

# TRU Sustainable Development Report 2025





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# 1. An introduction from our Managing Director, James Richardson



“As we open this year’s TRU Annual Sustainable Development Report, I’m proud to reflect on the incredible progress we’ve made together across the Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU). Guided by our Sustainable Development Strategy, Our Guiding Compass, the TRU Enterprise has continued to embed long-term thinking into every aspect of our programme – delivering real, measurable benefits for our customers, developing local skills and opportunities in the communities we’re impacting, and boosting the broader economy of the North.

Over the past year, we’ve seen the power of collaboration in action. From engineers and ecologists to local authorities, communities and train operating partners, all coming together. Our shared commitment has driven forward a more sustainable, inclusive and resilient railway.

We’ve made great strides in identifying viable biodiversity net gain on the ground, electrifying lines, launching our first Community Fund and introducing our first low carbon, sustainable composite sleepers.

We’re also deepening our enterprise-wide collaboration to respond to local and regional priorities, enhance customer experience and decrease disruption on the railway.

And we know we’re just getting started. With the passion and dedication of our people, and the clarity of our shared vision, I’m confident we’ll continue to deliver a railway that works for everyone, now and for generations to come.

TRU is increasingly being recognised as the forerunner of GB Rail – setting the standard for how future programmes can embed sustainability and social value at their core.

Thank you for being part of this journey.”

**James Richardson**  
Managing Director,  
Transpennine Route Upgrade





## 2. How Our Guiding Compass is driving a more sustainable railway

We launched 'Our Guiding Compass', TRU's Sustainable Development strategy in 2023 to challenge our programme to integrate best-in-class sustainability principles, building on our previous 2019 Strategy. It comprises four strategic pillars that guide sustainable development for TRU. These pillars steer our approach towards serving our customers, communities and environment, ensuring progress towards a better and more sustainable future.

As TRU moves further into delivery, sustainability is becoming increasingly embedded across all areas of the programme. We continue to monitor progress against Our Guiding Compass, deepen our sustainability culture and apply verified standards and continuous improvement to ensure we deliver measurable outcomes and long-term value.

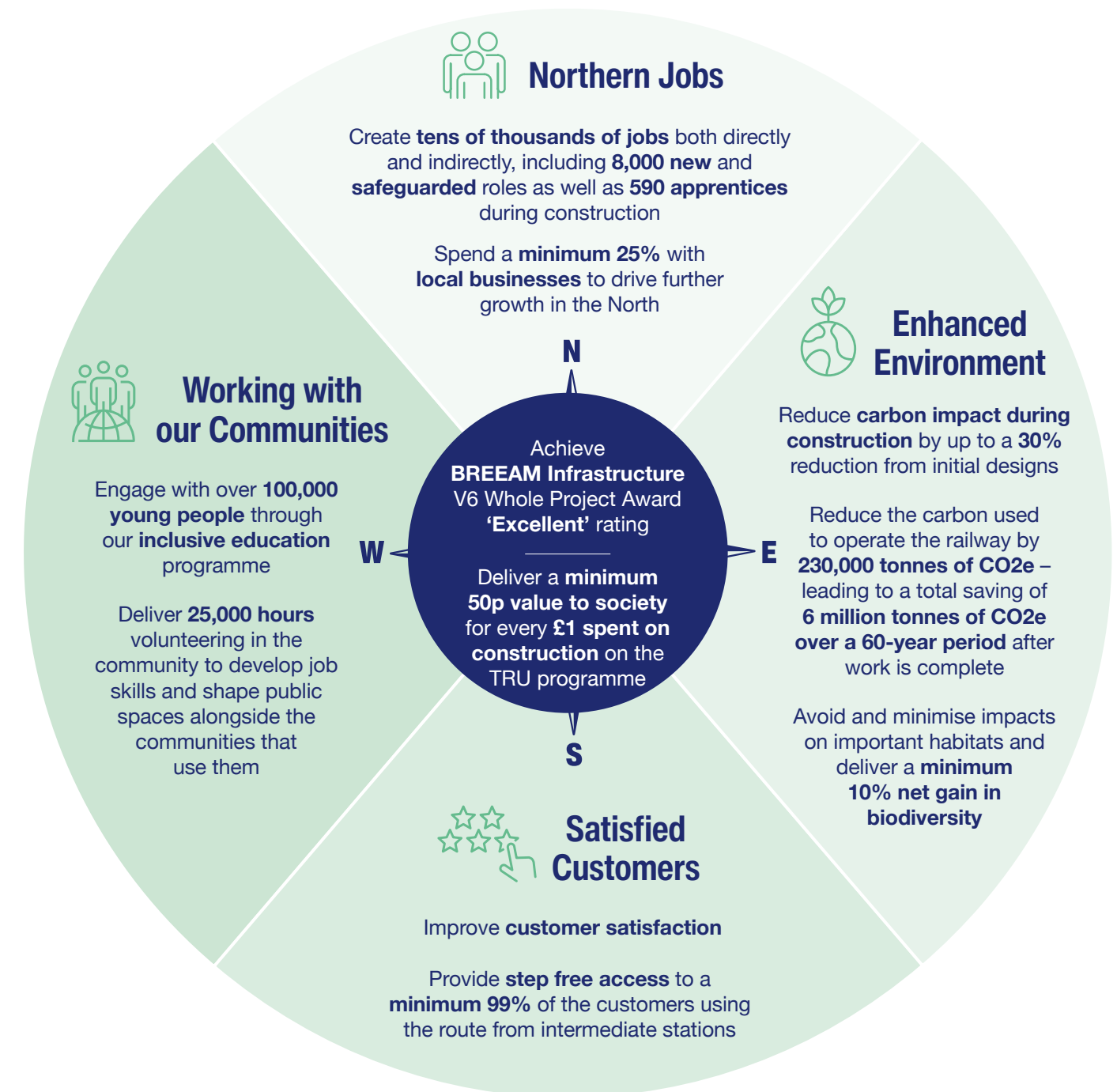
This report outlines our progress to date, highlights areas of innovation and collaboration, and sets out the next steps in delivering a truly sustainable railway.

This report summarises our work in driving sustainable development from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.



Manchester Victoria station

### Our Guiding Compass key 2035 sustainability objectives





# 3. On track to deliver our key objectives

The four pillars of ‘Our Guiding Compass’ have been carefully selected to help realise two key overarching objectives across the programme: achieving a BREEAM Infrastructure ‘Excellent’ rating and robustly measuring our social value impact.



## 3.1 Achieve a BREEAM Infrastructure ‘Excellent’ rating across our programme

### Our achievements:



Achieved ‘**Excellent**’ rating for project E1 (York to Church Fenton) Strategy Stage Assessment as part of a Whole Project Award (79.46%)



Achieved scores of **100%** in the ‘Resilience’ and ‘Communities and Stakeholders’ assessment categories



Tracking individual **Strategy Stage Assessment** scores reveals steady BREEAM Infrastructure improvement, driven by continuous learning at each assessment

We continue to utilise **BREEAM** (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method) Infrastructure to drive, assure and measure sustainability on TRU. BREEAM Infrastructure is an industry-leading independent evidence-based sustainability assessment, rating and awards scheme for civil engineering, infrastructure, landscaping and public realm projects. We have built and continue to maintain a strong working relationship with BRE, helping to ensure consistent interpretation of the assessment criteria to be able to develop high quality assessments.

