



## Welcome to the latest community and stakeholders newsletter and my first as Interim Director.

Activity across all areas of our business has continued to grow and we've had a busy start to the year.

Our long term track access application and replacement fleet project is progressing well. We are continuing to work with Network Rail and ORR in relation to the extension, which if approved will unlock the investment in a replacement fleet of bi-mode trains – subject to the final business case.

It has also now been confirmed that the East Coast Mainline timetable change that was consulted on in 2021 will be implemented in December 2025. The Grand Central timetable will change and we'll see amended departure times and improved journey times.

You're also likely to see an increase in engineering works on weekends throughout the first quarter of this year. This will mean a reduced service on the majority of weekends between now and the end of March. However, we're working hard to ensure this creates as little disruption to passengers as possible.

We're excited for the year ahead, particularly with some of the new projects we have in the pipeline. Community and customer are at the core of our business and we remain passionate about ensuring we make a positive difference in encouraging people to use public transport as an alternative to the car.

Chris Brandon  
Interim Director, Grand Central

Aesthetica

Community  
Fund

Cones

Fleet

Catcote  
Futures

Ambassador

Hannah  
Bromage

# Lights, camera, action for Grand Central and Aesthetica Film Festival

We were proud to partner with the Aesthetica Short Film Festival at the start of November. As part of our collaboration, we sponsored a range of engaging workshops, including filmmaking, gaming and stop motion animation, aimed at inspiring and educating young creatives.

The Aesthetica Short Film Festival, founded in 2011, is an international celebration of independent cinema held annually in York at the beginning of November. It serves as a platform for supporting and championing filmmaking talent from around the world.

Through hands-on activities and practical experience, young filmmakers developed a comprehensive understanding of the filmmaking process. Participants learned the fundamentals of camera operation, sound, and direction from experienced instructors.

We also supported workshops that introduced children to the exciting world of game development. Using Click-team Fusion 2.5, a perfect starting point for coding, participants created digital stories, games and animations. These workshops not only encouraged creativity but also enhanced problem-solving abilities, allowing children to boost their skills and make friends while exploring digital possibilities.



*"We're thrilled to have partnered with the festival this year," says Hannah Bromage, delivery manager – community and stations,*

*"Our sponsorship of the workshops aligns perfectly with our mission to inspire and nurture young creative talent in our communities. Seeing the enthusiasm and innovation of these budding filmmakers and game developers has been really inspiring."*

*"We are absolutely thrilled to partner with Grand Central Trains to deliver these incredible media workshops in gaming, stop-motion animation and filmmaking as part of the Aesthetica Film Festival 2024," says Cherie Federico, Aesthetica Film Festival director,*

*"This initiative is about so much more than creativity; it's about empowering young people with skills that will shape their futures, while also reinforcing York's status as a UNESCO City of Media Arts. Seeing over 200 young people engage with these opportunities fills us with hope and excitement for the future - it's a testament to what collaboration and a shared vision can achieve."*

Our support for nurturing young talent in media arts supports the city's UNESCO City of Media Arts designation, which has celebrated its 10th anniversary this year.





# Community Fund

## Are you making a difference in the community? Grand Central funding available to help!

At Grand Central we're committed to improving the communities we serve. That's why this year we are launching the Grand Central Community Fund.

We're looking to support community projects across our network, with grants available from £100 to £5000.

*"This fund really reflects our commitment to making a positive difference in the communities we serve," said Hannah Bromage, Delivery Manager – Community and Stations, "By supporting grassroots projects, we're not just investing in infrastructure but in our network's neighbourhoods."*

### What we're looking for

We're looking to support projects that will improve the local communities in one or more of the following areas

- Environmental improvements
- Educational projects
- Sustainable travel
- Social inclusion
- Accessibility



### Projects must

- Be within five miles of the Grand Central rail network
- Provide detailed project plans
- Improve the local community
- Be completed within 2025
- Provide projects updates

### Projects must NOT

- Require ongoing funding

### Who can apply?

Pretty much anyone! We welcome applications from community groups, charities, not-for-profit organisations, customers, stakeholders and our colleagues at Grand Central Rail.

