

Feel Good Futures Project Report 2025–2026

Community Rail Lancashire & Avanti West Coast

Introduction

The Feel Good Futures project has successfully built on the legacy of the Feel Good Field Trips programme by inspiring young people aged 14–18 to consider careers within the railway industry.

Thanks to the continued support of Avanti West Coast, students have been able to experience the railway first-hand through fully funded educational visits, giving them access to places, people and opportunities that many would never otherwise experience.

The project has focused on raising aspirations, improving awareness of careers, developing STEM skills and celebrating Railway 200, while showcasing the railway as a modern, innovative and inclusive industry.

Project Objectives

The Feel Good Futures programme aims to:

- Inspire young people to consider careers in the rail industry.
 - Increase awareness of the wide range of career opportunities available.
 - Develop understanding of STEM careers through hands-on experiences.
 - Promote rail safety and the history of Britain's railways.
 - Remove financial barriers by providing fully funded educational visits on Avanti West Coast services.
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Highlights of 2025–2026

Alstom Traincare Centre Visits

One of the most successful elements of the project has been the partnership with **Alstom**.

Students visited Traincare Centres at:

- Edge Hill, Liverpool
- Polmadie, Glasgow
- Wembley, London
- Oxley, Wolverhampton

Each visit included:

- Careers presentations
- Depot tours
- Meeting apprentices and engineers
- Boarding Avanti West Coast Pendolino trains
- Interactive activities exploring the variety of railway careers

Students were particularly inspired by hearing directly from apprentices who explained their own career journeys into the railway industry.

A further visit to Manchester Traincare Centre is already planned for Autumn 2026.



Y10 pupils visiting Alstom Edge Hill Traincare Centre

London Transport Museum – Inspire Engineering Days

Working in partnership with the London Transport Museum, seven schools travelled via Avanti West Coast to Acton Depot for engineering-focused workshops.

Students took part in:

- Engineering challenges
- Interviews with TfL engineers
- Sustainable city design activities
- Guided museum tours

Every participant received a CREST Discovery Award recognising their teamwork, creativity and problem-solving skills.

Teacher feedback highlighted the inspirational nature of the visit:

“The students were truly inspired and thoroughly enjoyed their day.”

Students consistently identified interviewing engineers and learning about real careers as the most valuable part of the experience.



My experience at the London Transport Museum was fantastic. The staff were amazing. They truly brought the workshop to life with their energy and enthusiasm. They were also incredibly knowledgeable, making the session both engaging and informative. I found the workshops very useful, as they provided practical insights in an interactive and enjoyable way.

Nadia – Teacher at Watling Academy

‘In my opinion the interviewing part was the best because i learnt the most about the jobs there and it peaked my interest’

Y9 pupil

2 pupils interviewing a STEM ambassador at London Transport Museum

Railway 200 – Inspiration Train

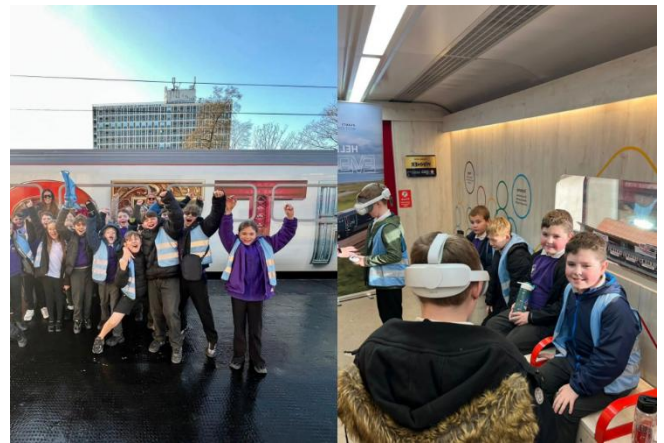
Throughout Railway 200 celebrations, Dave Savage organised school visits to the Inspiration Train at stations across the Avanti West Coast network including:

- London Euston
- Edinburgh
- Llandudno
- Crewe
- Stockport

At the majority of these stations Avanti West Coast had the parter zone where we provided:

- Careers talks
- Virtual reality experiences
- Interactive activities
- Railway uniforms – dressing up
- Goody bags

The combination of the Inspiration Train and Avanti's careers activities gave hundreds of young people a memorable introduction to the modern railway. Complimentary travel on Avanti West Coast enabled 13 schools from across the network to visit the Inspiration Train.



