Current Position

1. East Lancashire Railway – The Visitor Attraction

1.1 A strong visitor base

The ELR can be rightly proud of its achievements over the past 25 years, preserving a major asset for the region with no ongoing revenue support and raising funds through a variety of effective means. Although the number of visits to the railway has been static for the last few years, the performance has been strong relative to other attractions in the North West. The railway is attracting just over 100,000 visits each year.

1.2 Some strengths but some weaknesses

The idea of a steam and heritage railway is not necessarily unique in concept as there are many examples in the UK of heritage railways operating as visitor attractions. That is not to say though that the visitor experience at steam and heritage railways is not unique. When executed well, the visitor experience can be exciting, engaging, immersive and inspiring. Visitors are able to see and appreciate the sheer scale and engineering achievement of a steam locomotive; they hear the blast of the steam whistle, they feel the heat of the furnace and they smell the combination of coal, steam and oil. Older generations feel a sense of nostalgia whilst younger generations get a sense of awe and wonder. When coupled with a compelling story or narrative, steam railways can be very appealing as visitor attractions.

The current experience on offer at the East Lancashire Railway has particular strengths and weaknesses which resulted in strong growth in the early years but in more recent years, the performance, in terms of number of visits, has remained static. The Railway has a very strong events programme, particularly with the Santa Specials and Thomas days which attract around 40,000 visits each year in addition to a number of other events that attract a further 30,000 visits.

The railway however, is potentially disappointing for visitors when they arrive at stations. When passengers arrive at Heywood for example, there is the perception of nothing to do and as such passengers simply get on the next return train. The situation at Rawtenstall is the same.

There has also potentially been a change in the nature of perceptions of heritage railways. When the East Lancashire Railway first opened in the 1980s, there was something novel and unique about the experience. Today there are many of them in all areas of the country. The ELR claims to have moved with the market and positioned itself as a family attraction rather than just something for the railway enthusiast.

Our view is that while the ELR's events programme is strong in attracting over 70,000 visits each year, the real challenge in lifting the total number of visits to **200,000** per annum, lies in improving (and then selling to key markets) the core experience on offer to visitors on non-event days.

1.3 Consumers have become more discerning

As consumers have become increasingly affluent in the UK, they have become more discerning about how they spend their leisure time and money. In the North West, the physical regeneration of cities like Manchester and Liverpool and the development of high quality destinations such as the Trafford Centre and Chill FactorE have meant that consumers are now more 'destination-savvy' with higher expectations than ever before.

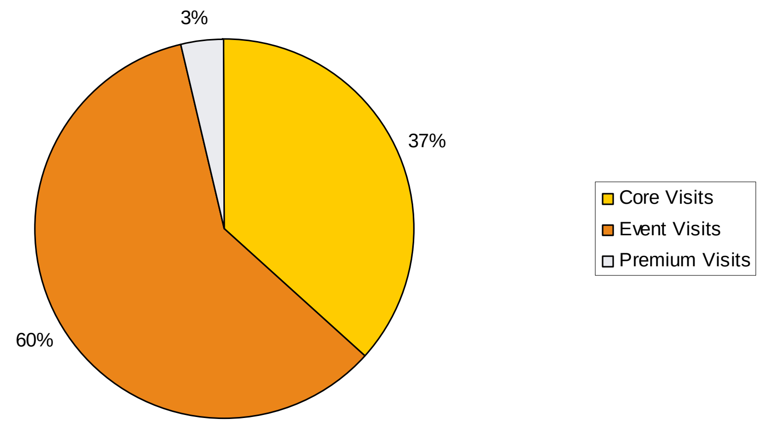
Tastes and preferences have changed; consumers are no longer willing to pay high prices for unhealthy fast food accompanied by poor service for example. Consumers now seek quality products and authentic experiences which must represent value for money and time. Within ELR's competitive market context, we are already seeing the decline of visitor destinations that have failed to invest in quality products and failed to align themselves with contemporary consumer tastes and preferences. Pleasureland Southport ceased trading in 2006, Camelot Theme Park saw admissions decline by 45% between 2000 and 2007 and has consequently gone into receivership while Blackpool Pleasure Beach and Blackpool Tower have both seen admissions decline by 20% over the last few years.

As the UK economy moves towards recession, it is likely that people will spend less on leisure, recreation and fun in the short term. This should not put off long term strategic planning for visitor destinations. Moreover, a short term decline in the economy will probably mean that the discerning nature of consumers will become even more acute as they choose to visit and spend money only in the **best** destinations: those that provide the best value for money and time whilst delivering engaging, memorable, personal and quality experiences.