### How do I apply?

To apply please follow link below

[Applications](#)

Applications are now open.

**You can read more about our community work [here](#)**



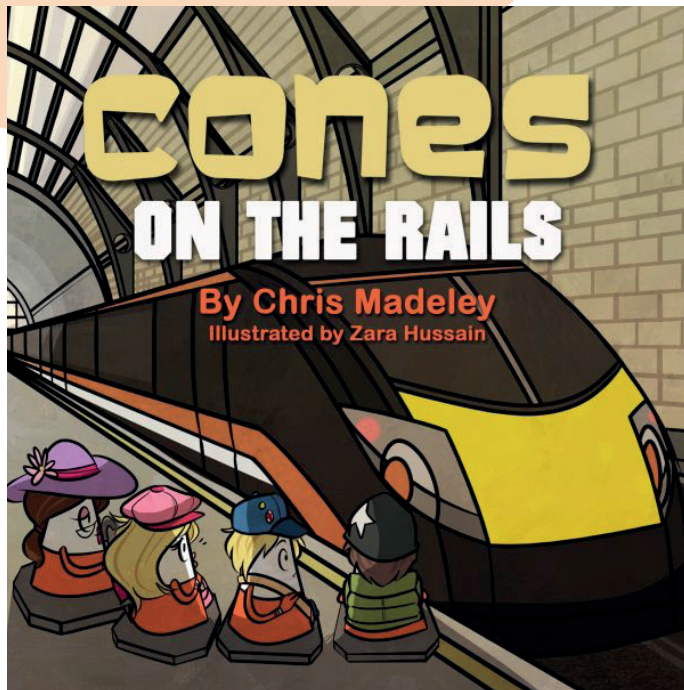
*Pictures included from previous current Community Projects with Halifax Football Club and Aesthetica Short Film Festival*

## Cones making a difference at Christmas

We were delighted to be able to send 50 copies of the children's book *Cones On The Rails to Seven Stories* in Newcastle at Christmas. *Seven Stories* is the largest collection of children's books in the UK – even more than the British library – and at Christmas they do fantastic work in looking after local children.

*Cones on the Rails* is the third book in the *Cones* series of illustrated adventures for children, written by Chris Madeley and illustrated by Zara Hussain. There are now 24 in the *Cones* series, which bring cones to life to help children navigate a range of real-life situation.

In *Cones On The Rails*, we meet Conecourse Conetroller who teaches children how to have fun on the railways but to always keep safe and obey the rules. Grand Central Railway helped in the research of this award-winning book both trackside and on-board our trains.



## Keeping hearts on track with the Red Sky Foundation



We've been working with the Red Sky Foundation to install defibrillators on our trains.

The North East-based charity provides life-saving defibrillators for local schools and public spaces as well as offering a range of training and education from defibrillator use and CPR performance to advanced support for babies, children and adults with heart problems and their families.

We've installed a trial defibrillator on one train and will be partnering with the foundation to add more over the coming year.

The Red Sky Foundation was established by Sergio and Emma Petrucci after their young daughter had to have life-saving heart surgery. So far, the charity has placed more than 500 defibrillators in the community and raised more than £m for babies, children and adults, with heart conditions that need lifelong support.

*"The charity does such great work in raising awareness of cardiac arrests and we're so pleased to be able to support them in their mission,"* said Hannah Bromage, Delivery Manager – Community and Stations, *"We're excited about the year ahead."*

*"Red Sky Foundation has a mission to make sure everyone has a fighting chance to survive a medical emergency by raising vital funds to provide life-saving cardiac support and equipment made available to everyone,"* said Sergio Petrucci, *"When a person is in cardiac arrest, every minute counts hence the need for early cpr and defibrillation as survival rates can increase from as little as 7% all the way to nearly 80%. While we hope they are never needed, it will demonstrate how important the devices are on trains in a medical emergency when current access is limited, in most cases, to station platforms."*







## A grand adventure

### Catcote Futures' unforgettable day with Grand Central

In October, the Catcote Futures gang embarked on a grand day out, courtesy of Grand Central Rail.

