

The route to becoming a locomotive driver on the Middleton Railway

The first stop on the route to becoming a locomotive driver is to join the Trust and apply to be a volunteer. This can be done either online by emailing volunteering@middletonrailway.org.uk or in person by completing a volunteering leaflet in the shop. Be sure to let us know what you're interested in doing whether that's working towards becoming a locomotive driver, helping overhaul and maintain the locomotive fleet in the workshop or any of the many other volunteering routes available. Once we receive your application, it will be arranged for you to attend an induction day where you will be shown around the site and familiarised with the safe working practices of the railway. Welcome to the railway, you're now a volunteer!

Whilst not a requirement, it is recommended that you spend time in the workshop as part of the route to becoming a locomotive driver. In the workshop, you will work with our skilled engineers to complete maintenance on our operational fleet in addition to doing work on the locomotives being overhauled. This will help you build skills and develop an in-depth knowledge of how these ageing mechanical marvels work. Although train services do not operate over the winter, the workshop is busier than ever so it's a great time to get involved. The winter months see the operational steam fleet prepared for their annual boiler inspections and the forthcoming operating season.

With your locomotive knowledge building, you will now be able to apply for 'cleaner' turns on the crew roster. These turns are split allowing you to choose to get hands on and crew either a steam or diesel locomotive or even both. As the name suggests, you will spend the morning cleaning the locomotive to make sure it looks the very best! Throughout the day, you will also learn about how services operate including how to couple/uncouple from the train, how to operate turnouts and what to look out for whilst on the move. Once it has been deemed that you have sufficient knowledge and experience, you will be able to complete a shunters assessment. Once deemed competent, you will be able to complete shunting movements without being under supervision.

If you've rostered on a diesel locomotive cleaner turn, you will learn how each diesel locomotive works, how it is prepared for use and the duties of a secondman. If you've rostered on a steam locomotive cleaner turn, you will learn about the role of a fireman, how to build an efficient fire, how to get water into the boiler and how to maintain sufficient pressure to operate.

The next stop when becoming a diesel locomotive driver is becoming a 'passed out' secondman. For this you will complete both a theory and practical assessment to demonstrate your knowledge of safely operating a diesel locomotive and what to do in different situations. Once 'passed out' you will be able to roster for secondman turns. As secondman, you are responsible for assisting the driver in preparing the locomotive, working with the driver to operate the days service and being a second pair of eyes when on the move.

If you are working towards becoming a steam locomotive driver, the next stop is becoming a 'passed out' fireman which is arguably the most important and interesting

role on the footplate. For this you will complete both a theory and practical assessment to demonstrate your competency. Often thought to be 'just shovelling coal', firing is an art form of efficiently balancing water, fire and steam pressure. In addition to this, you will support the driver throughout the day ensuring the service is operated safely.

Finally, you've made it, a 'passed out' driver! For this, you will complete both a theory and practical assessment in addition to a 'route knowledge' assessment to show you know the full length of the line in addition to having a thorough knowledge of the locomotives. If assessed as a steam locomotive driver, you will be able to drive all the steam fleet except the Sentinel which requires a separate assessment. If assessed as a diesel locomotive driver, you will have to be assessed on each diesel locomotive separately. As a driver, you are responsible for the locomotive, train and operations.

