



Making a difference

Social Value Report 2024-25



NORTHERN

Go do your thing

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Welcome

Purpose, People and Place – the key to Northern’s social value

Welcome to Northern’s third social value report – my first since stepping into the role of Managing Director. It brings together my three priorities – Purpose, People and Place – underpinning our vision “to make a positive impact in the North, in all we do and for all we serve.”

Purpose: Our priority is getting our customers where they need to be, working together to connect people and places across the North. We recognise our timetable is our promise and we must deliver on that. That’s why we are laser-focused on improving our performance and respecting and enhancing our communities’ economic, environmental and social wellbeing in the process.

People: This means always doing our best for our colleagues and the people we serve every day. With a network that spans the North, employs more than 7000 people and supports 242,000 passenger journeys daily – including connecting one in five customers to other train operators – we understand the positive impact we can have on economic growth and social inclusion. Every choice we make has the potential to create new opportunities for our colleagues, customers and communities.

Place: We have the scope to support our communities to be thriving places to live, learn, work and visit. We are a major employer and support local businesses, with £352m – 55% of our procurement spend in 2024-25 – committed in the North. We also manage 470 stations. These aren’t just pieces of infrastructure but places of real community value and we’re working with partners and stakeholders across the network to unlock this. You can read more about these innovative initiatives in our Community Rail Report 2025.

One project that encompasses our focus on Purpose, People and Place is the reopening of the Northumberland Line between Ashington and Newcastle. It’s already seen over 180,000 journeys – an average of over 13,000 a week – since mid-December in an area not served by rail since the 1960s.

We are hearing first-hand from customers how delighted they are to be connected to so many more opportunities for work, education and leisure – all now within easy reach using a sustainable and value-for-money travel option. The line will also bring a wealth of benefits to local economies through increased tourism and footfall.

Our teams have worked tirelessly with the Department for Transport (DfT), Northumberland County Council and Network Rail to make it happen and we have been proud to welcome 18 new conductors and 20 new drivers to work on the line, training dozens of other colleagues too. This project has been the result of outstanding collaboration between many stakeholders and I’m delighted to see everyone’s hard work now paying off for the people of Northumberland.

As the Northumberland line shows, rail is a greener, more sustainable travel choice, but it’s not perfect. We are working hard to mitigate adverse environmental impacts, whether boosting biodiversity across our estate or taking strides towards net zero in procuring a new fleet. We have just reached an exciting milestone in issuing our ‘Invitation To Negotiate’ to potential suppliers.

While we absolutely acknowledge that we need to keep improving our train services, it’s also important to celebrate the fantastic work the business and our colleagues do every day to bring purpose and positive impact to the North. I hope you enjoy reading the report, which captures and celebrates the great work our colleagues, volunteers and partners do to enhance the social value and impact our services create.

Tricia Williams

Tricia Williams
Managing Director



Executive summary

We're delighted to have many positive updates to share in our third social value report. With such a range of initiatives from the business and our colleagues, selecting just a few highlights has been challenging.

We're getting better at understanding where opportunities lie for us in making the greatest positive impact on the North. Three years of reporting gives us a clear baseline from which to progress, but we must also celebrate how far we've come in that time. We've established governance and reporting processes around the key areas for Responsible Business – going far beyond the required compliance for supply chain and sustainability initiatives. And our colleagues are more enthusiastic than ever in supporting the communities we serve.

Responsible business

In 2024, our Director Group endorsed Northern's first social value strategy, setting out our key activities and milestones until the end of 2027. We've outlined a four-step commitment to unlocking social value using the National Social Value Task Force (NSVT) roadmap 'Towards a Social Value Economy:'

- **Make it Core**
- **Create Capability – for us and others**
- **Accountability**
- **Radical Collaboration**

Meanwhile, our Responsible Business Steering Group (RBSG) has introduced new reporting processes and continues to work closely with Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) priority leads to identify risks and opportunities. It's also welcomed new members who are improving our approach to initiatives and streamlining our processes. In addition, we've completed maturity assessments using the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) Sustainable Rail Blueprint. We will do this annually to ensure we're using the industry's governance framework alongside our own.

We've also introduced a green and social washing policy and framework to prevent us from misleading or overstating our impacts or commitments. It sets standards and guidelines for marketing, communications and reporting to ensure we communicate our sustainable claims transparently, truthfully, and responsibly.



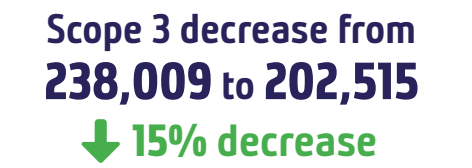
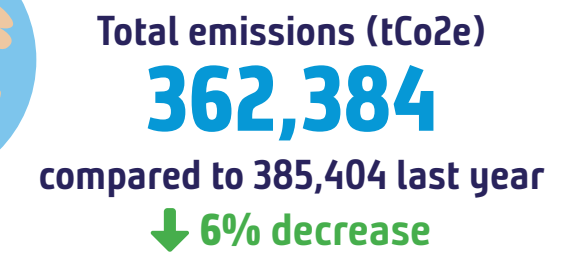
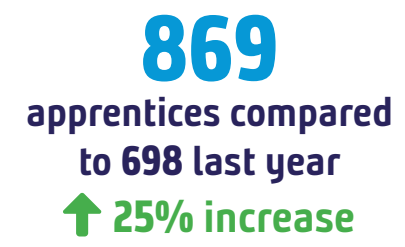
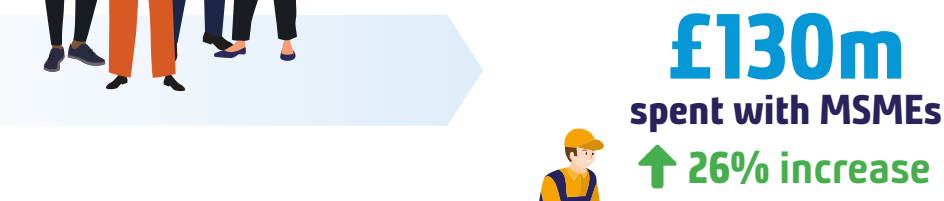
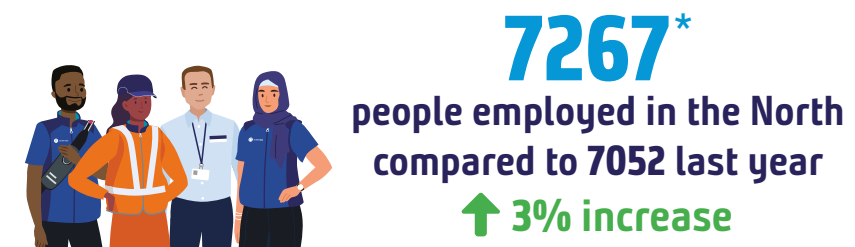
Collaborating for impact

Collaboration underpins the progress we continue to make across the business. We're committed to making a difference and our colleagues are excited to share their knowledge and expertise to find ways to do more – identifying business benefits alongside social value outputs. This collaborative energy extends outside the business too, including with our sister train operating companies in the Department for Transport Operator (DFTO) group. We take a shared approach to innovation, social value in procurement, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and environmental sustainability.

We serve many of the country's most deprived communities. Our services are vital in connecting them with education, employment and leisure opportunities, but we recognise there is much more we can do for a bigger impact. We need to start with a detailed local needs analysis across our network and use the invaluable insight that comes from our broad range of Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) partnerships.

In 2024, we joined the Purpose Coalition, a group of organisations committed to working together to break down barriers to opportunity in the UK. The Coalition has identified 15 Purpose Goals mapping societal and economic barriers businesses can tackle. We look forward to applying the recommendations in our Breaking Down Barriers report as we develop action plans for each business area.

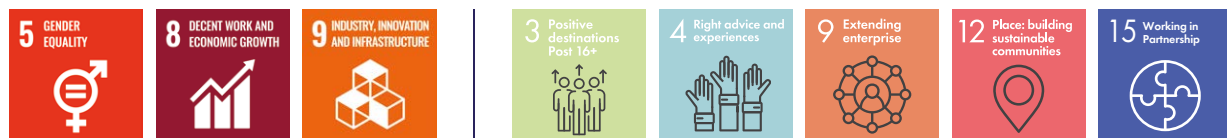
This report highlights various social value initiatives between 1 April 2024 and 31 March 2025. We've used the Rail Social Value Tool (RSVT) to measure our delivery. The RSVT has undergone significant updates during this reporting period, and, as anticipated in our previous report, this has impacted the latest metrics and values. As the RSVT is still evolving, we have outlined some key figures in our delivery over the last three years rather than the associated values. This allows us to give the most transparent comparison.



