



The winners of the 2024 Cheshire Best Kept Stations with awards chairman Mark Barker in the foreground

# On track for success

Honouring the people who make arrivals and departures a pleasure

PHOTOS: Ian Hulme

A magnificent 17 took the honours at the Cheshire Best Kept Stations awards evening held at Crewe Alexandra Football Club. The 2024 awards were presented before 180 guests, including 10 borough and town mayors, by Craig Harrop, regional director West & Central for Northern Railway. The honours go to railway stations and the people who care for them in the old Cheshire county boundary. Nantwich Station was crowned overall champion, winning the Best Kept Station

Award. Prestbury Station won the first Photographic Award, run in conjunction with *Cheshire Life* magazine and decided on a public vote. It also won the Northern Sustainability Award – the first time a station has won two trophies in the same year. The Mid Cheshire Line Station Volunteers were presented with the John Hobbs Award for Excellence, for their display of a station garden at RHS Tatton, which won a Silver-Gilt medal.

Three stations: Bebington, Prestbury and Styal, won awards for the very first time in the 22 years of Cheshire Best Kept Stations. Mr Harrop said: ‘It’s fantastic to be part of this celebration of volunteers and the local railway community, who through their skills, passion and hard work, help to brighten up stations across the county. Our community partners are the heartbeat of the railway and we’re proud to work closely with them to deliver such a wide-ranging positive impact across Cheshire and the North of England.’

## WINNERS



Back row – Craig Harrop, Gina Haigh. Front row – Janice Neve, Josie Rayworth (3 Counties Connected CRO), June Twelves, Douglas Bowyer-Bates, Trisha James, Jaquie Collin, Kathie Richardson, Malcolm Reid, Mark Barker

**CHESHIRE BEST KEPT STATION AWARD: Nantwich Station**  
An ongoing horticultural triumph. When the old concrete waiting shelters were replaced with glass and metal structures, the 3 Counties Connected Community Rail Partnership saw the opportunity to use them for an art display, working with Nantwich Academy Primary School pupils to create designs based on the town’s rich architectural heritage and the theme of floral town to link with the station’s gardens. Thanks to the teamwork of CRP, the school and volunteers, the station is a splendid gateway the town can be truly proud of.



Craig Harrop, Simon Harrop, Cllr Wendy Johnson (Mayor of Warrington), Julie Easty, Conor Easty, Beverley Hallam (mayor’s consort) and Mark Barker

**HALTON & WARRINGTON AWARD: Glazebrook Station**  
This group continues to do great work, not only in keeping the station looking at its best with excellent planters and heritage displays but also in engaging the community with an arts and crafts event on the station platform and in organising a D-Day celebration event, quizzes and Christmas carols.



Craig Harrop, Karina Stanley, Sarah Muir, Kay Lloyd-Haighon, Mark Pickup, Ann Pickup, Ian Stuart, Harry Allen, Elaine Skeffington, Jim Whitaker, Jon Leigh, Mark Barker

**THE JOHN HOBBS AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE: The Mid Cheshire Line Station Volunteers**  
The display created by the volunteers at RHS Tatton 2024 would have been a major achievement for any professional horticulturist and was a labour of love. The border imagined a station garden on the Mid Cheshire Line and featured a rail track, porter’s barrow, luggage and a white picket fence to evoke a station. The flowers were outstanding and a Silver-Gilt Medal was awarded. For a professional, this would be a crowning achievement, so how much more so for a group of station volunteers?



WINNERS



**NORTHERN SUSTAINABILITY AWARD: Prestbury Station**  
The group at Prestbury has significantly improved the quality of plant and wildlife, the environment and ecological sustainability. The station garden had been neglected for years, was overgrown and lacked structure and access. A rigorous approach to sustainable practices, including wildflower planting and organic products and low maintenance has transformed the garden and planters around the station.



**NORTHERN BEST STAFFED STATION AWARD: Rose Hill Station**  
A warm welcome is in store for passengers at this station. The waiting room is a home from home, gardening activity is imaginative, including an orchard and, of course, there are roses. The artwork on the wall facing the station building demonstrates the community involvement in this much-loved station.  
**Highly Commended: Meols Station**



**ART PROJECT AWARD: Wrenbury Station**  
The station, serving a small isolated rural community, was transformed into a vibrant public art space that reflects the unique spirit and identity of the village. The aim was to enhance the station's visual appeal while fostering stronger community ties. Funded by the 3 Counties Connected Community Rail Partnership, the project was delivered through a collaboration between local artist Cathy Williams of Art Space, 50 students from the village primary school and the station adopters from Transport for Wales.  
**Highly Commended: Marple Station**



**IN BLOOM AWARD: Hoylake Station**  
Attractive, well-tended beds and planters give colour and interest all around the station. The expertise of the group is apparent and its work has spread to other stations on the line. A worthy winner.