Our BREEAM Infrastructure journey reached a major milestone this year with the **successful completion of key assessment stages and verified results**, tracking progress toward the prestigious Whole Project Award. The formal ‘Excellent’ rating ( $\geq 75\%$ ) was awarded to project E1 (York to Church Fenton) with a score of 79.46% for the Strategy Stage Assessment submission. The Strategy Stage Assessment has been submitted for project E2–4 (Leeds to Church Fenton) and the first Design Stage Assessments commenced in detail for projects E1 (York to Church Fenton) and W1/2a (Manchester Victoria to Stalybridge).

Together, these efforts showcase the strength of TRU’s sustainability processes, embedding resilience, environmental management and sustainability assurance into every stage of delivery, as well as demonstrating our clear and measurable commitment to sustainability across the programme.



TRU’s official certificate for the E1 Strategy Stage Assessment



## 3.2 Deliver 50p of value to society for every £1 spent

### Our achievements:

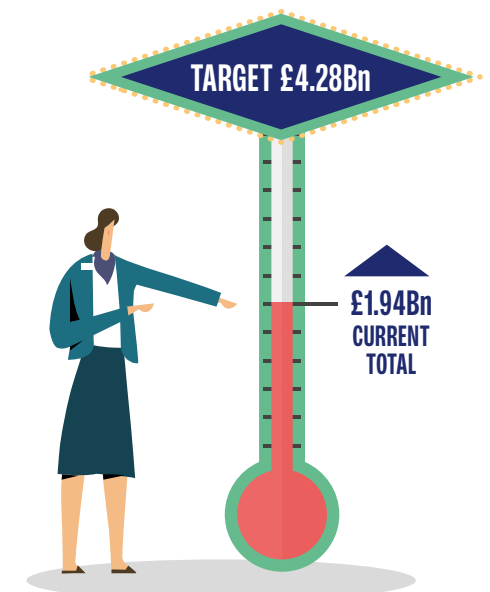


This year, TRU has delivered social value that will generate **£446.7 Million** of value to society



TRU has delivered **59p of social value for every £1** spent on construction this year, surpassing our target by 18%

TRU generated around **£446.7M** of social value this year, taking our **total social value generation overall to £1.94Bn** since 2019. These calculations are derived through the **Rail Social Value Tool (RSVT)**, which was developed by Network Rail and The Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) with the support of TRU. We use the original RSVT methodology to specifically monitor and independently measure the social value of rail projects. This tool, along with our innovative mapping software, allows TRU to assess the impacts of our sustainability activities based on where they are occurring whilst also making informed strategic decisions to maximise our impact and ensure we offer positive societal return on the investment of TRU.





## 4. We're creating thousands of roles in the North



### 4.1 Creating more jobs, opportunities and skills for local people

#### Our achievements:



**3,917 work experience days** for both young people and adults this year



**99 Apprentices and 39 Graduates** employed this year, including launch of the rail industry's first ever shared apprenticeship scheme, PlanBEE



**2,941 placement days** for this year's interns and year-in-industry students



TRU is unlocking long-term economic growth across the North by improving connectivity, boosting productivity and supporting job creation both within the programme and across the wider region.

We continue to generate significant employment by actively supporting new entrants into the rail industry through apprenticeships, placements and training. At the same time, we're working to ensure our workforce reflects the diversity of the communities we serve. One example this year is our targeted graduate recruitment through the **Institution of Civil Engineering (ICE) Quest scholarship programme**, which supports high-performing civil engineering students, regardless of background, to gain industry experience and progress into long-term careers.

TRU remains dedicated to fostering regional Northern growth through local employment. A key example is our collaboration with the **National Skills Academy for Rail (NSAR)** where we've modelled the types of jobs required and identified local skills gaps to help local people integrate into the programme. We also continue to work closely with local authorities to plan for future workforce skill development.

We're also generating supply chain opportunities along the North Transpennine corridor by working with local businesses, large and small, to build a stronger, more resilient regional economy and leave a legacy of inclusive growth.



Our PlanBEE Cohort with key TRU colleagues

In September 2024, TRU played a key role in developing and launching **PlanBEE Rail**, the industry's first sector-wide shared higher apprenticeship programme. Inspired by the Built Environment Education model (BEE), it's designed to nurture the next generation of multi-disciplinary project managers for Britain's railway. Created in partnership with Network Rail, Gateshead College, NSAR, and a consortium of 12 organisations including Amey, BAM, Murphy, Systra, VolkerRail, TransPennine Express (TPE) and others, this Enterprise-wide programme introduces a unique model of shared apprenticeship delivery across the sector.

Fifteen apprentices began their journey in York, with eleven completing TRU project placements through their sponsor organisations. Over the course of their placement, participants will complete four six-month rotations with different employers, gaining hands-on experience across the full project lifecycle, from design and development to delivery and close-out. Alongside this, apprentices also study one day per week towards a Level 4 Associate Project Manager Higher Apprenticeship.

TRU is proud to be a founding partner of this pioneering programme, which supports our commitment to creating high-quality Northern-based jobs, attracting new talent into the rail industry and building a more diverse, skilled workforce. Looking ahead, we hope to expand PlanBEE Rail across more areas of our programme, helping to embed long-term skills and capability across the rail industry.

PlanBEE Rail is already demonstrating impact. **Leah Allen**, one of our TRU Apprentices, was recently recognised at Gateshead College's prestigious **Edge Awards**, one of only eleven winners out of one thousand. Leah was nominated for her initiative, adaptability and willingness to take on new challenges, exemplifying the spirit of the programme.



David Bassett (TRU Apprentice & Graduate Programme Manager) and Leah Allen (TRU Apprentice) receiving the Edge Award from a Gateshead College representative





Launch of the Skills Hub

**Ellie Lawrence**, a Human Geography student at the University of Leeds, recently completed a total of 12 months TRU work experience as a Year-in-Industry student. Part-way through her placement, Ellie transitioned to one of our Sustainability teams as a Social Value Advisor and quickly became a driving force for our community engagement and social value delivery programme. She built strong relationships with schools and charities along the route, including Oldham Library, The Anthony Seddon Fund, Willow Wood Hospice and several primary and secondary schools, helping to create meaningful volunteering opportunities and long-term strategic partnerships. Her creativity shone through at Mossley Hollins High School, where she developed interactive careers resources to spark conversations about future pathways.

Over the last year, we've worked closely with Flannery Plant Hire and Kirklees College to establish a cutting-edge training facility focused on machinery operations. This partnership responds to the growing need for a skilled, local workforce across the construction industry. In March 2025, the Skills Hub was launched in March 2025 to mark the commencement of training activities and commemorate the significant partnership milestone. The Skills Hub has already commenced delivering Skills Bootcamps in plant operations, providing intensive, hands-on training to equip participants with the necessary skills to operate plant machinery safely and efficiently.



Ellie Lawrence at a careers event at Mossley Hollins High School



Alfie Gallagher working alongside Senior Engineer, Mark Page

**Alfie Gallagher**, a T-Level student from Barnsley College, recently completed a 45-day industry placement as part of his Construction in the Built Environment academic course studies. TRU hosted a unique opportunity working closely with Senior Engineer, Mark Page, to gain hands-on experience across many live construction environments and multidisciplinary team working. Alfie developed practical skills and gained confidence using industry-standard tools and equipment, and his experience has proved to be a valuable stepping stone in his journey towards a future career in construction. TRU is proud to support the next generation of construction professionals through meaningful placements like Alfie's, helping to build the future workforce of the UK's infrastructure sector.



