Middleton Railway Trust Limited
Company Limited by Guarantee

Trustee's Annual Report:
Year Ended 31 December 2025

COMPANY REGISTRATION NUMBER: 1165589
CHARITY REGISTRATION NUMBER: 230387

Middleton Railway Trust Limited
Company Limited by Guarantee
Trustees' Annual Report (Incorporating the Directors' Report)
Year ended 31 December 2025

The trustees, who are also the directors for the purposes of company law, present their report and the unaudited financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2025.

Reference and administrative details

Registered charity name	Middleton Railway Trust Limited
Charity registration number	230387
Company registration number	1165589
Principal office and registered office	The Station Moor Road Leeds LS10 2JQ
The trustees	Mr C W Milner (Chairman) Mr J. B. Holmes (Secretary) Mr P Calvert (Treasurer) Mrs J E Auckland Mr M Berry (appointed 24th June 2025) Mr G Brown (appointed 24th June 2025) Mr M A Calvert Mr C Campbell (retired 24th June 2025) Mr D J Hebden Mr A. Johnson Mr M Jones Mr R G Pike Mr S J Roberts
Coopted Member of Council:	Mr M. Berry (1st January 2025 to 24th June 2025)
Company Secretary	Mr J. B. Holmes
Independent Examiner	Upton & Co. Accountants Ltd.

TRUSTEE'S ANNUAL REPORT (including the director's report)

Structure, Governance and Management:

The Middleton Railway Trust Ltd is a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital. It is also a registered charity. As such its operation is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association under which the members of its Council are both the directors of the company and the trustees of the charity. Members of the Council are elected annually by the members of the company at its annual general meeting.

All policy decisions are made by the Council, although for major issues decisions are, where possible, brought to general meetings for consideration. In particular, the Council sets budgets annually for all the company's activities, and monitors these at its monthly meetings. Within this framework many specific areas of responsibility including, where appropriate, control of expenditure within allocated budgets are delegated to heads of department who may be individual members of the Council, or others appointed by the Council, who have relevant expertise. The possession of relevant expertise is one of the primary considerations of the members of the company in determining whom to elect as members of the Council, and hence there is little need for formal induction training for members of the Council.

The responsibilities of virtually all Trust Officers are defined and placed on the Member's Website in the Governance Section.

Objectives

The primary objective of the company, as set out in its Memorandum of Association, is to preserve in working condition the historic Middleton Colliery Railway for the benefit of the public. The other seventeen objectives are intended to further this, and as well cover specific activities that contribute to running the Railway and to supporting the company as a charitable organisation. These other objectives include establishing a railway museum, exhibiting locomotives and other items in it, and promoting the study of these artefacts and of rail transport generally.

These objectives are therefore deliberately set very broadly, and to help focus on them the Council set a number of strategic goals, which included establishing a museum. Once this had been achieved by registering the whole railway as a museum, the goals were reviewed at the annual general meeting in 2006 and amended at an EGM held on 19th March 2024. The following goals are now adopted:

- to extend the passenger line to Middleton Park;
- to increase our passenger figures to 300 per operating day;
- to restore all our rolling stock to at least display condition;
- to build at least one new steam locomotive boiler, or rebuild an existing boiler to a condition in which it would have a similar life expectancy to a new boiler, approximately every ten years;
- to run a daily service during August;
- to attract "new blood" to the railway to lower the age profile of the membership.

The goals were first reviewed during 2022 as part of the process of creating a rolling five-year business plan which was launched in 2023 and was supported by a longer term rolling ten-year plan which is much broader in scope and reflects the long planning cycle dictated by the restoration and operation of historic rolling stock. The rolling Five- and Ten-Year Plans are reviewed periodically by Council and updated and have been reconfigured to make tracking progress against specific objectives. The current versions of the plans are posted in the Governance Section of the Member's Website.

At a special meeting of Council s held on the 25th January 2024 the long-term future of the Railway and direction of travel was reviewed. The following were the principal conclusions of this meeting:

1. The main asset of the Trust is the remarkable history of the Middleton Railway and the contribution it made to the development of railways coupled with the story of the Leeds locomotive building industry which developed out of the pioneering work of John Blenkinsop and Matthew Murray on Middleton Railway.
2. To capitalise on this asset the Trust must develop its museum to tell the story of both the Middleton Railway and the Leeds locomotive building industry in its historic, technical and social context in a way which will attract visitors to the Railway.
3. The ultimate objective of the Railway is to pivot from being a heritage railway with a museum attached to being a museum which provides as an added attraction the opportunity for visitors to travel on the historic course of the Middleton Railway hauled by vintage steam and diesel locomotives.

This is an ambitious program and will be stretching of the Trust's very limited resources. The alternative of retrenching to a much smaller operation focussed on the current museum offering and supplementing this by a limited program of locomotive steamings confined to the Moor Road Yard was also considered by Council as was continuing on the current trajectory. Neither of these alternatives was felt to offer a sustainable long-term future for the Middleton Railway given its physical size and geographic location.

To fully realize this ambition will require external funding which will also require that the Trust's security of tenure on the Moor Road Site is assured for an extended period, preferably 99 years, and that the Trust recruits volunteers with the skill set to take forward the long term ambitions of the Trust whist at the same time maintaining and developing the current offering .

The Rolling Ten-Year Plan has been re-written to include for the long term focus on developing the Trust's Museum and is to be reviewed by Council during the first quarter of 2026 and then the Rolling Five-Year Plan will be revised to take account of the changed Ten-Year Plan and will also be reviewed by Council in the first quarter of 2026. It is planned to release the updated version of the Five- and Ten-Year Plans during April 2026 and then to produce a summary version for placement on the Trust's Website later in the year.

Public Benefit:

A key element in the objectives defined above is that the historic nature of the Middleton Colliery Railway means that the activities of both preserving it and educating people about it are recognised by the Charity Commission as giving rise to a public benefit. This was the basis for originally registering the company as a charity. The continuance of this public benefit follows from the efforts made by the charity to open its facilities to the public so that they are able to visit the Engine House and be educated by the museum displays, from allowing the public to travel on trains hauled by historic steam and diesel locomotives and so experience operation of this historic machinery doing the task for which it was designed and from the organisation of visits by schools for the purpose of educating their pupils about the historic role of the Middleton Railway. During 2024 the Railway was open to the public for the usual eight months of the year, ran a normal program of events and so provided the expected level of public benefit.

