

## EAST LANCASHIRE RAILWAY PRESS RELEASE

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### **East Lancashire Railway takes home prestigious External Communications Award**

The East Lancashire Railway is delighted to be recognised for its innovative marketing approach with the Heritage Railway Association Award for External Communications.

The heritage railway beat out stiff competition from across the UK to take home the award for its efforts in transforming its branding and digital presence in 2021.

The digital overhaul that was carried out last year saw a new audience focused brand strategy, significant investment in a new mobile-optimised website and a future-fit marketing strategy that positions the railway as an unmissable day out, with something for everyone - from dedicated rail enthusiasts to families and young people looking for a unique experience.

The success of the integrated marketing campaign in the second half of 2021 has contributed to record-breaking sales for ELR, with the heritage railway more than doubling the number of users on its site and enjoying visits from more than half a million new users in six months.

The Heritage Railway Association Annual Awards shine a spotlight onto achievements from all parts of the sector. With categories recognising everything from locomotive restoration to the contribution of young volunteers and successful communications projects. All heritage railways and organisations, big or small, can enter.

**Mark Pearce, Policy & Communications Manager at the Heritage Railway Association, says:**

“Encouraging more visitors from a variety of backgrounds is key to the success of heritage railways, and that’s why we focus so strongly on marketing and communications work at the Heritage Railway Association Annual Awards.

“The judges were really impressed by the digital work being done at the East Lancashire Railway. It’s really easy to be focussed on the aesthetic side of marketing work, but the East Lancs were able to demonstrate tangible results from their new marketing strategy and upgraded website. It’s very clear that they successfully reached new audiences and turned that into passengers on trains.”

**East Lancashire Railway Chairman, Mike Kelly** adds: “We are delighted and proud to receive this award; it’s the cherry on the cake after seeing the success of our digital efforts in bringing more people in to enjoy our fantastic heritage railway in the second half of last year.

“We went through a very challenging time during the pandemic but while our doors were closed our incredible team of dedicated staff and volunteers, and our valued agency partners [Democracy](#), got to work on ensuring the railway was fit for the future, ready to make an impact with our enthusiasts and regular visitors, as well as attract new audiences - vital to the railway’s survival once the doors opened again.

“By transforming the digital presence of the ELR, we have provided the perfect hybrid between the most joyful nostalgic elements of riding on the railway’s steam trains with the fast, slick and modern experience expected by today’s consumers.

‘We are looking forward to a bright future, with thousands of new customers enjoying many unmissable days out in 2022 at our award winning railway.’

For more information and to visit the railway, head to: [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.