

EAST LANCASHIRE RAILWAY PRESS RELEASE

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East Lancashire Railway Salutes Its Supporters For Getting It Back On Track in 2021

The Chairman of the [East Lancashire Railway](#) (ELR) has paid tribute to its staff, volunteers and guests for helping it successfully recover from the pandemic, after it saw record-breaking sales for its popular 2021 events.

The cherished heritage railway saw record numbers of visitors attend its Ghost Train event at Halloween, while over 43,000 returned to welcome back the much-loved Santa Specials, matching 2019 numbers for the railway's most important source of income of the year.

Chairman Mike Kelly expressed his delight and gave thanks to ELR's fantastic supporters who have come back to enjoy these unique heritage events. Their support over the past year has been crucial and pivotal in safeguarding the railway's future so it can continue to be enjoyed by families, friends and train enthusiasts.

ELR Chairman, Mike Kelly, said: "This outstanding performance from so many dedicated staff and volunteers comes after the most challenging period in the history of the ELR, as the pandemic left the railway fighting for financial survival. We now have a great springboard into 2022 as we plan to bring back a full year of unique ELR events and services.

"As we continue to recover from the impact of the pandemic, it has been wonderful to see so many people enjoying days out on the railway and attending our events and experiences."

"Without our guests and our team of dedicated volunteers, we wouldn't have been able to continue, so we'd like to thank them for all their support. Our gratitude is endless," continued Mr Kelly.

As a registered charity that relies on visitor income to stay afloat, the past two years have been some of the most challenging years for the ELR.

Mike continues: "Due to restrictions, we had to stay closed for large parts of 2020 and 2021 and, unfortunately, we had to cancel some of our most popular events, including our family favourite Santa Specials in December 2020.

"So, to see so many people join us for our events this year has been particularly special. We're thrilled that, thanks to the support we've received, generations of people can enjoy a grand day out on the railway for years to come."

The railway was able to keep its services running after it received vital cash boosts during the pandemic, including a £641,600 grant from the Government's Culture Recovery Fund and £194,300 from the National Lottery in 2020.

It also secured a £100,000 donation in 2020 from the ELR Preservation Society and a £300,000 loan in February this year from the ELR Trust, a charity made up of representatives from the three local authorities the railway runs through - Bury, Rochdale and Rossendale.

To book for events and experiences in 2022, please visit: www.eastlancsrailway.org.uk

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