During 2025 the Railway contributed to the events planned to mark the 200th anniversary of the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway which are being marketed under the 'Railway 200' banner. The contribution included participating in 'Whistle Up on the 1st January 2025 which launched 'Railway 200' and organising three free to attend talks related to the theme of 'Railway 200' and hi-lighting different aspects of the Middleton Railway's contribution to the development of Railways:' Blenkinsop, Murray and the Leeds Locomotive Building Industry' by Anthony Dawson, 'The Three Contemporary Models of the Blenkinsop/Murray Locomotives - the 1811 Model of 'Salamanca' and what a CT Scan Revealed'. By Dr Michael Bailey and 'The Middleton Railway – a Preservation Pioneer' by Ian Smith.

In addition, thanks to a legacy left to the Middleton Railway by the late Una Blears, the Trust published in 2025 'The Middleton Railway Volume 1' by Sheila Bye which covers the period from the early 18th Century to 1960. The book was edited by Dr Cowling, is an important contribution to the published history of early railways. And has been very well received. The same year also saw the publication of 'The History of Hunslet No. 1786 'Courage/'Sweet Pea' & The Courage Brewery Sidings' by Geordie Brown. This book is a history of both the locomotive and where it worked and has sold so well that a second, expanded edition has been developed which should be published in May 2026.

The year 2026 marks the 200th anniversary of the death of Matthew Murry, arguably the most significant engineer to have ever worked in Leeds. The Trust plans to mark this event by a series of three free to attend talks covering his life and works, a special exhibition on the Mezzanine Floor dedicated to his contribution to the development of the steam locomotive and the naming of the Trust's most modern diesel locomotive, Hunslet No. 6981, 'Salamanca' in honour of the Railway's and the world's first commercially and technically successful steam locomotive. The choice of 6981 for this honour as a representative of the last significant new locomotive design produced in Leeds neatly bookends the story of locomotive development in Leeds which began with Matthew Murray's 'Salamanca' of 1812. The Trust is also planning to make its history accessible in a new way by producing an A4 size graphic history of the Railway with drawings by Alan Brady; one of the country's leading archaeological and reconstruction illustrators.

The Trust continues to engage with the Ward Councillors in the two Wards in which it operates, Middleton Park and Hunslet & Riverside, and engage with local community-based organisations. In addition, it continues to host every year Community Day which provides an opportunity for local voluntary groups to introduce themselves to the public and develop links with each other in an informal setting. Maintaining these connections helps sustain the Trust's 'licence to operate' in what is essentially an urban area.

During 2025 the Council of the Middleton Railway, as trustees of the charity, continued to balance the conflicting requirements of setting fares and other charges at a level that will provide adequate income, while keeping them low enough that they will not discourage members of the public from visiting the Railway and hence will not adversely affect the public benefit that the charity provides. In managing these issues during 2025, the Council confirms that it has paid due regard to the guidance provided by the Charity Commission on public benefit.

Overview:

The 2025 financial outcome, as detailed in the accompanying Financial Report, met the Trust's primary financial objective which is to cover all direct operating costs out of revenue; a cash surplus of £23 K was recorded which is better than the £8K surplus recorded in 2024 but is not sufficient to cover the Railway's depreciation charge. Failure to achieve this primary objective means funding on-going operations out of reserves which is the route to failure. The 2025 result was achieved as a result of better than budgeted revenues, though they were marginally down on the 2024 revenues, and careful control of costs which were 2.9% lower than those incurred in 2024 though above budget. Most importantly this result was achieved safely.

During 2025 the Trust received £282K in legacies. It was the wish of one of the people who left money to the Trust that their legacy be used specifically for the maintenance of two of the Trust's steam locomotives, 'North Eastern Railway No. 1310' and 'Danish State Railways No. 385', and the Trust will respect this wish.

Below are detailed important aspects of the Trust's activities in 2025. It is pleasing to report that positive progress has been made in many areas including museum development, the second stage of the café and shop refurbishment and overhauling and building rolling stock despite the financial and labour constraints under which the Trust operates.

What has been achieved in 2025 is a tribute to the hard work and commitment of the Trust's working volunteers and thanks are due to all for the years good outcome.

Safety Performance:

During the year there were no lost time accidents reportable to the Health & Safety Executive under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR), no incidents reportable to the Office of Rail & Road (ORR) and no environmental incidents.

Nine minor accidents reported vs three in 2024. All were in the slips, trips and bumped heads category and all bar one did not require external medical attention; the exception was a wood splint in the hand from a coach birthday table which required external medical attention. One notable incident was a cut head sustained by a guard going between coaches. It was recommended that the corners of the gangway platforms be rounded to reduce likelihood of injury if struck whilst working between coaches.

Four incidents were reported and investigated vs. seven in 2024. One of these involved the derailment of the Ballast Packer and this highlighted the lack of procedures covering the operation of this machine and also control of P.W. work on running lines. Procedures covering both topics have been drafted and should be approved by Council early in 2026. Two further incidents involved locomotive derailments - fortunately without causing harm. The first was most likely due to a faulty turnout mechanism which has been rectified and the later was caused by a driver moving his locomotive before receiving instruction from the shunter. The investigation of the latter incident and the implementation of corrective measures to minimise risk of recurrence highlighted deficiencies in the current investigation and disciplinary process which is very prescriptive This is currently being revised to separate incident investigation and implementation of corrective measures from possible disciplinary action. The fourth incident was a lineside fire which was quickly put out.

Just three Near Misses were recorded in 2025 vs four in 2024: one related to storage of items in the Display Hall, one to a new cleaner not taking note of a warning signal sounded by an approaching locomotive and one to a guard allowing a young person to handle the brake wheel of a passenger coach. Corrective action to minimise risk of recurrence was taken in all cases.

Balm Road Branch has remained embargoed throughout the year whilst Risk Assessments are produced covering both Moor Road Crossing and the Tulip Steet/Beza Road Crossing. The Risk Assessments will endeavour to conform to the Office of Rail & Road (ORR) and Heritage Railway Association (HRA) Guidance which is somewhat opaque. Once this is done, proposals will be developed which are proportionate to the risk and will minimise risk to both the Middleton Railway and road users (including pedestrians) whenever Balm Road Branch is used. These will be costed and if cost is judged acceptable the proposals will be submitted to the ORR for acceptance and if this occurs a final decision will be made to proceed with the works necessary to reopen the Balm Road Branch. The final decision about reopening the Balm Road Branch will ultimately be a financial decision; does the necessary expenditure represent the best use of the Trust's limited resources.

During 2025 a Fire Alarm and Site Evacuation Test was run. This revealed a disturbing lack of familiarity on the part of the Working Volunteers present with the Evacuation Procedure. A second Test will be held in 2026 after first re-publishing the Procedure in 'Turnout'. The Test also highlighted some of the deficiencies in the Trust's Emergency Plan which is overdue revision.