1.4 Analysis of ticket sales

As shown in Figure 15, our analysis of ticket sales data highlights that the majority of visits made to the East Lancashire Railway are for special events (60%). Only 37% of visits to the railway are on non-event days – we refer to these as core visits (this also includes education and group bookings). The two premium products, Footplate Experience and the Red Rose Diners, make up 3% of the visits to the railway.

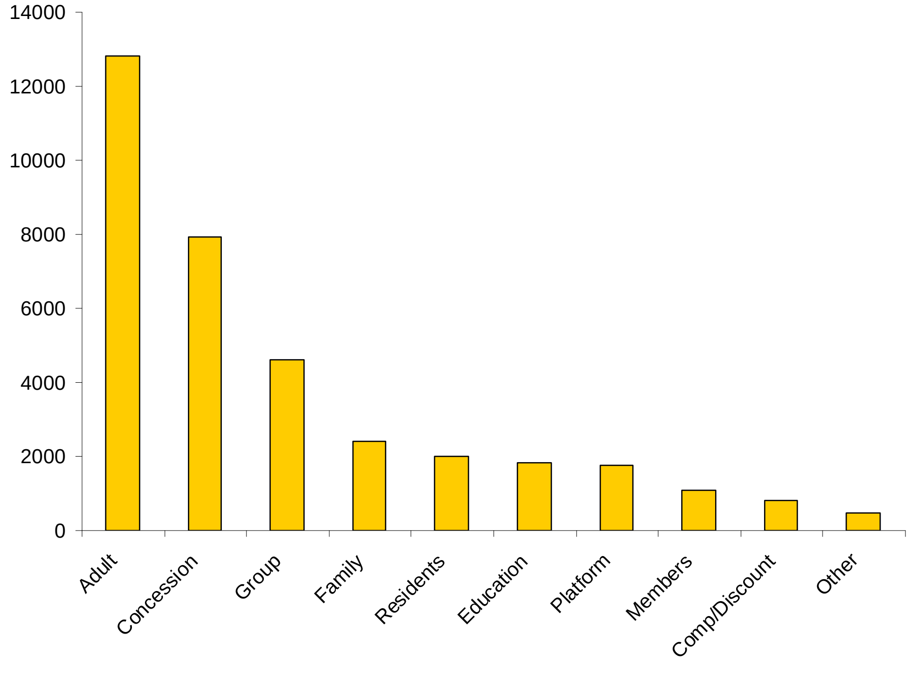
Figure 15: Core Visits v Special Events



Source: ELLR Company internal data and Locum analysis

Figure 16 shows the types of tickets sold on non event days. The majority of tickets sold are adult tickets. There appears to be an opportunity to grow the number of family, groups and education tickets sold.

Figure 16: Types of ticket sold on core visit days



Source: ELLR Company internal data and Locum analysis

1.5 Analysis of revenue sources

In the last financial year (ending 31st March 2008), the operating company (ELLR) generated revenue of just over £2million. This includes the £600,000 contract with Carillion, which is treated as an exceptional item. At just over 100,000 visits per annum, income for the ELLR is normally around £1.4m.

Figure 17 shows that visitor related income for the year ending March 2008 was £1,272,300 with a further £174,100 coming from non-visitor related sources such as bank interest, rent, scrap sales and hire of locomotives.

Figure 17: ELLR Company Income

Revenue Group	*Revenue*	*% of total*	*Spend Per Head*
Fares - Core Visits	£233,700	16%	£6.68
Fares - Thomas Events	£139,500	10%	£8.72
Fares - Santa Events	£238,500	16%	£9.94
Fares - Steam Events	£71,400	5%	£8.02
Fares - Diesel Events	£41,500	3%	£7.55
Fares - Other Events	£50,300	3%	£5.07
Premium - Red Rose Diners	£108,700	8%	£31.06
Premium - Footplate Experience	£60,200	4%	£150.00
Shop	£55,000	4%	£0.53
Buffet	£38,700	3%	£0.37
Trackside Pub	£234,800	16%	N/A
Non Visitor	£174,100	12%	N/A
Total	**£1,446,400**		**£11.76**

Source: ELLR Company internal data and Locum analysis

Income derived from fares on non-event days represents only 16% of the total income while income from events represents 37%. 12% of the total income came from the two premium products – the footplate experience and the Red Rose Diners.

1.6 The Trackside pub – a strength

The Trackside pub at Bury Bolton Street, we feel, is a good fit with the *current* visitor appeal of the railway. It offers real ale and food in comfortable and friendly surroundings and is a significant revenue generator (c£235,000 per annum). It is also important that the pub is open at times when the Railway is not. However, we feel that the East Lancashire Railway should consider ways to make it more family friendly and attractive to those visiting the Railway with children.

