

Bradford school children visit iconic Ribblehead Viaduct for Community Rail Week

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A group of school children from Bradford, many of whom had never travelled by train before, enjoyed an educational day out on the famous Settle to Carlisle Railway as part of this year's **Community Rail Week**.

The class of year five pupils from Barkerend Leadership Academy visited the iconic Ribblehead Viaduct for an interactive day of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths) activities, learning about the history of the viaduct and importance of the railway, before making drawings and models using recycled materials.

The Ribblehead trip is one of many activities taking place in Yorkshire and the Humber and across Britain during Community Rail Week, which runs from 22 to 28 May, including youth engagement projects, guided walks and station tours, and campaigns promoting scenic and sustainable leisure travel, all aiming to connect and empower communities, break down travel barriers, and help us move towards a greener, healthier transport future.

Before the visit, the 30 ten-year olds were visited by Karen Bennett from Community Rail Network and

Catherine Kingdom, Community Rail Education Development Officer at Community Rail Lancashire, who taught the pupils about rail safety and potential careers in the rail industry.

The pupils then engaged in a STEM eye-spy activity on their journey to Ribbleshead, looking out for Bingley Three Rise Locks, the Keighley & Worth Valley Railway, and semaphore signals.

After disembarking at Ribbleshead Station, chartered engineer and STEM ambassador Andrew Walker, who worked on the major refurbishment of the viaduct in 2021, explained how its original construction back in the late 19th century was extremely tough, dangerous work, carried out by thousands of 'navvies' using largely manual labour.

After seeing the viaduct up close, the children then returned to the station to build their own model versions and learn more about the history of the Settle to Carlisle line.

Vicki Hinchliffe, Vice Principal at Barkerend Primary Leadership Academy, said: "It's wonderful to be able to take the children out of the city into the stunning scenery of Yorkshire's Three Peaks landscape and, for most, it was their first experience of travelling on a train.

"Many of our pupils simply don't get these opportunities to explore the countryside and learn about the county's rich heritage and for community rail and Northern to help organise and fund a trip like this leaves memories that will last a lifetime. They will be talking about this amazing day out for weeks afterwards."

Community Rail Week, organised by [Community Rail Network](#) and sponsored by Rail Delivery Group, shines a light on the year-round work of Britain's 76 community rail partnerships, **which cover 34% of Britain's railway network**, and 1,200 station friends groups made up of more than 10,000 volunteers, **who tend to about half (47%) of Britain's 2,570 stations**. This includes six community rail partnerships and around 130 station groups covering routes across Yorkshire and the Humber.

Community rail aims to improve travel confidence, increase access to opportunity, tackle social isolation, give communities a voice, and put railways and stations at the heart of community life, while supporting a shift to sustainable, more social forms of travel, including rail. The Ribbleshead trip was a joint collaboration between Community Rail Lancashire, the Settle to Carlisle Community Rail Partnership, and Community Rail Network.

Karen Bennett, Education and Youth Engagement Advisor at Community Rail Network, said: "The trip was an opportunity to inspire pupils from inner-city Bradford to connect to new communities by rail and also to look to engineering roles for their future careers. We were delighted to be joined by industry contacts and a STEM ambassador to help encourage pupils into STEM careers.

"The pupils were wowed by the views of the Yorkshire Three Peaks and amazed to be up to the Ribbleshead Viaduct close up. They all enjoyed their adventure on the train, and many said they would convince their parents to bring them back."

Catherine Kingdom, Community Rail Education Development Officer at Community Rail Lancashire, added: "Opening up new experiences and opportunities for schoolchildren is at the heart of community rail's

mission. Travelling to such stunning landscapes is quick, safe, and easy by rail, thanks to the financial support of Northern. It's wonderful to see how excited and engaged the children become as soon as they get on the train.

"We hope this educational trip inspires the children to engage more deeply with their STEM studies and to bring their families back to the Settle-Carlisle Line to visit some of the magical places along it."

Carolyn Watson, Director of Stakeholder and Community Engagement for Northern, said: 'I was delighted to attend the event at Ribbleshead. Northern proudly supports over 20 community rail partnerships and volunteer groups at over 300 stations across the network and events like this really showcase the valuable work community rail delivers in bringing young people together.

"Providing young people with hands-on learning and fun, culturally diverse days out is so important for building their confidence and independence as passengers of the future."

Nationwide core events for Community Rail Week include: the national launch at Tolworth Station in London to highlight the work of Britain's newest community rail partnership, Community Train CRP; the Rail Minister Huw Merriman MP visiting a community rail promotional display at London Waterloo Station; a Scottish parliamentary reception at Holyrood; a nationwide community rail showcase of sustainable, exciting tourism and leisure opportunities by rail; and the finals of Rail Delivery Group's World Cup of Stations.

Photo credit: Community Rail Partnership