Since 1998 the Trust has been operating under an exemption from Regulation 4 of the Railway Safety (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 1997 which requires the provision of a means whereby passengers can communicate with a person able to take appropriate action in the event of an emergency – the Guard. This exemption applied only to two coach trains and to operate 3 coach trains either a means of communication had to be provided or an extra Guard/TTI had to be carried in the third coach. As described in the Mechanical Engineering section a robust means of addressing the communication issue has been developed and before start of the 2026 running season all four coaches will be fitted with the necessary equipment.

For the fifth year running there have been no nuisance complaints which is very pleasing, but this is an area where constant vigilance is required. The Heritage Railway Association regularly reminds its members that the release of dark smoke is a 'no no'; it can bring adverse publicity onto the whole heritage railway movement.

Work has continued, albeit at a slower than planned pace, throughout 2024 on the revision of the current Safety Management System and governance to meet the requirements of the ORR as laid down in The Railways and Other Guided Transport Systems (Safety) Regulations 2006 (ROGS). The Trust's approach to revising the Safety Management System is in general conformity with guidance for minor and heritage railway safety management systems issued by the ORR in August 2023. The same program of work also includes a review of the Trust's Emergency Plan and incident investigation procedure and subsequent follow up. It was intended to put proposals for revisions to these procedures to Council in 2024, but this has now been delayed to 2026

During 2025 the Train Operating Regulations were revised and the Ninth Edition of these was prepared for approval by Council. The new edition incorporates 'A General Appendix Covering Safety Critical Train Crew Instructions'. It is hoped that the Nine Editon will be approved by Council during the first quarter of 2026.

During 2024 and 2025 it was intended to address some of the issues associated with working at heights. A statement of Trust Policy has been drafted but otherwise no substantive progress has been made with tacking some of the more difficult problems such as accessing the tops of locomotives in the Running Shed, watering steam locomotives and emptying steam locomotive smokeboxes. One of the problems delaying addressing this issue is finding narrow width working platforms suitable for working within the confines of the Workshop/Running Shed and Display Hall. The ORR remain concerned about the number of falls from heights on heritage railways, some of which have resulted in life changing injuries, and are paying particular attention to this aspect of heritage railway operations. It is hoped to make progress with the resolution of some of these issues during 2026.

Environmental Performance.

Use of Fossil Fuels in 2022, 2023, 2024 and 2025 plus attendant Carbon Dioxide (CO2) release is summarised in the table below. CO2 release is calculated from the carbon content of the fuels which is derived from published information.

	2022		2023		2024		2025	
	Fuel Consumed	CO2 release (tonne)	Fuel Consumed	CO2 release (tonne)	Fuel Consumed	CO2 release (tonne)	Fuel Consumed	CO2 release (tonne)
Coal (tonne)	33	54.6	38.12	62.3	41.02	66.0	33.4	55.3
Diesel (litres)	2200	5.8	2900	7.6	3119	8.2	3200	8.4
Gas (Units)	27500	5.1	20129	3.7	20173	3.7	17941	3.3
TOTAL		65.5		73.6		77.9		67.0

Coal consumption in 2025 was lower than in previous years because no steam training days were run in 2025, as was the case in 2024, and service days were slightly less. However, the exact figure for coal usage in 2025 is open to error because very approximately 3.5 te of coal was recovered by the Railway from old stock free of charge and was not weighed before use. Diesel usage is similar to that of the previous year, and recorded gas usage has declined further – probably because of the mild weather for much of the year though investment in a modern control system and a condensing boiler will have helped reduce usage.

Electricity consumption in 2025 was approximately 31966 units excluding the contribution from the solar panels compared to 2024 consumption of 34,463 units, 2023 consumption of 37,431 units, 2022 consumption of 41,450 units. The reduction in electricity use reflects the continuing impact of replacing fluorescent tubes by LEDS in 2023 and subsequently (which use approximately 1/3 as much electricity/lumen) and the impact of the expanding solar panel capacity in 2024. During 2025 approx. 2790 units of electricity generated by the solar panels were exported to the National Grid.

The budget cost for upgrading solar generation capacity plus adding storage batteries to cover the bulk of the Trust's electricity requirement is approximately £77,000. The next stage in developing the Trust's solar power generating capability is to commission the three-phase metering system and measure power consumption across the three phases and then assemble costs for a battery installation which will enable the Trust to maximise usage of the electric power generated by the current installation. This work, which was deferred from 2025 because of lack of time to set up the system, may also help identify the cause of the higher than anticipated usage of electricity on none-volunteer days which is a cause of concern.

Lump coal suitable for steam locomotives is currently readily available and during 2025 costs fell from £350 to £330/te. The Trust also benefitted from the donation of a few tonnes of coal from a house clearance. For 2026 budget purposes the same figures as used at end 2025 are being used. No further trials have been conducted with 'eco fuels' which contain a mix of coal dust and biomass: there are no cost advantages for using such fuels and apart from the fact they burn with little smoke there are no environmental benefits.

Carbon dioxide release could be significantly reduced by curtailing steam locomotive operation, but this would go against one of the principle charitable objectives of the Trust which is to enable the public to experience and travel behind historic machinery operating in the way it was intended. Sequestering the amount of carbon dioxide released by the Trust's activities would require a forest containing approximately 4,880 trees based on published figures for the average take up of carbon dioxide by mature trees. Other methods of sequestering carbon dioxide are being explored – e.g. sea grass meadows.

Commercial Activities and Marketing:

The Trust cannot discharge is charitable obligations without raising money. The principal source of income for the Trust is its commercial activities: sale of tickets for train rides, sale of refreshments in the Trust café, sale of goods in the Trust shop and charges for the use of Trust facilities.

The Railway opened to passengers on 5th April 2025 with Community Day and ran a normal season until Sunday 26th October 2025 followed by Santa Special operations in December. During October trains were only run on Sundays – the evidence of previous years is that Saturday operation in October does not justify the required volunteer input. The table below provides a comparison between the last four seasons operation. The economic climate has changed so much since the Covid Pandemic of 2020 that it no longer makes sense to compare current performance with pre–Covid Performance.

ALL Adult & Child	2022	% Change 2023-2024	2023	% Change 2023-2024	2024	% Change 2024-25	2025
Ordinary Train Passengers	6179	+2	6293	+3	6311	-5	5987
Party Passengers	322	+7	345	+26	437	-23	336*
Special Event Passengers	830	+25	1036	+69	1754	-30	1234
Santa Special Passengers	4607	+7	4929	-21	3872	7	4137
School Santa Passengers	544	-2	533	-14	461	6	490
School Education Day Passengers	353	+11	394	+70	668	-48	350**
Charter Passengers	153	+82	279	-45	154	19	184

Passenger numbers in 2025 seem to have plateaued. There is evidence that in the first part of the season then Trust's charges were putting off prospective passengers and reducing children's fares in the latter part of the season led to improved numbers. In 2026 children under 5 will travel free which brings the Trust into line with the majority of heritage railways and hopefully will encourage more adults to take their children for a trip on the Railway.
School's traffic is significantly lower than in 2024 which reflects the fact that only 12 school specials were run in 2025 vs. .19 in 2024 to allow more time for maintenance and track work. Party Passengers were down because a one-off event (failure of Moor Road Site mains water supply) forced the Trust to cancel the train.