Y6 pupils visiting the Inspiration Train at Crewe.

Network Rail STEM Experiences

Students also visited Network Rail's headquarters in Milton Keynes and Rugby Rail Operations Centre.

Activities included:

- STEM workshops
- Smart railway challenges
- Control room tours
- Signalling simulators
- Careers talks from industry professionals

Evaluation showed significant increases in:

- Interest in STEM
- Understanding of railway careers
- Confidence in considering careers within the rail industry

Many students who previously knew little about the railway industry reported leaving with a much greater understanding of future career opportunities.



Y9 pupils from Holly Cross Girls School, Liverpool visiting Network Rail HQ in Milton Keynes.

Stemovators

Dave travelled to Scotland to deliver the Avanti West Coast STEM Challenge at the Stemovators event at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh.

Over 100 pupils aged 10–14 took part in hands-on coding activities using Intelino smart trains, programming routes, controlling speeds and solving rail-themed challenges.

The activities developed teamwork, problem-solving and digital skills while showcasing how technology is used in the modern railway. Pupils also had the opportunity to present their own STEM projects, making for an inspiring and engaging day.



Stemovators Event in Edinburgh

Career Fairs

Throughout the year, we received numerous invitations to attend careers fairs along the WCML. Dave represented West Coast at events in Wigan, Manchester, Crewe, Stafford and Coventry, speaking to students about the wide range of careers available within the railway industry. These events also provided an opportunity to promote the Avanti West Coast Virtual Work Experience Programme. In total, we engaged with more than **2,500 students**, helping to raise awareness of career pathways and inspire the next generation to consider opportunities in rail.



Avanti West Coast staff at a careers fair at Crewe UTC

Impact

The Feel Good Futures programme has demonstrated that giving young people direct access to railway professionals, workplaces and real experiences has a powerful impact.

To date, the Feel Good Futures programme has benefited more than 1,100 students through a combination of interactive workshops, careers talks and educational visits.

Students have:

- Increased their understanding of careers within rail.
- Improved awareness of engineering and STEM pathways.
- Developed confidence through engaging with industry professionals.
- Been inspired by apprentices and employees from across the railway.

One teacher summed up the impact perfectly:

“One child who can be challenging to say the least stated he wanted to go into coding on trains as a career.”

This illustrates the effect that these experiences can have on young people.

Partnership Working

The success of Feel Good Futures has been made possible through collaboration between:

- Avanti West Coast
- Community Rail Lancashire
- Alstom
- Network Rail
- London Transport Museum
- Schools across the West Coast Main Line

Together these organisations have created opportunities that connect education with industry and help develop the railway workforce of the future.

Challenges

Engaging secondary schools continues to be more challenging than working with primary schools, as timetables, examinations and curriculum pressures can make it difficult for schools to participate.

The cost of providing supply cover for teaching staff also remains a significant barrier for many schools, even when travel and activities are fully funded.

Identifying suitable venues for careers and STEM experiences, such as train care centres and engineering depots, requires extensive planning and coordination. These sites often have operational constraints, limited availability and strict safety requirements, meaning visits need to be arranged well in advance.

Looking Ahead

Planned developments include:

- Organising a visit to Longsight Traincare Centre in Manchester.
- Delivering an Asquith Xavier workshop in Coventry during Black History Month, exploring his legacy and the importance of diversity and inclusion within the railway industry.
- Arranging educational visits to Safeside Birmingham.
- Continuing visits to the London Transport Museum Inspire Engineering Days, providing hands-on STEM learning experiences.
- Attending further careers events, including the Crewe Careers Fair in September 2026, to promote careers in the railway industry.
- Visit to the Merseyrail Stadler depot in Liverpool.
- Arranging visits to Hesketh Bank Signal Box.
- Exploring opportunities to participate in the Big Bang Fair in Birmingham in 2027 to further inspire young people to pursue STEM and engineering careers.
- Continuing to identify and develop new educational venues and industry partners to expand the range of experiences available through the Feel Good Futures programme.