

Rail operator, community and industry celebrates 175 years of the Lancaster and Carlisle Railway

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Avanti West Coast got together with communities from around its Cumbrian stations to mark the anniversary of the Lancaster and Carlisle Railway, which opened in 1846.

The train operator worked with Cumbrian Railways Association (CRA), Community Rail Cumbria, and industry partners to host events at Carlisle and Penrith stations, celebrating the 175th anniversary of the railway line between Lancaster and Carlisle.

The week of celebrations was part-funded through Avanti West Coast's Station Community Project Fund. The events included photographic displays documenting the line, the appearance of locomotives from the rail freight company Direct Rail Services, and the unveiling of commemorative plaques by retired railway workers.

At Penrith, local schoolchildren created birthday cards and representatives from the community shared stories of their connections to the railway line.

Now known as the West Coast Main Line, the Lancaster and Carlisle railway connects London and Glasgow. It first opened on 15 December 1846, when the inaugural train from Lancaster arrived in Carlisle.

Two years later, the first timetabled passenger services got underway – making it possible for people in Lancaster and Cumbria to travel to and from the south by rail.

The 69-mile railway line, which goes across Shap summit (the highest point on the West Coast Main Line), and the associated stations and viaducts took 30 months to construct.

Mark Green, Avanti West Coast station manager at Penrith, said: “We’re proud to be playing our part to celebrate 175 years of the Lancaster and Carlisle railway. As gateways to the North Lakes and City of the Lakes, Penrith and Carlisle stations are key destinations on our route, where our iconic Pendolino trains provide a clean, green journey option.

“Working with industry partners, past rail workers and the community has highlighted how the railway makes a lasting impression on everyone, and the important role train travel has played and continues to play today in connecting people and places.”

Cumbrian Railways Association chairman, Philip Tuer, said: “The CRA and other partners believe that this milestone of railway construction should be properly recognised and celebrated as a key event for Cumbria, Penrith, Carlisle and the railway network as a whole.”