



Department
for Transport

Connecting Communities with the Railways: The Community Rail Development Strategy

Moving Britain Ahead



November 2018



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ISBN: 978-1-84864-211-9

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Executive summary

1. Community rail originally developed as a grassroots movement to shine a light on neglected and at-risk parts of the network, as communities came together to safeguard the future of their local lines. The entrepreneurial spirit of the organisations they formed, combined with their local knowledge, helped transform these lines into the thriving feeders to the rest of the rail network seen across the country today.
2. This first imperative of ensuring that local lines remain relevant and that community rail organisations continue to play their part in attracting increased ridership remains key. However, since the Government published the first Community Rail Development Strategy for England and Wales in 2004, most recently reviewed in 2007, the nature and focus of community rail activity has evolved beyond that.
3. Community rail organisations have successfully harnessed the support of and reached further into their local communities and the rail industry through the partnership approach they have taken. This new strategy builds on that success, and was informed by responses received to a 12-week public consultation which ended in January 2018¹.

As its foundation, it supports community rail organisations themselves to flourish as inclusive, independent and sustainable groups so they are well placed to deliver the strategy's key pillars:

- Providing a voice for the community
- Promoting sustainable, healthy and accessible travel
- Bringing communities together and supporting diversity and inclusion
- Supporting social and economic development

4. The Government and the membership body for community rail organisations, the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP), will work together to help community rail to flourish through:
 - Supporting community rail organisations to demonstrate that they are inclusive, diverse and trusted representatives of the community.

1 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/696681/community-rail-consultation-summary-of-responses.pdf

- Developing a new accreditation scheme to replace the Department for Transport's community railway designation scheme, reflecting the more community-facing role that community rail organisations play.
 - Providing the tools to develop a sound evidence base demonstrating the value of community rail, to help support its further development and attract additional funding.
 - Sharing knowledge and experience from train operators, ACoRP and particularly between community rail organisations.
 - Encouraging partners across the rail industry to work more collaboratively with community rail and provide flexibility where possible in order to help deliver social outcomes.
5. Community rail organisations will provide a voice for their local community through:
- Drawing on local insight to understand and act as an advocate for local people's views and needs to the rail industry and inform decisions about services and infrastructure to improve local transport provision. Ongoing dialogue with both the industry and the community is central to this.
 - Acting in the role of critical friend to the rail industry, to identify and address problems and potential issues.
 - Safeguarding the independence of community rail organisations, including supporting them to diversify their funding base.
 - Strengthening the relationship between community rail organisations and local authorities, supported by better communication of the value of community rail by Government and ACoRP.
6. Community rail organisations will promote sustainable and healthy travel through:
- Collaboration and partnership working with other transport providers, authorities and organisations to develop integrated transport systems around stations that reflect the community's needs.
 - The provision by community rail organisations of 'last mile' information and support at stations, to help passengers make their onward journey from the station.
 - Encouraging modal shift to walking, cycling and public transport by promoting cycling and walking routes and public transport options to and from stations, and promoting rail as a key part of sustainable and healthy journeys.
 - Working with schools, colleges and youth groups to promote travelling by rail to access opportunities.

7. Community rail organisations will help to bring communities together and support diversity and inclusion through:
 - Recognising that community rail can be at the vanguard of supporting the Government and rail industry to unlock the social value of the railways, and being bold in doing that.
 - Building close relationships with local charities and groups, including those who have not previously had any involvement with the railways.
 - Opening up opportunities for individuals to volunteer on the railways or on projects linked to the railways, providing opportunities for socially isolated people to connect with others and for individuals to develop new life skills, as well as give back to their communities.
 - Building the confidence of people who have particular support needs to travel by train.
 - Reaching out to those not currently accessing rail services to identify the barriers, and working with train operators and Network Rail to address those.
 - Expanding community rail organisations' work with children and young people to educate the passengers of the future and increase access to education, employment and recreational opportunities.
 - Promoting the career opportunities offered by the railways as part of this engagement with schools and young people, helping to create a more diverse workforce.
 - Using the leadership provided by ACoRP to build community rail organisations' skills, confidence and inclusivity.
8. Community rail organisations will support social and economic development through:
 - Promoting and enhancing tourism and leisure travel by train, supporting small businesses and social enterprise development, by attracting new customers to businesses around the railways and setting up railway-related enterprises.
 - Working with train operators to explore flexibility around pricing to support disadvantaged groups.
 - Identifying, contributing to or being a consultee on development opportunities around the railways, from the enhancement of existing facilities to schemes to unlock new housing or economic growth.
 - Linking with heritage railways through joint promotion, collaboration on initiatives and sharing of best practice and experience, recognising heritage rail as an important element of the rail industry.

- Making better use of railway land and stations, broadening the role of the station building to offer more services to and space for the local community, with the rail industry taking a more flexible and enabling approach to lease conditions in relation to community use.

Delivering the Strategy

9. Partnership working is essential to the delivery of this strategy and Government will work closely with ACoRP, train operators, Network Rail and others in doing that.
10. Most significantly however we look to community rail organisations to breathe life into this strategy, to continue to work across boundaries within their communities and beyond. We want to encourage individuals, communities, voluntary organisations and businesses to take responsibility for the issues that matter to them and their communities, working collaboratively and rethinking the way public policy and services are delivered.

1. Introduction to Community Rail

- 1.1 In 2017 the Department for Transport published “Connecting People: Strategic Vision for Rail”², acknowledging the challenges facing the industry and setting out the vision for the future of Britain’s railways. Passengers are at the heart of our reforms, with the strategy encouraging greater engagement between the railways and the communities they serve, which community rail is well placed to support.
- 1.2 Community rail is all about connecting communities to the railways through local partnerships, groups, organisations, social enterprises and volunteers. The community rail concept initially developed from grassroots organisations, before being adopted as a Government strategy in 2004 and supported more broadly by the rail industry. It can play a leading role in the Government’s vision for civil society (individuals and organisations that undertake activities whose primary purpose is to deliver social value and which are independent from state control).
- 1.3 Community rail lines carry over 40 million customers annually and are part of the national rail network, with train companies operating the services and Network Rail owning and maintaining the infrastructure (the track, signals and the majority of stations).
- 1.4 Community rail lines and services are supported by community rail partnerships. These are community-based and community-driven organisations working in partnership with the train operating company or companies serving the line, Network Rail, local councils, other community organisations such as rail user groups, and voluntary groups. In 2017 there were around 60 community rail partnerships in Great Britain, some based within local authorities, others within charities, social enterprises or as community interest companies.
- 1.5 In 2004, the Government published the first Community Rail Development Strategy, formally recognising community rail and the role of community rail partnerships in supporting the strategic aims of the national railway. The policy was last reviewed in 2007.
- 1.6 In 2015, a report into ‘The Value of Community Rail Partnerships and the Value of Community Rail Volunteering’³, the most comprehensive research undertaken into the value of community rail, identified 3,200 community rail volunteers give 250,000 hours per year in support, with an annual financial value of £3.4 million.

