



Welcome to our community and stakeholder newsletter

As always, there is a great deal happening across the business and it's a pleasure to be able to share some updates with you.

Following the order placed for our replacement fleet, we have been working closely with both Hitachi and Angel Trains to develop the necessary project plans and ensure the right workstreams are in place. We have held a number of train familiarisation meetings with Hitachi and are well underway with our internal business change process.

We are also continuing to progress our coupler replacement programme, which will see all 10 Class 180 units fitted with new couplers. This will make it easier and more reliable to couple units together, providing greater recovery and resilience during times of disruption, as well as opportunities to run longer trains. In addition, our fleet of Class 180s has recently been fitted with Remote Condition Monitoring (RCM). This provides an early warning system for any potential engine issues, reducing failures, cuts in service and cancellations, and ultimately delivering a more reliable service. Even though the system has only been in place for a few weeks, we are already beginning to see the benefits.

Unfortunately, our application for additional services between Bradford and London was only partially successful. The ORR has granted us access rights to allow some of our North East services to call at Seaham, creating a brand-new direct service to London – which is excellent news for local communities. Disappointingly, the ORR rejected our proposal for additional Bradford–London services, primarily on the grounds of network capacity and performance. We still believe the required capacity exists and will continue to work with both the ORR and Network Rail to revise our proposals.

Alongside this, we have continued to develop our proposals for new services between Cleethorpes and London and Newcastle and Brighton. Both applications have been through industry consultation and will be submitted to the ORR in the coming weeks.

Naturally, the December 2025 timetable change remains a key focus for us. This change represents the biggest alteration to the timetable on the ECML in more than a decade and requires an enormous amount of work across all operators to ensure successful implementation. However, we are among the first to have our new fares available to customers.

Happy reading!

Chris Brandon
Interim Director, Grand Central



BRIGHOUSE
STATION

AMBASSADOR
CONFERENCE

PRIDE

COMMUNITY
FUND

AMBASSADOR
DREAM
TEAM

WEBSITE

GC BEER

TIMETABLE

NEW
STARTERS

APPLICATIONS
UPDATE

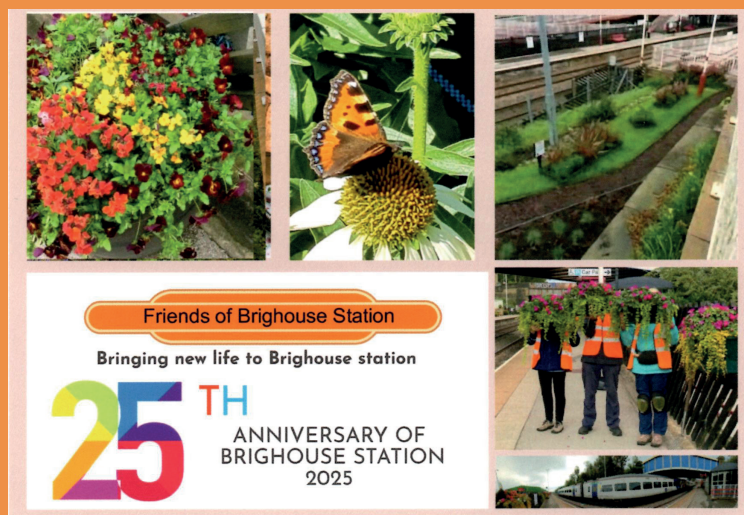
Brighouse Station celebrates 25 years

Back in May, Brighouse Station marked its 25th anniversary.

To mark the event, the Friends of Brighouse Station group (FoBS), recent Grand Central Community Fund winners, produced postcards, flyers and poster boards, which are currently on display at the station. All working members and sponsors received a pen displaying the Friends of Brighouse Station website.

An afternoon tea at the Commercial/Railway pub was arranged for the working volunteers, who were presented with certificates thanking them for their contribution to the improvements and floral displays at the station.

This celebration also coincided with the tenth anniversary of the formation of Friends of Brighouse Station group in 2015. Some of these original volunteers were Grand Central Ambassadors who wished to improve the gateway to Brighouse town centre. Since then FoBS has evolved and its members are now proud to be a part of an award-winning gardening group.



