Press Release

10 June 2024

Hamilton station becomes platform for transformed train carriage promoting positive mental health

- *Train operators support art project to champion mental health in South Lanarkshire*
- *'Hope in Hamilton' created by people being supported with their mental wellbeing*
- *Interactive art piece at Hamilton Central station aims to bring hope to community*

A train carriage which has been transformed into an interactive art installation has been unveiled at Hamilton Central station as part of a community project to champion positive mental health.

Located on platform 1, the large-scale artwork titled 'Hope in Hamilton' features visual messages collected from members of the community to provide voices from people in the local area. It is designed to raise awareness and understanding of mental health.

The unique art piece is the result of a project by Rail 74 CRP (Community Rail Partnership) – a charity that aims to deliver benefits along the Rutherglen to Hamilton Central Line.

Supported through Avanti West Coast's Station Community Fund, as well as funding from CrossCountry and ScotRail, the installation aims to create a sense of hope with a display of uplifting messages that can be viewed on a ticker display on the platform.

The project involved men in South Lanarkshire who are being supported with their mental wellbeing who contributed to the piece of interactive art. It was designed to help participants by giving them a creative outlet and an opportunity to interact with others who have shared experiences.

With the support of Samaritans, a series of workshops were held over eight months for members of the community including patients from NHS Beckford Lodge, individuals being supported by Lanarkshire Action for Mental Health, and Police Scotland Youth volunteers to design the art installation.

Award-winning artist, Rob Mulholland, from Arcadia Sculpture Centre in Loch Lomond, brought the participants' ideas to life using a train carriage that was donated by rail manufacturer, Alstom.

Speaking about the development of Hope in Hamilton he said: "It has been a fantastic and an emotional journey. Connecting with residents from Beckford Lodge we wanted to tackle the issue of mental health by creating something meaningful and purposeful."

"The mantras of wellbeing are the messages the community wanted to convey to anyone who found themselves at Hamilton Central station. It was important to connect this to the railway, so the ticker displays found at stations inspired the design. Seeing the installation here at the station is brilliant. We hope it will help people for whatever reason brought them here", added Rob.

The artwork was officially unveiled ahead of International Men's Health Week (10 – 16 June), which is designed to shine a spotlight on male health issues and encourage men of all ages to talk about them.

Suzie McCheyne, Development support at Rail 74 CRP, said: "We would like to say a big thank you to everyone who has participated. We've been delighted to be able to create and run this project in Hamilton. We want it to give a sense of hope *from* the community *to* the community! It's a positive way to support each other when times are tough and we're hoping we can build on the electronic mantras so we can make lives better."

Joanna Buckley, Community Manager at Avanti West Coast, said: "We want to support causes that matter most to communities along our route, so we're proud to have played a part in raising awareness and understanding of mental health in South Lanarkshire through this amazing project.

"Through our work with Samaritans, we know it's the small things that can make a huge difference to our wellbeing and this project has given people the chance to engage in art therapy and connect with others who have a shared experience – championing positive mental health. We want everyone to feel the sense of hope the art installation symbolises, so those who are struggling can talk or seek help."

Christina McKelvie MSP, for Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse, said: "The Hope in Hamilton art installation is a great talking point and a visual reminder that we all need a little support in life from time to time. The use of a recycled section of a train carriage is inspired and unique and the scrolling, visual messages of hope are direct quotes, collected from members of the local community to remind people that they are not alone.

"It is a good opportunity to speak to a neighbour, friend, colleague or loved one, just to check in with how they are doing, and to share some the anxieties that people are feeling

themselves. The positive affirmations displayed by the artwork may even spark a conversation on the platform. So, please talk to each other, and never forget that there is support and help out there."

John Wilson, ScotRail Community Liaison Executive, said: "ScotRail is proud to support the Hope in Hamilton project. Rail 74 and Rob have done a fantastic job in bringing this unique piece to life.

"We believe that the Hope in Hamilton installation will help raise awareness and encourage people to think about their own mental health, as well as their family, friends, or colleagues at work who might be struggling."

Alex Bray, Stakeholder Liaison Manager at CrossCountry, said: "At CrossCountry, we believe in the power of community and the importance of mental health support. We are proud to support Rail 74's 'Hope in Hamilton' project, which is dedicated to providing essential mental health awareness and provide a sense of hope within the community."

Robbie Livingston, Senior Project Manager at Alstom, said: "The Hope in Hamilton project has been a truly transformative initiative, and we at Alstom are incredibly honoured to have contributed to such an important cause. By repurposing a train carriage, we've not only helped create a powerful art installation but also fostered a platform for the community to share their thoughts and experiences. This project exemplifies the impact of community collaboration and creativity in promoting mental health awareness, and our involvement has certainly sparked important conversations among staff at our Glasgow depot, as well as across our sites in the UK and Ireland."

Samaritans volunteers are always available to listen, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, free of charge on the phone - 116 123 or email – jo@samaritans.org.

ENDS

About Avanti West Coast

Avanti West Coast, operator of intercity rail services on the West Coast Main Line, is a joint venture between FirstGroup and Trenitalia, delivering a cleaner, greener railway that drives the West Coast forward.

We're on a mission to revolutionise train travel. Our refurbed Pendolinos have returned to the rails with a £117m investment that's delivering the best in class comfort. Known as the UK's hardest working fleet, the programme is transforming all 56 of these iconic trains boasting better seats,

improved lighting, new interior carpets, customer-friendly passenger information screens, additional luggage space, power points at every seat and refurbished toilets.

Our new Evero fleet was introduced in June 2024 and will replace our Voyagers. Built by Hitachi, the 23-strong fleet, consisting of 10 seven-carriage electric trains and 13 five-carriage bi-modes, will serve routes from London to the Midlands, Chester, North Wales and the North West, leading to a substantial cut in carbon emissions with an increase in seats, and offering improved comfort. Quieter and roomier, with more reliable Wi-Fi, wireless charging for electrical devices and a real-time customer information system, these new trains are the result of a £350m investment in sustainable travel.

We're tackling climate change wherever we can, from reducing energy and water use to training drivers in eco-driving techniques and sourcing food and drink from local suppliers. Our goal is to be net zero carbon by 2031. We're on track.

For the latest news, visit the Avanti West Coast Media Centre:
https://newsdesk.avantiwestcoast.co.uk/

Press Office: 0845 000 3333