



Mid Cheshire Community Rail Partnership

CRO report for the accreditation meeting on 5th February 2026

Railway 200

Last year the Mid Cheshire CRP pulled out all the stops to celebrate Railway 200 -the 200th anniversary of the modern railway. Early in 2025 the CRP held a meeting with the station volunteers to make plans on how to mark this important milestone in rail history. As a result, the volunteers planted coordinated planting schemes in the Railway 200 colours of red, white and black and strung bunting up at stations along the line. They also worked together on another very special whole line project detailed below.

Railway 200 Baton Relay walks

The mid Cheshire Line baton relay walks took place over six days from 22nd to 27th September. The volunteers, CRP members and people from communities along the line walked from Manchester Picadilly to Chester stations on routes closely following the line. The routes were devised by the volunteer walk leaders and were a fantastic opportunity for station friend groups across the line to work together on a group project. It also allowed new people to be introduced to the Mid Cheshire Line and the concept of community rail. The walk leaders passed a knitted baton, made by community knitting group *Toppers of Northwich*, on to the next walk leader at the end of each day.



Day 1 started at Manchester Picadilly with a walk led by Rebecca Styles and Owain Roberts of Northern. It concluded on the Saturday with Pete Waterman and Chester Town Crier David Mitchell dropping in to greet the walking party as they arrived at Chester.

Jane Farnworth who completed all 6 days said *"I really enjoyed every day of the baton relay. The community spirit shown along the line was so inspiring and it was great to meet new people and make new friends."*

This project has been nominated for a National Community Rail Award, and we look forward to attending the awards evening in March.

Station Specific Events



Chester

Last year the Mid Cheshire CRO Sarah Muir worked with CROs Chris Kinsella and Josie Rayworth of North Cheshire, and 3 Counties Connected CRPs on a joint project for Chester station. The 3 CRPs provided funding to artist Sue Guildford to work with young people from Cheshire Buddies (a charity which supports young people with disabilities). The young people enjoyed attending craft workshops led by Sue to

make Railway 200 themed Christmas decorations for the large Christmas tree at Chester station.

The CROs met up to decorate the tree at the beginning of December and Cheshire Buddies came down later to admire their handywork.

Mouldsworth and Delamere Stations

Last year the lead volunteers at these stations engaged with local schools who produced artwork for display at the stations. The CRO has recently had a funding application granted from Cross Country to print the artwork on to di-bond panels for display at the stations.

Greenbank

The Greenbank volunteers are a small but active group who meet once a week where they tend their flower planters, litter pick and enjoy painting themed murals on the fences and sides of planters. They also have a good relationship with the church which occupies the old station house and the volunteers drop in for a hot chocolate when they've finished their work sessions.

Northwich

To mark Railway 200 the CRO worked with station volunteers and Northwich based artist Jim Stanley on art panels for the town's station. The illustrated panels featured all the main stops along the Mid Cheshire Line. A launch day was held on the 30th May and attended by the Town Mayor Kate Cernic and Mid Cheshire MP Andrew Cooper plus project funders and station volunteers. Multi-talented Jim Stanley even did a special performance of a song he wrote dedicated to the Mid Cheshire Line!

The volunteers have also been making the station more wildlife friendly by growing wildflowers from seed and planting them in a wildflower border on the bank by the car park. We are looking forward to seeing them in full bloom and buzzing with bees this summer.



Lostock Gralam

Last summer the volunteers worked with Groundwork to install self-watering planters with funding provided by Groundwork. The Lostock group, which is the newest on the line, have done a fantastic job to transform the appearance of the station with colourful planting schemes, freshening up paint work and keeping the platforms weed and litter free. In September pupils from Greenbank School received a safety briefing so they could start work creating a Railway 200 themed border in late flowering plants.



Plumley

The Plumley volunteers are a busy green fingered group who again produced beautiful flower borders last summer which included a great selection of wildlife friendly plants. They also made a special Railway 200 board to mark the occasion.

Knutsford

The CRO has recently been granted funding from Cross Country to have Dibond panels installed on the Chester side platform featuring the Marvellous Days Out artwork. This



artwork has been requested by the volunteers.

The Knutsford volunteers also created a beautiful Railway 200 themed herb border over the summer.

The group was rewarded for their efforts throughout 2025 by achieving an outstanding in the *RHS It's your neighbourhood* awards.

Mobberley and Ashley

The Mobberley volunteers joined in celebrating Railway 200 by planting flowers in red, white and black colours and adorning planters and platforms with the themed Railway 200 bunting.

At Ashley the CRP has had new planters purchased and the old ones removed. One of the residents of the old station house is keen to start volunteering at the station this year and is going to attend the next CRP meet up to meet the other volunteers.



Hale

The Hale volunteers have been nominated for a community rail award. This active group has held stalls and had history boards designed and

installed to celebrate Railway 200.

The group held a stall at their village fete

over the summer to mark 200 years of rail and chat to locals about their work and hand out publicity.