## 4.2 Spending more money with small and local businesses

### Our achievements:



**69% of spend** outside of TRU's core delivery partners to local suppliers within 25 miles of the route this year



**Local spend** totalling **£706.5 Million** to date



**37% of spend** outside of TRU's core delivery partners to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) this year



**SME spend** totalling **£323.4 Million** to date

New COWAP site at Dewsbury in development



Supporting local businesses is a key part of TRU's commitment to delivering long-term, sustainable economic value across the North. By prioritising supply chain activity within a **25-mile radius** of the route, we are helping to stimulate local economies, create jobs and build regional resilience. Local supply chain spending has a recognised multiplier effect, where every £1 spent generates broader economic impact through increased employment, business growth and reinvestment in local services. By building a network of trusted local suppliers, TRU is helping to foster a more inclusive and sustainable regional economy.

Working with **Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)** is central to this approach. SMEs bring agility, innovation and deep local knowledge, making them vital partners in delivering a complex, multi-year infrastructure programme like TRU. Their involvement not only strengthens our supply chain but also ensures that the benefits of investment are felt more widely across communities. As we scale up delivery, we will continue to expand opportunities for SMEs to ensure they play a meaningful role in shaping the future of rail in the North.

A stand-out example of TRU's commitment to SME engagement and growth is our supplier partnership with **COWAP**, an SME that has experienced significant expansion working with the TRU programme. Over the past five years, COWAP has calculated that their TRU-related business revenues have increased by 50%, enabling investment in a new fabrication workshop in Manchester and a new site in Dewsbury.

To support TRU delivery, COWAP has invested in specialist workshop machinery, plant equipment and heavy goods vehicles, while also focusing on continuous improvement through enhanced quality systems and industry-recognised accreditations, such as ISO 9001. COWAP has calculated that this has led to an 80% growth increase in staffing over five years, alongside meaningful investment in workforce development.

COWAP's values closely align with TRU's own. As partners of the Welcome Centre in Huddersfield, they've helped provide meals to 6,500 people in crisis, including 2,600 children under 16 years old. They also share our safety commitments through active participation in the Rail Safe Friendly Programme, co-selecting schools to work with to promote rail safety education.

This partnership exemplifies how TRU's approach to inclusive procurement and local investment can drive sustainable business growth, community impact and shared value across the supply chain.

### Key Challenge

While we're currently on track to meet our 33% SME spend target, performance varies across the route, with some parts under-performing. To improve our route-wide performance, we're introducing new reporting procedures to help identify suitable opportunities and are actively engaging with new SMEs to strengthen our supply chain and create more inclusive access to work across the route.



## 5. We're enhancing the natural environment

TRU will electrify the whole route to enable more sustainable trains to run. This year, we electrified the line between Manchester Victoria and Stalybridge, enabling bi-modal trains to operate in electric mode instead of diesel for the first time. Our bi-modal trains will reduce carbon emissions, noise levels and air pollution by operating via electricity along the route.

We will continue to reduce environmental harm by considering the impacts that construction and infrastructure delivery has on our environmental footprint. That's why we're actively reducing construction-related emissions through low-carbon design, circular economy principles and responsible sourcing.

This year, our team received a prestigious **Safety and Health Environment Leadership Team (SHELT) award** from Network Rail, recognising our innovative Environmental Performance Index (EPI) under the "Supplier Management" category.

EPI enables us to systematically measure, monitor and manage environmental performance across programme delivery. Aligned with the principles of 'Our Guiding Compass', the EPI ensures continuous improvement and progressive environmental stewardship. Through regular evaluation and data-driven insights, TRU is empowered to make informed decisions that enhance environmental outcomes and contribute to long-term sustainability goals.



TRU Environment Manager, Alex Peters, accepting the SHELT award on behalf of the programme



### 5.1 Reducing our carbon footprint

#### Our achievements:



Currently on course to achieve a **12% carbon reduction in construction** – meeting our minimum carbon reduction target



**Electrified the line** between Manchester Victoria and Stalybridge, enabling bi-modal trains to operate on electric power, delivering carbon savings



Introduced the **first sustainable composite sleepers** at the Osmondthorpe Lane railway bridge, reducing associated embodied carbon by **70%**



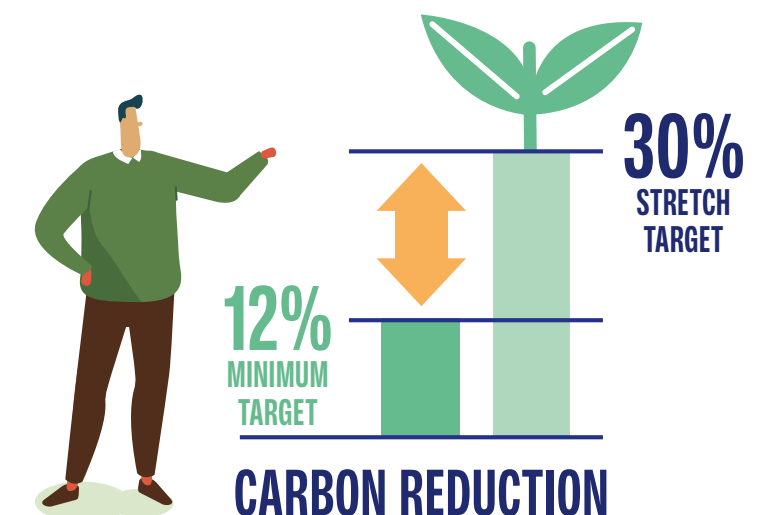
Re-use of track and concrete sleepers at Healey Mills Depot has delivered a **16.5% cut in carbon emissions**

TRU is committed to **reducing operational carbon emissions** in line with national Net Zero targets and our own objectives. Operational carbon refers to emissions generated during the ongoing use of the railway, such as powering trains, stations and supporting infrastructure.

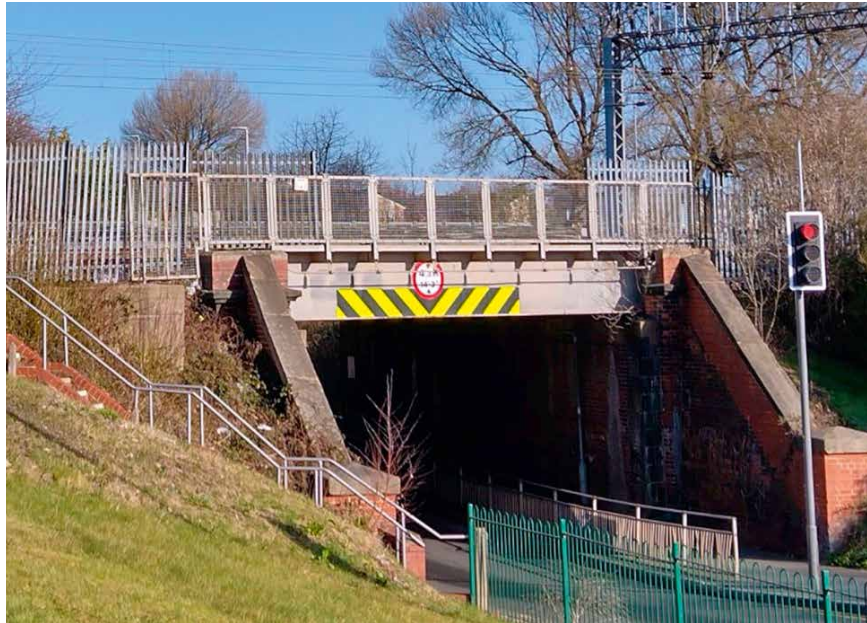
The transition from diesel to electric as a power source is central to this effort and a strong step toward decarbonising rail travel in the North. Electrification will significantly reduce operational carbon emissions, while also improving air quality and reducing noise for communities along the route. The newly electrified section between Manchester Victoria and Stalybridge already enables faster and more frequent services, delivering both environmental and performance benefits.

