

Major overhaul for Heritage Railway Association Awards

September 30, 2022



The biggest awards event in the heritage rail sector is set for one of the most significant overhauls in its history with several new categories.

The [Heritage Railway Association Annual Awards](#) is set to feature five brand new categories for 2023. The new categories, together with changes to several existing categories, have been designed to ensure that the awards can continue to recognise the very best work across the whole of the heritage rail sector.

A new 'Railway of the Year' category is headlining the changes. The award will be given to the railway, tramway or funicular railway that has achieved, and consistently demonstrated, excellence in visitor experience, business, safety and operations, teamwork and equality, preservation, restoration or engineering. Organisers hope that the award will become one of the most coveted in the entire railway sector, as it will recognise high quality across a whole organisation rather than one specific element.

Also set to appear in a trophy cabinet for the first time, is the HRA 'Team of the Year' award. The accolade will be presented to a specific group or team for excellence in their field. The team could be made up of staff or volunteers who work together regularly, or who have come together to deliver a specific project.

For the first time ever, construction and civil engineering projects will have their own category at the HRA Awards. The 'Infrastructure Award' will go to an outstanding project that can demonstrate how it has supported the long-term viability or development of a railway or tramway.

The 'Rising Star' award is also new for 2023. It aims to recognise innovation, new initiatives and success by organisations that are new to the sector. The winner could be an individual, group of staff and volunteers, or even an organisation, which has been a HRA member for 10 years or less.

The final new category is the 'Award for Business Innovation'. This award has been created to recognise creative income generation, new business models, fundraising initiatives, projects or schemes that have delivered real benefits or substantial positive changes to the business activities of a railway or tramway.

The previous Award for Diesel Locomotion has now been broadened for the first time to encompass diesel and electric powered self-propelled vehicles including locomotives, multiple units, railcars and trams.

Also modified for 2023, is the Award for Marketing and Communications, which will now cover all forms of communication, public relations, advertising and marketing activities, in any format, including digital communications campaigns.

In total there will be 11 categories at the 2023 HRA Annual Awards, which are open to entries from all Heritage Railway Association member organisations. Categories including the highly-respected 'Morgan Award for Rolling Stock Preservation', the prestigious 'Coiley Award for Steam Locomotive Engineering' and the hotly-contested 'Lord Faulkner Young Volunteer Award' remain largely unchanged for 2023.

The HRA Award for Environmental Innovation, which was new for 2022, is also set to return for the latest awards, recognising the huge work being done to make heritage rail more sustainable.

Brian Simpson, Chairman of the Heritage Railway Association, said: "The heritage rail sector has evolved at a substantial pace over the last two or three years. We felt that it was time to ensure that the HRA Awards could also evolve to better reflect the huge array of successful and high-quality work that is going on in the sector.

"Our 2022 awards saw more entries than ever before. But it also highlighted that we were not recognising some parts of the sector as well as we could. That's why we've introduced a new category for infrastructure. We've broadened the scope of some categories to ensure, for example, that electric traction in its many forms isn't left out. And we're doing more to recognise the wider picture with additions like our new Railway of the Year category.

"I know how well heritage railways and tramways have been rising to the challenges of this, sometimes painful, post-Covid, post Brexit world. I hope these changes will allow us to celebrate the huge successes of the sector in its many forms at the HRA Annual Awards."

Entries for the **2023 HRA Annual Awards** are due to open during early October. Entries for all categories can then be made online using the HRA website. The winners will be announced at a glamorous awards evening, featuring guest speakers and a three-course meal, in Birmingham on Saturday 11 March 2023.

Photo credit: Shutterstock