Friends of Brighouse Station

Bringing new life to Brighouse station

28th May 2025

25th Anniversary of the opening of
Brighouse station



www.friendsofbrighousestation.org.uk



Grand Central Volunteers honoured at annual Ambassador's Conference

Seventeen dedicated volunteers have been recognised for ten years of outstanding service with us at this year's Ambassadors Conference, held at the Railway Museum in York.

The event, which coincided with International Volunteers Week, celebrated the invaluable contribution of GC Ambassadors to the company. Each honouree received a volunteer appreciation certificate and a gift card, celebrating a decade of commitment since the start of the ambassador programme.

"We wanted to do something to show our appreciation for our ambassadors, who give up so much of their free time for GC," said Hannah Bromage, Grand Central's Community and Volunteer Manager, "All of them have been with us since near the start of our ambassador programme and have really helped GC and our customers over the years."

"Yesterday also underlined for me a sense of privilege (and even pride!) which I have in being able to volunteer for a company which does have such a distinct ethos, manifest both in its concern for the

wellbeing of passengers, and also for the communities which it serves," said one volunteer.

The conference was attended by 62 volunteers, who also enjoyed business updates from Paul Hutchings, Managing Director of Arriva Rail Services, and Chris Brandon, GC's Director. Will Etherington, GC's Performance Manager, provided a session on East Coast Mainline Timetable changes and Edshift delivered a workshop on their work supporting young people affected by domestic abuse and violence.

Ambassadors also took the chance to try out their new-look uniform and connect with colleagues over lunch.



Pride Workshop with Out North East

Grand Central Railway joined forces with Out North East earlier this year to host a creative workshop in the heart of Sunderland, bringing together participants of all ages to celebrate Pride.

The free event drew in a diverse group ranging from eight-year-olds to senior travellers, all of whom were invited to help design a stunning banner commemorating '200 years of Pride on the Rail'. The finished banner, adorned with rainbows, flowers, butterflies, and plenty of sparkles was carried in the Pride in Sunderland March on Saturday 28 June, to coincide with International Stonewall Day.

"Out North East is delighted to be partnering with Grand Central for the Pride in Sunderland Festival. Working with an organisation that celebrates community and inclusivity is wonderful and we are proud Grand Central flies the Pride flag for equality across its network," said Peter Darrant, Chair of Out North East.

The event highlighted the power of togetherness and the role we are continually proud to play in supporting and celebrating LGBTQ+ equality along our routes.

On our West Riding route, we are working with LGBTQ+ charity LonGBoaT Wakefield CIO and The Art Exchange CIC to support a plan to create a community mural at Wakefield Station. LonGBoaT, which has adopted Wakefield Kirkgate, has plans to transform the station into a vibrant community space which reflects the town's unique history and spirit.

As part of these plans, we are helping them to put out an open call for LGBTQ+ artists to help with a mural that celebrates the coming together of Wakefield's diverse community. Hannah Bromage – Community and Volunteer Manager said:

"We're so pleased to be working with LonGBoaT on this mural. Not only will it celebrate the diverse communities that we're proud to serve, it also continues to showcase Wakefield as a hub for creative arts."



"It is not the first time we have supported the arts in Wakefield. In 2017, we created an art exhibition with Ashley Jackson in the underpass, helping to improve the station environment with beautiful landscapes of the Yorkshire countryside." Hannah said: "These types of projects go a long way to helping create a safe and welcoming space for all."





Community Fund update - some of the projects we've been able to help

Boldon Girls Football club sponsorship

We are delighted to be sponsoring the Boldon Girls' football kit. Boldon Girls Football club is located just north of Sunderland. Our funding will help provide kits for the teams, allowing for the club to keep subs low and keep sports accessible to young girls in the area.

The club has many successful players to come through the club, such as England Lioness Jill Scott. We were first introduced to the club via one of our onboard crew and have been working with them ever since.



Horbury Community Centre Stay-And-Play Group

The Horbury Community Centre Trust is a small charity based in Wakefield, supported by some of our Wakefield Ambassadors. The trust's mission is to preserve and enhance the community's treasured hub, the Cluntergate Centre.

Our funding is going towards helping support the volunteer-led 'Stay and Play' group for pre-school children. The playgroup provides much-needed affordable childcare option in the area.