2 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-strategic-vision-for-rail>

3 <https://communityrail.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/ACoRP-Value-of-CRPs-and-Volunteering-28.1.15.pdf>

- 1.7 While our railways have seen a doubling in passenger numbers in the last 20 years, some community rail lines have seen even higher growth than this.⁴ That is a significant challenge to the railway industry and requires continuous improvement to deliver the best possible journey experience for our passengers today and in the future. At a local level, community rail partnerships and station adoption groups are ideally placed to work with the industry to support this improvement, and ensure it is informed by communities' needs and aspirations.
- 1.8 The Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP)⁵ is the representative body which provides support, advice and information to the community rail sector, particularly through membership services and events. The organisation is an advocate for community rail, providing a link between members and national and devolved governments, partners and industry. Government recognises the important role that ACoRP plays in helping to deliver strategic outcomes and is a key funder of the organisation.
- 1.9 Through its rail franchising programme, the Government seeks to provide improved outcomes for passengers, better value for the taxpayer, and to drive economic, social and environmental benefit for the country. Train operating companies who are franchisees are required to set out how they will work with ACoRP to deliver strategic outcomes, as well as seeing specific commitments and obligations to support the community rail sector placed on them, which include:
- Provision of funding to community rail partnerships, with most new franchises providing funding through multi-year settlements. This often enables partnerships to employ community rail officers on a sustainable basis and aids long term planning.
 - Supporting station adoption schemes, ranging from solo station adopters reporting faults through to larger groups helping transform station environments and delivering outreach initiatives.
 - Supporting skills development and training among community rail partnerships and providing access to expert support from industry, for example on planning, community engagement, timetabling, fares and marketing.
 - Greater collaboration, engagement, communication, managerial focus and accountability within train operating companies in regards to community rail.
 - Encouragement to support the development of redundant station space for community benefit.

4 The 2015 research identified that community rail partnership lines grew by 45% overall, compared with the regional sector (comparable rail services) overall, which grew by 23% from 2006-7 and 2012-13. Between 2010-11 and 2017-18, passenger rail journeys across Great Britain increased by 26%.

5 <https://communityrail.org.uk/>

Case Study: The Beccles Station Project

Beccles is a small market town on the East Suffolk Line between Lowestoft and Ipswich, with a railway station well located to be a community hub. The station building was restored and repurposed by the local community through the Beccles and District Regeneration Charity. The Project's achievements so far in providing facilities for local community groups and activities include the provision of four offices for local small and medium-sized and start-up businesses in Beccles. There is Wi-Fi throughout and two meeting rooms that can be hired out at affordable rates. Toilets have full disabled access. The activity/fitness room and meeting room space above are well used by local people and groups. The local University of the Third Age (U3A – an international movement whose aims are the education and stimulation of mainly retired members of the community) uses it as a base for talks and meetings. There are regular classes in yoga, women's fitness and other subjects.

The station adoption group has also done much to secure additional funds to celebrate the station's heritage, install a new waiting shelter, improve access to the station and provide tourist information.



Consulting on a new strategy

- 1.10 The decade since national community rail policy was last reviewed in 2007 has seen considerable change and growth, with community rail continuing to develop amid an evolving and expanding rail network. To ensure that the strategy for developing community rail further reflected that new context, in November 2017 the Government launched a 12-week public consultation to enable those with an interest in community rail in England and Wales an opportunity to inform future policy.
- 1.11 The consultation was structured around four key areas which had been identified through engagement with the community rail sector:
- Connecting people to places and opportunities
 - Integrating communities to create a fairer society and encourage diversity and inclusion
 - Supporting local and regional economies and sharing opportunities
 - Suggesting innovative ways to improve the way the railway works
- 1.12 The Government received 175 responses to the consultation from a range of stakeholders, including community rail partnerships, rail user groups, train operating companies, local authorities, other organisations including charities, and a number of individuals with an interest in local rail services. Many were joint responses from two or more organisations representing a community or local area. In April 2018 we published a summary of the consultation responses we received⁶.
- 1.13 Some clear themes emerged from those responses and we have reworked the areas covered in the consultation to reflect those. This strategy is therefore structured around the following chapters:
- Helping community rail to flourish
 - Providing a voice for the community
 - Promoting sustainable and healthy travel
 - Bringing communities together and supporting diversity and inclusion
 - Supporting social and economic development
 - Government's commitment to the delivery of the strategy

6 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/696681/community-rail-consultation-summary-of-responses.pdf

2. Helping Community Rail to Flourish

Summary

To successfully deliver the aims of this strategy, community rail groups need to be sustainable and inclusive organisations. They must be able to demonstrate to their communities, the rail industry and potential partners the important value that they add.

This chapter sets out the expectations of those organisations, the support they can receive from Government, ACoRP and others, and the tools that will be available to help them to continue to flourish.

Creating Effective, Inclusive Community Organisations

- 2.1 Community rail partnerships and station adoption groups as grassroots organisations must ensure that they are inclusive organisations that truly represent the local communities in which they operate, so that they can develop a deep understanding of the most pressing needs of local communities, and so they remain relevant as society changes.
- 2.2 It is important for community rail partnerships and station adoption groups to represent the best values of inclusive workplaces, where staff and volunteers feel empowered to tackle any negative behaviours to protect the reputation of the community rail sector. We are supportive of ACoRP's work to ensure that member organisations have appropriate codes of conduct and access to appropriate advice and training such as on unconscious bias that assists with building greater understanding around inclusion issues.
- 2.3 Being communicative and transparent, being open to everyone's input and involvement through different means, consulting widely across communities, and ensuring local needs and views are at the forefront of decisions, particularly around which projects and activities to support and deliver, will help ensure that community rail is reflecting the local community and its needs as fully as possible.
- 2.4 Community rail partnerships and station adoption groups should also reflect on how equality, diversity and inclusion commitments are built into strategies, working practices and reflected in their membership and on boards, for example by demonstrating how they align with the Equality Act 2010⁷.