Communities at our heart



The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and The Purpose Coalitions Purpose Goals linked to this section:



Across all regions of our network, committed colleagues and partners are looking to build relationships within communities, bringing diverse groups together to promote greater understanding and share valuable insights. This helps create Northern teams that reflect our communities and support our customers better.

West – Art through a queer lens

Every station from Carlisle to Newcastle and Carlisle to Whitehaven has taken part in an art trail celebrating the strength and talent of the diverse queer community and raising the profile of young artists.

Each of the works in the summer's Queer Art Trail had a QR code connecting people with support organisations. There was also a questionnaire to help Northern and rail partners understand what they can do to make the network feel safer and more welcoming for our queer customers.

The project – a collaboration between Queer Cumbria, Northern and Cumbria Coast and Tyne Valley Community Rail Partnerships – has been shortlisted for a Community Rail Award. There are now plans to work together to better understand queer travel challenges and to create a booklet showcasing all the artwork and the stories behind them.

Central – Art aspiration

The artistic talents of disadvantaged young people in Manchester have been showcased at the city's busy Deansgate Railway Station. 'Moments in Transit' exhibited their photographs, capturing the dynamic street art of the city's Northern Quarter, which helps shape the area's distinct identity.

The project aimed to help young people transition from destructive behaviours to more aspirational futures by giving them a voice, a much-needed creative outlet and helping them connect to and be accepted in their communities.

Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham officially opened the exhibition in September. Curated by TiPP, a charity dedicated to transforming lives through art, the project also involved Manchester Youth Justice Service, Northern and other rail bodies.

Meanwhile, local rail officer Sarah Morgan and a Network Rail colleague were privileged to support one young rail enthusiast during February half term with a money-can't-buy experience at Manchester Piccadilly station.

13-year-old Dexter, who has specific additional needs, got to examine our fleet, make an announcement over the station Tannoy and talk with our drivers. He also visited the signal box, helping with a train movement from Manchester Airport to Piccadilly. Dexter is now more determined than ever to join Northern's conductor crew!



East – Keeping faith

Northern's Interfaith & Cultural Awareness Faith Trails aim to create a deeper understanding of the role of faith in our workplaces and show the importance of building relationships with faith communities. Run during November's Interfaith Week, they're coordinated by our Regional Community & Sustainability Manager Richard Issac with the Yorkshire Asian Business Association/NPH Ethnic Minority Business and Policy Forum.

In 2024, Northern managers were joined for the first time by those from LNER, Arriva and TransPennine Express and invited to the Leeds Gurdwara, the United Hebrew Congregation, the Makkah Mosque and the BAPS Hindi Temple.

The trails are a valuable opportunity for our managers to ask faith leaders and volunteers questions so they can better understand the requirements colleagues may have. They're also a chance for faith communities to learn more about rail careers and promote them locally. Ultimately, we want our workforce to better reflect all the communities we serve.

North East – New line, new opportunities

The reopening of the Northumberland between Newcastle and Ashington is transforming people's journeys and opportunities in the North East. And to ensure that it's bringing the maximum social, environmental and economic benefits to its communities, Northern, CrossCountry and Northumberland County Council are busy setting up a Community Rail Partnership (CRP) with Tyne Valley CRP acting as a mentor through its first year of operation. The new CRP covers all services and stations on the line and joins 22 others across the Northern network.

Meanwhile, colleagues from Northern, Network Rail, Nexus, Morgan Sindall and Northumberland County Council have been out and about delivering rail safety sessions to 70 schools, all within a two-mile radius of the new line. With passenger services running for the first time in 60 years, they recognise that young people won't necessarily be tuned in to railway risks.

And in 2025, we'll be involving 10 schools on the Northumberland Line in two STEM projects linking back to the new railway. Our engineering colleagues will be involved in the initiative led by Primary Engineer, a non-profit organisation enthusing teachers and pupils about science, technology, engineering and maths and the career opportunities they present.



Community funding

With 470 stations across the North, we're in the heart of the communities we serve. Many are economically disadvantaged, lack access to services or have few opportunities for young people.

At Northern, we're committed to making things better. Through our Customer and Community Impact Fund (CCIF), we granted £100,000 to 11 projects in 2024 and an additional £10,000 in small grants to 20 initiatives.

Many of our colleagues are already involved in these local projects. We hope to inspire more to get out there!

Our Customer and Community Impact Fund (CCIF)

Social mobility is at its worst for over 50 years. Our focus for 2024 was improving people's life chances through access to employment and training. We've been looking at the opportunities we can offer within Northern, while offering grants from £2,500 to £20,000 for community projects tackling this inequality. Recipients include:

Learn to Play

Learning a musical instrument helps with the skills you need for academic and career success. It requires discipline, dedication and perseverance. Since 2015, Olympias Music Foundation, based in Longsight – one of Manchester's most deprived areas, has delivered more than 20,000 free music lessons to children from six to 18.

Work For All

The High Peak-based organisation offers mentoring workshops to older people keen to return to work or training after a long period away. The sessions aim to build their confidence and unlock skills and abilities from their past. Work For All's clients, who range from their late 50s to mid-70s, get support job hunting and with their applications. The next course is set for Hattersley in Tameside.

Special Needs Under Fives

The charity pairs special needs children with volunteers in once-a-week, one-to-one sessions in Early Years settings across Bolton. It gives preschoolers essential support while the adults develop skills and experience to help them into employment. Many volunteers go on to work in education. In the past year, the 42-strong volunteer team completed 177 hours of training, including first aid and communication and sign language.



Small Grants Projects

Our Northern colleagues once again had the opportunity to help charities, community groups and projects close to their hearts by encouraging them to apply for small grants of up to £500 or applying on their behalf. Recipients included:

Children's Book Project

Reading can shape children's lives, but children growing up in poverty often have few books or none of their own. The charity gifts books, collecting new and lightly used ones from families and publishers. The grant will pay for 1000 books and allow Children's Book Project to build longstanding relationships with two Leeds schools. This includes holding pop-up book shops for 500 children to choose two or more books

Yorkshire Coast Sight Support

The non-profit organisation supports visually impaired people in and around Scarborough through social groups, lunch clubs, health support and a new Sensory Yarden (a garden without grass!) It aims to get them enjoying gardening again – something many have stopped because of their impairment. The grant will help fund everything they need to be green-fingered, from planters to soil.

Street Treats

The Greater Manchester group has a hot food Street Kitchen that feeds up to 125 people experiencing homelessness every week. It also supplies warm clothing and toiletries and offers support. The grant will help keep the food van stocked and on the road.



Education outreach

Northern and its rail partners are bursting with skills, experience and a willingness to help young people reach their full potential, regardless of their background. It's about equipping them with the must-have skills to be successful anywhere, though we do love to inspire them with opportunities in rail!

Track to The Future: Career confidence for young people in our communities

Newton Heath colleagues could soon have enthusiastic new team members, thanks to the successful pilot of 'Track to the Future' – a programme highlighting career opportunities in rail while boosting skills and confidence.

It's been developed between the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB), Northern and The Talent Foundry, which focuses on helping young people from disadvantaged communities develop work-related skills

A cohort of 90 students undertook an intense four-session programme, with 24 Year 12 Manchester College students placed with Northern.

They put programme management into practice by tackling a real-world scenario from the rail sector and gained experience in an operational rail environment at Newton Heath.

The feedback from students and staff was overwhelmingly positive, from the skills they'd developed to their awareness about rail-based career opportunities.

A second college in Leeds is now signed up to the 'Track to the Future' programme and Northern's experience in running the pilot is helping shape our education outreach plans. The team is working closely with colleagues in early careers and brand management to ensure the programme embeds Northern's vision and values.



Don't just take our word for it...

- 100% of Manchester College students rated the programme excellent or good
- 82% felt more confident in both teamwork and speaking
- 94% became more aware of their own skills and talents
- 88% better understand how to apply their skills to achieve their ambitions
- 76% started thinking more confidently about their future career paths
- 100% of students now have a better idea of careers available in the rail industry



Manchester College testimonials

"This is a superb programme that offers the students a true insight into careers within rail and is also an excellent way to develop their project management skills, applying the knowledge taught in their course to a real-life working situation. They have also been able to extend their presenting skills" – **Lucy, teacher**

"It has helped me get out of my comfort zone"
– **Student, Manchester College**

"It has brought me more confidence in my communication skills" – **Harley**

"I thought the railway industry was boring, but I have learnt there are many jobs in this industry with good pay as well" – **Zainab**

"It has opened my eyes to other ideas on how I could carry out my future" – **Michael, Manchester College**

I thought nothing of the industry before, but now I see how trains are maintained, the opportunities given and the skills needed" – **Chukwuka**

Accessibility

Train travel should be a route to opportunity for everyone, helping them get to work, enjoy days out or simply supporting them to tackle day-to-day tasks independently.