Santa Specials and Events:
The recovery in Santa Special Traffic is very welcome. The majority of unoccupied seats are at the beginning of the season, and it is hoped that by enabling people to book sooner more of the in demand late season seats will be filled early leaving late bookers

to fill the less popular early seats. In 2025 the early morning start trialled in 2024 was cancelled and the normal start time of 09.45 hours was resumed, and more effort was made to promote the presence of a children's entertainer, Penny Barron, on the train to keep children engaged whilst in the opposite carriage to that in which Santa was giving out presents. The Santa Special experience was marketed as a traditional Yorkshire Christmas which seemed to work well, and this message will be reinforced in 2026. There will also be further investment in new decorations to refresh the appearance of the event. Santa Specials remain the Trust's single largest source of income and in 2025 accounted for nearly 34% of total income (excluding legacies) and 40% of trading income and so it is important to continue re-investing in this event.

Community Day in 2025 was held at the start of the Season and was the most successful yet with regard to visitor numbers (318), numbers of participating community groups (14) and shop/café takings (£1079) – figures well in advance of those which might be expected on a normal Saturday. The event was graced by the presence of the Lord Mayor of Leeds as well as by Councillors representing the Wards in which the railway operates. in the event and because of the distinguished visitors it attracted regional as well as local press coverage. It also provides an opportunity to promote the Railway to local groups and their members and publicize the Railway by 'word of mouth' as well as build links with other local voluntary organizations.

The major event held in 2025 was 'A Taste of Yorkshire 2025': a Yorkshire focussed festival of local foods and artisan beers and cider supported by local bands. The event was a repeat of 'A Taste of Yorkshire 2024' which had been a great success. The event was carefully planned by John Linkins and his team and passed off without incident and was enjoyed by those who attended. However, attendance was barely half that of the previous years event and revenues were down by about 27%- a poor reward for all the work put into organising the event. One factor which may have contributed to the disappointing outcome was the charging structure. It is now thought that this was out of line with similar events and that perhaps too much focus was placed on the value of the train ride in setting the price. Nevertheless, the event was a significant contributor to Trust funds. It was planned to stage 'A Taste of Yorkshire 2026' but changes in the availability of volunteers to run the event and plans to refresh it and focus more on taste at the expense of other elements mean that it will next be staged in 2027.

Classic Car Sunday which was launched in 2024 was repeated in 2025 with a good turnout of cars and similar attendance. It had been hoped to have a secondary display of cars at Park Halt which would have given visitors an additional reason to travel on the train but Leeds City Council failed to give the required permission despite being provided with all the information they required, Risk Assessment, Method Statement, Insurance provision etc., in good time. An application to stage a display of cars at Park Halt during Classic Car Sunday 2026 was launched in August 2025 to give the Council plenty of time to arrange for permission to be granted.

Star Rails was repeated as a one-day event in 2025, but the results were very poor despite being well publicized by the cosplayers, the Mos Eisley Misfits, and by the Trust. It seems that at present Star Wars is out of fashion. Instead, in 2026 the Trust will trial a Halloween themed event. Halloween is becoming the big Autumn Festival and so a well-designed Halloween event has the potential to become a significant part of the Trusts event's program.

Steam Punk Market was held in 2025 and like other events numbers were down on previous years. This was partly because the event clashed with a Goth event held elsewhere in Leeds on the same day which reduced both the number of traders and visitors. However, the organiser of the event is very keen to repeat it in 2026, seems to be re-enthused and there are no competing events on the weekend when it will be staged so hopefully there will be a better outcome in 2026.

Though a well-established feature in the Trust's Calendar, the Model Railway Exhibition (MRE) remains a popular and successful event. The 2025 MRE was a good event but with regards to visitor numbers was not as successful as in previous years. Thanks as ever go to Ian Dobson for once again stepping up and organising this multifaceted event.

Finally, a low-key Steam Gala was held in 2025. The embargoing of the Balm Road Branch reduces the drawing power of this event, and it is a harsh fact that the benefit in terms of additional visitors of having a visiting locomotive at the Gala does not cover the cost of transporting the locomotive to and from the Railway. No Steam Galas are planned for 2026 though there may be some small-scale special events featuring multiple locomotives.

One new event which will be trialled on Saturdays during October 2026 is a Driver Experience event featuring on alternate Saturdays steam or diesel locomotives.

Overall, event numbers significantly lower than in 2024. There are event specific factors which have contributed to this, as outlined above, but a common factor seems to be cost inflation which is reducing the amount of money potential visitors have to spend on entertainment rather than essentials which is driving them to look for more when they spend their money. In recognition of the fact that not all potential event visitors want to ride on the train and not all people interested in travelling on the train during an event day are interested in the event the Trust will trial charging standard fares on event days in 2026 with the object of trying to maximise footfall and hence secondary spend.

Shop and Cafe:

During the 2025 closed season the Trust's ticket office counters were remodelled to match the rebuilt and relocated shop and continue the planned program to a improve the appearance of the café and shop. In the 2025/26 closed season the former 'Yellow Zone' will be remodelled to become a children's play area/children's craft workshop. During the 2026 season, on one weekend every month plus selected Bank Holidays, Penny Lucus, a children's entertainer, will be employed to lead themed children's craft workshops to encourage visitors to stay longer and hence encourage visitors to spend more in the café/shop. This initiative will also provide a secondary reason to visit the Middleton Railway – playing on theme of giving visitors more for their money than a train ride.

The café offering was similar to that of 2024, and revenue was little changed despite the decline in visitor numbers, but shop sales were up by 12% vs. the 2024 number due in part to an increased range of good which now includes local produce and an extended range of souvenirs. Book sales were also significantly up on the 2024 numbers – by 42% - which in part is due to the sale of more higher value books including Volume 1 of the Middleton Railway History which was launched in 2025 and the runaway success of Geordie Brown's book which almost sold out of its initial 150 unit order by the end of the year.

Marketing:

Work has continued to upgrade the reconfigured Trust website, and an increasing volume of tickets and other items are being sold through the website. Work will start in 2026 on a full-scale refreshment of the Trust's website which will be launched in 2027. From a marketing perspective it is very important to periodically refresh the web site, changing its appearance, adding new features, making it easier to navigate etc., with the object oof keeping it interesting.

Posting on the Trust's social media platforms has been consistent and visitor numbers and engagement are increasing. Regular posting in a disciplined and co-ordinated manner is important to maintain platform visitor engagement and build up numbers which should eventually translate into increased visitors to the Railway.