We recognise that infrastructure delivery also carries a carbon cost. To address this, we are encouraging low-carbon design, applying circular economy principles and responsibly sourcing materials. Whole Life Carbon assessments are now being completed across the programme to ensure emissions are tracked, managed and reduced throughout the programme lifecycle.

Current tracking shows that TRU is projected to **achieve our minimum construction carbon reduction target of 12%** by completion of the programme. This figure will continue to evolve as more projects come online, as the carbon baseline is refined and projects continue to make carbon reductions. Our approach supports not only a cleaner railway, but also healthier communities across the region.







Concrete deck replacement at Osmondthorpe Lane railway bridge



Winning the ICE Smeaton Award for the Osmondthorpe Lane Bridge Replacement

Capital carbon (the overall carbon emissions associated with the creation of an asset) represents a significant portion of TRU's overall carbon footprint, stemming from the materials used and the construction activities required to deliver the railway. Reducing capital carbon not only lowers greenhouse gas emissions but also encourages lean engineering by minimising materials, shortening build times and lowering dust, noise and air pollution. This also strengthens the local economy by prioritising the procurement of materials, equipment and labour closer to site, helping to reduce transport emissions and support more sustainable delivery.

Our TRU team identified an opportunity to optimise the specification track renewal between Manchester and Stalybridge. By refining the design, they reduced the extent and scope of track renewals from 12.5km to 8.6km, resulting in a **carbon saving of 1,281 tCO<sub>2</sub>e**. This outcome aligns with the 'Avoid' principle of the Carbon Management Hierarchy outlined in PAS 2080, the industry standard for managing carbon in infrastructure. It also demonstrates the value of applying circular economy strategies, such as reducing, reusing and refurbishing, early in the design process to minimise whole-life carbon impacts.

This year, our Leeds to York team introduced the first sustainable composite sleepers on the TRU route. These sleepers were installed as part of the replacement of the 300-tonne concrete deck

at **Osmondthorpe Lane railway bridge**.

Like the newer lower carbon concrete sleepers, the composite sleepers offer a lower carbon footprint and have the added benefit of being lighter, making them an ideal choice for this bridge upgrade. This innovation was recognised in December 2024 with the ICE's prestigious Smeaton Award. The judges commended our sustainability approach and celebrated the community engagement to minimise disruption for nearby residents.

The 155 new sustainable composite sleepers are manufactured by Sicut, an SME who use recycled plastic waste, providing a lighter, more sustainable and efficient alternative with longer service life span to traditional timber sleepers. This innovation enhances the reliability of the railway, allowing faster and heavier trains to run into the future. Additional benefits included safer and faster installation due to lower weight and more durable material. Our efforts are underpinned by strengthened governance, improved data quality, and consistent reporting across the programme, ensuring a robust and auditable approach to carbon management.

We also remain committed to eliminating unnecessary construction waste. By year-end, the programme exceeded its target for reusing or recycling waste before incineration or energy capture by 7% and successfully diverting 98.9% of waste to landfill.

One notable example of eliminating unnecessary waste this year was the successful re-use of 3,000m of track and concrete sleepers and steel rail tracks from the core route for use at Healy Mills depot. Through cross-project collaboration, our teams **repurposed concrete sleepers and rail tracks** from the core route for use at Healy Mills

SCO depot. Quality assessments indicated these materials needed replacing to support faster and more frequent trains. We were able to reuse them at Healy Mills depot which has stationary or slow-moving trains. This reuse strategy led to a 16.5% reduction in carbon emissions compared to the baseline.



### Key Challenge

We created the TRU Carbon Fund to help drive carbon reduction of construction beyond the programme minimum target of 12% towards the programme stretch target of 30% reduction. However, due to the fast-paced and constantly evolving nature of a major programme like TRU, it's been challenging to respond to and support emerging opportunities within tight timescales. To address this, we're streamlining our existing process to make funding more accessible, enabling quicker support for new carbon reduction interventions.



## 5.2 Championing Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity Net Gain is a core commitment within Our Guiding Compass, aiming to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than before construction began. We have set an ambitious target of **delivering at least 10% BNG** across the programme. This means assessing the biodiversity value of sites before works begin and then enhancing or creating new habitats to ensure a net positive outcome. Our approach prioritises

avoiding or minimising impacts to important habitats, followed by targeted habitat creation and enhancement. To guide this process, we've developed a BNG hierarchy that informs decision-making throughout design and construction. Wherever possible, biodiversity improvements are delivered close to the areas impacted to support local ecosystems and provide visible benefits to nearby communities.



This year, we've developed a programme-wide BNG Plan that outlines key focus areas at every stage of the programme's design, helping to integrate biodiversity into decision making throughout the design process. Delivering BNG on TRU will contribute to nature recovery by shifting mindsets away from mitigation and compensation, towards betterment from the outset. This plan is anticipated to set a **new standard for future Network Rail projects nationwide**.

A total of eight biodiversity gain sites have been in development this year, each with long-term management and monitoring plans to enhance habitat value. Our expectation is to **triple or quadruple** this number by project completion. We're currently progressing detailed plans for four of these sites and aim to start the habitat creation and management later this year in winter. The other four sites have the potential to be further developed by TRU at a later stage or used for other Network Rail requirements.

Our Manchester to Leeds team has designed and developed a long-term habitat management plan for the 4 Ha woodland at Fairfield station. This site is likely to be the **first on Network Rail's estate with formal 30-year management commitments for biodiversity**.

Our Leeds to York team has embedded biodiversity into early-stage planning, avoiding unnecessary habitat loss at Church Fenton, Manston Lane and Wykebeck, collectively saving over 4.5 BNG units.

We've also been exploring a flagship biodiversity site opportunity at Healey Mills depot, with the potential to create an open mosaic habitat. If this site is successfully delivered, it is likely to support nationally rare invertebrates including an assemblage of butterfly and moth species. It is also hoped that the site will be made accessible to the general public to enable the delivery of additional community benefits.



### Key Challenge

We're aiming to deliver the majority of our 10% biodiversity gain on non-operational Network Rail estate. As the first major rail project to deliver BNG using existing Network Rail land, we've overcome a range of challenges to successfully deliver outcomes on the ground.

BNG creates new biodiversity assets that must be managed and monitored over a 30-year period. To ensure long-term success, our habitat designers are working closely with Network Rail (the asset owner) to agree the design, funding, resourcing and handover process. This requires new tools, processes and procedures, which have been developed as part of Network Rail's Biodiversity Delivery Model. Once implemented this model will provide a blueprint for future Network Rail projects to deliver BNG across its estate.