⁷ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents>

- 2.5 We encourage the rail industry, ACoRP and community rail organisations to continue to promote and support initiatives such as ‘Women in Rail’ and ‘Women in Community Rail’, which have been created to improve diversity in the UK rail industry and the community rail sector through providing networking opportunities and promoting inclusive practices, encourage undertakings and stakeholders to adopt diversity as a business strategy and devising initiatives aimed at promoting opportunities for those who are marginalised in some way.
- 2.6 We would support and encourage ACoRP and train operating companies working through the Rail Delivery Group to consider how the rail industry and community rail might most effectively work together to support, engage and listen to young people, who make up the next generation of passengers, volunteers, community rail officers and railway staff.
- 2.7 Being inclusive organisations will help community rail to reach out to new partners who bring with them additional expertise and knowledge. Having appropriate transparent governance structures in place will support the involvement of new partners, investors and sponsors, as well as wider involvement from the community.

Demonstrating Value

- 2.8 It is important for community rail organisations to continue to develop sound evidence bases about the impact they are having and value they can bring, focusing on outcomes (the change that occurs as a result of their actions), if they are to continue developing their work and successfully attract additional funding particularly from non-rail sources. Making use of expert advice, tools and frameworks such as the Rail Safety and Standards Board’s new Common Social Impact Framework for Rail will aid in this endeavour, and we support ACoRP’s ongoing work to aid this. ACoRP has an essential role to play in supporting community rail organisations interpret such frameworks so that they are able to develop effective plans and business cases.
- 2.9 Whilst community rail partnerships must be able to adapt to reflect local and changing circumstances, they should take the opportunity of the line planning process – coordinated by ACoRP as a core service to its members – to think in a strategic, outcomes-orientated way that is in tune with local needs and opportunities.

Sharing Knowledge & Building Expertise

- 2.10 It is important for ACoRP to continue developing its range of advice, information and training. ACoRP’s seminars, workshops, webinars, national Community Rail Awards, website, publications and research reports create good opportunities to disseminate best practice, share lessons learnt and provide expertise, insights and connections from outside of community rail. There is also an opportunity for train operating companies to make use of their annual community rail conference and other events to share best practice and provide development training for community rail partnerships and station adoption groups.

- 2.11 In addition, we would encourage ACoRP to further support community rail to connect with skill pathways and wider opportunities through signposting and provision of off-the-peg templates, tools and training materials, to enable easy, constructive take-up and linkage with national initiatives, and a menu of offers to support existing related rail apprenticeships.
- 2.12 The rail industry and ACoRP are encouraged to support those community rail organisations wishing to host work experience and apprenticeship placements in a way which benefits both the individual participating and the organisation hosting.
- 2.13 Of equal importance is for community rail organisations to continue to learn from one another, through the sharing of case studies, presenting at conferences and workshops, and through hosting visits. This should include the sharing of learning, knowledge and what works in terms of social benefits and community impact. Whilst there may be opportunities for a community rail partnership to provide paid consultancy to another in the delivery of a specialist service, for example a school's outreach project, it is important that the dissemination of knowledge and exchange of ideas between community rail organisations continues to flow freely. We would also encourage train operating companies, Network Rail and other companies to explore opportunities to second employees into local communities to bring their business skills to impact and transform communities – and for them to learn about community engagement and understand local needs and views. Allowing staff to volunteer to support community initiatives provides further opportunities to share knowledge and expertise.

Supporting the Growth of Community Rail

- 2.14 In areas where there is no active community involvement with the railways, the rail industry is encouraged to work within those communities to raise awareness of the opportunities available to address local issues. Where individuals and communities want to take action and get involved, ACoRP and train operating companies also have a key role in supporting new groups and partnerships to be established. This includes assisting them to access initial finance to help them find their feet quickly, and encouraging others to support them.
- 2.15 To make sure community rail's growth remains relevant, it will be important for community rail partnerships to understand, anticipate and respond to wider trends and innovations in the rail industry as well as within society and their own communities. Additionally Government, ACoRP and industry partners needs to collaborate to remove bureaucratic and practical barriers. Helping to achieve this will be an important role for the National Community Rail Steering Group⁸ – to champion actions and initiatives to grow the world of community rail.

⁸ A partnership of central and local government, the rail industry, Transport Focus & ACoRP

Case Study: Love Thy Neighbour at Smethwick Rolfe Street

Smethwick Rolfe Street Station is in an inner-city area of Birmingham with high levels of cultural diversity, and was in need of regeneration. The train operating company, London Midland, worked with Smethwick Abrahamic Foundation, which brings Muslims together with all faiths to improve their community, to form the station's first adoption group.

With help from Network Rail and London Midland, the group re-established the station garden. BTEC Art students from a local college consulted the community to produce a large art mural to celebrate the many cultures of Smethwick. The result is a permanent, colourful and transformative artwork that reads 'Love thy neighbour' in many different languages. Students from the same college helped to transform an unused room at the station into a meeting and exhibition space that could be used by the community, enabling the station to take part in a Heritage Open Day.

The project brought together students, developing their skill set and showcasing their work. Multi faith groups and retired volunteers contributed to the design, planting and maintenance of the station garden. With many people engaged across cultures, ages and abilities, lasting relationships have been formed and the community has transformed the station into a hub and a gateway of which they can be proud.