1.7 Relatively weak performance of retail and on-board catering

The shop within Bury Station on the other hand is weak and lacks contemporary appeal. Sales of c£55,000 per annum equate to around £0.53 per visit. We would expect to see sales of upwards of £1 per visit at an attraction of this nature. A realistic target would be an average spend of £1.50 per visitor[16].

The cost of sales in the shop is particularly high at £44,471, representing 80% of turnover. For a cost of sales of c£40,000, we would expect to see shop income nearer £100,000 (i.e. representing around a 60% mark up on purchases). It is almost certain that if the shop was not staffed by volunteers, it would be making a significant loss each year. This high cost of sales seems to suggest a lack of focus in the buying regime, with unpopular ranges of products and very low mark-ups on goods.

The on-board catering facilities are also weak and lacking contemporary appeal. We believe that there is significant potential to improve the offer and quality of the on-board catering which would increase the spend-per-head from its current level of £0.37. An average income of £1.50 per head should be achievable from visitor related catering[17], with a profit of around 30% (allowing for cost of goods and staff costs. If the majority of labour is supplied by volunteers the profit should be higher).

Whilst retail and catering do not necessarily act as attractors to the destination, they are essential components of it and, if the offer is closely aligned to the target audiences, they can act both as catalysts for repeat visits and significant income generators.

Realistically, the Company will probably need to invest more in the necessary skills if it is to achieve the standard of service and contribution that is both expected by visitors and is achievable.

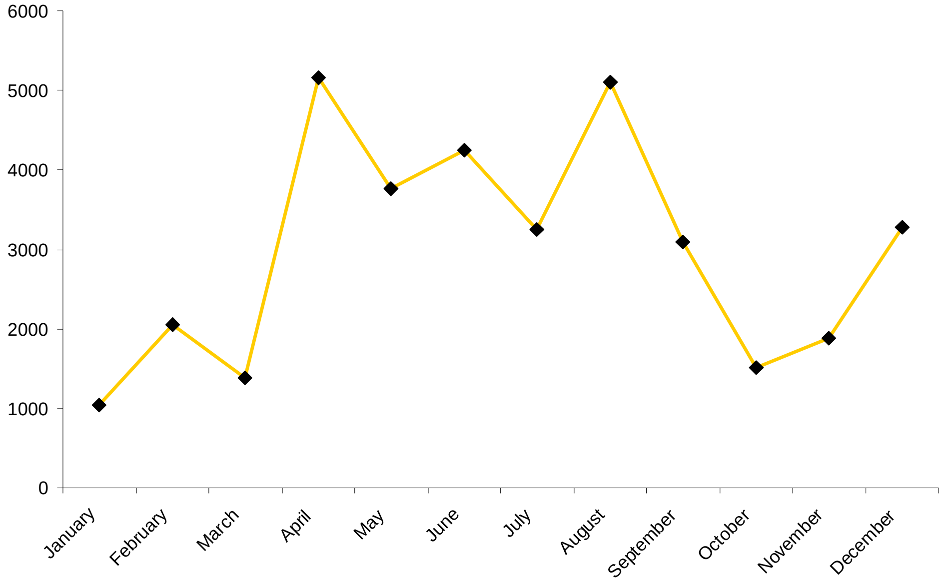
1.8 Seasonality

Figure 18 shows the seasonality of core visits across the year. The real peaks are in the months of April and August. This corresponds with school holiday patterns in the UK and this pattern is seen in most visitor attractions. It is our view that there is potential to grow the number of visits across the year. Consideration needs to be given to the markets that can be attracted at certain times of the year. Families can be attracted at weekends and during school holidays while the groups and education market can be attracted in mid-week shoulder periods.

[16] This figure is based on Locum's knowledge of other independent visitor attractions achieving between 100,000 and 150,000 visitors per annum in the North of England.

[17] It may be necessary to include visitor related purchases made at the Trackside pub in order to get a true catering income figure.