**CHRIS DALE TRAVELWATCH AWARD FOR LARGE STATIONS: Stalybridge Station**  
A historic mainline station that has seen major improvements to track and signalling, matched by investment in modern passenger facilities, including a Changing Places toilet, which makes it a pleasure to use. However, its most well-known facility is the historic real ale Station Buffet, which guarantees a good pint and cosy surroundings. This makes the station a destination in its own right.



**WIRRAL AWARD: Bebington Station**  
This station has been much improved with lovely artwork in the subway depicting nature, local landmarks and heritage pictures of the station. There are plenty of well-maintained planters and artwork by Wirral Grammar School. A great effort by a volunteer organisation and first-time winners, Love Bebington.



**CHESHIRE WEST & CHESTER AWARD: Delamere Station**  
This is a picture-postcard country station and visitor hotspot cared for by an adopter and students with learning difficulties from Petty Pool Vocational College. The café is used by the many walkers enjoying the surrounding forest.



**CHESHIRE EAST AWARD: Alderley Edge Station**  
The Friends Group is hard-working, ingenious and ambitious. There is plenty of planting on forecourts and platforms, including a herb garden on a pallet and the upcycling of a sandbox. High-quality artwork shows the beautiful natural environment of the village, local maps and heritage, and the history of the Manchester-Crewe line. A station at the heart of its community.  
**Highly Commended: Disley Station**



**MERSEYRAIL BEST-KEPT GARDEN AWARD: Alsager Station**  
Carefully tended and shaped shrubbery, neat beds and a profusion of wildflowers are in harmony with artwork and heritage displays that give the station a well-cared-for impression. The flowerbeds even sport Christmas decorations over the festive period.



## WINNERS



Craig Harrop, Mark Angelucci, Jan Farrell, Angie Clark, Janice Crossfield, Mike Hanson, Alf Clark, Neil Farrell, Mark Barker

### TRANSPORT FOR GREATER MANCHESTER AWARD: Romiley Station

This is a group thoroughly embedded in its community, working with local schools and businesses, supporting charities such as the community-run Stockport Hydro, promoting walks from the station and publishing a monthly newsletter. There are ambitious gardening and landscaping projects on site.

**Highly Commended:** Hale Station



Craig Harrop, Becky Styles (Northern), Charlotte Radford, Joanne Goodwin (Cheshire Life), Mark Barker

### THE CHESHIRE LIFE PHOTOGRAPHIC AWARD: Prestbury Station

The Prestbury image, *The Revitalised Station Master's Garden*, was taken by Charlotte Radford.

Goostrey Station was second with *Keeping Up Appearances*, taken by Christina Burgess. Styal Station was third, with *New Welcome Board*, by Sarah Ward.



Craig Harrop, Sarah Morgan, Fraser Wilson, Megan Dingle, Christina Burgess, Mark Barker

### COMMUNITY RAIL NETWORK AWARD FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Goostrey Station

This group is well known and regarded in the community, participating in the annual Rose Day, village festival and open gardens. The latter was used to recruit gardeners. Working with the WI a large Coronation wall-hanging depicting the village was unveiled during the year. Art activities bring young people and other groups to work in the flourishing Art Studio at the station. The website is a mine of information about sustainable travel. Cubs, Scouts, and Beavers help with the gardening and learn about rail safety.

**Highly Commended:** Altrincham Interchange



Craig Harrop, Rob Sawyer, Gemma Nichols, Sarah Ward-Novak, Mark Barker

### RISING STAR AWARD: Styal Station

When the Village Association adopted the station, activity on the station was energised. As well as volunteer working parties to tidy up and paint, rail safety training was organised for classes at the village school featuring Arlo the Badger and his adventures. An eye-catching map mural features local attractions, leaving visitors in no doubt where they are.



Craig Harrop, Val Whitaker, Jim Whitaker, Mark Barker

### BEST UNSTAFFED STATION AWARD: Mouldsworth Station

The volunteers here have provided vibrant and colourful planters on both platforms. The original station building and restored station seat complete the picture of a charming country station.