Many of our customers require additional support and tailored facilities for seamless, enjoyable journeys and Northern's Accessibility User Group (NAUG) is helping us make this happen.

We value insights from our disabled customers' lived experiences, using them to shape our infrastructure designs, initiatives and policies.

We've made many changes and are continually looking at what more we can offer. Here are some highlights from the past 12 months:

Our website made easy

New 'Recite Me' software is helping people access information on our website, from timetables to service updates, in a way that works best for them. Rail users can change the font, text size and colour or choose a read-aloud function. They can also translate the information into more than 100 different languages. It's hoped making the information more accessible will give people of all ages the confidence to travel, including those with visual impairments and learning differences and those who don't speak English as a first language.



Meeting points for stress-free journeys

After a successful pilot in Sunderland, 40 more passenger assist meeting points will be popping up across the Northern network. They are designated places where customers can wait and request assistance to board a train, giving them confidence that there will always be somebody to help get them where they need to go. Our Accessibility User Group is helping us develop and deliver these facilities.



"The assist point will enable so many more people to access trains independently. A lot of disabled people worry about the 'what ifs' when travelling by train, so this will give them the confidence to know they can meet someone at the station and get that support."

Jimmy Simpson, disability rights campaigner and co-creator of the 'Adventure of Jimmy and Lauryn Facebook page'.

Station colleagues in Leeds now carry supplies of accessible toilet keys and hidden disabilities lanyards thanks to a suggestion made by Mark Cutter, Chair of Northern's Accessibility User Group (NAUG). It means they can now help travellers in need on the spot. We look forward to reporting back on the trial's success and our plans for rolling it out more widely on our network.

Improvements in action

According to the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), 96% of customers who received additional assistance from Northern were satisfied with the level of service they received – the joint highest in the industry. But at the same time, almost one in five customers who pre-booked additional assistance for their journey reported that they didn't receive any help. This is simply not good enough.

Following a full review, shaped by valuable customer and colleague insight, we've put together a one-year plan to improve the reliability of our passenger assistance service.

It focuses on five themes:

- **Ensuring our policies and processes are consistent across Northern.**
- **Supporting colleagues in delivering the service by ensuring they have the right training and resources.**
- **Ensuring the right technology is in place with better tools and data insights.**
- **Empowering colleagues to adapt during disruption and other unexpected challenges.**
- **Making essential information more accessible to our colleagues and customers.**

Valued people

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and The Purpose Coalitions Purpose Goals linked to this section:



One of Northern's four strategic ambitions is to be a business that values its people and where people feel valued whatever their background.

It's about empowering our 7000+ colleagues to be and do their best, recognising and rewarding their efforts. This will be reflected in higher engagement, productivity and retention and outwardly through positive customer interactions and impactful work in communities.

Ultimately, we want to become a 'destination employer' – a place where people actively seek out job opportunities over our competitors, enticed by our strong social-value built brand, vision, values and culture.

We've introduced a new organisational structure with dedicated roles focusing on Employer Brand and Future Careers now embedded into our People Team.

Our focus is on:

- **shaping and nurturing a "high-performing", efficient and simpler business.**
- **being innovative in developing an inclusive business where colleagues perform at their best and are THE BEST.**
- **developing inspiring leaders with a shared purpose who help and support others to go do their thing.**
- **actively listening and responding to what our colleagues tell us and strengthening our stakeholder partnerships.**

More than six in 10 colleagues (64%) completed our annual employee satisfaction survey – the highest since records began in 2018. From that, we know that communication is important to colleagues. That's why we offer many channels to update people and support two-way conversations. These include a colleague intranet, newspaper and regular 'Ask me Anything' sessions with leaders and our experts on issues ranging from performance to uniform.



Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

People want to work somewhere welcoming, where they feel they belong and can truly be themselves. Diverse and inclusive organisations are more innovative, more resilient and better places to work.

The North of England has vibrant and diverse communities and we need to do a better job of representing the people we serve

Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy sets the direction. Our priority areas up to 2026 are men, women and ethnic diversity, while we continue to champion and celebrate other under-represented groups.

We have an ongoing programme of work and lots going on behind the scenes to guide our priorities and future activities:

- **Formal, chaired working groups developing areas for improvement – a new ethnic diversity working group is our latest addition.**
- **Active networks, including Armed Forces, Neurodiversity and Women, to understand different groups of colleagues across the business, feeding into EDI strategy and planning.**
- **A rolling calendar of EDI events across the year, including Ramadan, Eid, Neurodiversity celebration week, Pride, Armed Forces Day and National Inclusion Week. Colleagues support activities across the network, such as organising our annual Pride celebrations.**
- **All of our colleagues participate in a diversity and inclusion workshop as part of their Northern induction.**

White Ribbon: Helping women and girls live without fear and harassment

Seventy per cent of UK women say they've experienced sexual harassment in public (APPG for UN Women, 2021), and three in five have experienced sexual harassment, bullying or verbal abuse at work (Trade Unions Congress, 2023).

With 7000+ colleagues and operations in communities across the North, Northern has recognised the role it can play in tackling the issue.

We've joined with the charity White Ribbon to help engage men and boys in ending harassment and violence against women and girls. Through our official accreditation, we're taking action to positively change harmful culture, attitudes and behaviours.

Our chief operating officer, Matt Rice, took part in a panel event to discuss the role the rail industry can play in the White Ribbon Campaign. And our managing director, Tricia Williams, is chairing a dedicated steering group to champion the cause, bringing together staff in operational roles, support functions and those at TrainCare Centres.

Our first White Ribbon Steering Group meeting is planned for April 2025, where colleagues will create an action plan to set clear goals for bringing about genuine change. All steering group members are registered as White Ribbon ambassadors and champions.



Northern accreditations

- **White Ribbon – demonstrating our commitment to preventing harassment, abuse and violence against women and girls**
- **Armed Forces Covenant, working towards Gold accreditation – demonstrating our commitment to being a forces-friendly employer**
- **Investors in Diversity**
- **Disability Confident Employer – demonstrating our commitment to maximising the opportunities provided by employing disabled people**
- **Global Diversity Equality and Inclusion Benchmark, Level 3 (in conjunction with other train operating companies) – a comprehensive framework designed to help organisations assess and improve their EDI practices from introducing them to embedding them**

Spotlight on menopause

Awareness of menopause and the challenges it can present women in the workplace is a hot topic, emerging from under a veil of secrecy and stigma. At Northern, we are taking strides to support our colleagues during this period in their lives, conscious that there is always more we can do.

- Our menopause support policy aims to create a more supportive and inclusive workplace, ensuring leaders are aware of the impacts of menopause and the support they and the wider business can offer.
- Our menopause support network has 56 members, also welcoming people who advocate for women experiencing menopause.
- We are part of an industry-wide menopause working group sharing best practice. In 2025, we will be running a women's health roundtable with Network Rail, LNER, Northern and TransPennine Express. We also host various events and sessions around women's health in collaboration with Women in Rail.
- Our managers in the North East and East regions have taken part in a menopause at work workshop, giving them an understanding of the physiological and psychological impacts of menopause, exploring the potential workplace implications and practical support strategies. We will roll this out to all managers across the business in 2025.
- Our annual 'Go do Her Thing' month celebrates women, raising awareness around women's workplace challenges. In 2025, we are collaborating with the other Department for Transport Operators (DFTO) to host four online events. These will include a focus on women's health, such as menopause, endometriosis and postnatal depression.
- We offer Employee Assistance and Mind Matters counselling sessions. We've also introduced Wellbeing Managers and Mental Health First Aiders for additional support.
- We consider the comfort and practicality of uniforms, such as offering menopausal colleagues cotton-rich blouses.



Talent attraction & early careers

To achieve our ambitions, we need a truly diverse workforce reflecting the communities we serve and encompassing a broad range of skills, including many not traditionally found within the railway.

Almost nine in 10 of our new colleagues are new to the rail and transport industry. They bring fresh outlooks and innovation from roles in retail, the civil service, education, healthcare, blue light services, science and the trades.

We also want people at the start of their career journeys or looking to return to work. We're keen to harness their enthusiasm and commitment to learn and give them opportunities that build confidence and pride in their abilities – particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds

We use a broad marketing mix for recruitment, from the traditional job fairs and employability schemes to campaigns on Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and TikTok, using our people to tell their stories.

Boosting social mobility

A thriving business and thriving communities go hand in hand. We recognise that improving social mobility is a huge area of opportunity for us, cutting across all our Purpose, People and Place priorities. It's reflected in our plans for education outreach, inclusive recruitment and career development opportunities for our existing colleagues.