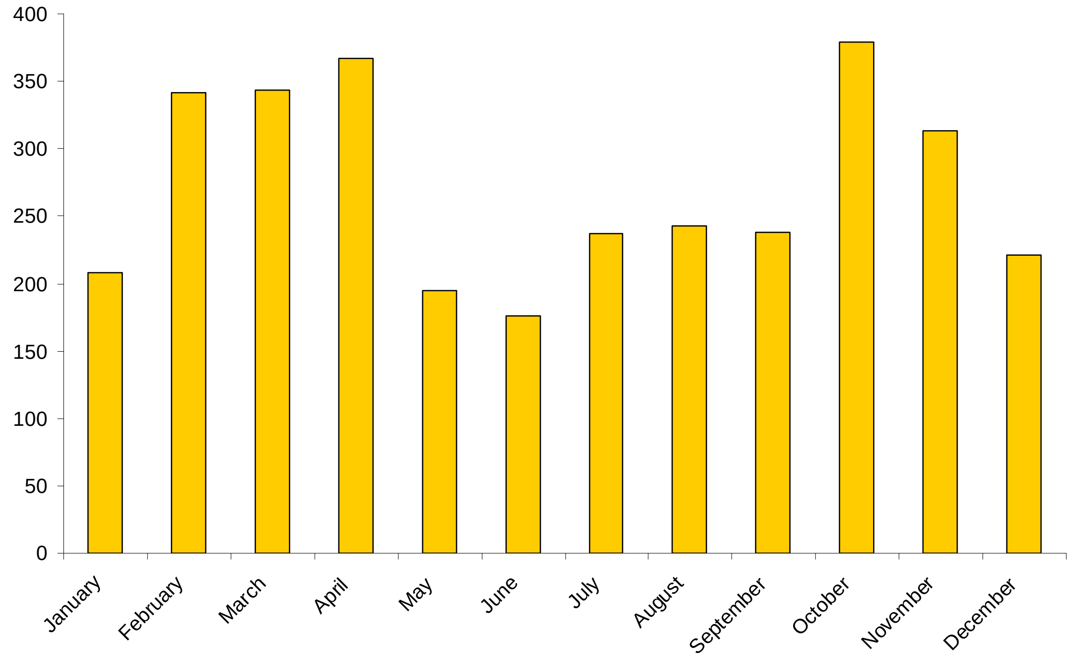
Figure 18: Seasonality of core visits (non-event days)



Source: ELLR Company internal data and Locum analysis

Figure 19 shows the average number of visits per day across the year on non-event days. This shows that in April and October, the average number of visits is between 350 and 400 on each operating day. In July, August and September, the average number of visits is much lower at between 200 and 250 visits per day. This perhaps suggests that there is potential to increase the number of visits in the summer period, particularly from families. The average number of visits per day in May and June is even lower at between 150 and 200 – this is much lower than the months of February, March and November.

Figure 19: Average visits per day on non-event days



Source: ELLR Company internal data and Locum analysis

1.9 Station of entry

Analysis of the ticket sales and the visitor research carried out in the summer of 2008 shows that most people board the train at Bury Station. The next most popular station from which to board the train is Rawtenstall. It appears that just 1,900 non-event day passengers board the train at Heywood.

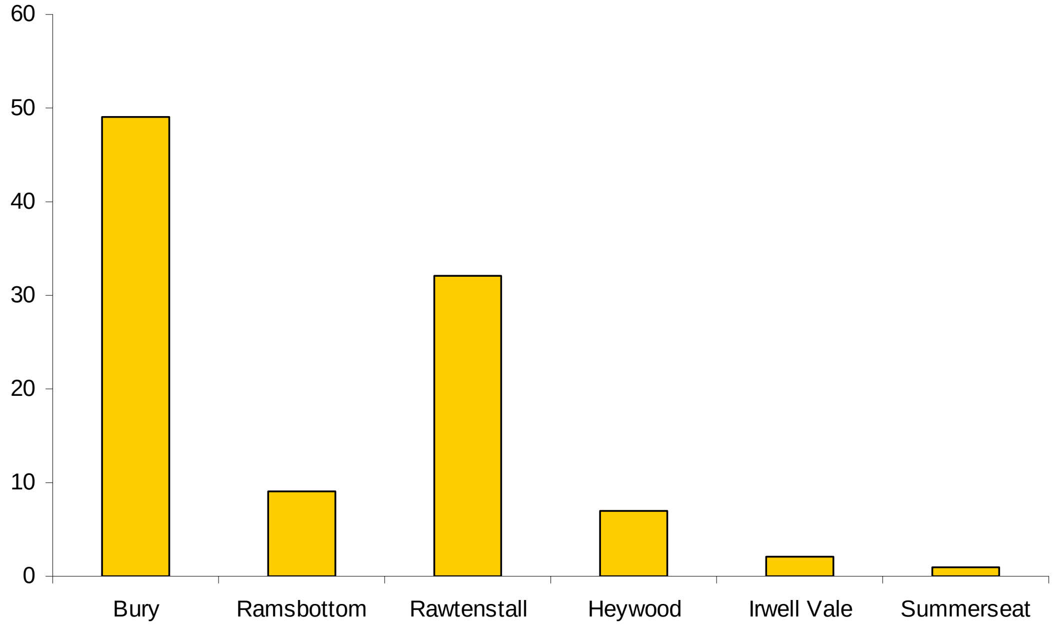
Whilst this in part reflects where visitors are coming from, it is also due, we understand, to the difficulties that the company experiences in finding volunteers to staff some of the ticket desks.

This is part of a wider issue and is not just about distribution.

The stations are the first point of contact between the railway and visitors, providing a welcome and setting the scene for the visit. They are also the most important sales opportunity.