Collaborating with the Rail Industry to Innovate

- 2.16 Many community rail partnerships have been innovative in raising awareness of the local railway and working with local planners to secure planning obligations (such as Section 106 agreements⁹ and community infrastructure levies) to secure the necessary funding to improve their local railways. Others have adopted and sought to deliver schemes through collaborative and community-minded approaches, for example by working with individuals who are on community payback schemes or supporting people undergoing rehabilitation. Most have been creative in attracting new users to the railways by taking the railway out into the community through arts projects, competitions and events.
- 2.17 For community rail to continue to act innovatively and effectively, the rail industry must ensure that its regulations and processes, which can often be complex, are applied proportionately to community-based projects. We encourage Network Rail to more effectively collaborate with community rail partnerships, particularly by seeking input into the short to long-term strategy for routes and ensuring that local aspirations are embedded within Network Rail's own overall strategy for the UK rail network. We encourage Network Rail to be more responsive and flexible in working with community rail organisations, supporting them to find innovative solutions, and to deliver local improvements and station-based activities. Network Rail's transfer of more authority to its regional routes enables its local staff to engage more fully with community rail organisations. On a national level, there is an important role for the National Network Rail Community Rail Lead to provide leadership within the organisation to find ways to make sure internal processes are proportionate and supportive, particularly when opportunities to make better use of railway assets or unused land have been identified by community groups.

Accreditation

- 2.18 As part of the 2004 Community Rail Development Strategy, community rail lines and services could be 'designated' by the Secretary of State. Designation was created as a system to enable community rail lines to be managed, marketed and supported, with the aim of identifying ways to reduce red tape and simplify processes relating to community rail lines. Although designation has not in practice been used to deliver all of the aims originally intended, it has allowed many community rail partnerships to access additional funding to kick start innovative projects, largely through the Designated Community Rail Development Fund. It has also on some occasions been the stimulus to the rail industry adopting more pragmatic solutions to address local needs. Most importantly, it has bestowed the status of being formally recognised by Government, which has been welcomed by community rail partnerships.
- 2.19 Consultation with the rail industry and beyond during the development of this new strategy showed a desire for designation in its current form to be replaced

⁹ Section 106 (S106) Agreements are legal agreements between local authorities and developers linked to planning permission and can also be known as planning obligations.

with something which focused more on being a mark of quality for community rail partnerships. As such, we will develop a system of accreditation for community rail.

2.20 Accreditation will build on the legacy of designation. It will:

- Act as a trusted mark of quality for community rail groups.
- Be developed as a brand that is recognised both within the rail industry and beyond, acting as a tool to assist community rail groups when engaging with new stakeholders both in local government and private industry. This in turn will help community rail groups to collaborate with new partners and diversify their funding bases.
- Assist in creating opportunities to further develop community rail's impact and to influence unregulated fares.

2.21 This process will apply to community rail partnerships in England and Wales.

2.22 The Government will work with the Welsh Government, ACoRP and the National Community Rail Steering Group to design the application and monitoring processes for accreditation, which will fit, as far as possible, with existing community rail planning processes. They will be designed to promote good practice and will include regular reviews to ensure they uphold the appropriate standards. There will also be a process for removing accredited status from any groups that fall below the standards expected and where issues cannot be resolved. The Steering Group will also play a role in helping to build accreditation as a trusted mark of quality.

Key actions to deliver the aims of this chapter:

- Network Rail and train operating companies to use community rail organisations to better communicate and engage communities on changes to the railways, and to be responsive and supportive regarding their local activities.
- ACoRP to continue to develop its range of advice, information and training and to support community rail organisations to make better use of evidence and to remain inclusive organisations.
- Department for Transport and the Welsh Government working with ACoRP and the National Community Rail Development Steering Group to develop and implement the new community rail accreditation system.

3. Providing a Voice for the Community

Summary

One of the key purposes of community rail remains its role in providing a voice for the community, communicating local people's views and needs to the rail industry. This pillar of the strategy focuses on ensuring community rail organisations are independent and effective in fulfilling their role as a critical friend, and the importance of maintaining open dialogue with the rail industry and communities.

Providing Local Insight

- 3.1 A key strength of community rail is the respect it has earned from both local communities and the wider rail industry. It has an ongoing dialogue with both, and has thrived over the last decade due to its ability to act as an effective partner and critical friend for its rail industry partners, local authorities and Government. Community rail organisations can be strong advocates for improving local transport provision and can help to identify ways that the railway can play a more active and effective role in supporting and improving the communities it serves. Understanding local people's views, needs, habits and barriers to rail travel enables the rail industry to address unique local contexts by applying an approach that is tailored to local needs and opportunities.
- 3.2 Across the country, where they are well supported community rail partnerships and groups have worked with the industry to bring about real change for the benefit of passengers and communities. These partnerships and groups often use local knowledge of travel patterns and needs to help planners to fine tune local services that better deliver maximum benefit for the community. A meaningful engagement between a community rail partnership and their train operating company when timetable and other changes are being considered can improve local transport provision, and improve communities' understanding of and buy-in to such changes.
- 3.3 Community rail partnerships have influenced changes to the timing of last trains at weekends and additional trains/stops to support major events in local areas. They have carried out research, consultations and reviews including conducting surveys on trains and away from the railway, to identify demand for different services, such as the introduction of Bank Holiday and Sunday Services, and to better understand common barriers to rail travel. Their insight can add value to the development of rail services at all parts of the process. Community rail partnerships can provide evidence which has been used to make the case for major infrastructure projects and identify opportunities

for smaller improvements that help to deliver attractive, community-based stations and needs-orientated service provision. It is essential that community rail continues to fulfil this role and that the rail industry remains receptive to make the most of such opportunities.

Case Study: The Todmorden Curve and Darwen Passing Loop

Improvements to services brought about by the Todmorden Curve, a stretch of rail track rebuilt in 2014, and the Darwen Passing Loop in Lancashire are the positive result of local authorities, the rail industry and community rail working in partnership. Community Rail Lancashire developed awareness and usage of the services on both lines, making it possible to develop viable business cases for these investments which total over £30 million.

Community Rail Lancashire supported the introduction of the new direct services from East Lancashire to Manchester via the reinstated Todmorden West Curve. Train frequencies were increased to half hourly service to Manchester via Darwen and the Bolton Corridor following a £14m scheme to extend the passing loop at Darwen.