We also support job seekers with CV writing and interview skills through workshops that align with local employment opportunities. And through the sector-based work academy programme (SWAP) scheme, we offer people employability and customer service training, work experience and an interview for a role with Northern if they complete the programme.

More than one in three (34%) of each cohort of conductor and driver trainees come from disadvantaged areas. And up to 30% of trainees join us without formal English and maths qualifications. They progress to jobs above the UK's median average wage – significantly above for drivers.



Armed Forces Covenant: Inviting the skills and experience of military personnel

Northern is actively seeking to recruit serving armed forces personnel, reservists, veterans and those from military families, recognising the value their experiences, skills and attitudes can bring to the business.

As a signatory to the Armed Forces Covenant, we've partnered with various armed forces organisations and career transition groups to reach potential new colleagues through job boards, webinars and employment fairs.

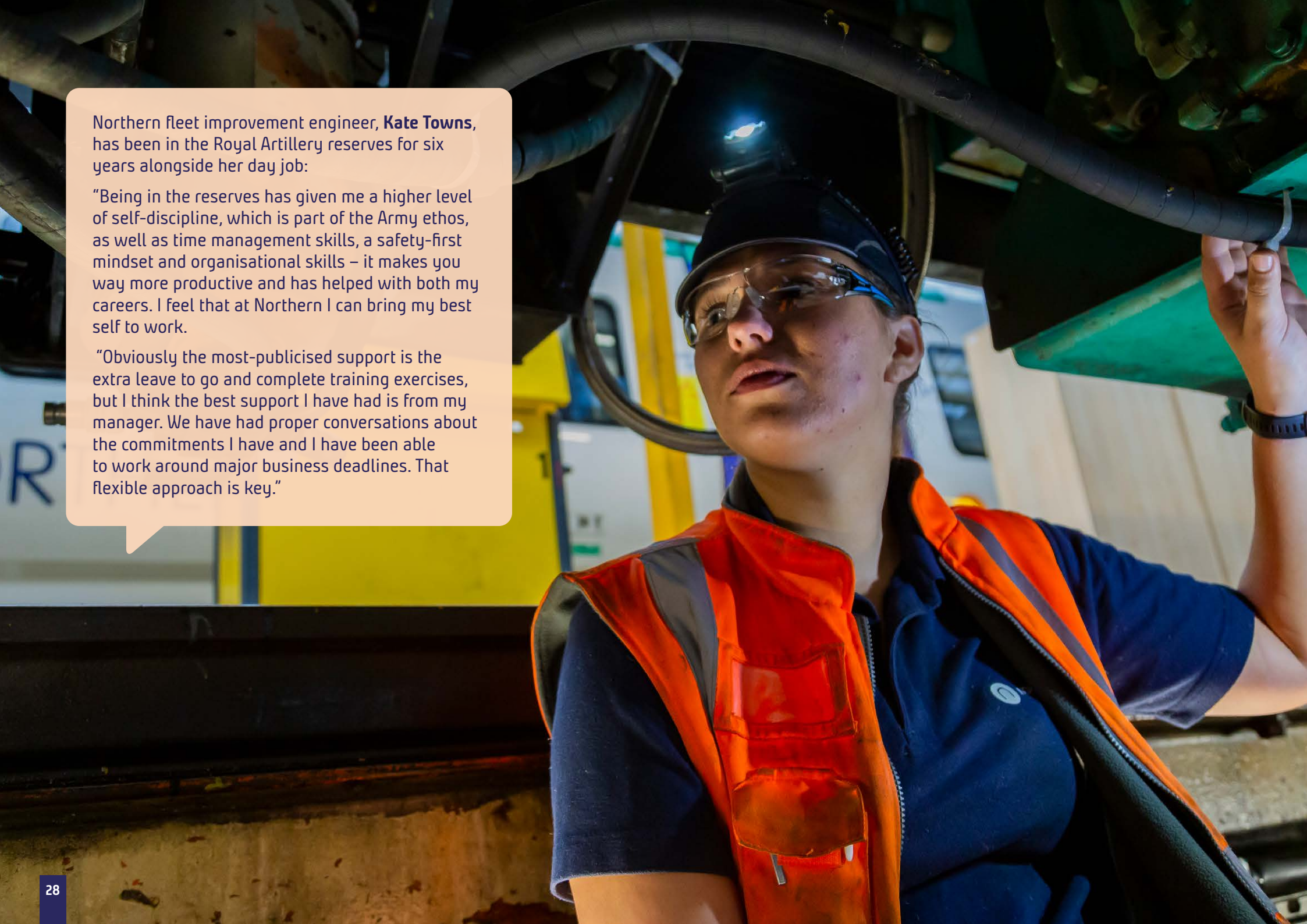
We've also had the opportunity to showcase some of our fantastic armed forces colleagues in Civvy Street magazine, showing how they've transitioned from military to civilian life and the various roles they're now in.

Our dedicated Armed Forces Group, with over 100 members, is central to helping our ex-armed forces colleagues feel at home. It's chaired by Patrick Hodgson, who joined the engineering team after 27 years in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME). The group helps ensure we meet our commitments to the Armed Forces Covenant and stay focused on our Gold Accreditation ambitions.

Signing up to the Armed Forces Covenant means we don't disadvantage armed forces personnel, current or former, through our recruitment processes; we ensure special leave is in place for reservist or cadet volunteer training and regularly promote career opportunities within Northern.

Garry Bartie is Northern's Allerton TrainCare centre manager. After serving 22 years in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) he joined Metrolink in Manchester before being invited to apply to Northern as an engineering depot supervisor at Liverpool's new facility. Garry moved onto the new trains project in 2017. He also has a Masters degree, funded by Northern.

"As veterans, we're very adaptable. We're always thinking on our feet and we've got a can-do attitude. Northern have been really supportive; they've helped develop me. What veterans are really good at is having a plan B, C or D up their sleeves and that's a really valuable commodity."



Northern fleet improvement engineer, **Kate Towns**, has been in the Royal Artillery reserves for six years alongside her day job:

“Being in the reserves has given me a higher level of self-discipline, which is part of the Army ethos, as well as time management skills, a safety-first mindset and organisational skills – it makes you way more productive and has helped with both my careers. I feel that at Northern I can bring my best self to work.

“Obviously the most-publicised support is the extra leave to go and complete training exercises, but I think the best support I have had is from my manager. We have had proper conversations about the commitments I have and I have been able to work around major business deadlines. That flexible approach is key.”

Startup Sherpas: Harnessing young people’s talents to shape the Northern of tomorrow

A ‘SuperSquad’ of talented young people is helping future-proof Northern by boosting our understanding of what the next generation wants as customers and future colleagues.

And it’s a win-win. Our 100 teenage partners from areas on our network with high levels of deprivation get paid for their efforts while building their confidence, creativity and resilience – all skills needed to shine in the workplace.

The initiative also allows us to showcase the rail industry’s broad scope of careers, building our pipeline of apprentices and encouraging future applications for all roles from office-based to customer-facing.

Run with Startup Sherpas – a social enterprise supporting young people in developing workplace skills with the confidence to innovate – the six-week programme sees young people immersing themselves in Northern. It includes looking at new ways to describe existing job roles, considering the new jobs young people want in rail and devising fresh ways to engage people in the industry.

At the time of writing this report, the ‘SuperSquad’ are still doing their thing, but there are already some valuable insights to share, illustrating the potential impact of the scheme.

- **More than six in 10 of the ‘SuperSquad’ (61.4%) have travelled with Northern, bringing already informed views.**
- **Almost one in three (30.4%) describe ticket purchasing as ‘difficult’.**
- **In week one of the programme, only 4.7% considered a career with Northern Rail – a lot of untapped potential!**
- **For 78%, it’s their first-ever paid work experience. It’s their first time going through a recruitment process and entering a professional work environment – creating a memorable stepping stone in their career journeys.**

We’re excited to see the results of this work. Watch this space!

Training & skills

From customer-facing roles to technical experts, we recognise the opportunities Northern offers. We want to support people at the start of their careers, help others get back into work and encourage our existing colleagues to achieve their ambitions. Investing in our colleagues is also an investment in Northern's future. We want to attract the brightest minds and highly skilled talent to take Northern forward.