As part of the strategy we suggest that ensuring that the stations are staffed on operating days should become a priority.

Figure 20: Station where visitors first board a train (non-event days) – %



Source: ELLR Company internal data and Locum analysis

1.10 Visitor Research Summary

In the summer of 2008, Jane Saxon Associates carried out a survey of visitors to the East Lancashire Railway. In the past, the Railway has carried out visitor research on a somewhat patchy basis. We would strongly recommend that a regular programme of visitor research be conducted across the year to gauge feedback and to assess the type of visitor that is attracted to the railway.

The research found that 75% of people were on a day trip from home whilst 25% were staying in the area “on holiday”. Combining this with the Santa Special research conducted in 2007, we estimate that just over 20% of visitors come from Bury, Rochdale or Rossendale, 65% come from the rest of the North West and 15% come from outside of the North West.

The research found that 42% of visitors were retired, 65% of people came without children and 20% of visitors came alone. Only 15% of visitors intend to spend a full day on the railway with most (55%) wanting to spend half a day and a significant proportion (30%) only wanting to spend an hour on the railway. Most people want to get off at Rawtenstall, Bury and Ramsbottom but very few at Heywood, Summerseat and Irwell Vale.

The most popular activity is visiting a café, restaurant or pub followed by shopping, visiting other attractions[18], visiting the countryside and cycling.

1.11 Visitor Attractions – a competitive market place

The UK visitor attraction market place is an increasingly competitive one, with ever-more attractions competing for visitors who have less and less free time. Visitor attractions are not only competing with each other, but also with other leisure pastimes and facilities to capture the expenditure and attendance of visitors, whether they are residents, domestic tourists or overseas visitors. This is reflected in declining visits to many attractions around the UK.

As such, visitor attractions, particularly heritage attractions, have to find ways to enhance and broaden their offer for visitors and refresh their product if they are to be sustainable in the long term.

1.11.1 Performance of other North West attractions

The tables below show the number of visits recorded to the top twenty paid and free visitor attractions in the North West from 2002–2006, as recorded by the Visit Britain Visitor Attractions Monitor. It should be noted, however, that this data is compiled from the responses of attractions which choose to participate in the annual Visit Britain survey and as a result, the data does not provide an exhaustive list of all the most visited attractions in the region.

However, it is possible to draw some interesting conclusions from the data as it is provided in the Attractions Monitor. In 2006, both the top free and paid attraction in these tables were non-heritage related, however in the case of Windermere Lake cruises, the central premise is around novelty transport and the stunning view which has positive implications for the East Lancashire Railway. Ullswater Steamers similarly receives high visitor numbers.

[18] The definition of other attractions is broad and includes museums, retail attractions and other places of interest.

Figure 21: Top 20 Paid admission attractions in the NW as listed by Visit Britain 2006

Name of attraction	*Local authority*	*Category*	*Visits 2006*
Windermere Lake Cruises	SOUTH LAKELAND	other historic	1,267,066
Chester Zoo	CHESTER	safari/zoo	1,161,922
Tatton Park	MACCLESFIELD	historic house	770,000
Chester Cathedral	CHESTER	place of worship	624,500
Blackpool Tower	Blackpool	leisure/theme park	526,456
Ullswater Steamers	EDEN	other historic	309,365
Tullie House Museum & Art Gallery	Carlisle	museum/gallery	273,221
Cheshire Ice Cream Farm	CHESTER	other	250,000
Sandcastle Tropical Waterworld Museum	Blackpool	other	223,535
Croxteth Hall & Country	LIVERPOOL	country park	172,000
Marbury Country Park	VALE ROYAL	country park	170,000
Martin Mere Wildfowl & Wetland Trust	WEST LANCASHIRE	nature reserve	144,425
Beatles Story	LIVERPOOL	museum/gallery	144,114
Liverpool Football Club	LIVERPOOL	other	131,896
Anderton Boat Lift	VALE ROYAL	heritage/visitor centre	117,025
Dunham Park	TRAFFORD	historic house	111,380
East Lancashire Railway		other historic	107,950
Quarry Bank Mill	MACCLESFIELD	other	102,117
Lyme Park	MACCLESFIELD	historic house	83,407
Cumberland Pencil Museum	Allerdale	museum/gallery	83,000
Muncaster Castle	COPELAND	historic house	82,639