### Our achievements:



Progressing **four** of the **eight identified biodiversity gain sites** this year



**4.5 biodiversity units** embedded this year into early-stage planning to avoid habitat loss at Church Fenton, Manston Lane and Wykebeck



Formal **biodiversity commitments** likely to be delivered at Fairfield station in the near future – anticipated to be the first on **Network Rail estate**



Further developed programme-wide **Biodiversity Net Gain Plan**, positioned for national Network Rail adoption



Successful engagement with **Leeds City Council** to improve biodiversity in woodlands

## 6. We're improving the customer experience



### 6.1 Improving customer satisfaction

#### Our achievements:

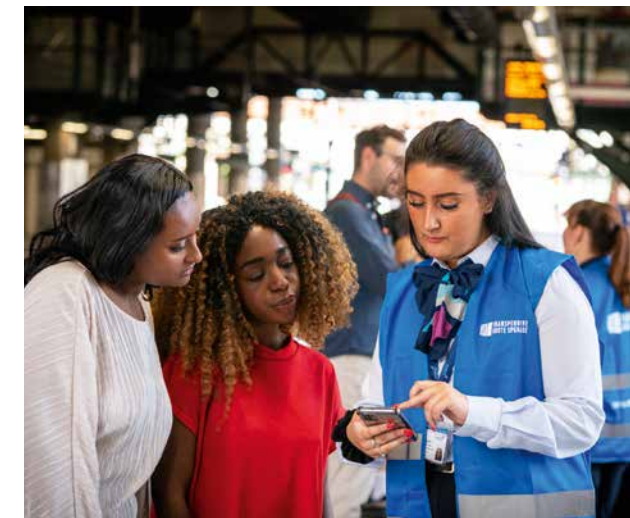


Achieved **64% customer satisfaction**, beating our target of 63% and achieving our highest score to date

Maintaining customer satisfaction while modernising the railway is a key priority for the TRU programme. This year, following our significant investment in diversionary routes, targeted efforts were made to minimise customer disruption during blockades, supported by dedicated teams and governance processes focused on service readiness. Measures included increasing the frequency of services on diversionary routes and operating trains as close as possible to the point of blockage, keeping customers on trains as much as possible.

We've also deployed colleagues to assist customers during key events, such as 'Leeds Light Night', and strengthened collaboration with other train operating companies, including London North Eastern Railway (LNER). This has enabled TRU and East Coast Main Line blockades to be co-ordinated side-by-side, helping reduce the overall impact on customers.

To maintain a positive customer experience, we've continued to review the capacity utilisation and deployment of thousands of rail replacement bus journeys, ensuring sufficient capacity where required, and minimising underutilised vehicles to reduce environmental impact. Additionally, we recently appointed a dedicated TRU Accessibility Manager to work across the programme, ensuring journeys are accessible for all, even during disruption.



Our TRU team assisting passengers at Manchester Victoria

TRU uses a range of monitoring mechanisms to track customer experience. Short-term feedback is captured through Customer Satisfaction Scores (CSAT), which assess specific interactions such as station facilities, punctuality, cleanliness and staff helpfulness. Longer-term sentiment is measured through recommendation-based metrics which provide insight into overall brand perception and customer loyalty. Mystery passenger surveys also offer anonymous evaluations of service quality, adding another layer of insight.

These efforts have contributed to **successfully beating our 63% customer satisfaction target by 1%**. The programme will soon enter a sustained period of blockades, yet despite these anticipated increases in disruption, we'll strive to maintain our current customer satisfaction target, reinforcing that customer experience remains central to programme delivery.

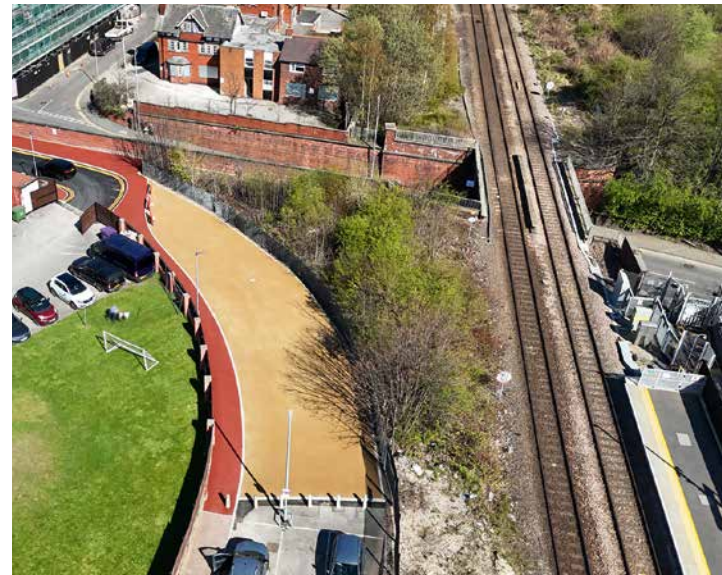
### Key Challenge

Responsibility for assessing and managing the impact of our construction work on customers is shared across multiple cross-collaborating teams within the programme. This adds a degree of complexity to how we collectively oversee and manage overall customer satisfaction. To improve efficiency and add value in this space, we're continuing to strengthen our collaboration with Enterprise-wide partners. The recent appointment of a TRU Accessibility Manager will help better integrate and connect the work of our TOCs, ensuring journeys remain accessible for all throughout construction.





## 6.2 Enhancing station safety, security and accessibility



Completed road improvements at Station Road in Castleford, to improve safety and security

### Our achievements:



**Accessibility assessed and profiled** with the Department for Transport at every station along the TRU route



**Five access routes improved for safety and security** at Castleford station

**Increasing step free access at stations** remains a key priority for TRU, with our Stations Strategy Working Group (SSWG) actively developing proposals to improve accessibility at three locations. The SSWG is a collaboration between Network Rail, Northern Trains, TransPennine Express, Transport for the North, West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA), Transport for Greater Manchester and York & North Yorkshire Combined Authority, and focused on improving short- and long-term station accessibility across the TRU route.

While no station upgrades were completed during the last year, significant progress has been made in planning and programme alignment. Our focus now shifts to agree the scope of improvements to ensure that future station enhancements support inclusive access for all customers.

This year, the SSWG concentrated on building a comprehensive understanding of each station's current accessibility status, both inside and outside of stations. A major input into this work was a Department for Transport-commissioned study, which **assessed accessibility at every station**. This data has since been used by Great British Railways Transition Team (GBRTT) to develop detailed accessibility profiles for each location. Northern Trains and TPE reviewed and updated this information to reflect recent improvements, resulting in a robust audit of station accessibility. This work has provided the SSWG with a clear evidence base to inform the next phase of allocating the Stations Fund, ensuring future investments are targeted where they are most needed to improve access for all customers.

We're directly addressing community concerns around **safety and security** at Castleford station by improving access along five key routes. These routes were identified by residents as unsafe or as barriers to walking into town or reaching the station. Significant progress has already been made, with CCTV and lighting installed along one route, and Station Road (previously unadopted) now brought into Wakefield Council's ownership. The road has been resurfaced and transformed with clear walking and cycling paths, making the journey to the station safer and more accessible for all users.