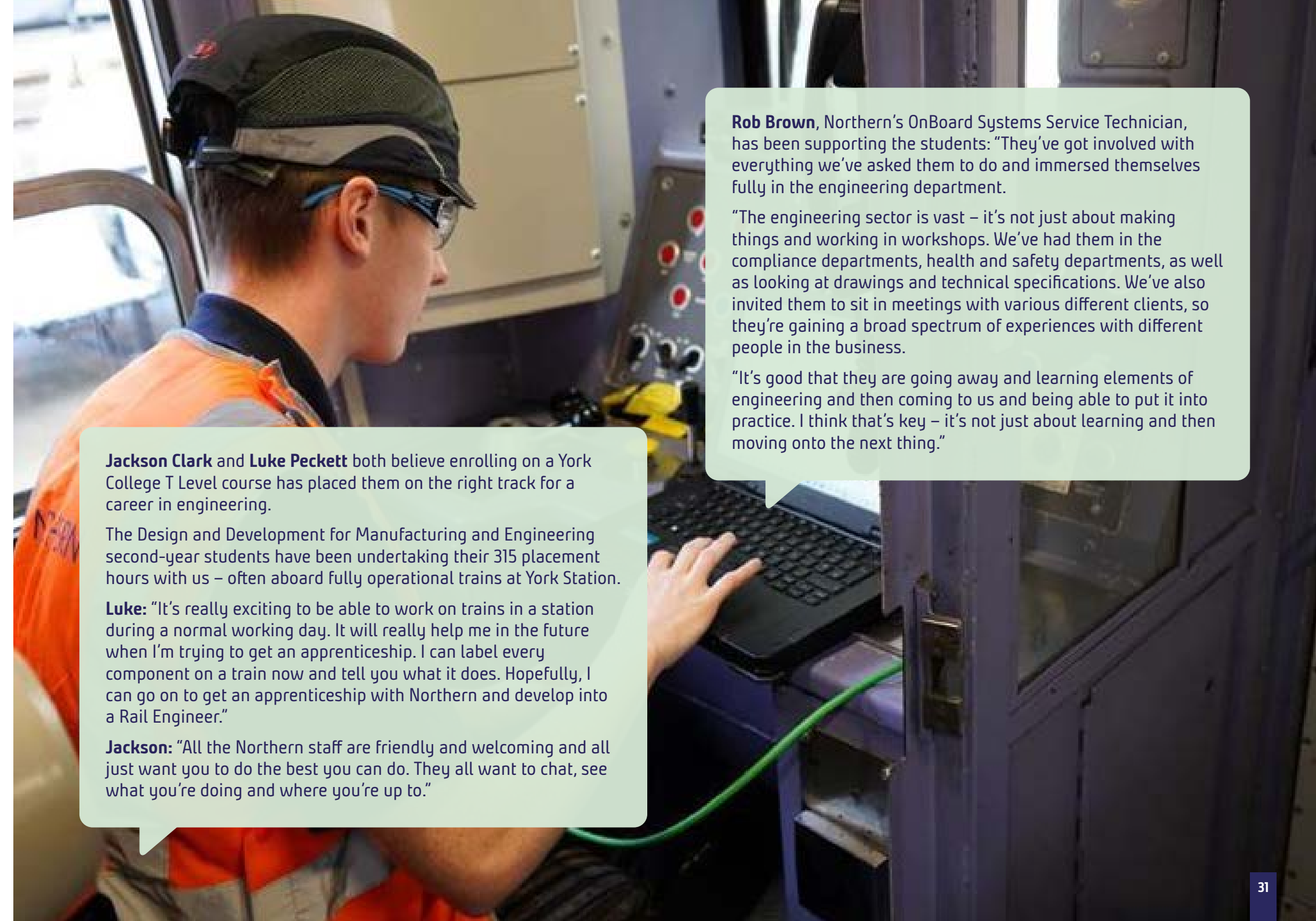
Training down to a T

Northern's Digital Onboard Systems Team has become the most popular placement for T Level engineering students at York College!

T Levels offer an alternative to A levels. They're focused on vocational skills, mixing classroom learning with industry placements, which can be hard to secure.

After an approach from York College, the systems team were keen to help with the hands-on element of the course, recognising its potential for bringing highly skilled talent into Northern. Working with our apprentice manager, Onboard Systems Service Technician Rob Brown, we developed engaging study topics and engineering opportunities.

While it's been a learning curve for Rob and the team, word about the fantastic opportunities at Northern has got around. They now have new T Level and work experience partnerships with colleges in Manchester, Tameside, Stockport and Knowsley. Two new T Level engineering students from Stockport College working at Newton Heath have also applied for the Northern Engineering Apprenticeship.



Rob Brown, Northern's OnBoard Systems Service Technician, has been supporting the students: "They've got involved with everything we've asked them to do and immersed themselves fully in the engineering department."

"The engineering sector is vast – it's not just about making things and working in workshops. We've had them in the compliance departments, health and safety departments, as well as looking at drawings and technical specifications. We've also invited them to sit in meetings with various different clients, so they're gaining a broad spectrum of experiences with different people in the business."

"It's good that they are going away and learning elements of engineering and then coming to us and being able to put it into practice. I think that's key – it's not just about learning and then moving onto the next thing."

Jackson Clark and **Luke Peckett** both believe enrolling on a York College T Level course has placed them on the right track for a career in engineering.

The Design and Development for Manufacturing and Engineering second-year students have been undertaking their 315 placement hours with us – often aboard fully operational trains at York Station.

Luke: "It's really exciting to be able to work on trains in a station during a normal working day. It will really help me in the future when I'm trying to get an apprenticeship. I can label every component on a train now and tell you what it does. Hopefully, I can go on to get an apprenticeship with Northern and develop into a Rail Engineer."

Jackson: "All the Northern staff are friendly and welcoming and all just want you to do the best you can do. They all want to chat, see what you're doing and where you're up to."



On track to rail careers

From helping customers to the hands-on work that keeps the network running, the three-week 'Get into Rail' programme has given its third cohort of out-of-work individuals in Leeds and Bradford experience in the workings of the railway and the chance of a career.

Attendees who had enrolled through the jobcentre onto the Shipley College-run programme got work experience with Northern shadowing train presentation operators, Network Rail staff and Carlisle Support Services, which employs the network's revenue protection officers.

The programme guarantees job interviews, and four attendees went on to impress. Two were offered jobs, with one candidate getting to choose between job offers from Carlisle Support Services and Network Rail. Two others got second-round interviews.

Student insights into rail futures

Working with MA Design Innovation students from Manchester Metropolitan University, Northern gained fresh insight into its vision and values and how to plan for the future of train travel.

The 'Design Futures' module challenged the students to apply their knowledge and design skills to rail. They looked at sociocultural and technological trends and spent time at Manchester Victoria station, putting themselves in the shoes of customers with different needs and priorities, such as students with limited travel budgets and wheelchair users. They also learned about the metrics through which Northern evaluates the customer experience, including performance, staff attitude and cleanliness.

The students honed their design skills, and their findings and recommendations gave Northern a new perspective. We may have our potential innovators of the future!

Supporting our people to grow

We support our colleagues in fulfilling their potential, progressing to leadership roles or becoming experts in their fields. There are no limits. Some members of our senior leadership team and directors started with us on early career paths or in entry-level roles.

Our support includes:

- **E-learning platform – allowing colleagues to develop in areas that interest them or enable them to carry out their role to the highest standard.**
- **Our network-wide training schools equipped with cutting-edge technology, including simulators, virtual reality and AI.**
- **Delivering Institute of Environmental Management (IEMA) courses and professional qualifications as an approved training school.**
- **Formal and informal mentoring.**
- **Extensive apprenticeship opportunities, from a level 2 in cleaning and environmental services to level 7 operational and managerial qualifications. Since gaining employer provider status in September 2020, we've had over 1500 colleagues enrol in apprenticeships, either as a way into Northern or to develop their careers with us. 776 colleagues have already completed their qualifications, including 337 conductors and 280 train drivers now in operational service**

Reward & recognition

Celebrating successes big and small

From a colleague going the extra mile to ensure a customer gets where they need to go or masterminding an idea that transforms how we work, our brand-new reward and recognition strategy celebrates the attitudes and actions that positively impact our colleagues, customers and communities at every level.

Our Northern Lights Colleague Recognition scheme offers different ways to receive and give thanks for great work.

WOW cards & hampers

These are our digital 'thank yous' or 'high fives'. We work in varied roles across a huge network, so we can't always say 'well done' face-to-face. We enter everyone who receives one into that month's prize draw to win a goody-filled hamper of chocolate, coffee and other treats. And for the added feel-good factor, we source them from a social enterprise that employs people who face barriers to securing work. All the contents have sustainable packaging and are sourced from other social enterprises, so the more we buy, the more impact we make!



Managers can award anyone in Northern who's sparked in their efforts to live and breathe Northern's values with a £20 Northern Sparks award. It's added to their Northern Perks account, where they can spend it with any participating retailers, already benefitting from extra discounts.



Our prestigious company awards ceremony recognises our colleagues who've gone above and beyond. We received more than 200 nominations across 12 categories for the 2025 awards. There's a chance for everyone to shine with categories including 'Unsung Hero' for colleagues who work behind the scenes but are crucial to success and 'Northern Hero' for those who've gone beyond the call of duty to save lives or keep people safe.