Altrincham

Friends of Altrincham have also received an invite to the Community Rail Awards. They have been very active engaging with their local community. This includes inviting a local primary school to make posters for their display case on Pl. 4 and working with a knitting group to make a knitted banner for the waiting room.

There have been several projects at Altrincham Interchange completed over the last year.

The CRO worked with the station friends to organize a tour on the 15th of January which was attended by Mayor of Trafford Cllr Jane Brophy, project funders and volunteers. The tour was to celebrate installation of the Altrincham Running In board (pictured) history panel on Pl. 4 and the aerial photo of Altrincham Interchange in the bus station. After viewing these the guests took a hop on the Metro to Navigation Road to view the Scouts' art panels.





Navigation Road

This station, which also includes a Metro stop has been brightened up with art panels created by the Altrincham and District Scouts and Explorers who are based a stone's throw from the station. The young people travelled the line and took pictures and notes to create the 16 designs featuring each stop along the Mid Cheshire Line.

On the 30th of November scout leader Tom Hartley (pictured) organised a BBQ at the scout hut to celebrate the installation of the panels. On the 15th January the mayor of Trafford Cllr Jane Brophy also paid a visit to the station to admire the young

people's artwork.

Stockport

In the Easter holidays last year Pam Bradshaw author and creator of the CRP funded illustrated poetry book Hare and Rabbit; Travels on a Train held poetry workshops at Stockport Library assisted by her colleague Steve. There were 4 workshops held in total, 2 at the library and 2 at Egerton Primary School in Knutsford which were funded by Community Rail Networks Small Grants Fund. They were based on Pams` book about best friends Hare and Rabbits` adventures on the Mid Cheshire Line. There were plenty of smiles on the faces of the young participants as they listened to Pam read her poems before they had a go at writing their own.

Other news on Stockport-The CRO has been working with Crewe to Manchester and SE Manchester CRPs on plans to create a bee friendly garden at the end of Pl.3 at Stockport station. The CRO has applied to Avanti West Coast for funding and is waiting to here back on whether the application has been successful.

Manchester Picadilly

The CRO and some of the Mid Cheshire volunteers attended the community rail week event at Manchester Picadilly on the 21st May. It was a chance to hand out publicity and chat to the public about our work as well as meet people from other CRPs.



Mid Cheshire Line history panels

The CRO has been working with railway historian Trevor Booth on content for history panels along the Mid Cheshire Line. Panels have been installed at 12 of the stations, two for each platform wherever possible.

The panels detail the history of each station and the surrounding area. The project was achieved thanks to funding from Community Rail Network, Northern, TP Express and the CRP.

Railway history Exhibition at Weaver Hall Workhouse and museum

The CRO also worked with Trevor Booth and Richard Hall of West Cheshire Museums on a history exhibition of the railways in Northwich.

The exhibition has proved very popular and was advertised to the local community in the Northwich Guardian and Radio Northwich alongside the baton relay event.

Media visibility

The CRP projects continue to be featured in regional press. The CRO has been invited on Radio Northwich twice in the previous year to talk about Railway 200 and CRP projects. The CRO writes a monthly article for the Cheshire and Oakmere Newsletter, and the Hartford newsletter has also featured the baton relay walks. CRP Projects and events have been publicised in the Northwich and Knutsford Guardian as well as Altrincham Today. Both Delamere and Altrincham station groups have featured in Cheshire Life during 2025 in articles written by former Director John Hulme. The baton relay walks and Jim Stanely art project were also covered in Cheshire Life.

Music Trains

Former CRP Director Mike Ross organised another well attended roster of music trains between April and October 2025 and attracted 278 paying passengers in total. Mike also organised three special daytime events for Opal Carers, Cheshire and Warrington Carers and Chester Vision Support with the CRP contributing funds towards a pub lunch for the groups and free travel provided by Northern. We thank Mike Ross for his years of dedicated work for the CRP which included sitting on the board of directors, organising music trains and managing the sales of Marvellous Days Out and Cheshire Wildlife posters and other stock.

Looking Forward

The CRO has recently secured funding for art works to be produced on Dibond panels for Mouldsworth, Delamere and Knutsford stations. In the latter 2 stations the art has been

created by local school children who will no doubt be thrilled to see their work displayed at the stations when it is installed in the next few months.

Cheshire Best Kept Stations Awards

The CRP Board and CRO will be attending the CBKS awards evening on the 5th February along with many of the Mid Cheshire Line station volunteers. The CRO has assisted in organising the catering for this years event.

Community rail awards

The CRP and Hale and Altrincham Station friends' groups have been invited to attend the Community Rail Awards

The CRP will be holding a meeting with station volunteer groups to invite ideas on what they would like to do this year in terms of projects at their stations and in respect of the whole line.

Bee Garden Stockport

It is hoped that the bee garden at Stockport station will be created this year. The CRO has applied for funding from Avanti West coast and matched funding will be provided by Mid Cheshire, Crewe to Manchester and SE Manchester CRPs.

This concludes the CRO report for the Mid Cheshire CRP accreditation 2025-26.

Thank you for reading.

Sarah Muir

CRO for the Mid Cheshire CRP