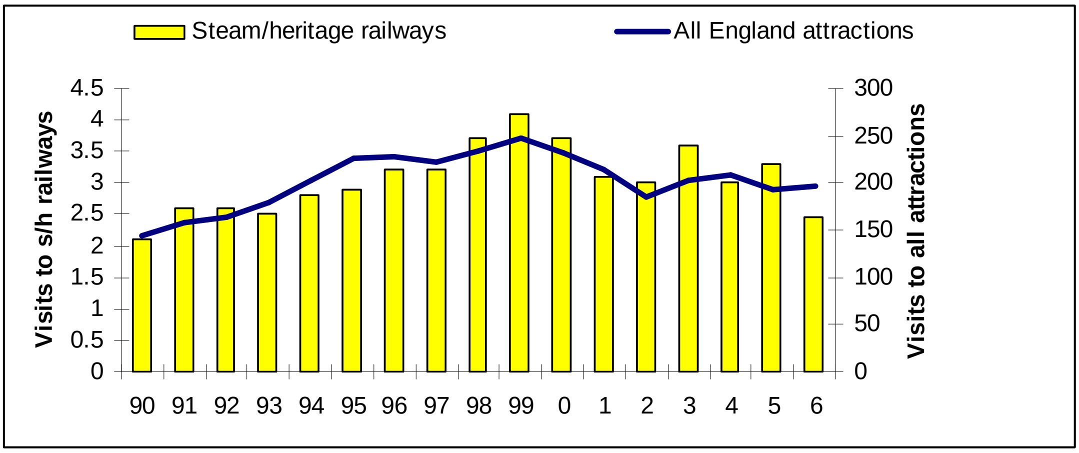
Source: Visit Britain Attractions Monitor 2006

1.11.2 Performance of other steam and heritage railway attractions

The exhibit below shows the indexed trend in visits to steam/heritage railway attractions and across England, based on the visits given by responding attractions to the Visit Britain Attractions Monitor since 1990.

The figures do not represent the entire market but give a good indication of trends over almost 20 years. This shows that visits to steam/heritage railways have been broadly in line with visits to attractions in England generally, but from 1999 to 2005 actually bucked the trend by receiving comparably more visits.

Figure 22: Visits to steam/heritage railways and all England attractions 1990 – 2006



Source: Visit Britain Attractions Monitor

The table below shows all attractions in this category listed by Visit Britain in 2006. The Visit Britain Attractions Monitor also shows that the average adult ticket charge for a railway attraction in 2006 was £6.12 and of their sample, 37 railway attractions are paid admission and only 4 free.

Figure 23: Steam/heritage railway attractions listed by Visit Britain Attractions Monitor 2006

Attraction	*Region*	*2002*	*2003*	*2004*	*2005*	*2006*	Change 02 - 06
North Yorkshire Moors Railway	Y&H	297,000	297,000	303,000	305,000	*305,000*	3%
Severn Valley Railway	WM	237,000	249,000	242,000	252,000	246,222	4%
West Somerset Railway	SW	172,000	220,000	230,000	250,000	230,000	34%
Swanage Railway	SW	191,000	172,000	199,000	197,000	200,452	5%
Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Railway	SE	165,000	166,000	168,000	160,000	160,000	-3%
Mid-Hants Railway	SE	122,000	120,000	128,000	130,000	134,817	11%
North Norfolk Railway	EAST	105,000	107,000	119,000	126,000	125,000	19%
Gloucestershire & Warwickshire Railway	SW	80,000	100,000	120,000	110,000	*110,000*	38%
Midland Railway Centre	EM	120,000	120,000	110,000	110,000	110,000	-8%
Moors Valley Railway Narogauge Ltd	SW	**	**	100,000	110,000	*110,000*	
East Lancashire Railway	NW					107,950	
Isle of Wight Steam Railway	SE	63,000	64,000	65,000	90,000	100,000	59%
Avon Valley Railway	SW	78,500	79,500	86,500	100,000	100,000	27%
Kent and East Sussex Railway	SE	86,570	103,780	96,063	95,530	97,737	13%
Cleethorpes Coast Light Railway	Y&H	**	**	59,036	60,928	70,005	
Eastleigh Lakeside Railway	SE	55,000	64,187	77,402	61,958	60,436	10%
Battlefield Line	EM	**	**	**	50,000	55,000	
Nene Valley Railway	EAST	52,571	51,813	55,642	57,506	51,595	-2%
Bodmin & Wenford Railway	SW	44,167	47,707	47,284	43,079	42,724	-3%
Buckinghamshire Railway Centre	SE	43,000	41,000	41,000	40,000	37,226	-13%
Steam Yacht Gondola	NW	**	**	**	32,523	37,112	
Chasewater Railway	WM	17,000	25,000	30,100	36,500	36,700	116%
Audley End Miniature Railway	EAST	41,786	42,509	42,175	41,878	36,091	-14%
Wells & Walsingham Railway	EAST	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	0%
East Somerset Railway	SW	17,438	17,469	20,000	17,400	16,894	-3%
Swindon & Crickdale Railway	SW	**	8,500	10,500	14,000	15,207	
Northampton & Lamport Railway	EM	**	16,898	14,642	16,734	14,894	
Shipley Glen Cable Tramway	Y&H	**	42,917	29,584	31,358	14,754	
West Lancashire Light Railway	NW	**	12,293	12,317	13,393	13,929	
Mid-Norfolk Railway	EAST	8,295	9,174	9,117	10,246	13,903	68%
Telford Steam Railway	WM	7,500	9,000	11,000	11,000	11,657	55%
Lavender Line Preserved Railway	SE	**	8,600	8,250	10,000	9,500	
Nottingham Transport Heritage Centre	EM	12,722	12,330	9,144	9,400	9,300	-27%
Sittingbourne & Kemsley Light Railway	SE	8,200	5,988	5,498	6,502	6,360	-22%
Bredgar & Wormshill Light Railway	SE	5,820	5,832	4,696	5,390	5,944	2%
Irchester Narrow Gauge Railway	EM	5,050	5,120	6,150	7,250	4,650	-8%
Weardale Railway	NE	**	**	**	**	4,300	
East Kent Railway	SE	6,000	8,000	8,400	3,500	3,400	-43%
Abbey Light Railway	Y&H	2,951	**	3,646	3,925	3,398	15%
Barton House Railway	EAST	1,157	1,813	1,476	1,543	1,284	11%