During 2025 the Trust has continued to enjoy good coverage in the Heritage Railway Press which accesses a small but important part of the Trust visitor base. The Trust has also continued to advertise in the Leeds free press and has had paid adverts in the Yorkshire Evening Post and Sheffield Star with the object of trying to increase awareness of the Middleton Railway outside the Leeds Metropolitan Area – its immediate catchment.

During 2026 the Trust is to trial selling tickets for both ordinary running days and event days plus lunch boxes via the LovetoVisit ticketing and marketing platform with the aim of increasing the number of potential visitors who are made aware of the Middleton Railway and what it offers. And making it easy for them to purchase tickets. Preparation of copy and illustrations for LovetoVisit started before end 2025.

Promotion of the Trust was again aided by the Trust's success in Yorkshire in Bloom: for the sixth year in succession the Trust received a Gold Award. This is a great tribute to the hard work of Mick Jackson and his team who keep the Moor Road Site looking attractive and bright with flowers to the benefit of the Trust's visitors and neighbours. The Trust is going to take a break from Yorkshire in Bloom in 2026 to give time to develop some new ideas and refresh the Trust's entry. However, this does not mean having no flowers decorating Moor Road Station and not keeping keep then Site looking tidy, groomed and weed free!

During 2025 no suitable marketing projects were identified which could be taken up by Leeds University Business School Students though contact with the Business School is being maintained.

Complaints:

Three complaints were received in the year – none of great significance and all responded to promptly. The complaints were:

1. During a school visit a volunteer showing a party of children how a locomotive control worked gently tapped a child on the hand with a thin roll of paper to stop them fiddling with the controls and pay attention. This had the desired effect, and the child was not distressed but subsequently a teacher raised this incident as a safeguarding issue. To avoid such incidents happening again the Trust now insists that all parties of children – even small groups - are accompanied by teachers and they will be asked to ensure that the children behave appropriately.
2. Local residents and a Hunslet & Riverside Ward Councillor complained about thoughtless parking by visitors during 'A Taste of Yorkshire 2025' which prevented pavement wheelchair access ramps being used and obstructed lines oi sight at local junctions. In future the Trust will contact Leeds City Council Highways Dept. to obtain permission to cone off areas such as pavement access ramps and the Hartington Avenue/Prospect Crescent/Moor Road junction on the days when a major event such as 'A Taste of Yorkshire is held.

3. A Santa Special Passenger complained about the conduct of Ms Penny Barron; the Santa Special Children's' entertainer. Nothing untoward happened I and the complaint seemed to be driven purely by the fact that the complainant simply did not enjoy Penny Barron's act.

The small number of complaints and their essentially trivial nature reflects very well on the volunteers– shop and café team plus train crew - running the customer facings sides of the Middleton Railways activities

Engineering Projects:

Volunteer numbers have not recovered to pre-CoVid-19 Pandemic Levels with regard in particular to workshop staff and this is having an impact on the rate of progress with major projects. Resource has been concentrated firstly on the routine maintenance tasks necessary to keep the Railway operational.

Mechanical Engineering:
Steam and diesel locomotives were available throughout the year to maintain advertised services as required.

During 2025 Hunslet Engine Co. 2387 and Hawthorn Leslie 3860 were the mainstay of the steam fleet and gave relatively little trouble, a couple of leaks from the tank of HE 2387 and a regulator leak on HL 3860 being perhaps the most noteworthy. Sentinel 8837 after repairs to the steam brake was also available for use but was little used during the driest part of the Summer because of its propensity to throw sparks when climbing to Park Halt. Manning Wardle 1210 hauled the 'Mince Pie Special' on New Years Day as is the tradition when available and then spent part of Spring at the Beamish Open Air Museum and later at the Mid Suffolk Railway and had a second spell at the Mid Suffolk Railway in mid-Summer. Apart from having to borrow MW 1601's blast pipe because its own was badly wasted it gave very little trouble which is a tribute to the recent overhaul carried out by the Middleton Railway. HE 2387 also left the Railway for a brief period; a week's visit to the Embsay and Bolton Abbey Steam Railway to take part in their Hunslet Gala.

Good progress has been made with the overhaul of Hudswell Clarke 1544. The boiler was retubed, the boiler washout plugs replaced, new ash pan fabricated and fitted and new chimney fitted and after successfully passing hydraulic and steam tests the boiler was reunited with the rolling chassis in October and the locomotive reassembled and repainting started. Currently it is anticipated that HC1544 will be available for service before the start of Summer 2026. The overhaul of Hudswell Clarke 1544 has been financially supported by its owners, the Slough & Windsor Railway Society, to whom thanks are due.

The mainstay of the diesel fleet continues to be Hudswell Clarke D1373 which has run with little attention though the year. Brush Beyer Peacock 91/7856 has been available for most of the year apart from a period when there were problems with its sanding gear and Peckett 5003 has also been available for traffic. For most of the year Fowler 4220033 has only been available for shunting duties because of an exhauster fault. Towards the end of the year, it entered the Workshop for rectification of this fault and repainting. All of the heritage diesel fleet were stopped for most of the year: HE 1693 had cylinder head gasket issues, HC D577 had electrical problems and HC D631 would not engage gear properly. Work has now stated on the replacement of the head gaskets of HE 1697.

The overhaul of HE 1786 was completed in time for its planned birthday celebration on the 19th July. The work involved overhauling the sanding gear and restoring it to working order, casting and fitting new brake blocks, obtaining new bonnet door panels with the correct design of louvres and hot riveting them to the support frame and repairing the cab roof plus servicing the prime mover. The locomotive was then repainted in what is believed to be its original livery; dark green with thin red lining. The locomotive is now in as close as possible to the condition it was in when it left Hunslet's Jack Lane works in 1935 and is available for Brake Van specials. This project was led by Geordie Brown who carefully researched the history of the locomotive and established with a reasonable degree of probability its original livery. His research into both the history of the locomotive and where it worked, Courage Brewery Sidings, Alton, resulted in him writing a history of the locomotive and the place where it worked which has been very well received.

The overhaul of Hunslet Engine 6981 made further progress during the year; the exhaust system has been rebuilt and vacuum brake pipes installed. Because the locomotive has been selected to be named 'Salamanca' at a ceremony planned for the 21st June 2026 completion of its overhaul will be accelerated in 2026 and contract painters will be engaged to repaint it in the two-tone green livery with red stripping and white and black buffer beams it wore when delivered to Conoco in 1968

A carriage fleet of three workable vehicles was maintained throughout the season. During the year a closed loop electrical alarm system to enable passengers in any coach on a three-coach train to alert the guard in case of an emergency was developed by Richard Pike, Trust Electrical Engineer, and Mr David Hebden, Trust SHE Manager. This was installed and tested on two coaches before year end 2025 and will be fitted to all four coaches before the start of the 2026 season. The new facility is not an automatic brake application system; it is purely an alarm system.