Our Northern Lights 2025

- 572 Wow Cards gifted
- 1017 Northern Sparks awarded, totalling £20,340
- 200+ nominees for the Northern Lights annual awards



Here are our shortlisted colleagues for the Northern Lights Awards 2025, 'Helping Hands' category. It recognises those who make a difference in our communities, contributing to social value and building connections.

Rob Brown, Onboard Systems Service Technician

Rob goes above and beyond in the community. He visits local schools to discuss the importance of railway safety, even making wooden structures for one school's playground! He's also established a relationship with York College, sharing his experiences of the railway and military to inspire students' future careers. He is passionate about attracting ex-military personnel into rail and regularly attends career fairs. You can read more about Rob's efforts on p. 30-31.

Chris Taylor and Monika Sayed, Conductor Team Managers

Monika and Chris are supporting people with special educational needs travel confidently and independently by running dedicated sessions at Manchester Piccadilly station. They introduce young people to colleagues in various roles and show where they can get help. They've grown the sessions, so there's now a team of volunteers and there are plans to roll them out across the network. You can read more about Chris and Monika's initiative on p. 41.

Pat Cox, Programme Delivery Manager

From a few bags of gifts to two sleighs full... Pat Cox's Christmas toy runs to Leeds Children's Hospital have become a major calendar event since he started them with his daughter seven years ago. Now he's got a whole host of colleagues involved, with presents donated from within Northern, from local businesses and the police – everything from Xboxes to pyjamas!

This year, Northern's festively dressed team set off with their sleighs from Leeds station, travelling with blue-light escort through the city centre to the hospital. One of the sleighs was named after Daisy Morton, a three-year-old who recently passed away. Her parents helped give out presents alongside players from several Super League and Championship sides and local firefighters.

Operational excellence

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and The Purpose Coalitions Purpose Goals linked to this section:



A smooth-running, clean network supporting everybody to get where they want to go safely and efficiently is the day-to-day operational excellence we strive for. But operational excellence is also working with partners to deliver big, strategic projects that can transform communities and people's lives.

The reopening of the Northumberland Line – Connecting people to opportunity

For the first time in 60 years, and after two decades of local campaigning, people can now travel by train between Newcastle and Ashington with the reopening of the 18-mile-long Northumberland line.

The Department for Transport, Network Rail, Northumberland County Council and Northern spent years planning and preparing to turn the freight line into a modern-day passenger railway in a project costing £298.5m.

There's been enthusiastic take-up already, with 16,000 passenger journeys in its first week of operation in mid-December and 97,000 in just the first two months.

The new Northern services are already a game-changer for many, with journeys that may have taken up to an hour and a half by car reduced to 35 minutes or less.

And it's not just about faster journey times and encouraging people out of their cars to benefit the environment, but also connecting Northumberland communities to education, work and leisure opportunities and stimulating economic growth and regeneration.

It's also a boost for tourism, making it easier for people to discover the county's historic sites, such as the National Trust's property Seaton Delaval Hall, its dramatic landscapes and friendly welcome.

Half-hourly Monday-Saturday services and hourly Sunday services now call at Newcastle, Manors, Seaton Delaval and Ashington. A single ticket costs no more than £3 and people can travel using their Nexus Pop Pay-As-You-Go cards, supporting seamless, integrated travel on public transport.

Stations at Bedlington, Blyth Bebside and Northumberland Park – which interchanges with the Tyne and Wear Metro – are due to open in 2025.

How Northern helped make the Northumberland Line happen:

- Set up integrated fares with other public transport providers for simple, seamless public transport journeys.
- Introduced a simplified single-leg pricing structure so customers can always find the cheapest fare for their journeys, with a single fare half the price of a return.
- Ran an intensive traincrew training programme for 18 conductors and 20 new Northern drivers, with plans to train 100 in total to ensure safe and efficient services on the line.

Martin Bowes was one of Northern's first conductors to complete training for operations on the Northumberland line.

"When I moved to Blyth 18 years ago, they were talking about reopening the line and a lot of people thought it would never actually happen.

"But we're about to begin running services and I feel privileged to be a part of it because it will make a massive difference to people in the area.

"It will open a lot of doors to people in places like Ashington, as they will be able to get into Newcastle in just over 30 minutes."

Safety

Keeping our colleagues and customers safe on the network is a priority. We do this in all sorts of ways, from rail safety sessions for young people to introducing innovative tech.

Our Crime Reduction Team works with Network Rail, the British Transport Police (BTP), Community Rail Partnerships and a host of other partners to give people the confidence to travel worry-free and position Northern as an industry leader in rail safety. Here are just a few of our most recent activities:

Life-saving small talk

A familiar face helping keep customers safe in and around stations in our East Region has been fronting the Samaritans' 'Small Talk Saves Lives' campaign after an encounter with a vulnerable customer potentially helped save their life.

George Mitchell, one of 60 uniformed Travel Safe Officers that security organisation Amulet provides for Northern, has been at London Kings Cross and Leeds stations, as well as sharing his story online.

The Samaritans campaign encourages us all to look out for people who may benefit from a conversation, showing how small talk or simple questions – like “Where can I get a coffee?” – can be all it takes to interrupt someone’s suicidal thoughts and set them on the path to recovery.

George was with a colleague when he noticed somebody visibly distressed. He went over, introduced himself, explained their roles and began building a rapport, assuring them they would be safe. He explained that they weren’t going anywhere and could speak to them if they wanted to. The person in need opened up about their mental health struggles.

“Having done the Samaritans’ Managing Suicidal Contacts training, it gave me the confidence to approach somebody. It also showed me there isn’t really a right or wrong thing to say. We also learned how to pass them on to British Transport Police or refer them to other services, including Samaritans.

“It’s important for people in my role to have these kinds of speaking and listening skills because we deal with the public and people see us as a go-to person to deal with situations involving vulnerable people. Doing the course, I got an understanding of how to make someone feel important and not scared.”

Travel Safety Officers (TSOs) are ‘safeguarding champions’ under Northern Trains’ safeguarding accreditation. Amulet officers also serve as representatives at safeguarding action groups.



Bus fun tackling rail risks

A 'mobile youth zone' – a converted bus complete with a PlayStation 5, VR gaming, air hockey and arts and crafts – is visiting rail stations and other public transport hubs across Greater Manchester. It offers a safe place for young people to have fun and learn about making good choices – tackling reckless, dangerous and antisocial behaviour on public transport.

Northern has joined other train and public transport operators, Network Rail and British Transport Police, in launching this pioneering education programme with Foundation 92 – a Greater Manchester charity that supports those living with additional needs or homelessness. It also supports other groups, including young people at risk of offending. It works to improve their lives through sport, education and bespoke projects.



Rail safety in the classroom

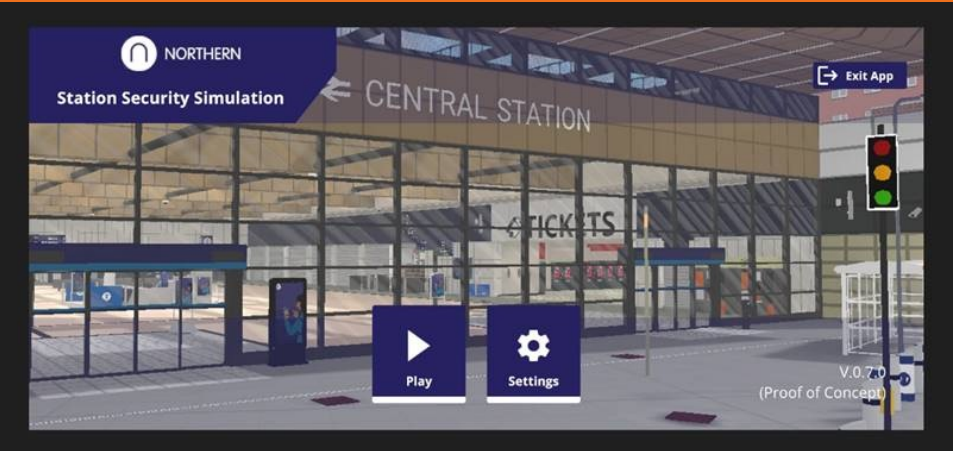
Northern is sponsoring 10 schools from the Lake District to East Yorkshire – each with significant numbers of pupils travelling to and from school by train – to receive digital, interactive 'Learn Live' rail safety materials. In the first 12 months, almost 13,500 pupils have been educated on the risks and what to do.

Virtual safety training

A new app is set to help train Northern's customer-facing colleagues, including our Travel Safe Officers contracted by Amulet, to identify potential risks and the actions they should take. It sets users on a station concourse where they have to navigate through customer enquiries, suspicious behaviours and left items.