Ensuring Independence

- 3.4 Community rail's origins as a grassroots movement has demonstrated that community rail partnerships deliver best value and outcomes when they are free to offer constructive challenge to train operating companies and to consider innovative, community-led approaches to local issues. It is not a model that can be imposed on local communities by either Government or train operating companies, although it can be encouraged and supported, and the Government recognises that in order for them to deliver maximum impact and value, community rail partnerships must remain independent. As part of this, the Government has sought to create greater certainty for community rail partnerships by introducing funding requirements for community rail in rail franchise agreements as set out in Chapter One.
- 3.5 Increasingly a number of community rail partnerships are becoming more dependent on a train operator as their main or only source of funding. While this funding has been of great value to community rail to support long-term planning and delivery, it can create a potential risk that the funding train operating company may wish to exert control over the operation of the community rail partnership. To help to minimise the risk of a partnership being reliant on a single industry funder, where there is overlap between operators' routes and appropriate connections we shall look to require other train operating companies to make a financial contribution and become an active member of the relevant community rail partnership.
- 3.6 To safeguard this independence, we encourage community rail partnerships to look at diversifying their funding base. Examples of how community rail organisations are already doing this include looking at social enterprise opportunities; bringing in corporate sponsorship; and delivering services such as consultancy to partners. Diversifying the tourism work already undertaken by community rail partnerships could also provide an additional revenue stream through paid marketing and advertising opportunities for local businesses and attractions, for example providing links to accommodation websites and obtaining a commission for successful referrals, or by offering paid advertising space on marketing literature. Community rail partnerships might also generate additional income from community assets, by providing space for community groups, local businesses, educational purposes, jobs/recruitment fairs, contractor events, and social events.
- 3.7 Train operating companies can assist community rail partnerships in this area by helping them to develop their business planning skills and providing community rail organisations with opportunities to provide agency services and duties more economically. This can include running ticket offices, providing station checks, specialist report writing, conference delivery and event management. A number of community rail partnerships have established themselves as social enterprises or development companies to undertake a range of revenue generating activities.
- 3.8 The role of local authorities remains crucial. Given their access to and knowledge of suitable partners, opportunities and project funding streams, much more can be achieved with their support and a partnership approach. To ensure that local authorities remain involved with community rail, there is a role for Government

and ACoRP in better communicating the value of working with community rail organisations. Community rail organisations also need to ensure their activities align with local needs and priorities and to develop effective relationships with local government and partners. It is important for the rail industry to recognise that much of local authorities' project funding requires schemes to be delivered within a given financial year, so they need to be agile and responsive and ensure that industry processes complement rather than hinder project delivery.

- 3.9 It is important to recognise that not all community rail initiatives and projects will generate revenue. Income-generating and fundraising activity (and associated management and partnership work) should be delivered in a way that effectively supports delivery of the partnership or group's principal activities to achieve social value and meet local needs, rather than income-generation being an end in itself. The support being provided through franchising provides a platform that should ensure that community rail partnerships have a degree of long-term security and are able to focus on outcomes in line with local needs and aspirations.

Key actions to deliver the aims of this chapter:

- Department for Transport to ensure that community rail voices are heard at a strategic level.
- Train operating companies to be proactive partners of community rail, ensuring that they maintain effective mechanisms for communication, support and engagement, while respecting the independence of community rail organisations.
- Train operating companies and Network Rail to ensure that they have mechanisms in place for community rail organisations to communicate with and provide feedback to them, and for their ideas and suggestions to be considered and acted upon.
- Community rail organisations to look for opportunities to develop a more diverse funding base.

4. Promoting Sustainable and Healthy Travel

Summary

With their understanding of local needs and views and through partnership working, community rail can help to place the railways at the heart of sustainable journeys. This chapter sets out how community rail can deliver greater social value by supporting sustainable travel to and from stations – the role it can play in travel planning, bringing complementary providers together, and spearheading local improvements.

Bringing Travel Partners Together

- 4.1 Their role within local communities means community rail partnerships and station adoption groups are well placed to make local stations and railway lines into focal points of the community. They can use their links to bring partners together to deliver improvements, use their activities and communications to generate understanding, interest and pride in the railway and wider area, and bring members of the local community together around a common interest.
- 4.2 Rail is at the core of many journeys, but by its nature is not door to door. People's journeys start before they reach the railway station and end after they leave it. An integrated transport system, linking different transport modes and enabling each to use its strengths, is key to achieving a shift towards healthier and more sustainable modes of travel. Community rail can help provide a better understanding of the experience of the 'last mile' beyond the station. Initiatives such as Station Travel Plans¹⁰, improved walking and cycling routes and facilities, electric vehicle charging points, cycle hire schemes and smartcards – many involving or led by community rail – are beginning to address this. But further partnership and collaboration is needed with complementary providers, ranging from walking and cycling to buses (including community transport), metros and trams to taxis or pay-as-you-go car services.
- 4.3 Community rail can act as the conduit that brings these complementary providers and modes of travel together, reaching out and engaging with other local organisations and service providers, such as charities and local support groups, health providers, educational establishments, leisure facilities and local employers as well as

¹⁰ Station Travel Plans can bring together all the stakeholders with an interest in rail stations (rail industry, local authorities, passenger groups, bus and taxi operators, cyclists and others), to develop and agree common objectives and a coordinated approach to deliver smarter transport choices with the aim of reducing its environmental impact.

complementary transport providers on identifying shared transport solutions in a holistic way.

- 4.4 Some community rail partnerships host regular branch line forums which bring together the principal local authority, the relevant District and Borough Councils, and where they exist, Town, Parish and Community Councils. Equally they can include local tourism, business, rail-user and station-friends' groups, plus the train operator and other interested bodies.
- 4.5 Community rail partnerships and station groups can also deliver benefit by providing 'last mile' (journey from station to final destination) information and support, especially at unstaffed stations at more rural or isolated locations.
- 4.6 This can all help individuals to make sustainable multi-modal journeys, reducing emissions and congestion and improving air quality and health within communities. Through the benefits of a shared transport experience, when taking a journey with others, and when journeys include an element of physical activity (as many by rail do), it can also help individuals' physical and mental well-being and support society to address issues of loneliness and isolation.
- 4.7 There is a role for Government, local authorities, the rail industry and ACoRP in supporting this through fostering constructive relationships with other organisations working in the sustainable and active travel arena. We will assist community rail organisations to make connections with community transport providers and local bus operators.

Creating Sustainable, Healthy Journeys

- 4.8 There is a role for community rail in promoting safe, accessible, healthy local travel and building local commitment in support of the Government's national strategies, including the Cycling & Walking Investment Strategy,¹¹ Inclusive Transport Strategy¹² and the sport and physical activity strategy Sporting Future¹³. A number of community rail partnerships and station adoption groups have helped to facilitate the provision of cycle facilities including safe and secure cycle parking and cycle hire at stations. Many have encouraged the use of rail for recreational cycling and walking with a number producing leaflets supporting and encouraging walks from or between stations or group cycling. Others have offered guided walks often taking in the local history or nature trails between stations.
- 4.9 The Government wants walking and cycling to be a normal part of everyday life, and the natural choices for shorter journeys and as part of longer trips involving, for example, a rail journey.