This year, our Manchester to Leeds team received **'Excellent' Considerate Constructors Scheme (CCS)** audit scores at compounds at Batley, Mirfield, Hillhouse, Weaving Lane, Gorton Road and Grimshaw Lane. The CCS promotes and supports improvement in the way construction activities impact the community, the environment and its workforce. The recent audits measured how far we abided by the scheme's Code of Considerate Practice by following clear guidelines to help highlight we are operating in a responsible and respectful way.

Steve Hamer, Civils Compound Lead, said: "We're really pleased with the results received so far in these audits, which are a testament to the hard work and collaboration of the TRU team across the project. While there are still further improvements we can make, this is a great start in demonstrating our commitment to the environment, the local community and our workforce."



Batley Station secured an 'excellent' CCS audit score



## 6.3 Enabling connected ongoing journeys

### Our achievements:



**Accessibility towpath improvements completed** at Mirfield Station



**Station art mural installation underway** at Castleford Welbeck

As part of TRU's commitment to improving station accessibility, our **First and Last Mile** programme offers more customer connectivity and sustainable onwards travel options. At Mirfield, we delivered First and Last Mile improvements in partnership with the Canal and River Trust, including towpath upgrades to enhance the walking and cycling route to Mirfield station. This is one of two projects in the area designed to improve access, with the second connecting the station to nearby residential communities via Memorial Park. Together, these improvements support active travel, reduce reliance on car journeys and help integrate the station more effectively into the local community.

A leader from local walking group, Mirfield Wellbeing Walk, an initiative of Kirklees Council, shared this feedback: "I would like to thank TRU for the brilliant improvements recently carried out on the canal path between Mirfield and Shepley Bridge. The canal towpath is a popular local walk but can be dangerous to walk along in winter months due to puddles and mud forming on the unstable surface. The TRU workforce has been very courteous and helpful to towpath users, and these improvements now increase accessibility to this location all year round."



Mirfield Towpath Improvements before and after



To improve the customer experience at stations, we've invested in **Routes to Roots**, a TRU-funded public art initiative showcasing work by emerging young artists along the route. Once complete, Routes to Roots will form the **longest linear art gallery in the UK**, and possibly among the longest in the world. It will transform stations into vibrant, welcoming spaces and give young talent a platform to display their debut work.

Our second ever Routes to Roots project began in September 2024 at Ashton-under-Lyne station. Manchester-based artist **Chris Cyprus**

collaborated with students from Great Academy Ashton and St Damian's R.C Science College to explore what their community means to them and tell the story of "Their Ashton" through art and photography.

Member of Parliament for Ashton-under-Lyne, Angela Rayner, visited the station and commented: "Ashton train station is very well used and has been known to be very dull and dark in the past. The new artwork by Chris Cyprus and the photographs from our very talented local schoolchildren have made such a huge difference."



Member of Parliament, Angela Rayner (second from left), meeting TRU representatives and local students at Ashton-under-Lyne's art installation



Castleford Welbeck mural

An additional art installation project took place at Castleford in collaboration with Wakefield Council, where public engagement revealed safety concerns about the station canopy walkway along Welbeck. In response, the canopy was removed, opening up the area and creating an opportunity for a mural. Local artist **Jay Gilleard** (CBLOXX) worked closely with residents of all ages to understand what mattered most to the community.



## 7. We're working closely with our communities

Our TRU teams engaging the community

TRU is committed to leaving a lasting, positive legacy for the communities along the route. By working with local authorities, education providers and charities, we're able to understand and respond to local community priorities and challenges, which helps us create bespoke needs-led Local Community Strategies and Socio-Economic Impact Assessments to ensure that we invest in appropriate and meaningful wellbeing, inclusive education and community spaces. Through volunteering, skills development and targeted engagement, we're helping to reconnect people with the places around them and deliver wider social value, during construction and beyond.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT







## 7.1 Inspiring the next generation

### Our achievements:



**14,550 young people** have been engaged across **187 inclusive education events** this year



**Highly Commended** in the Corporate Social Responsibility category at the **Spotlight Rail Awards 2025** for co-creation of children's book 'Cones and the Transpennine Upgrade'



Young carer on our organised train ride with Northern Trains

As part of TRU's commitment to supporting young people and creating inclusive opportunities, our team partnered with **Barnardo's Young Carers** service to deliver a unique and enriching experience for children who help care for family members with disabilities, illnesses, mental health conditions or addictions. The initiative began with a robotics workshop at our Batley office, designed to spark interest in technology and engineering. Building on this, our team collaborated with Northern Trains to organise a train journey from Mirfield to Morley, an exciting first-time experience for many of the children. During the trip, they received a rail safety talk from Catherine Kingdom from Community Rail Lancashire and learned about the Morley station upgrade. The children expressed their excitement and curiosity, with one remarking, "I learned that it takes 20 football pitches to stop a train," and another saying, "I will definitely be going on a train again!" This initiative not only provided practical knowledge and a sense of adventure but also broadened the children's horizons and introduced them to potential future careers in the rail industry.



Our TRU team accepting the Highly Commended Award at the Spotlight Awards 2025



Mayor Tracy Brabin and Lord Peter Hendy at Ravensthorpe alongside TRU leaders (James Richardson and Jo Griffiths) and Apprentices preparing to bury the time-capsule

In February 2025, Rail Minister, Lord Peter Hendy, and West Yorkshire Mayor, Tracy Brabin, visited Ravensthorpe and Huddersfield to celebrate our programme's progress. Joined by our TRU Apprentices and local students, they placed a **time capsule** beneath the new viaduct foundations at Ravensthorpe, commemorating our collective achievements and the 200th anniversary of the modern railway. The visit included cab rides with Northern Trains and TPE, showcasing major

works along the route, from the viaduct and station relocation at Ravensthorpe to upgrades at the Grade I listed Huddersfield station, where modernisation has been carefully balanced with heritage preservation. The time capsule included a rail ticket, a local newspaper, a letter to future finders and imaginative visions of rail travel 200 years from now, created by young people.

In June 2024, as part of our Local Huddersfield Community Strategy, our team was invited to **Greenhead College** in Huddersfield to engage with 125 Year 12 students pursuing engineering-related qualifications. Through a series of interactive workshops, we provided practical insights into engineering and sustainability, aiming to bridge the gap between academic learning and real-world practice. The sessions were designed to deepen students' understanding of the industry and spark greater appreciation for the role of sustainability in engineering.



