

Rail Family Raises £540,000 for Rail Aid

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When industry charity Railway Children asked for help this November, the railway family answered the call and came together like never before. Rail Aid, the charity's response to the impact of COVID-19 on their fundraising programme, generated an incredible wave of support within the industry and raised an astonishing £540,000 to ensure Railway Children's work with vulnerable children will continue despite the devastating effects of the pandemic.

Dubbed 'the railway's answer to Children in Need', Rail Aid was organised from a standing start following the cancellation of the charity's 2020 events programme, including the Three Peaks Challenge by Rail and the Railway Ball, which collectively raised almost £900k last year. Supported by a committee of senior rail figures, the venture was a huge undertaking for the small events team and there was no way of knowing how successful it might be. But they had faith in the railway family, and following an outstanding live appeal show on Friday 27th November, that faith was more than repaid.

Rail Aid Ambassador Sir Peter Hendy CBE said: "I cannot thank our industry enough for the part each business, corporation, team and individual played in ensuring that Railway Children can continue their vital work to help children who were already vulnerable and who are now dealing with the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on their lives. It has been humbling to witness how many people took the time and effort to join in with Rail Aid during this most difficult period for us all."

An incredible number of people got involved in Rail Aid, culminating in a week of events and YouTube broadcasts. Perhaps one of the ingredients that made the event such a success was the sheer variety of ways people were able to show their support, either by donating or participating. During Rail Aid week, highlights included:

- Get On Track, sponsored by EY, which saw over 250 people running, walking, and cycling the 16,000km of the UK rail network to raise funds.
- The Locomotion Challenge, sponsored by Siemens Mobility, was so well supported with nine strong entries, with the Charing Cross team eventually taking the crown. The real winners though were the many people who took part and created smiles across the industry.
- Commit Your Commute, sponsored by HS1, saw staff across the industry donate the cost of their daily commute.
- The Smooth Operators Challenge, sponsored by KPMG, encouraged supporters to vote for their favourite of nine senior rail industry figures to have a leg wax. Eventual winner Andrew Haines, CEO of Network Rail, duly obliged on film for the whole industry to see.
- A stunning Grand Central Railwayana Auction, supported by Porterbrook, raised £69k, while The Knorr Bremse Gala Auction, featuring incredible prizes donated by more than 100 companies, raised over £100k.

In addition, there were numerous other Rail Aid events organised and contributed by so many. Women in Rail organised their own lip sync number, while a beautifully uplifting performance by the Rail Aid Choir warmed hearts during the Friday show. Worldline and the Young Rail Professionals launched Sir Peter Hendy into the world of virtual entertainment as he hosted his own rail-themed quiz with more than 150 participants, and Rail Forum Midlands organised their own 'Question of Sport' style Mystery Guest Competition, featuring well known rail industry faces incognito. And if that wasn't enough, Rail Aid Bingo, hosted by Strictly winner Kelvin Fletcher proved to be a huge success with families and soap fans, who won over a thousand pounds worth of prizes.

Key to reaching all corners of the industry in the events first year were the eight Rail Aid Ambassadors: Andy Byford, Lisa Coleman, Susan Cooklin, Dyan Crowther, Mary Grant, Sir Peter Hendy CBE, Paul Plummer and Mark Thurston – all of whom provided their unconditional support to ensure success. Rail Aid also attracted invaluable support from countless sponsors, influencers and partners.

On Friday 27th November, Rail Aid week culminated in a Rail Aid Live Show on YouTube, a real first for the industry and the charity, and viewers weren't disappointed. The show attracted more than 5,000 viewers and was a fitting celebration of the rail family's efforts during a torrid year for the industry.

The money is still coming in, but by close of play after the Live Show, the total stood at an incredible £534,181, remarkable amount of money that will change the lives of children and their families.

In the UK this income will help secure projects for another 12 months, supporting children in danger on the rail network every day. In East Africa it will help fund outreach workers who go out every day looking for vulnerable children forced to survive on the brutal streets. In India it will allow the charity to keep supplying food and emergency provisions to families who lost their homes and livelihoods because of

COVID-19, and to be there to help them recover from the crisis.

Commenting on the success of Rail Aid, Terina Keene, chief executive of Railway Children, said: “We’re amazed, thrilled and above all incredibly grateful to everyone in the railway family for making Rail Aid such a success. COVID-19 has affected so many people worldwide and as a result children more vulnerable than ever. The pandemic has had a devastating effect on our fundraising programme and we have faced the proposition of having to close projects. Thank you to every single person who did so much to support us. We are extraordinarily grateful to each and every one of you.”

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