

## EAST LANCASHIRE RAILWAY PRESS RELEASE

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### **East Lancashire Railway Unveils Game-Changing New Website**

The **East Lancashire Railway (ELR)** is putting itself on track for a bright future - by transforming its digital presence.

The charitable organisation has been able to significantly invest in overhauling its entire digital offering, including a [new website](#), as a result of a number of grants it has been awarded over the past 18 months.

Financial lifelines have come from national organisations including the National Lottery's Heritage Emergency Fund and the Government's Culture Recovery Fund - after the coronavirus pandemic left it fighting for its survival.

Alongside the new mobile-optimised website, it has used the funding to create a new, comprehensive marketing strategy that aims to position the heritage railway as a 'not-to-be-missed', day out for people of all generations - from train enthusiasts to individuals and families seeking new experiences.

**East Lancashire Railway Chairman Mike Kelly** said: "The past year and a half has been an incredibly challenging period for the ELR, with the pandemic putting our future in jeopardy. But we are now on the road to financial recovery and looking to the future with optimism.

"We remain so grateful for the support we received from the Government, the National Lottery, the ELR Preservation Society and our local authority partners, all of which has been crucial for retaining jobs, paying for running costs and carrying out essential maintenance to safeguard the future of the ELR.

"It has also allowed us to make significant investment in our digital presence, resulting in a website that is a real game-changer for us in terms of design and functionality.

"With our super and dedicated staff and volunteers, we're determined to continue to provide the unique heritage experience for our many thousands of loyal customers and reach new audiences and share with all generations the delight that a visit to the ELR provides."

The new and improved website makes it a breeze for visitors to see 'day out' itineraries, explore the possibilities at each ELR station, check timetables, book tickets and look up event

information. Its new marketing, digital and PR strategy was devised by Manchester agency Democracy.

The investment into its digital presence comes after the pandemic left the cherished heritage railway and registered charity on a knife edge, as it faced an unprecedented six-figure loss.

But its future was secured with grants including £694,000 from the Government's Culture Recovery Fund, £194,300 from The National Lottery's Heritage Emergency Fund, £62,251 from the Charity Survival Fund and support from Rossendale, Bury and Rochdale councils, as well as a donation of £125,000 from the ELR Preservation Society.

For more information, visit: [www.eastlancsrailway.org.uk](http://www.eastlancsrailway.org.uk).

**ENDS**

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

**About East Lancashire Railway**

ELR opened as a heritage railway in 1987, and hosts around 200,000 visitors annually, as one of the leading visitor attractions in the North West. Operating steam trains from Bolton Street Station in Bury, along a 12.5-mile line between Heywood, in Greater Manchester, and Rawtenstall in Lancashire, the railway was recently recognised with a TripAdvisor Travellers Choice Award for 2021.