Sadly, construction and painting of Coach 2223, which had been led by Roy Gunn, was not completed before he died but it was available for use on the special train run after the reception held at Moor Road following Roy's funeral. Following rectification of a few teething problems the coach entered service in June 2025.

Once Coach 2223 was established in service Coach 1867 was taken out of service for attention to some rotten beading. The decay proved to be much more extensive than expected and all the beading will have to be removed and much replaced and work will be needed to stabilise decayed window and door frames. Given current labour availability it is unlikely that the coach will be available for traffic until early Summer 2026. The extent of the decay was surprising; all new and recovered beading will be treated with a fungicide and painted on all sides before refitting and repaired timbers will also be treated with a fungicide before painting to try and reduce future rate of decay.

Because of lack of volunteer time no s progress has been made on the repair of LMS Van No. M85133, on the conversion of GWR 5-Plank Wagon No. 113084 to a 7-Plank Railway Clearing House design coal wagon and on the overhaul of 16-ton Mineral Wagon B154977.

Apart from disposal of a redundant shaper the main change to the workshop has been procurement of an LEV system to control welding fumes – as required by HSE Guidance.

Civil Engineering:
The focus of Civil Engineering work during 2025 has been routine, but essential tasks including gutter cleaning, lineside vegetation clearance, weed killing and jacking and packing track. The later task was materially aided by using the Permaquip Ballast Packer which is now available for service following completion of its shelter with running line access in Moor Road Yard. Training of volunteers in the use of the Packer has started and operating procedures are being developed

At the request of the Trust, National Highways cut back vegetation encroaching on the public footpath which runs between the M621 and the western perimeter of the Moor Road Site and cut down branches and trees overhanging the Carriage Shed and the Workshop. Unfortunately, this work was not done until after a tree fell across the south end of the Running Shed – fortunately without doing any damage.

Further work has been done to reseat loose coping stones at Park Halt, and two period lamp post have been installed on Moor Road Platform with a third planned to be installed during 2026.

A scheme was developed and costed to extend the Carriage Shed so that it could house all four coaches and thus release space in the Workshop for goods wagon repair. The estimated cost of the scheme was £42.5K but despite repeated efforts no contractor was found willing to take on the work – probably because of its small scale and the difficulty of site access. This scheme has been suspended in favour of a more ambitious project to extend the Workshop in a northerly direction by two bays. This would allow creation of a dedicated welding bay, provision of a new locker room and amenities area for volunteers, establishment of a dedicated electrical store, in the existing volunteer mess room, and creation of a locomotive spares store in what is now the locker room. The latter would be used to store items such as a brake blocks and tubes now held in the container standing beside the west wall of the Engine House and would allow this life expired container to be scrapped thus releasing space for the construction of an Engine House store for items now kept in the Display Hall. The Workshop Extension would provide covered accommodation for two additional items of rolling stock thus permitting goods wagon repair to take place under cover and allowing Display Hall items to be moved into the workshop for cosmetic work. The scope of this scheme has been agreed and detailed costs and a project plan will be produced during the first half of 2026 for review by Council. It is hoped to sign off on this project by the end of 2026 provided the cost matches the value of the benefits.

There is a concern that poor ventilation within the Carriage Shed, dictated by the need to have a fully enclosed and part lined structure for security reasons, may be exacerbating the risk of fungal attack on the coaches when kept inside the building. Costs will be obtained during 2026 for retrofitting the Carriage Shed with forced draft ventilation to lower humidity within the building when wet coaches are put inside.

Electrical Engineering:
During the year electrical engineer time has been focused on routine maintenance work such as replacement of failed security lights, PAT Testing and replacement of broken pit lamps as well as electrical work associated with locomotive repair and installation of the Guard Alarm System in the coaches.

The two period lamps installed on Moor Road Platform were wired up and commissioned ready for the 2025 Santa Special Season.

An additional CCTV Camera was installed in the Shop, which maximises the capacity of current CCTV System, .and the smoke detectors employed in the Workshop have been replaced by rate of rise temperature sensors which are better suited to the conditions found within the Workshop. All fire extinguishers used by the Trust have been replaced by modern HFC free units.

During 2026 it is planned to complete the replacement of the remaining fluorescent lamps in the Workshop by LEDS. guards alarm system.

Museum

The application for re-accreditation of the Middleton Railway Trust as a museum submitted to Arts Council England (ACE) at the start of 2025 was successful. The Trust should retain its accredited status for another five years after which it will become necessary to seek re-accreditation. However, a lot of work is now required to keep the Museum documentation and record keeping up to the standard required of an accredited museum by ACE. A start was made on this process at the end of 2025, and this will continue through 2026 and subsequent years.

The National Railway Museum (NRM) have leant a number of models and works plates from their collection to the Trust. The NRM now require that the intruder alarm fitted to buildings in which items loaned by them are housed is continually monitored. The necessary upgrades to the Engine House/Display Hall Intruder Alarm System to permit remote monitoring were completed during 2025 and the system is not remotely monitored. Thus far the revised intruder alarm system has worked without problem.

The Museum's cataloguing software, AdLibLite, is no longer supported and does not work properly with Windows 365. Several alternatives have been explored and the chosen replacement for AdLibLite is MODES which is used successfully by the Vintage Carriage Trust which is an organisation of similar size tom the Middleton Railway Trust and has a similar cataloguing requirement. Switching over to MODFES will take place in 2026.

Work has continued through the year on cataloguing the collection of papers and images given to the Trust by Sheila Bye, the Trust's former Chief Historian. Andrew Gill has completed scanning and storing in TIFF format the Trust's image collection using Omeka, free, open-source software, as the content management system. He has also started scanning various documents held by the Trust and is also using Omeka as the content management system for the scanned collection. Documents already scanned include all back numbers of "The Old Run'.

Anthony Dawson, who has a degree in archaeology from the University of Bradford and a Masters Degree in History by Research from the University of Leeds, is a museum professional and is an expert on early railways and author of several books on the topic , has developed for the Trust a set of easy to read information boards telling the story of the Middleton Railway and its influence on the development of railways nationally and internationally. These boards set a new standard in the way the Trust communicates with its visitors.

At the start of 2026, Mr Andrew Johnson, the Trust's Museum Manager stood down from the post and Mr Anthony Dawson was appointed in his place. This appointment brings a wealth of expertise in both museum management and railway history to the role and will materially help the Trust develop the museum side of its activities

During 2025 negotiations regarding the future of Hunslet 1684, which is on loan to the Trust, were concluded with the remaining member of the GWR 1338 Fund who are the owners of the locomotive. The Trust has acquired the locomotive which means that the Trust can either apply for Grant Funding to restore the locomotive or use its own funds for thjs purpose. The acquisition of the locomotive also eliminates a potential liability issue because of the way the loan agreement was worded. Now that the Trust owns Hunslet 1684 action has to be taken to explore Grant Funding to cover its restoration.

