

# Press Release

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## Blowing away the winter blues: Clarinet player brings joy with performances at Penrith station

- *Avanti West Coast welcomes performances from local clarinettist at Penrith*
- *Musician visits station to enjoy company of others and keep them entertained*
- *Passengers treated to music of all genres when travelling to and from the station*

A clarinet player who performs at Penrith station is hoping to bring some joy to people this winter and help tackle feelings of loneliness through music.

Philip Lowe, 79, is welcomed every week by the Avanti West Coast team at Penrith to perform songs of all genres for people travelling to and from the station.

The clarinettist, who lives three miles from the Cumbrian station, has been playing music on the platforms for 10 years to enjoy some company.

Philip's wife has Alzheimer's and his visits to the Penrith help him feel less isolated by providing the opportunity of socialising with others. He finds his musical performances invite conversation from passengers who are waiting for their train.

"Sometimes I get a bit lonely, so I come to the station to play my clarinet," explains Philip.

"I love having a laugh – it makes me feel good. I want to bring that feeling to other people through my music. My instrument helps to break the ice."

Philip, who is originally from Manchester, has been playing the clarinet since he was 12-years-old and comes from a musical family. When his father finished work for the day as a cotton spinner, he would play the piano in clubs in Manchester. While Philip's mother, who worked as a garment maker, sang in her spare time.

Despite being a trained printer, the pensioner was fortunate enough to make a career out of his favourite passion. Philip did a printing apprenticeship that took him all over the world, including Australia, where he became a piano tuner – a job that led to a career in music for over 40 years. During that time, he owned a music shop in Lincoln for two decades, refurbishing instruments.

"Music gives me a sense of nostalgia – it reminds me of my memories, parents, friends, places, and adventures. My wife and I sing together and it's a great comfort for us," he added.

The musician carries his clarinet everywhere he goes and can often be found entertaining audiences across Cumbria. He enjoys taking inspiration from his surroundings and the people he meets.

Philip said: "I've played at railway stations elsewhere in the world but there is nowhere else quite like Penrith. It is a great place to be – the staff and customers are friendly; they tolerate my music and the Avanti West Coast team have made me and my wife incredibly welcome. I hope my performances bring comfort to people and inspire others to play music."

Mark Green, Avanti West Coast Station Manager at Penrith, said: "We love welcoming Philip to the station to play his clarinet. He offers a warm greeting to those travelling to and from Penrith and we enjoy hearing his music as much as he enjoys playing it!

"Philip brings smiles to so many faces on the platforms of Penrith with his conversation and songs. He's a friendly face, which we're sure offers comfort to everyone he comes across."

Local Services Manager for Alzheimer's Society in Cumbria, Penny Giles, said: "It's wonderful to hear how music is helping Philip feel more connected with his community, while also bringing joy to others. At Alzheimer's Society we know that music has tremendous therapeutic benefits for people living with dementia and their carers, who can become quite isolated. Our most recent research shows that one in three people with dementia will feel cut off this Christmas and many carers will also experience a sense of isolation. As one in three people born today will develop dementia in their lifetime it's incredibly important that all of society becomes more dementia friendly. We applaud Philip and the Avanti West Coast team at Penrith for raising awareness of the issue and wish them many happy performances."

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#### 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 refurbished Pendolinos are returning to the rails, with a £117m investment that's delivering best in class comfort. Rebuilt using sustainable materials wherever possible, including tables made from recycled plastic bottles, our upgraded fleet offers 25,000 brand new seats, free Wi-Fi, onboard recycling and much more.

New Hitachi trains are set to replace our Voyager trains from 2024, leading to a 61% cut in carbon emissions. Quieter and roomier, with more reliable Wi-Fi, wireless charging for electrical devices and a real-time customer information system, the new 23-strong fleet is 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.

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