11 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/603527/cycling-walking-investment-strategy.pdf

12 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-transport-strategy/the-inclusive-transport-strategy-achieving-equal-access-for-disabled-people>

13 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/486622/Sporting_Future_ACCESSIBLE.pdf

- 4.10 Community rail partnerships and station adoption groups can play their part by promoting and enhancing cycling and walking routes to and from stations, and identifying and spearheading opportunities to improve walking and cycling facilities at stations.
- 4.11 Additionally many community rail partnerships and adoption groups work with schools, colleges and youth groups to promote safe, sustainable and independent rail travel to help children and young people access opportunities (this is considered in more detail in Chapter Five). Such activity can also be a catalyst for helping to connect different generations and different groups together through sharing knowledge and experiences.
- 4.12 To enable community rail to input into local travel plans effectively, Government, the rail industry and ACoRP will need to play their part in signposting community rail partnerships and station adoption groups to appropriate sources of funding and training, as well as supporting them to establish and maintain effective working relationships with other organisations including complementary transport providers.
- 4.13 We encourage ACoRP and the rail industry to work together to explore how community rail's involvement in station travel planning can be further developed.

Key actions to deliver the aims of this chapter:

- Department for Transport, train operating companies, Network Rail and ACoRP to signpost and support community rail organisations to develop their impact on sustainable and active travel, including through helping them connect with relevant partners and access additional funding, training and advice.
- ACoRP and the rail industry to explore how community rail's involvement in station travel planning can be further developed.

Case Study: Kent Community Rail Partnership's 'Smarter Journeys' Programme

'Smarter Journeys' is an inspiring schools programme run by Kent Community Rail Partnership which aims to enable and encourage young people to choose to take more journeys by walking, cycling and public transport. The programme supports Year 5 and 6 pupils, providing them with skills so that they can make active and sustainable travel journeys as they prepare for the transition to secondary school.

Pupils take part in a number of activities over a year, most taking place before or after school or during assembly time to reduce the impact on Year 6 curriculum time. Activities include a free train ride and station visit, a visit to the school by local bike mechanic, rail safety lessons and travel planning.

Kent Community Rail Partnership has been working with pupils from Aylesford Primary School for the past three years to help pupils develop confidence to travel independently and safely to secondary school. Pupils took part in Bikeability cycle training where nearly 90% of pupils passed. They also had a visit from 'Dr Bike' from Cycles UK Maidstone, who helped them fix up their own bikes in readiness for their training.

Pupils took part in the Big Pedal Competition, a five-day, cycle-to-school competition organised by Sustrans which saw around a third of pupils cycling to school, up from 4% on a normal day. Pupils also took part in an initiative called the Big Street Survey where they surveyed their journey to school and made recommendations to the Headteacher about how they could improve their journey, resulting in the provision of a new bike shelter.



5. Bringing Communities Together and Supporting Diversity and Inclusion

Summary

This chapter sets out the role that community rail can play in helping to build and support integrated communities. It looks at how community rail activity can help to unlock the social value of the railways by opening them up to a wider group of people, making them more accessible and providing children, young people and others with the skills and confidence needed to access the opportunities it offers.

Building Integrated Communities

- 5.1 Connecting people is at the heart of the railway's purpose and is the very essence of community rail. With a network that is at the same time national and local, rail is in a position to have a wider social impact. Community rail partnerships and station adoption groups play a crucial role in personalising the rail network and making it relevant to individuals, organisations and communities that it serves. Community rail also needs to look beyond the people and groups who have traditionally been involved with the railways and be open to everyone; by involving a wider mix of people it can play a valuable role in building and supporting integrated communities.
- 5.2 The diversity of local communities, and the benefits that this diversity can bring to communities, can be promoted by running initiatives that span multiple groups and geographical areas. To do this community rail organisations must work closely to build relationships and align values with local community groups and charities – those that appreciate the needs and requirements of different user groups.
- 5.3 It is important for community rail organisations to reach out and involve groups that may not traditionally have been involved in their work. Delivering specific projects with community input such as 'music trains', festive events, summer fun days and fetes, and community art projects can all help to provide social, recreational and creative opportunities that aid wellbeing and bring diverse groups together.

Value of Volunteering & Station Adoption

- 5.4 Station adoption has been one of the outstanding successes of community rail. More than 1,000 adoption groups have been formed nationwide, equally at home in an inner-city environment or in a rural setting. As well as engaging thousands of people in volunteering, bringing people together and creating pride in their station and

community, these groups play an important role in making their stations welcoming, pleasant and attractive places. Often their work extends beyond basic upkeep, incorporating community gardening and growing food, local arts projects, and workshops and visits for children and young people.

- 5.5 By making their stations welcoming and attractive and running local engagement activities, station adopters deliver a range of benefits for their communities. Encouraging the use of the railway and breaking down barriers to sustainable travel has environmental benefits, while their visible presence at stations and the attractive environments they create often help to reduce vandalism and anti-social behaviour¹⁴.
- 5.6 The key to community rail – and station adoption in particular – is the involvement of members of the community. Volunteering is not only an opportunity for members of the community to give something back, it also provides them with a chance to meet with others and develop their confidence and capabilities. It can provide an opportunity for socially isolated people, for example recently widowed, disabled people, those new to the area, and people recovering from a long-term illness or surgery to connect with others. It also provides opportunities for people interested in developing new life skills and can be a great way for passing on knowledge between different generations.
- 5.7 Government see this as an important part of the success of community rail and wish to see opportunities to volunteer on our railways open to everyone. A report into ‘The Value of Community Rail Partnerships and the Value of Community Rail Volunteering’¹⁵ found that most volunteers in community rail came from a similar social background, with an above average level of education including degrees and relevant technical or specialist qualifications, and there was a lack of social diversity, particularly in terms of ethnicity and age and to some extent gender. As there is a shift towards people remaining in paid employment until later in life, there are fewer potential replacements amongst the retired population. In addition, local communities both urban and rural are becoming more diverse. There is therefore a need to appeal to a wider demographic if we are to see a sustainable expansion of station adoption that creates a sense of community inclusion.
- 5.8 It is incumbent on all to ensure that everyone, no matter their background, feels confident to get involved in community rail. Creating open, welcoming groups will help to create a sense of community inclusion, where people of all ages and backgrounds can come together to make a positive difference to their community and forge lasting friendships. Volunteering is evidenced to benefit both individuals taking part and wider communities and it is important that efforts are made to actively

14 Research carried out by London Underground shows that the perception of journey time is elastic and can be influenced by the environmental factors that customers experience during a journey. If a station environment is cluttered, crowded and uncared journey time will seem longer than it actually is. However, improvements to station ambience, including those that are enabled through the activities of community rail partnerships and station adoption groups, can actually make journeys seem shorter to customers and encourage the usage of the rail network. Further information can be obtained by contacting the London Underground Customer Experience team at designlu@tfl.gov.uk.

