

National Railway Heritage Awards 2009

About the Awards

The Awards were instituted in 1979 as the Best Restored Station Competition, with the object of encouraging high standards of structural restoration and environmental care by amateur groups involved in railway preservation. It was then suggested that awards might also be made for restoration work by British Rail itself, by other public or commercial organisations, or by private individuals responsible for restoring an operational or redundant station structure, so for several years the competition was divided into Voluntary and Public & Commercial Sectors. A further change in the emphasis of the individual Awards has seen the two sectors now competing successfully on equal terms.

Any present or former railway or tramway structure is eligible if it is:

- An existing structure that has received sympathetic restoration, for any purpose;
- A replica structure intended to recreate or augment some aspect of the railway or tramway heritage;
- A new structure designed in traditional style in order to blend with or complement a local environment;
- A former structure now used for another purpose, but reflects the association with its former use.

Extensive alterations or complete rebuilding must fall within one of these criteria, although modernised structures are encouraged for entry, provided that a significant proportion of the original fabric remains. Particular attention is paid to the skill exercised in blending new with old, inside and out. Large-scale restoration is not necessary; the emphasis is on overall quality and thoroughness, sympathetic treatment, attention to detail, conservation practice, attractiveness to the public and regard for the local environment.

As examples of the variety of entrants, previous winners have included local authorities, commercial companies, museums, local amenity societies and private individuals. Particular encouragement is given to the restoration of redundant railway and tramway buildings, either for a totally new use or as part of a station or site where they are no longer required for operational purposes. One condition of entry, which the Adjudicators will note carefully, is the maintenance regime; an Award will not be given to a building, which is unlikely to be maintained.

In the Voluntary Sector, entries frequently aim at recreating a period atmosphere, in which case authenticity is an important factor. The fact that much work is done by volunteers in their spare time, with limited finance and resources, dictates an appropriate approach. In such cases, incomplete work that shows particular promise can gain an Award. Despite seemingly daunting difficulties, standards in the Voluntary Sector are commendably high and some stations have won Awards several times.

The panel of Adjudicators consists of:

David Lawrence, Chairman [*formerly Property Director, British Rail Property Board*];

Louisa Humm [*Inspector of Historic Buildings, Historic Scotland*];

Mary King [*King Partnership*];

Dr Marilyn Palmer [*Emeritus Professor of Industrial Archeology, School of Archaeology and Ancient History, University of Leicester*];

Oliver Pearcey [*formerly Director of Special Projects, English Heritage*];

Gavin Watson [*Secretary, Pevsner Books Trust*];

Robin Leleux [*Secretary*].

Initial inspections are made in the summer by judges drawn from a panel based in all parts of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, and entries receiving high initial marks are visited independently a second time by another judge. Adjudicators make the final choice, and the Awards are presented in December.

The Management Committee is very grateful to all our Sponsors, without whose support we could not conduct the Awards scheme. Ian Allan Publishing Ltd has generously sponsored the Awards since 1979. The national railway, now represented by Network Rail has supported us from the outset. We are also strongly supported by FirstGroup, London Underground, Invensys Rail, the Railway Heritage Trust, ATOC (the Association of Train Operating Companies) and Transport for London.

We are also strongly supported by the Railway Heritage Committee, the Heritage Railway Association and J & J Longbottom Ltd.

IAN ALLAN PUBLISHING HERITAGE RAILWAY OF THE YEAR AWARD

Each year a team of judges visit most preserved railways in Britain. By awarding marks for those aspects of most concern to visitors – the facilities, the scenery, the cleanliness etc – it is possible to draw up a 'league table' of the preserved railways, from which the winner is chosen.

John Ellis

Chairman, Management Committee