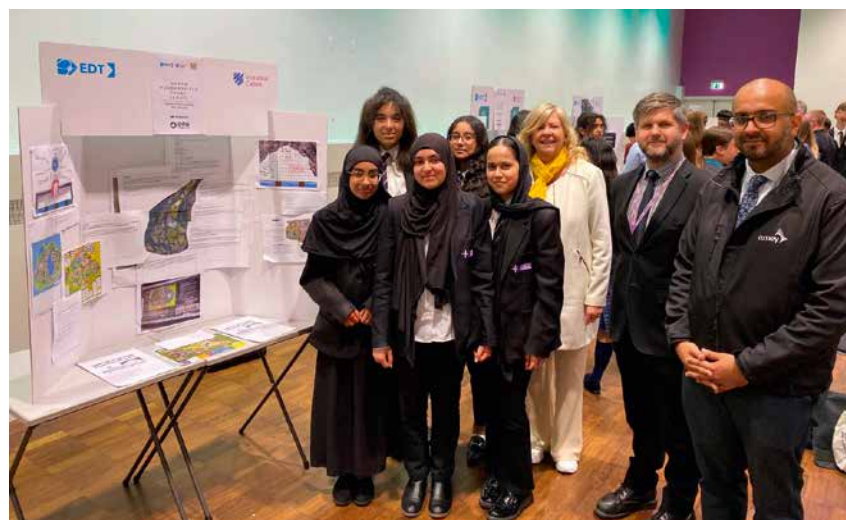
Our volunteers delivering insights to Greenhead College students on the role of sustainability in engineering



Building on our success in 2023, TRU's continued sponsorship to the Engineering Development Trust (EDT) resulted in the North Huddersfield Trust School winning the **EDT Project of the Year Bronze Award** for the second consecutive year. This nationally recognised award is part of the Industrial Cadets programme designed to inspire young people to explore careers in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Maths (STEAM). Targeted at students in Years 8-9, the programme offers hands-on industry-based experiences that help develop key employability and technical skills. It also serves as an entry-level pathway into engineering-related fields by encouraging curiosity, teamwork and problem solving.

TRU supported the programme through regular volunteer visits, guiding students through sustainability-focused challenges and individual tasks. These efforts culminated in a school-wide celebration event, where students presented their work and connected with peers from other local schools.

As a result of our involvement, not only did our student group win the award, but 100% of participants reported feeling optimistic about their future employability opportunities. One student shared: "This project has been really fun as I have learnt many new skills such as resilience, teamwork and confidence. I met many new people such as our mentor and other students from other schools at the celebration event."



North Huddersfield Trust School winning the EDT Project of the Year Bronze Award 2024



Evan Straw, now a valued TRU employee

Building on the success of our participation at LARF 2024, we were proud to support Evan Straw, a prospective TRU employee with learning difficulties. What began as a meaningful conversation around a shared interest in running evolved into a structured pathway of tailored employability support and reasonable adjustments. Recognising the importance of psychological safety, Evan's interview was at an informal setting chosen by him to make him feel at ease. Today, Evan is a respected and valued General Assistant at HD1, one of TRU's head offices, and a testament to the power of inclusive recruitment and person-centred support.



Our teams participating at LARF 2024

In February 2025, our teams once again took part in the **Leeds Apprenticeship Recruitment Fair (LARF)**, hosted by Leeds City Council. Held at the First Direct Bank Arena, the event welcomed over 7,000 attendees, including students, parents and local employers. Our TRU volunteers provided guidance on apprenticeship pathways into Network Rail and TRU Enterprise functions, with existing TRU Apprentice, Oliver Rhodes, sharing his personal journey and professional opportunities over the past three years to inspire future applicants.



## 7.2 Giving back to the community

### Our achievements:



**5,813 volunteer hours** by TRU employees this year to 187 schools and 90 community and charitable organisations or events along the TRU route



**£213,751 fundraised** this year for community and charitable organisations along the TRU route



TRU Community Fund granted **£155,507.80** this year to 27 community groups, charities and schools along the TRU route

We launched our inaugural **TRU Community Fund** this year to forge new partnerships along the route and deliver against two key TRU priorities: acting as a catalyst for regeneration by enhancing and protecting community "spaces and places", and supporting the delivery of 25,000 TRU workforce volunteering hours. The fund was open to community groups, charities and schools located within a 5-mile radius of the TRU core and diversionary routes and within the top 50% most deprived areas nationally. Eligible projects focused on creating or enhancing indoor or outdoor community-based facilities.

This year, the fund attracted applications from 279 organisations, with grants totalling over £155,500 awarded to 27 successful applicants, allowing us to prioritise funding to address local needs across the North of England. Most grants were 'small' (£1,000-£5,000), with a select number of 'medium' grants (£5,000-£20,000). Since disbursement, funded organisations have either completed or are progressing their approved projects, which span a wide range of activities, including:

- Renovation of community buildings and facilities
- Restoration of play areas, woodlands and wildlife ponds
- Enhancement of community gardens and allotments
- Biodiversity and access improvements
- Youth-led green space restoration and social action programmes

Beneficiaries include people who identify as homeless, ethnic minorities, LGBTQIA+, refugees, asylum seekers, women, low-income and unemployed individuals, neurodiverse communities, people with disabilities, seniors and carers. These projects touch on multiple themes and have delivered a wide breadth of outcomes including, not limited to:

- Supporting vulnerable people
- Enhancing mental health, wellbeing and suicide prevention
- Promoting skills, education and employment
- Improving local environments, biodiversity enhancements and place-making
- Fostering arts, recreation and cultural heritage preservation
- Advancing equality, diversity and inclusion

Together, these outcomes reflect TRU's holistic approach to sustainable development and our commitment to supporting communities in meaningful and lasting ways. Thanks to the dedication of our volunteers, we've also been able to directly support successful recipients in delivering their projects, helping bring their ideas to life on the ground.



HOURS TARGET:  
**25,000**  
CURRENT TOTAL:  
**17,252**





TRU volunteer team building Hulme Community Garden Centre's wildlife pond

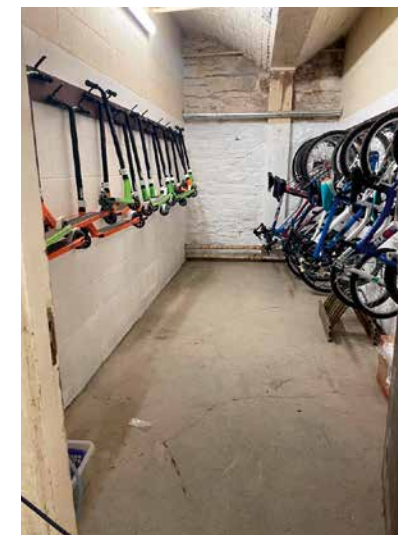
**Hulme Community Garden Centre (HCGC)** received hands-on support to prepare their outdoor pond just in time for the upcoming frog spawning season. Volunteers helped lay sand, soil and liner material, and planted beds around the pond's edge. HCGC is a community and volunteer-led Garden Centre Social Enterprise supporting local disadvantaged people, underpinned by organic principles and promoting sustainability through horticultural practices and environmental respect.

Following the volunteer event, Kath Gavin, a horticulturalist from HCGC, shared: "I'm delighted to announce that our first two frogs have arrived back at the newly renovated pond this week. Thanks to the enthusiastic and hard-working TRU volunteers who helped to prepare the area, we have managed to provide somewhere for them to spawn in time for Spring!"



TRU volunteer team helping renovate Your Trust's bicycle library

Another one of our TRU volunteer teams supported **Your Trust** by painting the walls of a neglected changing room, which was later transformed into a vibrant bicycle library. This new space now facilitates cycling sessions, maintenance classes and bicycle loans for the local community, helping Your Trust inspire residents to lead active, creative and healthy lives through a diverse range of health, wellbeing and cultural initiatives.



TRU volunteer team working with Grow Wakefield in their community allotment



Our TRU team proudly laying the final paving slab with SAWN

One of our TRU volunteer teams worked with **Support and Action for Women's Network (SAWN)**, a charity who trains, educates and provides services to improve the lives of Black African women. Our volunteers cut back and weeded vegetation, planted trees, laid paving stones and spread woodchip, helping SAWN create a more welcoming and functional outdoor space to support resilience, skill-building and improved physical and mental health.