Working with the Training Academies in Leeds and Manchester, we're now looking to include the Northern Station Security App in the security module, which all new entrants must complete.

Northern's Crime Reduction Team came up with the concept for the app, which technology experts Chrome Angel could put into production thanks to Northern's Innovation Fund. The app's available to all Northern colleagues in our Play Store.



Empowering young people to overcome travel challenges

We take great pride in creating a rail network for everybody and our inclusive approach is evidenced by the efforts of Conductor Team Managers Monika Sayed and Chris Taylor at Manchester Piccadilly station. They lead sessions for young people with special educational needs and other hidden disabilities to help them travel confidently and independently.

The interactive sessions introduce them to colleagues working in various roles to show who they can go to for help, reassuring them that they will always be happy to support them get where they need to go.

Giving young people the confidence to travel opens up a wealth of education, leisure and employment opportunities and helps them overcome isolation they may experience if they're too overwhelmed or anxious to travel.

The sessions are also our opportunity to showcase careers in rail, the skills we're looking for and the routes into those jobs – opportunities they may not know existed and ones they may be keen to pursue if we make their travel experience a positive one. We want to attract people from all backgrounds and with a range of experiences to ensure our workforce is truly representative of the communities we serve.

Monika and Chris now have a team of volunteers supporting them in running these sessions and they're working with Northern's Social Value Team to develop a structure for them to be rolled out to benefit young people across our network.

Here's to our new customers and potential future colleagues!



Innovation

At Northern, we're passionate about exploring new ways to do things, whether improving the work environment and making life easier for our colleagues or becoming safer and more efficient in all we do.

We invite anybody across our business to approach us with a work-based problem or challenge. Our innovation team then supports them in finding a solution in-house or by looking outside the business. And to help get ideas off the ground, we have a dedicated internal innovation fund to fund trials of new technology and products, commission designs, or employ suppliers or academics to undertake research.

Here are some game-changing innovation projects currently on the go:

Future Labs

We're about moving the whole rail industry forward. Using our innovation fund, Northern is part of a programme looking to solve industry-wide challenges, supporting innovative small businesses in the process.

Future Labs, incorporating the Department for Transport Operator (DFTO) train companies LNER, Northern, TransPennine Express and Southeastern, is a 12-week innovation accelerator programme introducing startups and businesses to the rail industry.

During 2024, each of the nine SME finalists – shortlisted from nearly 500 applicants – partnered with a train operator to help guide and develop their product. This mentorship enabled them to design, test and develop ideas based on key challenge areas – enhancing customer experience, improving performance and operational excellence and developing people and talent.

They then exhibited and demonstrated their ideas to a room full of rail industry professionals at 'Expo'. You can read more about one of the exciting projects we've helped support on p.49.

Carbon Co-pilot

We're keen to harness the potential of artificial intelligence to make our processes more efficient and robust. This includes the carbon emissions data we collect from our suppliers and provide to the government. We must ensure the information is as accurate as possible.

While we work with our suppliers to understand their emissions, there can be errors in what we receive. And completing forms and interpreting the data can be time-consuming and labour-intensive for all involved.

However, our new AI-driven Carbon Co-pilot forms, currently in development, could take the hassle out of the process. They can prepopulate forms with publicly available information and extract data from supplier documents. An AI assistant then supports users in analysing the information.

Active hearing protection

With moving trains and heavy machinery on the go, hearing protection is a must at our depots. However, traditional hearing protection isn't foolproof. If it's ill-fitting, it won't work as it should. It can also prevent colleagues from hearing warnings about dangerous situations.

As a result, we're trialling active hearing protection headsets. Colleagues can always hear each other as they allow voice frequencies through and the system monitors noise levels outside and inside the defenders, ensuring they are being worn correctly and are a good fit. The headsets also alert local safety managers when noise levels are abnormally high and potentially damaging.

Wearable fatigue monitors

Our colleagues often complete tasks that are safety and operationally critical. Being extremely tired or run down can affect processes and decision-making, potentially putting fellow workers and customers at risk.

To help ensure our engineers are at the top of their game, some are trialling wearable fatigue monitors in the form of a smartwatch. They monitor energy levels, giving an alert when they detect a high level of fatigue. This means we can take action before any safety or operational decisions are needed. The monitors also give us a detailed picture of fatigue levels across the team to help us identify any common factors, such as the impact of shift patterns, so that we can make changes.



Sustainable growth

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and The Purpose Coalitions Purpose Goals linked to this section:



Being sustainable is about managing environmental, economic and social resources to safeguard them for future generations. It also encompasses using resources for the collective good. From our strategy to make Northern net zero by 2050 to encouraging our suppliers to think 'social value' and monetising their commitments through our new portal, we're maximising and minimising our impact in all the right places.

Our supply chain

We want all our resources, including those through our supply chain, to drive positive outcomes for communities across our network.

Just a year into using our Social Value Portal, we're already impressed by our supply chain partners' creative commitments and their progress in delivering them. We've added contracts with a combined value of £24,000,000 to the portal and for every £1 we've spent, 33p has been committed to supporting social, economic and environmental wellbeing for those who live and work within our network.

It's clear we and our suppliers share similar visions and values. We're proud to work with purpose-driven businesses such as Carlisle Support Services that contribute to our communities. There's much we can learn from each other and achieve together.

We're always on hand to help suppliers deliver their social value commitments despite hurdles or setbacks. In the past year, we've supported one of our key suppliers by identifying unreported value and connecting them with our community partners so their fantastic initiatives could reach a bigger audience and have a greater impact. This means they'll go on to deliver way beyond their initial commitment.

Our aim is always to create opportunities where they are needed most, so we're quick to introduce supply chain partners to our Community Rail Partnerships, the Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprises (VCSEs) we support and the schools and colleges we work with.



Key activities:

- Introducing a new 'supplier social value hub' into the procurement area of our website. It helps suppliers understand social value and why it's important to us. It also demystifies the process around making a social value submission when tendering. We include case studies from us and our suppliers, large and small, and signpost to external support and resources.
- Progressing from an 'established' to a 'mature' organisation when assessed against the ISO20400 Sustainable Procurement Standard. We're progressing the recommendations following initial work with Action Sustainability in 2022. This includes undertaking a heat mapping exercise to help us prioritise the areas of highest risk and impact for sustainability in our supply chain.
- Communicating with our suppliers in anticipation of the new Procurement Act (February 2025), explaining the changes we can expect to see. This includes a new central digital platform to make finding and bidding for contracts easier. In terms of social value, a key change will be the shift in evaluation from Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT) to Most Advantageous Tender (MAT). While there is no explicit mention of social value, we're optimistic this will have a positive impact.

Mabs & Sabbir – the friendly faces of Northern’s extended family

At Northern, we aim to offer customers the best possible service ensuring their journeys are safe, comfortable and as stress-free as possible.

We expect the same from those companies we contract to support our operations, such as Carlisle Support Services, which employs our station-based revenue protection officers. We see them as part of our extended Northern family, echoing our vision and values in their own.

This year, Mabs Alom and Sabbir Choudhury, based at Saltaire Station, have been shining examples of the difference a customer focus can make.

ShIPLEY College has praised the revenue protection officers for the above-and-beyond support they’ve offered its students, many of whom have additional needs. Mabs and Sabbir know them by name and greet them enthusiastically each morning.

In particular, they commended them for the ongoing help they gave a student learning to travel independently to a work placement twice a week. The pair were on hand to remind him where he was travelling to, which travel card he needed and how to buy tickets from the machine and check departure times. They also kept him up-to-date on delays and cancellations, ensuring he boarded the right train.

They received on-the-spot £20 ‘Core of Carlisle’ vouchers, and the College nominated them for the company’s ‘Superstars’ awards. Managers at Carlisle were so proud they also nominated Mabs and Sabbir for the national RailStaff Awards.



Energy & environment

We're committed to reducing our impact on the environment and positively enhancing it, such as boosting biodiversity at our stations.

Our aim to be net zero by 2050 remains ambitious, but our collective commitment to achieve it keeps it within reach. By nature, much of our work in this area is cross-industry or a partnership effort, such as improving the air quality at our stations, which are served by multiple train operators, or decarbonising internally and across our supply chain.