EdShift

EdShift focuses on helping transform the lives of young people affected by domestic abuse through the arts. Thanks to our support, Redshift has been able to increase the hours of its SpotLight practitioner. SpotLight is our early intervention programme that gives children and young people exposed to domestic abuse a safe space, a trusted adult to talk to, and practical coping strategies to help them overcome trauma. For many, it's the first time they've felt heard and supported.

At the recent Grand Central Volunteers Day, EdShift was able to raise awareness about the impacts of domestic abuse on children and young people. During the day, groups of volunteers came together to create inspiration bunting filled with messages of hope and encouragement. The organisation is also offering Positive Bystander Training to the Grand Central team, part of its Project Zero provision. This training helps people recognise harmful behaviours and equips them with safe, practical ways to make a difference. It's a powerful step in creating safer communities for everyone.

"Grand Central's partnership with EdShift is more than just support, it's a lifeline for the children and young people we work with," says Ellie Brook, CEO of EdShift, "together, we are sending them a clear message: you matter, and you are not alone."



Ambassador dream team - Tony and Elliott Catherall

Tony Catherall (62) and his son Elliott (16) started as Grand Central ambassadors in Brighouse in June this year.

Tony works as a shop assistant in his local wholefoods store. A qualified youth and community worker, Tony says, *"I am a sociable person and I enjoy working with groups and being an ambassador is an extension of this."*

Elliott is just about to begin his A levels and is a keen railway photography enthusiast. Thanks to this passion, he knows quite a bit about the rail network, such as how to find train times, train types and routes. This makes him indispensable when it comes to alterations to a passenger's route, or to find out where a train is and when it will arrive. Tony laughs, *"He is the technical expert in our track-side team of two."*

In the pair's brief time as Ambassadors, Tony says he has seen how challenging it can be to run a rail service. *"There are major Network Rail works around West Yorkshire with the electrification of existing track and sometimes the information can change within minutes. We have to update Grand Central customers as best as we can. Often it's not the best news to relay but this is a part of the role – the holy grail being a 'Plan B'."*

Both Tony and Elliott enjoy chatting to passengers and the connections can make a difference to both volunteers and passengers. *"On one occasion we were chatting to a Canadian man who had been visiting his relatives, who lived near Brighouse. We were at the station to wave him off as he made his way back to London to catch his flight home. We had a lively and good-humoured chat, asking him about life in Canada, so when the Grand Central train came into the platform and the man boarded, both me and Elliott joined in with the farewells/waving with his family. He had a big smile on his face as waved back and the train pulled out of the station. It was such a nice memory."*



Grand Central website now live

We're delighted to announce our newly redesigned website. It's far more than just a visual refresh. It's a new way to shape the online experience to more closely align with our passengers' needs.

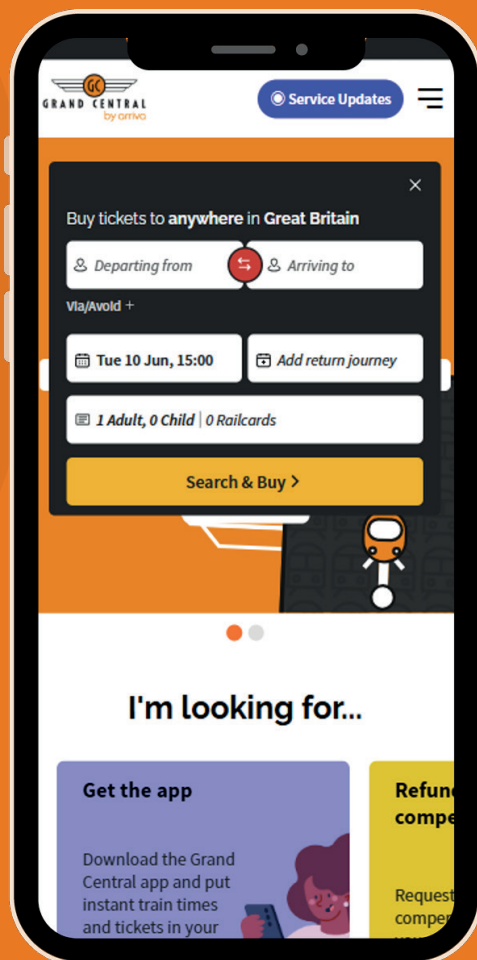
This has been a real collaborative effort between the Grand Central team and partners at Arriva and is the result of months of dedicated work.