Source: Visit Britain Attractions Monitor – italicised = 2005 figure

2. East Lancashire Railway Trust

2.1 Summary

The East Lancashire Railway Trust is a company limited by guarantee, first established in 1984. The Trust is comprised of the Councils of Bury, Rochdale, and Rossendale and a 4th partner (the ELLR Company) as its "operating partner".

Each of the Trust's local authority partners holds the freehold title to the railway land within their respective local authority boundary. The Trust holds the head lease for the railway and subleases this to the East Lancashire Light Railway Company Limited (ELLR) a further partner on the Trust board of management.

The 3 local authority partners are each members of the ELR Trust. Its business is conducted through a 12 member Board of Management (each partner having 3 members).

There is a facility to invite non voting members from other potential partners on to the Board of Management for a period if the Board wishes. The Trust Chair is rotated with each partner taking a turn every fourth year.

The Board of Management currently meets 3 times a year and is supported by an officer group with representation from each of the ELR Trust partners. More recently support services have been contained within a Service Level Agreement (SLA) between the Trust partners where the ELR partners share the costs of "core" services.

The Trust is comprised in such a way to minimise risk, provide strategic guidance and maximise partnerships. For example it was Bury Council who commissioned the NW Tourist Board in 1987 to produce the report ' Marketing the Irwell Valley – a Marketing Framework for the ELR Project' which has provided much of the context for developing the railway to date.

2.2 Role & Objectives

The ELR Trust vision is that by 2020 the East Lancashire Steam Railway will be firmly established as a top North West England "paying" tourism attraction that consistently achieves high customer satisfaction ratings in terms of its quality, value for money, range of events and wider tourism experiences on offer to the visitor of Greater Manchester and Lancashire.

The ELLR operating company on its own has not the manpower, resources or the access to the range of strategic skills that has driven the ELR forward. The primary objects of the Trust are:

- To promote the use of the ELR and to assist the operating Company in the provision of facilities for the recreation of the public both to the railway and its environs.

- To advance the education of the public in technical matters relating to the ELR and the social history of the Irwell Valley and its surrounding towns and villages.
- To monitor the proper management of the railway operation in general – the day-to-day management and operation being devolved to the ELLR Railway Company which holds the Light Railway Order (LRO) and Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) and Her Majesty's Railway Inspectorate (HMRI) operating Licences.

Throughout its 20 year history the ELR Trust has implemented these objects through the drawing up of a strategic long term vision supported by 5-year development plans. Since its formation in 1984 the ELR Trust has met on a regular basis with the main business of the Trust being:

- To establish a strategic direction for the long term development and viability of the railway.
- To monitor the condition of the ELR's major structures and to implement a regular inspection, repair and maintenance programme.
- To monitor the "health" of the ELLR Company and support it when required.
- In implementing the M&AA and the ELR Trust's Vision and Development Strategy to act as a general enabling body and on occasions advise, "trouble shoot" or lobby to stay on track.
- To share good practice and ideas within the Trust forum.