Key activities and achievements:

- Working with procurement to ensure suppliers' commitments to decarbonise are highlighted in the tender process, reflecting our ambitions. This is alongside our commitment to support SMEs in making changes to decarbonise their business practices, as we recognise they may not have the expertise or resources to do it independently.
- Updating how we undertake a carbon footprint audit, ensuring transparency and using modern methodologies. We're collaborating internally and with other train operators to ensure consistency and to share learnings.
- Developing a green and social washing policy and framework so people can have confidence in Northern's environmental and social commitments and our achievements. It sets standards and guidelines for marketing, communications and reporting to ensure we communicate our sustainable claims transparently, truthfully, and responsibly.
- Buxton becoming the first of six pilot stations on our network to get a site-specific 'biodiversity makeover.' This has included introducing native wildflowers and pollinator-friendly species to support the local bilberry bee population. It's based on habitat surveys using Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping led by conservation charity Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. Biodiversity schemes will be introduced at Bolton, Harrogate, St Helen's Central and Worksop next, with the learnings shaping future biodiversity activity across the network.
- Developing a revised noise policy and complaint process recognising the negative impact our operations can have on people in our communities. We're also improving how we collate, analyse and map noise complaints to deal with them more efficiently.
- Improving recycling performance, hitting the 70% target in some individual reporting periods. However, 2025-26 will see a shift in focus from what we recycle to the materials we send to landfill or incinerate. This new circular economy target focuses on reducing waste and reusing materials.
- Working to improve air quality at Manchester Victoria station by trialling changes to the local extraction system. Monitoring suggests that the high numbers of early morning trains starting their journeys there contribute to elevated levels of Nitrogen Dioxide.

Treeva: A fresh take on turbine power generation

We've been working with Treeva, one of this year's Future Lab companies (See p.42), to understand how its idea for generating energy onsite could help power our infrastructure, reduce our carbon footprint and cut energy costs.

Treeva is pioneering the development of turbines that rotate from the airflow of passing transport, generating energy reliably and predictably... in line with the train timetable! We're now looking into the feasibility of installing them at trackside locations, such as Northern stations and within the boundaries of our TrainCare Centres.

Treeva was one of nine tech startup finalists showcasing its groundbreaking ideas to rail industry leaders at the Future Labs Expo and just one of two to receive special recognition. The SME won an audience vote to be named 'People's Choice'.



Our Carbon footprint

When measuring our carbon footprint, we consider greenhouse gas emissions as part of Northern’s operations (Scope 1), from the energy we use to operate (Scope 2) and emissions emitted indirectly from services and products that support our operations (Scope 3).

Our carbon footprint is developed according to the GHG Protocol Corporate Standard and is independently audited every year to ISO14064 standard.

In 2023-24:

- **Our Scope 3 emissions reduced by 15% compared with the previous year.**

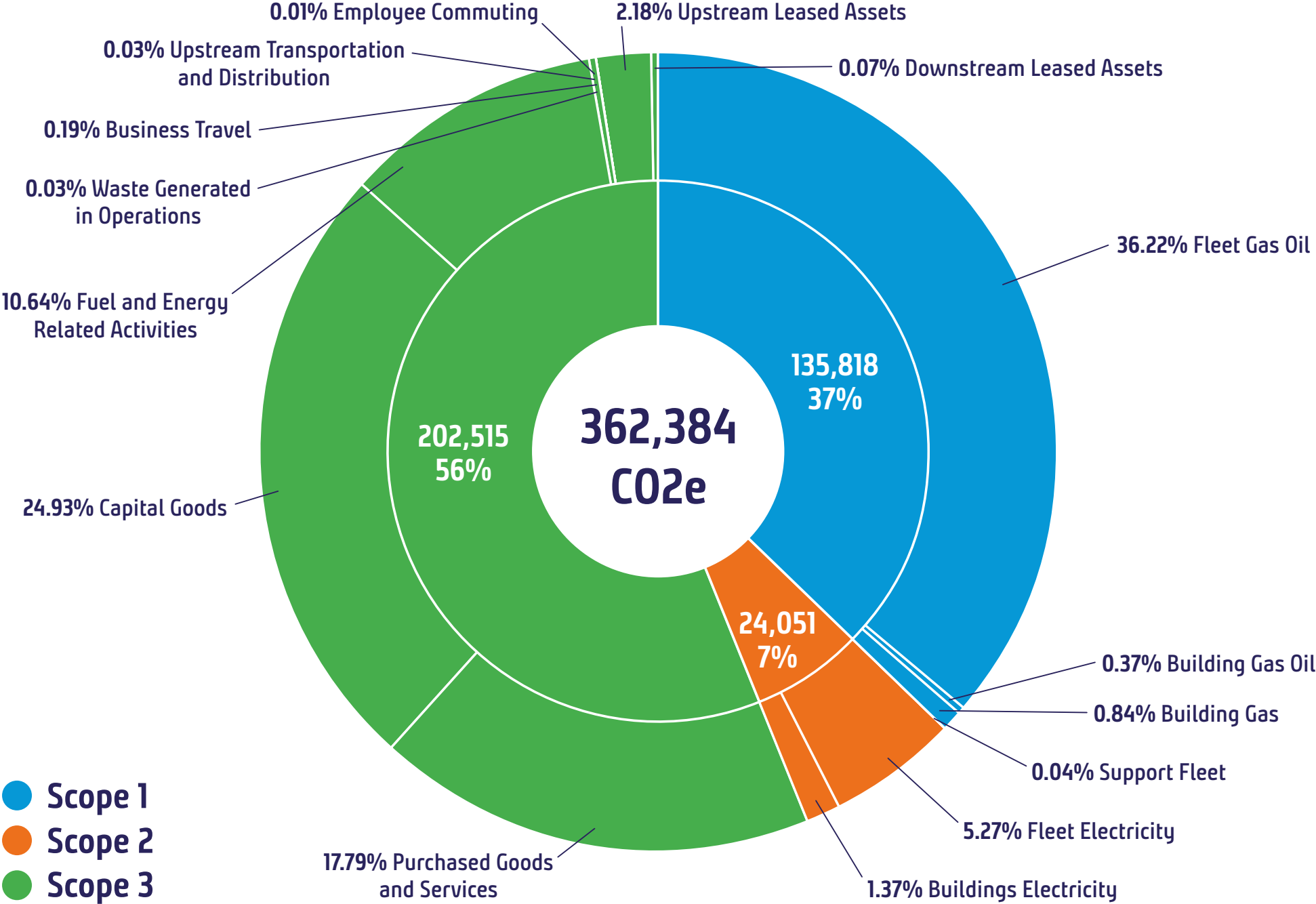
This is mainly due to our Environment Team working with colleagues in finance and procurement and the DFTO Operator group on Northern’s Carbon Data Improvement project to boost accuracy and transparency in emissions reporting. The project has impacted our overall carbon footprint accounting, resulting in emissions 6% lower than the previous year. We will either apply these improvements to our previous carbon footprints to understand the actual change or produce a new baseline so we can make accurate comparisons in future reports.

- **Our Scope 1 emissions increased by 7% and Scope 2 by 20% compared with the previous year. This can be explained by:**
 - **Fleet emissions** – our electric trains covered 3% more miles and our diesel trains 7% more. However, this increased mileage supported more customer journeys.
 - **Building-related emissions** – introducing new facilities at our TrainCare Centres and substations. However, they have given us the capacity to manage and maintain more trains.

Our fleet emissions account for a large proportion of our carbon footprint. And as the proportion of electric trains within our fleet is small, any slight increase in mileage can significantly impact our Scope 2 emissions. This is in addition to the new facilities at our TrainCare Centres.



- Scope 1
- Scope 2
- Scope 3



Conclusion

This report always serves as an important reminder of how much Northern can offer the communities it serves – above and beyond getting people from A-to-B. It's about ensuring there's connection, community, and purpose in everything we do, harnessing the enthusiasm and expertise of our thousands of colleagues to make a positive impact across the North.

Our focus on Environmental and Social Governance (ESG) is becoming the golden thread. It's leading to radical collaboration within the business and with a diverse range of external partners, moving us towards a place-led approach. To ensure we achieve this, we will undertake a detailed local needs analysis across our network and use the invaluable insight that comes from our broad range of Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) partnerships.

Our priorities for the year ahead are:

- **Reviewing how we measure and report social value, with greater alignment between environmental and social sustainability reporting.**
- **Building on our procurement success – refreshing our measurement metrics, offering suppliers more support and ensuring our contract managers can help suppliers deliver on their commitments.**
- **Piloting our own education outreach programmes to bring STEM careers to life, raise young people's aspirations – particularly those from disadvantaged areas – and showcase rail career opportunities open to everyone regardless of gender or background.**
- **Strengthening our environmental and social governance through business processes, ensuring that 'purpose' is at the heart of decision-making.**

As we move into the new reporting year, we're already looking at how to respond to local challenges in exciting new ways. We're moving into a new phase of creating social impact, encouraging ourselves to do more and differently. We will learn from our challenges as much as our successes. And we remain committed to being transparent about what we achieve and where we can do better, effectively using our reach, people and resources to benefit the North.