One of our volunteers shared: "Really great volunteering day, the team at SAWN were so welcoming and appreciative of our time. It was great and a little humbling to hear about the work they do for the community – it really emphasised how worthwhile a cause they are."



Friends of Westwood Park completed the first phase of their community garden project through TRU's funding





The Place's (University of York) completed renovation of their community-embedded learning facilities



TRU proudly continues our exclusive long-term partnership with the **Canal & River Trust**, rotating sponsorship across several sites along the canal that runs parallel to the route upgrade corridor. This year, TRU sponsored a one-mile stretch of the Calder and Hebble Navigation (Dewsbury Arm), contributing nearly 1,050 volunteering hours from over 130 TRU volunteers. Our teams supported a range of activities including towpath vegetation clearance and management, improving accessibility, litter picking, lock maintenance, and enhancing water quality and flow. These efforts contribute to creating welcoming spaces by water that support both community wellbeing and nature recovery.



TRU volunteer teams supporting the Canal & River Trust

The Canal & River Trust shared: "We look forward to continuing our partnership in the future to help us care for a 2,000 mile, 200-year-old network of canals, rivers and reservoirs because we believe life is better by water."

### Key Challenge

The third sector continues to face significant instability, with many organisations experiencing financial strain, operational challenges or closure. This volatility has directly impacted both our TRU Community Fund Service Provider and grant recipients, some of whom have unfortunately ceased to exist. In response, we've adapted our operating model to better navigate this shifting landscape, allowing us to continue supporting impactful initiatives despite sector-wide uncertainty.

As part of TRU's commitment to community wellbeing, enriching educational experiences and enhancing the environment, we partnered with waste management specialist Ecoefficiency to support the creation of two new eco-gardens in Huddersfield. In April 2024, **North Huddersfield Trust School** received support, followed by **Fixby Junior School** in July 2024. Ecoefficiency donates a portion of its profits to green-space community funding for every tonne of soil they removed through TRU programme activities. Each partner school received £5,000 to develop their eco-garden. These gardens serve not only as tranquil spaces but also as hubs for sensory exploration and environmental education.

TRU volunteers worked alongside students and local suppliers to design, plan and construct the gardens by laying new paths, planting trees and installing planting tubs. The result is a living classroom that fosters a deeper connection with nature, offers a valued space for break times, and serves as a place of remembrance for students who have tragically passed away.

Nick Collins, Assistant Principal of North Huddersfield Trust, shared: "The garden offers a calming, reflective area for students and staff alike, and we've already seen regular use by both the students and the wider community."



North Huddersfield Trust's completed eco-garden

Lauren Nuttall, Pastoral Manager of Fixby Junior School said: "We would like to extend our greatest thanks to the volunteer team. Every staff member shared such positivity about the team's work ethic, positive attitude and friendly nature. We look forward to watching the future development of the programme."

This initiative reflects TRU's broader sustainability goals by enhancing green spaces, supporting mental wellbeing and leaving a lasting, positive legacy in the communities we serve.

One of TRU's proudest community engagement initiatives this year was our collaboration with **Kirk Fenton CE Primary School** to support the development of their new **Forest School**, a transformative outdoor learning space designed to inspire creativity, confidence and connection with nature. Forest Schools offer a unique educational experience by using the natural environment as a classroom. This approach is especially beneficial for children who may find traditional learning environments challenging, helping to build motor skills, emotional awareness and self-esteem through hands-on activities.

Over the course of just nine days, our TRU volunteers worked alongside school staff to bring this vision to life. With 13 volunteers and a dedicated on-site supervisor, the team contributed more than 350 hours of volunteering. Together, they built a wooden shelter, created a pond for wildlife exploration and prepared safe spaces for activities like tent building, fire making and outdoor cooking.



Final construction of Kirk Fenton's wooden shelter, delivered with TRU support

The result is a vibrant, immersive learning environment where pupils can explore, play and grow socially, emotionally and physically. Already, the Forest School is enriching the lives of current students, and it promises to be a lasting legacy for future generations. This project reflects our commitment to creating meaningful, long-term value in the communities we serve.



## 8. Closing statement from Head of Sustainability and Social Value, Anna Humphries

We're on track to a brighter future



**TRU has succeeded in delivering key programme milestones that generate real benefits for our communities and the environment along the route. By launching the first electrified sections of the route, we have laid the groundwork for new trains to operate with lower emissions, meaning cleaner air and lower noise levels for the people living and working in the North of England. We have also celebrated our first ever TRU Community Fund, which is helping to regenerate our local communities alongside our extensive engagement with schools to deliver real value for our neighbours.**

I am excited for the year ahead, with many significant major project milestones to come in 2025/26 allowing even greater progress towards our sustainability objectives.

We will complete the upgrades between Church Fenton and York around July 2025, resulting in a total of 25% of the TRU route being 'electrified'. We will be able to run more bi-modal trains in electric mode for longer, while also improving capacity and resilience to improve commutes and leisure journeys for millions of people. While it is still early days, our close integration with TransPennine Express and Northern will bring new trains to the route and reduce carbon emissions from rail while also reducing noise levels around stations.



We will also progress our work towards our target to minimise carbon emissions from construction as more of route enters service. We will begin to see the results of our work towards efficiency and innovation during both design and construction. We expect that the work between Manchester and Stalybridge will meet or exceed our 30% carbon reduction target, generating a big step in our sustainability journey.

To add to this, in 2025/26 we will begin to deliver work to generate and improve biodiversity at sites on or nearby the route, leading the way towards the programme delivering our objective of 10% biodiversity net gain.

For our community work, we have already created great success through our work to engage tens of thousands of children in STEAM, careers and safety, while also generating hundreds of jobs and work experience opportunities to help local young people advance their careers. In 2025/26, we will work closely with communities around high-impact sites, but also provide more engagement with schools and charities, aided by the launch of our second TRU Community Fund, now increased to £250,000, to provide an even greater local impact.

We already see really positive results from our Enterprise approach with the train operating companies to ensure a more accessible railway, and this will continue to generate a

customer focused delivery, efficient design of our construction and services and stronger engagement with our communities, supported by funding for stations and new resource to assess and improve accessibility of the route during construction and the end state.

Finally, we had set the objective to deliver a sustainable rail programme to the highest standards and as we move from design towards construction, we will reach key BREEAM certification milestones. In 2025/26, we will complete our BREEAM Strategy Stage audits for all our projects along the route, as we aim for BREEAM 'Excellent' rating.

***I and the rest of the TRU Leadership Team is incredibly proud of what we have delivered over the past year and excited about what is still to come. We still have much to do, and with strong partnerships, shared purpose and a clear sustainability vision derived from 'Our Guiding Compass', we are confident in our ability to deliver a railway that is faster, cleaner and most importantly 'greener' to help communities across the North.***

**Anna Humphries**  
Head of Sustainability,  
TransPennine Route Upgrade





**We aim to publish our TRU Sustainable Development Report annually. Scan the QR code to access the full 2025 TRU Sustainable Development Annual Report on our website.**

To learn more about our sustainability goals – or play your part in the progress visit **[thetrupgrade.co.uk](https://thetrupgrade.co.uk)** for regular updates on our work.

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