help celebrate the success of the Ribble Valley line and the service which has connected the town of Clitheroe to Manchester over the last 25 years. Good connectivity across the North is vital if we are to thrive as region and grow our economy. The campaigning for the reopening of the line from Blackburn, and the championing of the service for a quarter of century, showcases the real benefit of a community working together with local authorities, elected members and the rail industry to achieve a goal that supports social, economic and environmental objectives. I want to congratulate everyone involved in this project. It's a great example for others to follow."

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Note to the editor:

Community Rail Lancashire is a company limited by guarantee that oversees the activity of four community rail partnerships (CRPs) in the Lancashire area. The four CRPs are:

The Clitheroe Line CRP;
The East Lancashire CRP;
The South Fylde Line CRP; and
The West of Lancashire CRP.

The CRPs work with industry partners, local authorities and the local community to improve local railway lines and stations across the patch and are four of a total of sixty CRPs across the country doing similar work.

Community Rail Lancashire specialises in education work, with a strap line of 'Educating the Passengers of the Future' and also works with special education needs groups and is working towards a diverse and inclusive railway for all. More details can be seen on its two websites:

www.communityrail Lancashire.co.uk and www.downtheline.org.uk and can be contacted at its head office in Accrington:

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