15 <https://communityrail.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/ACoRP-Value-of-CRPs-and-Volunteering-28.1.15.pdf>

attract underrepresented groups to ensure that community rail reflects and understand their needs.

- 5.9 Creating partnerships with local schools, community groups, charities and businesses to foster a sense of community spirit and promote access to and understanding of the railway across diverse groups will help to do this. Opening up disused buildings to create community hubs can also provide space for communities to physically come together and to support community cohesion and wellbeing (this is considered in more detail in Chapter Six).

Improving Accessibility and Railway Confidence for All

- 5.10 Community rail organisations can help train operating companies and Network Rail to better understand barriers to travel and work with them to address these. For many people, a lack of mobility or confidence in using the transport system can be a barrier to employment, education, health care, and to a social life. Transport operators are increasingly recognising that designing and delivering their services in a genuinely inclusive way is the right thing to do, as well as making good commercial sense.
- 5.11 There are over 13 million people in the UK who have a disability, which can include physical or sensory impairments, as well as less visible or 'hidden' disabilities such as autism, dementia, learning disabilities or anxiety which can be just as much of a barrier to travel. Many community rail partnerships and station adoption groups have worked proactively with the rail industry and local authorities to identify and seek funding for improvements to aid accessibility at both stations and on board trains.

Case Study: Harrington Hump

At some stations with low platforms, the stepping distances between the platform and the train can make it difficult for passengers to board and alight the train. This can have an effect on some disabled people, parents with young children in pushchairs, passengers with luggage and some elderly people.

As there is unlikely to be a strong business case to rebuild platforms to modern standards at stations with low passenger numbers, many community rail partnerships have instead had a 'Harrington Hump', named after Harrington Station, installed. This innovative solution was first developed on the Cumbrian Coast Line in response to a need identified by the local partnership. It enables part of a platform to be raised to reduce the stepping distance between the train and platform at a lower cost, allowing easier access for those with mobility issues.

Since its initial introduction over 100 stations in England and Wales have benefitted from the introduction of the 'Harrington Hump'.

- 5.12 Social accessibility and confidence to travel can be just as important as enabling people to physically negotiate stations and board trains. Does the service provided meet the community's needs, and is it affordable and easily understandable? This is a key area where community rail, supported by the rail industry following the

Rail Sustainable Development Principles¹⁶, can help to put rail within reach of more people. 'Try the train' initiatives aimed at building confidence amongst groups with additional needs can help to address issues around loneliness and social isolation.

- 5.13 Alongside working with the rail industry to encourage physical improvements to aid physical rail accessibility, most community rail partnerships and station adoption groups work to develop skills, understanding and confidence in rail use too. This is critical because transport barriers for disadvantaged groups comprise a range of social, cultural and psychological factors.
- 5.14 Many community rail partnerships and station adoption groups run workshops and visits at stations for groups facing accessibility barriers or who have particular support needs, to build confidence, familiarity and understanding, such as people with learning disabilities, groups with visual impairments, older people and socially disadvantaged families. This is an important area of work for community rail to progress and extend further.
- 5.15 Through their work with partners on local travel planning, community rail partnerships and station adoption groups should be able to reach out to groups and individuals not currently accessing rail services to identify their barriers to travel and gaps in service, and to work with partners to prioritise and secure the necessary improvements and changes required to make rail services accessible to all. This is a key area of development and Government will expect train operating companies and Network Rail to work with community rail organisations to consider local solutions. A number of train operating companies are required as part of their franchise to provide an annual community rail report; in future we shall require this report to include an update on progress in this area.
- 5.16 For community rail to effectively reduce barriers there is also an issue around affordability for disadvantaged or marginalised groups for the rail industry to address. The affordability of transport and travel for disadvantaged groups is central to achieving fairer communities through more equal access to opportunities, especially relating to employment, education and training. Government will look to train operating companies to work with community rail organisations to consider local solutions, including innovative ticketing solutions that make the railway more accessible for these groups. We shall also require train operating companies to report back on progress in this area in their annual community rail report.

Engaging Young People

- 5.17 Most community rail partnerships and many adoption groups already work with schools, youth groups or others to deliver educational sessions, visits, materials or communications that aim to promote awareness and confidence in using rail. Much of this is geared towards promoting independent travel through developing an understanding of both the benefits and practicalities of travelling by rail, including ticketing, interchange, sustainability and healthy travel, and safety.

16 <https://www.rspb.co.uk/Library/improving-industry-performance/2016-05-rail-sustainable-development-principles.pdf>

- 5.18 Community rail partnerships have the potential to play a significant role in educating and creating the rail passengers of the future. By increasing the confidence with which young people can travel by rail, they can improve their access to employment, education, training and recreation opportunities. This has the potential to building long-term healthy and sustainable mobility with significant implications for individuals' and communities' prosperity, health and wellbeing.

Case Study: Passengers of the Future

Community Rail Lancashire has been working with pupils (ages 8 to 10) for over eight years to deliver a curriculum-linked educational programme. Centred on the cartoon character 'Brian the Bull', it involves over eight hours of study based around a school visit, a train journey and a full day's study in the specially-adapted classroom at Accrington Station. Areas of study include timetable work, poetry, map making, technology and sustainability. During the day a Community Support Officer from the British Transport Police delivers a session on rail safety.

In recognition of their work, pupils receive a 'Passport to Safe Travel' which records the knowledge they have gained and enables them to travel free on the local line when accompanied by a fare-paying adult for a three-month period.