The new website supports customers at every stage of their journey, enhances overall accessibility and aims to drive customer loyalty, encourage app downloads and boost ticket sales. One key highlight of the redesign is the revamped search and timetable tools, which have been specially tailored for greater usability.

The new platform is much easier to navigate and simpler to update, which saves us valuable time and ensures we can better respond to customers.

Have a look here if you haven't already and do let us know what you think.

www.grandcentralrail.com



Say cheers to our new Grand Central beer

We have teamed up with Vaux Brewery in Sunderland to produce a special new Grand Central drink, available across all our services. The drink is a double dry hopped Citra pale ale with an ABV of 5.3% and is suitable for vegans.

The project started around a month ago and aligns with our desire to work more closely with suppliers along our route. "Vaux Brewery was the perfect partner to launch this initiative, helping us create an authentic local beer with a bespoke label for our trains – something Grand Central has never done before," says Vane Ristov, On-board Customer Service & Catering Delivery Manager, "With Sunderland FC returning to the Premier League, we also wanted to celebrate by offering something unique and local for our passengers and supporters.

Grand Central Beer (On The Rales) has been brewed with Columbus and Idaho 7 in the whirlpool, then double dry-hopped with Citra. *"It delivers a bright, refreshing flavour that feels distinctly Grand Central,"* says Ristov, *"modern, bold, and proudly connected to our community."*

Applications update

– two new services from Wakefield Kirkgate to Bradford Interchange and direct service from Seaham to London

We are pleased to share some positive developments following the recent announcement from the ORR about additional access rights for services on the East Coast Mainline, effective from December 2025.

We have been given approval to introduce two additional services from Wakefield Kirkgate to Bradford Interchange on weekdays and Saturdays. We've also got an additional service in each direction between Bradford Interchange and Wakefield Kirkgate on Sundays.

We are also delighted that the ORR has approved our plans to introduce some additional calls at Seaham on existing services. For the first time, Seaham will have a direct connection to London.

Our application to offer additional stopping services between London, York, Bradford, and Peterborough has not been granted. However, these newly approved services are good progress in our efforts to better meet the travel needs of communities along our routes.

Our other applications, such as the London to Cleethorpes service, are continuing to progress and we'll keep you updated on those.



New timetable from December

From 14 December we're launching our new timetable. This means faster and more frequent journeys.

The updated schedule introduces a number of improvements, particularly for those travelling on the North East route. Some services will run with reduced journey times, while a more consistent Monday to Saturday timetable will make planning ahead simpler for passengers.

One of the key changes is the introduction of departures from London King's Cross on the hour, with services spaced more evenly throughout the day to reduce gaps in the timetable.

Sunday services will also see notable enhancements, including the addition of an earlier Sunderland to London service and a later London to Sunderland service, extending travel options for weekend passengers. Pontefract Monkhill station will benefit from more services, including a strengthened Sunday offering.

East Coast Main Line Timetable Change

Launch Date


DECEMBER
14

Benefits

The new timetable will bring faster and more frequent journeys
16,000
extra seats a day on long-distance high speed services across all TOCs

Companies affected

- CrossCountry
- East Midlands Railway
- Grand Central
- GTR
- Hull Trains
- LNER
- Lumo
- Northern
- Transpennine Express
- All ECML Freight Operators

Changes
The new timetable will bring different service patterns, including changes to:
 Departure times
 Arrival times
 Journey times
 Dwell times
 Calling points

Helping passengers

We can't be complacent or rely on past knowledge to help passengers.

New starters!

We are pleased to announce two important new additions to the Grand Central team.

Scott Ive has joined us as our new head of drivers. Scott brings with him a strong family connection to the railway, with both his brother and stepfather having worked as train drivers – a heritage we are proud to support at Grand Central.

We also welcome Simon Walker as our new head of fleet. We hope they'll both be very happy in their roles.



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.

If you have any questions or you wish to stop receiving these emails please contact community@grandcentralrail.com.