Discussions with the surviving members of the Steam Power Trust, who own North Eastern Railway 'No. 1310' and Danish State Railway 'No. 385', both on loan to the Middleton Railway Trust, with the aim of securing the long-term future of both locomotives. These should be concluded during the first quarter of 2026.

Unfortunalerly no progress has been made with the plan to cosmetically restore Greenwood & Batley (G & B) 420452, the last working coke car locomotive in the Yorkshire and the last built by Greenwood & Batley. Since the Trust does not have the volunteer labour to carry out this work, the best approach to securing the future of this historic locomotive is to employ external contractors to replace the corroded plate work, replace the missing cab access steps, refit the windows and then shot blast and repaint the locomotive before placing it on display outside the Picton Shelter. An attempt will be made to cost this work and secure Grant Funding during 2026.

For the same reasons which means that no work being done on the restoration of G & B 420452, no work was done in 2025 on the cosmetic restoration of Kitson 5469 'Conway' during 2025.

In May 2025 Susan Cooper very generously donated a 1/8th scale live steam model of 'Salamanca' built by her late father, Harry Murray, between 1938 and 1939 to the Railway. Accompanying the model was a contemporaneous article in the Model Engineer describing its construction. This is the last built of the four known 1/8 scale models of 'Salamanca' and essentially is the same as the 1/8 scale model of 'Salamanca' loaned to the Trust by the Leeds Industrial Museum. excepting that it depicts s 'Salamanca' after being fitted with an exhaust steam silencer and with the rack wheel on the correct side. The donation of this model is particularly timely because Leeds Industrial Museum are considering repatriating their model.

The work to establish contact with Sowerby Bridge Glass, who held in store the Job Isles Memorial Window which was given to the Trust by the Yorkshire Baptist Association following closure of Farsley Baptist Church where it was installed, was bought to a successful conclusion in 2025. The Window was delivered to the Railway during the second half of 2025 and was subsequently sent to Barley Studio, Dunnington, York, for restoration and mounting in a new support frame. This work should be completed during the first half of 2026 and then the Window will go on display in the Trust's Museum. It is a very fine example of Victorian memorial glass, though made in the early 1920s, and helps tell the story of Job Isles who founded the steam crane building company which bears his name.

During 2024 the noted railway historian Mark Smithers kindly placed on loan to the Trust the nameplate of Manning Wardle 1725, 'Julia Sheffield' and the works plate of Manning Wardle 1846, 'Felspar' – the last four coupled Manning Wardle built locomotive to work in the British Isles. These have now been mounted on a display wall beside the original boiler of MW 1210.

Originally the trust was planning to use QR Codes to enable visitors to find out about exhibits in the Display Hall and the history of the Middleton Railway but on the advice of Chirs Valkoinen of the NRM, the Trust's Museum Mentor, and Anthony Dawson the Trust will instead use guides to talk to visitors about the exhibits and the Railway's history. It has been the experience of the NRM , the National Trust and other Museums that this adds to the visitor experience and makes it more special. Work has begun on training the guides or docents, but the scheme will not be fully launched until 2027.

Mark Smithers was working with the Trust on a new book about Manning Wardle built industrial locomotives before his untimely death. With the support of his brother, it is hoped to complete this book during 2026.

The main work planned for 2026 will be to review the Museum catalogue and transfer it from AdLibLite to MODES software, to set up an exhibition plus other events to mark the 200th anniversary of the death of Matthew Murray, to refashion the ex LMS Brake Van Display to better highlight the role of the goods guard and the brake van in train operation and to carry out an audit of the Museum collection and dispose of any items which do not meet the Trust's collection policy.

Trust Membership and Working Volunteers:

Before starting this section, it is very pleasing to report that on 7th March 2026 at the HRA Annual Awards ceremony Fran Bailey was awarded the 'Innovation of the Year Award'. This reward is a recognition of Fran's foresight, together with that of Janet Auckland and Jenny Cowling, in recognising the need for the role of Almoner to keep in contact with working volunteers who may have fallen ill or withdrawn from an active role on the Railway through ill health or, age or relocation and provide support where appropriate. It is also an award for the exemplary manner in which Fran has developed the role.; the Trust could not have a better person than Fran to fill this important role

At the same Ceremony, whilst Geordie Brown had a very good claim on the 'Diesel or Electric Locomotive Award' for his leadership of the project to restore Hunslet 1786 to its 'as built' condition and for researching the locomotive's history and that of the place where it worked and writing this up as a book which has been published , the 7th was not his night,. However, he has the satisfaction of having made a distinctive well researched and well written addition to the cannon of industrial railway literature and was highly commended for his work.

Both Fran and Geordie and their teams are to be congratulated on their success in the HRA Annual Awards.

The lifeblood of the Trust are the working volunteers and without their labours nothing would be accomplished. All the commercial, engineering and other activities of the Railway are critically dependant on having volunteers with the skills and time needed to both maintain the current programme and develop and implement new initiatives aimed at improving the financial performance of the Trust and better discharging the Trust's charitable objectives. Progress is critically dependant on volunteer hours.

Trust membership and numbers of 'card carrying' working volunteers for the years ending 31st December 2020 to 31st December 2025 is tabled below.

Year Ending 31st December	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Trust membership (inc. Association Members)	241	253	271	258	282	296
Working Volunteers (inc Association Members).	64	67	71	73	77	72

In 2025 Trust membership by category was as follows:

Year Ending 31st December 2025	No. Members by Category
Trust Ordinary Members	87
Trust Life Members	78
Trust Pensioner Members	93
Trust Association (Family) Members	28
Trust Junior Association Members	10

The Youth Team, which is for members under 18, had up to nine regular members in 2024 and Colm Connolly-Taylor, Joe Brewer and John Linkins served as team leaders. Regrettably because of family and other commitments the team leaders have had to reduce their commitment to the Youth Team. From 2025 no members under 16 can be accepted and currently the team is not functioning in the way that it once did because currently there are no working volunteers able to devote the time to then Youth Team that is required to make it function effectively. There is a requirement for someone to step up and taken on the running, as their prime commitment to the Railway, the Youth Team which is a very important route to bring in young people who will become the mainstay of the Railway in the future.