Catcote Futures is a specialist further education college in Hartlepool, dedicated to supporting the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) community.

For many of the adult learners, this complimentary trip marked their first-ever train journey. The excitement was palpable as they boarded the 9:24am Grand Central service from Hartlepool to York for a guided tour of the National Railway Museum.

Led by York ambassador Graham, the learners were able to find out more about trains and their rich history. The adventure continued with a complimentary visit to The Wonder Lab, a science and sensory experience within the museum, which, says teacher Lyndsay Turner,

*"We absolutely loved every minute of exploring. Seeing our learners' faces from the minute the train arrived yesterday to them getting back to college was priceless," says Lyndsay, "From the minute we stepped on the train the staff and service were absolutely outstanding. We were welcomed onboard and the staff engaged with our learners, answering their questions, chatting with them and supporting them, making them feel special."*

Learner Adam, says: *"We had the best day ever and want to say the biggest thank you to Rob Oerton from Grand Central, Martin and Graham the Ambassadors and all the staff who looked after us so well."*



## Fleet improvements underway

Our fleet is currently undergoing a comprehensive customer audit, marking the first major refresh since 2018. This will enhance the overall passenger experience through extensive deep cleaning and necessary repairs, including the replacement of door handles and chair arms.

In response to previous issues with coffee machines during the 2023-2024 period, the fleet has been fitted with upgraded equipment to ensure a more reliable service. We've also sourced an ample supply of spare parts, addressing historical challenges in obtaining components for older machines.

We've made a wide range of improvements, including replacing window seals and cleaning existing residue, refitting and tidying standard seat bases, replacing worn base cushions and updating aisle-side armrests. Other work includes updating various interior elements including labels, bezels and oval saloon lights in each coach, as well as replacing tip-up seat covers, updating vinyl on toilet doors and repainting second man desks.

Work has already started on several vehicles, including 180103, 180105, 180106 and 180112 and a deep clean of all interiors across the Class 180 fleet is also underway.

*"The fleet team are very happy with this improvement project to the interior of our fleet, which should be completed in the next few months," says Technical Support Officer Alison Bent, "There has not been a project like this since 2017/2018 so we aim for customers to really see, and enjoy the difference when using Grand Central trains."*



## Our newest ambassador – Evelyn Jibro

*"I'm from Nigeria but I've always had a love for travel and connecting with people from different places. I worked as a Grand Central customer relations consultant for 15 months and now work as an admin professional in a healthcare facility. I decided to volunteer as an ambassador at Northallerton Station, to help make passengers' journeys smoother and more enjoyable and anything else they might need to have a stress-free journey."*

*I saw how much it meant to passengers when staff took the time to assist them. That's why I knew this role would be worthwhile – I've seen first-hand the difference a little extra support can make.*

*For me, it's about meeting people, making their day easier and sharing my knowledge of the railway. It's rewarding to know you've helped someone, even in a little way.*

*I think the ambassador programme is fantastic because it brings together people who genuinely care about customer experience. It adds a personal touch to travel and helps create a welcoming atmosphere at the station. It's also a great way to stay involved with the railway industry and meet like-minded people."*



## Welcome back Hannah!

We'd like to welcome Hannah Bromage, Delivery Manager – Community and Stations, back from her maternity leave. Hannah has been busy raising her baby Albert but has returned to the community and stakeholder helm, expertly managed in her absence by Rob Oerton.

*"I'm so pleased to be back," says Hannah, "and especially with so many exciting projects in the pipeline. It's going to be a busy year but I can't wait to get stuck back in."*



### **We want your news and views**

Got a great story to share about community work on our routes or even projects you think we should be involved in?

Please drop us a line at [Community@grandcentralrail.com](mailto:Community@grandcentralrail.com).

If you have any questions or you wish to stop receiving these emails please contact [community@grandcentralrail.com](mailto:community@grandcentralrail.com).