2.2.1 Financial Summary

Figure 24: Profit/loss summary 2003-2007

	2003	*2004*	*2005*	*2006*	*2007*
Income	£51,649	£37,771	£64,555	£66,228	£238,384
Expenditure	£253,531	£132,876	£83,159	£59,258	£98,538
Profit/loss	-£201,882	-£95,105	-£18,604	£6,970	£139,846

Source: Charity Commission website

Figure 25: Fixed assets at the end of the 2006-7 financial year

	Freehold Property	*Stations*	*Bridges*	*Trackworks*	*Total*
Cost	£47,097	£636,053	£57,836	£239,640	£980,626
Depreciation	£15,398	£162,418	£13,399	£51,140	£242,355
Net book value	£32,641	£486,356	£45,594	£193,293	£757,884
Other investments					£390,000
					£1,147,884

Source: Charity Commission website

3. East Lancashire Light Railway Company

3.1 Summary

The East Lancashire Light Railway Company is the trading company that was formed from within the East Lancashire Preservation Society – the volunteer workforce that originally approached the local authority partners for support in establishing the ELR railway initiative.

A stipulation of local authority support was that the skills required to run a railway safely should be properly constituted within a registered company and that this company should sign up to the overarching aims: that the railway venture should be a catalyst for wider economic regeneration and tourism growth within their areas.

The East Lancashire Light Railway Board has 10 directors with each director having the skills to lead the individual specialist departments that run the railway operation such as the Operations (which encompasses: Steam & Diesel locomotive management e.g. driving/firing/secondmanning, guards, stations management, signallers, & safety) , repair and maintenance of locomotives, the restoration and maintenance of carriages and wagons, signal engineering, civil engineering duties, electrical engineering) secretarial and financial duties, marketing and publicity, the organising and running of special project teams and the development of all commercial aspects of the ELR.

The ELLR Company Board meets on a regular basis and at the operational level further develops the railway through a series of project sub groups charged with specific tasks such as the staging of events or the delivery of projects central to the ELLR Company 3 Year Business Plan.

The company also maintains a close working relationship with the ELR Preservation Society that makes up the ELR volunteer workforce and is a fund raising body in its own name.

Whilst the ELR is still largely run by over 500 volunteers there are a number of paid employees holding key positions – General Manager, Company Secretary, Civil Engineering Staff, Passenger Manager, Carriage & Wagon Staff, Electrical Engineering Supervisor, Steam Locomotive Department Staff, Trackside Bar Staff & Finance Manager.

3.2 Role & Objectives

The ELLR Company has been largely able as a separate Company to concentrate on the day to day running and marketing of the railway and the demands of developing the railway product. The drawing up of development plans, funding them and the implementation of longer term project work has been shared with the ELR Trust.

In more recent years the Company has developed a "rolling" Company Business Plan approach whereby there is a very close fit between the ELR Trust long term vision for the

ELR and the more incremental improvements that can be directly carried out by the Company within its 3-year Business Plan timeframe.

Primary objects:

- To carry on business as a general commercial company;
- To advance the education of the public by securing the preservation, restoration, enhancement and maintenance of features and objects of industrial, scientific and historical interest in the counties of Greater Manchester and Lancashire and surrounding areas.

3.3 Financial Summary

In the March 2007- March 2008 period the largest majority of sales income came from fares followed by Trackside pub sales.

Other income came from elements such as shop sales, special diners and rent. A small amount came from donations. The highest expenditure, excluding overheads, is equipment hire and running costs.

The biggest overhead was wages and salaries followed by advertising. The ELLR Company has over the last 20 years successfully operated the railway safely and without any need for revenue support from the ELR Trust or its local authority partners.

4. Local Authority Partners

4.1 Relationship with the Three Authorities

The East Lancashire Railway Preservation Society originally approached the local authorities affected by British Rail closure proposals. Through their involvement in the Trust partnership the 3 local authority ELR Trust partners have continued to make grant applications (when appropriate) in their own name to take advantage of funding opportunities. This has been particularly useful in accessing substantial derelict land grant (circa £4m) and the European Regional Development Fund (circa £1.8m) where the ELR Trust and the ELLR Company had restricted direct access to these funds.

Bury

Bury Council as the successor lead district, took the lead in much of the preliminary work to form, set up and service the ELR Trust. Stations within Bury are Bury, Summerseat and Ramsbottom.

Rochdale

Rochdale was the latest local authority to join the partnership. The line was extended to Heywood station which lies within the borough, in 2003. The Council is now recognising the potential catalytic role of the ELR in securing regeneration and is actively supporting the opportunities at both Heywood and Castleton.

Rossendale

There are two stations on the line in Rossendale – Irwell Vale and Rawtenstall.

Rossendale Council is around 35 years old and historically has had financial and other problems. In the 1990s it was one of the poorest performing local authorities in the country. Since 2000, things have improved, but tourism has understandably been quite a low priority. The Council believes however that the time is now right for Rossendale to start exploring the opportunities presented by the Railway and there is a new appetite and enthusiasm to do so.

The Council can see how Bury and Ramsbottom town centres have benefited from the railway, effectively building their visitor offer around it. Rossendale Council now has an opportunity to think about how the ELR can be of benefit to Rawtenstall.