

My name is Louis, I'm 14 and I'm a member of the Nene Valley Railway Youth Group.

For 40 years, the Nene Valley Railway (NVR) has operated trains out of Peterborough and the surrounding area. Running 7.5 miles from Peterborough Nene Valley station to Yarwell Junction, it provides a home for a large collection of heritage steam and diesel locomotives. For the last decade, it has also been home to the NVR Youth Group.

The Youth Group is a group of about 30 talented young volunteers aged 12-18 years old, who are given the chance to learn important practical skills such as welding, fabrication, woodworking, electrics and plumbing.

They are also able to help in the operation of Overton station:

dispatching trains, selling tickets and serving refreshments- all whilst learning all important social and customer service skills which are demanded by almost all industries. Come Christmas their skills are put to the test as they serve the public on our annual Santa Trains.

No experience is required to start – most volunteers just start off with an enthusiasm for engineering or railways which gives them a foundation to learn new skills that will serve them well into adulthood.

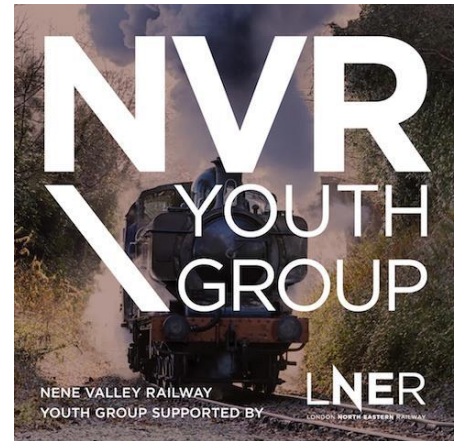
The members of the youth group are able to learn these valuable skills all whilst being able to assist the railway with its needs. The group is actively restoring and repairing heritage railway vehicles for revenue earning service on the line. This includes a number of European coaches, including a dining car from the which ran all over Europe as part of high-profile trains such as the Orient Express.

The skills picked up have a very positive impact on the youngsters who partake in these activities, and at present three of our older members have jobs on LNER, a railway company that operates through

Peterborough between London and the North East. LNER have kindly help fund new facilities for our young volunteers.

As a member of the youth group myself since July of last year, I can heartily agree as to what has been said. I have learned so many new skills – if it wasn't for the COVID-19 pandemic, I would be learning to weld by now! I go to the railway with some close friends of mine, and it does strike me as to how much it has changed and shaped their lives in what is quite a short space of time. I can also appreciate how much the railway has improved my lifestyle, and has given me something I can be proud of.

The recent COVID-19 outbreak means we have had to temporarily close the railway, concurrently closing the Youth Group too. To help emphasize the importance of what the group means to the young people who are and have been part of it, some of our members have shared their experience below:



Rebecca – member of the Youth Group.

From a very young age I have had an interest in trains: I spent my time constructing Brio model railways in the living room, and my parents and I would visit heritage railways like the Colne Valley Railway in Essex, and the Ffestiniog Railway in Wales. I frequently visited the NVR, and I loved seeing 61306 Mayflower when it used to reside on the line. I would never have imagined though that I would go on to become one of the first recent female members of the NVR Youth Group many years later.

Fast forward to now. Since climbing onboard and joining through the DofE volunteering section, I have found out how things roll and the technical names for tools like ‘thingamajigs’ and ‘whaddyacallits’. Highlights include the Travelling post office days, where we demonstrate how mail was transported by train on the move and the Santa Specials to name but a few. I have learnt many new skills, like metalwork, using a grinder, painting, cleaning and woodwork. There is an amazing team spirit and many laughs along the way! I look to continue my involvement with the group into the future in the hope that I and others have carved the way for many more volunteers in the future- including young girls and women.

Max – member of the Youth Group.

Being part of the Youth Group is something I very much enjoy, doing exciting jobs, in both station and yard areas and spending time meeting and learning with interesting people. From handling money when selling tickets to learning how to restore items using specialist equipment and learning important social skills whilst interacting with customers, the youth group has taught me vital attributes for future careers. I would like to be an architect when I’m older and the group has given me experience in planning and construction to help me if I follow that or similar paths. You are also able to contribute to large scale projects. Without the support from the youth group, I believe I would miss out on many exciting opportunities in life.

Joel – member of the Youth Group.

My name is Joel and I am 15. I have been volunteering with the NVR Youth Group for the last 3 years and have done a range of jobs such as working in the station at Overton, working on the Santa Specials and restoring some of the rolling stock. This has given me a wide variety of skills that will benefit me in later life such as customer service and teamwork.

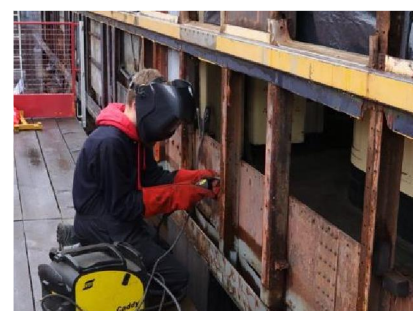
Without the railway and it’s youth group, I would be stuck at home playing video games so this provides a fun yet practical way to get out of the house.



Kyle – member of the Youth Group.

All my life I have been interested and involved with trains and cars, yet two years ago I would have been afraid of a welder or a grinder. Now thanks to the Youth group I can use them and other power tools with no problem and have found I am good at welding and really enjoy it.

These skills are helping me build a fully-working miniature steam locomotive from scratch- something I would not be able to do without the skills I learned in the Youth Group.



Harvey Harrison – former member now a Youth Group Supervisor

The Nene Valley Railway Youth Group has been a major influence on waving the green flag of my railway career. It has allowed me to gain a variety of skills and much needed self-confidence as I have developed into adulthood. It pushes boundaries whilst allowing a lot of fun. Because of this I managed to join LNER in 2018, aged 18, and am now an Information Controller and Train Dispatcher based at Peterborough. I owe so much to the NVR youth group and love to see and help the development of it, to allow more youngsters to follow their dreams.



Adam Paice – former member now a Youth Group Supervisor.

I started at the Youth Group 7 years ago when I was 13. Not a day goes by where I don't use the skills I learnt in that time. As a direct result of my experience at the Youth Group I was able to become the country's youngest train manager at 18 and now at 20 I help train new train managers. This has led to job and financial stability which is essential- especially in the current economic climate. Whatever career path you want to follow, employers now demand experience- experience you cannot get from school or university. This is why I believe the NVR Youth Group's importance cannot be overstated.

As an adult I still volunteer with the group to help keep it going in the hope that other young people will have even more opportunities to enjoy the same success.



In order to keep the Youth Group going we must keep the Nene Valley Railway operating after this current crisis. We cannot run trains through this COVID-19 outbreak so our revenue stream is severed and the railway is in danger.

Thus a donation to the Nene Valley Railway is not just about keeping the history alive but keeping the future bright for all the young volunteers who pass through the Youth Group. They rely on the group for future career opportunities and job security in later life.

Thank You

Louis – Youth Group Member

To donate go to: <https://nvr.org.uk/product.php/164//>