Press Release

21 January 2026

All aboard! Thousands visit exhibition train celebrating UK's railways at Crewe station

- *Avanti West Coast hosted exhibition train, Inspiration, and its miniature model as part of its year-long tour of UK*
- *Nearly 3,000 people visited free, family-friendly attraction during its five-day stop*
- *Inspiration train is a mobile museum created to mark 200 years of modern railway*

Avanti West Coast welcomed nearly 3,000 people onboard a unique touring exhibition train at Crewe station as part of celebrations to mark 200 years of the UK's railways.

Named *Inspiration*, the exhibition train, which has been co-curated by Railway 200 and the National Railway Museum, stopped at Crewe between Thursday 15 and 19 January to give people the opportunity to learn about the past, present and future of rail.

The free attraction, which is part of a campaign to mark the industry anniversary known as Railway 200, offered visitors the chance to come onboard to experience a series of exhibitions set across different carriages.

Inspiration's visit to Crewe was hosted by Avanti West Coast, who manage the station. It was stop number 30 on its tour of the UK – part of the Railway 200 celebrations running from 2025 until June 2026 - and marked the halfway point of the train's year-long journey.

Nearly 300 young people from schools and colleges in the North West and North Wales, including Crewe Engineering and Design UTC (University Technical College), and Underwood West Academy in Crewe visited the train. These visits were arranged as part of Avanti West Coast's Feel Good Futures initiative, which aims to educate young people about the railway and careers within the industry.

Families, groups and members of the public also came onboard *Inspiration*, which showcases the history, innovations and careers of the railway, and features interactive displays and activities for people of all ages.

Over the five-day event, local organisations supporting careers in rail, including the UK's leading train supplier, Alstom, and infrastructure group, Balfour Beatty, were at Crewe station to highlight the rich railway heritage of the town.

Record producer and rail enthusiast, Pete Waterman, and his team of rail fans, Railnuts, joined the weekend's events by displaying the latest addition to their record-breaking model railway – a tiny version of *Inspiration*.

Taryn Banks, Avanti West Coast Station Manager at Crewe, said: "Welcoming thousands of people onboard *Inspiration* during its stop in Crewe has been fantastic. Crewe has a proud railway heritage and is a key hub on the West Coast Main Line, so it's been great to see so much enthusiasm from people of all ages. It shows just how important the railway is to the town.

"We've enjoyed working with local organisations to celebrate 200 years of the railways and would like to say a big thank you to them, as well as the many volunteers who helped make *Inspiration's* visit a success. We hope the event sparked a passion for rail among the next generation, so our railways can continue to thrive for years to come."

Emma Roberts, Programme Manager for Railway 200, said: "Crewe has an amazing history as one of the world's first railway towns, so we were delighted that thousands braved the January weather to visit *Inspiration*.

"A huge thank you to everyone who made this visit unforgettable, and a special thanks to the volunteers, staff, Avanti West Coast and our many local partners."

Connor Naismith, MP for Crewe and Nantwich, said: "The Railway 200 Inspiration train journey wouldn't be complete without a stop at Crewe station. The story of Crewe is interlocked with the railways and, as an industry, it continues to support the livelihoods of many residents today.

"Rail is part of our shared history and our sustainable future. *Inspiration* is a fantastic representation of that relationship, and I hope it encourages people to learn more about our remarkable infrastructure networks."

Steven Fergusson, Deputy Principal at Crewe Engineering and Design University Technical College (UTC), said: "At Crewe UTC we are proud to give our students opportunities like visiting the Railway 200 Inspiration train, which showcase the exciting and diverse careers available in the rail sector. With Crewe's rich railway heritage and our close partnerships with local rail firms, we ensure our students gain real-world insight and support to pursue future careers in this vital industry."

Following its visit to Crewe, *Inspiration's* next stop on its journey is East Lancashire Railway in Bury from Wednesday 21 to Saturday 24 January.

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About Railway 200

2025 marked the 200th anniversary of the modern railway, inspired by the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway in 1825, a journey that changed the world forever. Under the banner of Railway 200, nationwide celebrations took place throughout 2025, showcasing how the railway shaped Britain and the world and how its pioneering pedigree continues today and is shaping tomorrow. The Railway 200 exhibition train *Inspiration* tours until June 2026.

Railway 200

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. Avanti West Coast serves key UK cities, including London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow as well as North Wales.

We're on a mission to be the transport of choice – connecting customers and communities along the West Coast. Our award-winning Pendolino refurbishment programme transformed the UK's hardest working fleet with all 56 of the iconic trains providing best-in-class comfort.

Our Evero fleet, which offers more seats, improved comfort, and a substantial cut to carbon emissions, was introduced in June 2024 and is the result of a £350m investment in sustainable travel. Built by Hitachi, the 23-strong fleet, consisting of 10 seven-carriage electric trains and 13 five-carriage bi-modes, serves routes from London to the Midlands, Chester, North Wales and the North West.

We want to make a positive difference to the people and places we serve – helping to drive economic growth, green travel, and break down barriers. Our efforts to contribute to society and enable people to benefit from the opportunities rail offers through purpose-led initiatives including Feel Good Field Trips and award-winning female driver recruitment campaign has seen us create over £1billion in social value impact.

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/

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