Trust membership remains on an upward trend but in 2025 there was decline in the number of 'registered' working volunteers for the first time in five years. This reflectors departures from the cadre of Working Volunteers for a variety of reasons including sadly death and the failure to add enough younger members to replace losses. The increase in the number of 'registered' working volunteers since 2020 is not mirrored by an increase in the number of volunteer hours worked which has declined and significant shortages of volunteer time are being felt in areas such as traffic, workshop and track maintenance. This is affecting the rate at which projects are bought to completion and the number of projects which can be undertaken and ultimately may restrict the Trust's ability to run the current train service. It is worth noting that without the work of the teams provided by the Training providers the Trust would struggle to maintain the P.W. without depleting the number of volunteers in the workshop. The problems with respect to train crew are exacerbated by the time required to train new train crew and the restrictions caused by the Trust's limited number of steam and diesel operating days. The experiment of running steam training turns has been tried but the results did not justify the high direct costs (fuel, lubricants, water etc`) and diversion of volunteers from other works.

The work carried out on the Railway by the working volunteers equates to approximately 11 full time equivalents which is a measure of the value of the work they carry out. This figure does not include the time spent on administrative and other tasks by members working off Railway premises. The Trust desperately needs more working volunteers to enable it to fully discharge its five and ten year plans Not only has competition for the time of individual Trust members increased due to family and work demands, which must of course come first, and other opportunities to spend leisure time but competition for volunteers is increasing as the voluntary sector expands.

On-going attempts are being made to work with South Leeds Community Groups including Holbeck Together and St Luke Cares to see if the volunteering opportunities the Trust offers might be of interest to their members but so far without success. During June 2025 a team from Cummins Diesels helped with several projects at Moor Road including clearance of litter and tree branches from the Balm Road Branch, perimeter fence painting and tidying up the Moor Road Suite. The contribution of the Cummins Team is much valued by the Trust, and it is hoped that tea from this organisation will visit the Railway in 2026. Schneider Electric Ltd. enquired about a volunteer party visiting the Railway in 2025 but unfortunately the Trust could not come up with a date which worked for both parties; hopefully their volunteer team will be able to attend in 2026. However, before their Team can come down all tasks that might be engaged in have to be Risk Assessed and Method Statements produced which adds to the workload of hosting them

The Trust needs to put more effort into both attracting and retaining new working volunteers if it is to survive. The key role in this process is that of Volunteer Co-ordinator whose primary role is to liaise with the other voluntary groups in the Leeds Metropolitan Area promoting the Trust's offering and supporting the recruitment and training process for new volunteers. Whilst this role remains unfilled, leaflets explaining the specific tasks that volunteers might undertake on the Railway as distinct

from the old style 'please turn up and help approach', have been drafted and are being used by Voluntary Action Leeds. There is an opportunity to promote volunteering on the Middleton Railway on the Voluntary Action Website, but this has not been progressed because of lack of management time. More work also has to be done on the introduction of volunteers to the Railway; the current generation of volunteers expect to be assigned specific tasks from the start and to be trained in them so that their precious free time is not wasted and they need support as they begin to navigate the culture of the Middleton Railway. To this end it was hoped to start re-establishing the role of Volunteer Liaison Officer in 2025 with specific focus on supporting new volunteers, but this did not really happen. This task is also one which would fall into the remit of the Volunteer Co-ordinator.

During 2026 a list of responsibilities of the Volunteer Co-Ordinator will be prepared and feelers will be put out with a view to securing grant funding to employ someone in this role for three years if no Trust members is willing and able to take it on. This is an approach taken by the Tanfield Railway and is being explored by Vintage Carriage trust.

Future Developments:

The key objective for 2025 is to not just finish the year cash positive but to generate sufficient revenue to cover at least some of the depreciation charge – which in simplistic terms equates to putting money aside for future repairs. This objective dominates all commercial considerations and events will not be launched unless there is a reasonable chance that they will at least cover their direct costs.

The biggest external challenge for both the Trust and the Trust's visitor base is the continued increase in costs which in the last 12 months and on into 2026 is being driven by factors completely outside the `Trust's control. In response to these pressures the Tust works hard to ensured that it spends its money carefully and wisely but does not defer expenditure if that potentially risks mortgaging its future. The impact of continuing price inflation impacts on potential visitor spending power and may deter some visitors from coming to the Railway though other potential visitors may see a visit to the Middleton Railway as being a more affordable option to what they might otherwise have done. Recognising the need to stay price competitive with other family visitor attractions in the Leeds area has meant that in 2026 the Trust will not charge extra for event days, excepting Santa Specials, and will allow children under the age of 5 to travel free. These pricing measures will also be accompanied by measures such as the children's craft workshops to add value to the Middleton Railway visit and by working to improve the effectiveness of the Trust's publicity.

The 2026 events program will follow a similar pattern to the 2025 program excepting that it will feature a Halloween Event for the first time in many years and for reasons outlined above 'A Taste of Yorkshire' will be suspended until 2027 whilst it is remodelled.

2026 marks the 200th anniversary of the death of Matthew Murray who, more than any other person, is responsible for the Middleton Railway having such an important role in the development of railways. This event will be marked by a program of three talks about his life and works, a special exhibition on the Mezzanine Floor of the Display Hall and the naming of Hunslet built locomotive 6981 'Salamanca'. The latter event will feature a group of reenactors portraying member of His Majesty's 33rd Regiment of Foot (A Yorkshire Regiment) dressed in the uniforms they would have worn in the Napoleonic Era and they will also put on demonstrations of armour handling and craft skills of the late Georgian era such as spinning. This promises to be a very good event and one which might lead to a long-term relationship with the reenactors.

During 2026 work will continue attempting to secure a new Moor Road Site lease which eliminates some of the restrictions built into the current lease such as the prohibition on the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages on the Moor Road Site without the express permission of the site landlord, Leeds City Council, and extending the duration of the lease from 30 to 99 years to give the security of tenure required to attract grant funding for major capital projects. Thus far Leeds City Council has declined to talk about altering the terms of the lease and the best they are prepared to offer with respect to duration of the lease is a letter of comfort advising that they are minded to grant the Trust another 30-year lease when next it comes up for renewal.

Work will also continue revising the Trust's governance and upgrading the Trust's Safety Management System to bring it into complaisance with the ORR's latest guidance and work will continue to bring the Trust's road crossings into compliance with the requirements of the Trust's regulators.

Acknowledgements:

None of the work covered by this report would have happened without the commitment and hard work of the Working Volunteers of the Middleton Railway Trust. This report is very much a tribute to their labours. It would also not have happened without the often-unsung work of those who have taken on leadership roles within the Trust. Their work, often done at home

and out of sight, is the vital glue which keeps the whole enterprise functioning. A particular word of thanks goes to those Working Volunteers who have taken on these often thankless and demanding roles to help ensure the survival of the Railway.

Charles Milner; Chair, Middleton Railway Trust.

Philip Calvert, Treasurer, Middleton Railway Trust