Building on that work, Community Rail Lancashire is now offering summer placements for college students aged 16 to 18 years, providing valuable work and community experience.

- 5.19 Many community rail partnerships coordinate activities and practical projects with young people, particularly those of primary school age, which not only enhance curriculum learning but also provide practical experience and life skills.
- 5.20 Additionally, community rail partnerships have an opportunity to become a broker for skills and knowledge exchange between local schools or youth groups and businesses.
- 5.21 There is scope for community rail to expand its reach, especially through extending its work with young people to encompass secondary and tertiary education. This can include awareness work with colleges and universities (such as in fresher weeks), interactive projects, presentations and visits linked to curriculum work, offering volunteering opportunities and placements linked to students' courses, and for promoting career opportunities and routes into employment. This includes within the rail industry: community rail can promote career opportunities so that young people see working in the railways as a viable employment option and inspire young people to reach their full potential, especially for those who start out at a disadvantage.
- 5.22 Community rail organisations are also encouraged to explore opportunities to develop their capacity to host work experience and apprenticeship placements. Some community rail partnerships are now offering summer placements for college students, others have created work experience opportunities for students with special needs. This is an example of how community rail can help young people to develop their skills and identify and pursue career pathways that are right for them, including in rail. This in turn helps the railway industry to attract a talented, dynamic and diverse workforce, as reflected in the Transport Infrastructure Skills Strategy¹⁷.
- 5.23 New technologies, like those driven by increased use of digital solutions in the railway,¹⁸ mean that the railways need new skills in competition with other industries for these and more traditional skills. To succeed, the railways will need to develop the industry's image as a modern, high-tech sector, where software engineering or customer service skills are as important as train driving. One of the ways to achieve this is for the rail industry to partner with schools and universities to ensure a pipeline of people with relevant skills. This is an area of proven strength for community rail partnerships who are familiar with forging productive relationships with educational establishments.
- 5.24 There is therefore a real opportunity for community rail partnerships and station adoption groups to lead industry efforts in this area and support the Government's aspirations to build a country that works for everyone, by taking opportunities to talk to young people with whom they engage with about potential future careers.

17 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/495900/transport-infrastructure-strategy-building-sustainable-skills.pdf

18 <http://digitalrailway.co.uk/>

Case Study: Skills for Life at Gobowen Station

Through Seven Dee Travel, a not-for-profit organisation run by volunteers and the Chester Shrewsbury Rail Partnership, a small café in the waiting room at Gobowen Station in Shropshire is providing work experience for the local college for students with special needs. Working in a safe and supportive environment, students from Derwen College undertake high quality work experience where they learn basic catering and customer service skills. This directly links to their vocational studies and supports their longer term career aspirations by providing an opportunity for them to develop work-related skills.

This is now part of the curriculum at Derwen College and Ofsted recognised that the café provides students “with the opportunity to develop excellent social, vocational and wider employability skills while working in the heart of the community. They learn to work as a team and communicate with customers.”



Supporting Community Rail Organisations to Deliver

- 5.25 There is a key role for ACoRP to play in supporting community rail organisations to deliver in the areas set out in this chapter by providing advice and training. We would encourage ACoRP to further develop appropriate toolkits and training, including on ways to approach groups and sectors who are harder to reach as well as supporting community rail organisations to better assess, evidence and develop the social value of their activities.
- 5.26 In recognition of the importance that we attach to supporting the railway to be accessible to a broader part of the community, we also recommend that ACoRP additionally nominate a Diversity and Inclusion Champion to provide leadership to the wider community rail sector.
- 5.27 Additionally, we encourage train operating companies to cover these areas in their annual community rail conferences, including on diversity and inclusion element and outlining specific activity to promote integration. This would further the aim of fostering good relations within communities, share best practice, build skills and, importantly, promote and celebrate success in this area.

Key actions to deliver the aims of this chapter:

- Department for Transport, ACoRP and the rail industry to provide appropriate training and support to help community rail partnerships and station adoption groups to have confidence with approaching and engaging groups who are 'seldom heard', and supporting access to career pathways.
- Train operating companies to include diversity, inclusion and an equality objective in their annual community rail conference, and to explore how their wider diversity and inclusion initiatives might be better linked with community rail.
- ACoRP to consider and set out a strategy for supporting greater engagement of young people within community rail.

6. Supporting Social and Economic Development

Summary

As well as supporting individuals within communities to access opportunities and reach their potential, community rail can also help local communities themselves to prosper and grow. This chapter focuses on how it can assist our railways to make a greater economic and social impact and support local regeneration. It also considers the role of community rail in promoting rail travel and tourism and linking with heritage railways.

- 6.1 Rail makes a significant contribution to the UK's economy, supporting and facilitating business, employment, leisure and tourism. The rail sector provides more than 200,000 jobs and is very important in helping different geographic areas and sectors of the business community all over the UK to contribute in a more balanced and equal way. According to research by the Rail Delivery Group¹⁹, the rail industry in Britain contributes £10.1 billion in added value to the economy each year and increases business productivity by £11.3 billion.
- 6.2 Rail offers a fast, cost-effective way to transport large numbers of people into towns and cities, supporting economic growth, and it offers an attractive and sustainable means of travel, including accessing environmentally sensitive rural and coastal areas and supporting the tourism sector.

Supporting Local Economies

- 6.3 Community rail has a role to play in identifying service gaps, influencing timetabling improvements and supporting the railways to seize opportunities created by new housing and business growth. It can help to promote and enhance tourism and leisure travel by rail, which delivers social, environmental and economic benefit, and helps train operating companies to fill spare capacity particularly at off-peak times.
- 6.4 Community rail encourages people to travel by train, to explore local culture, heritage and landscape and to engage with local people. Through its focused, local promotion, community rail is able to support small businesses and social enterprise development by attracting new customers. For example, many community rail partnerships promote 'Rail Ale Trails' which promote visits to village pubs by train, others publish Foodie

¹⁹ <http://www.raildeliverygroup.com/media-centre/press-releases/2015/657-2015-09-21.html>

Guides which promote great places to eat and buy local produce along their branch lines. Such initiatives can provide linked opportunities along a route, bringing custom to local shops, restaurants, tea rooms, markets and local events while increasing patronage on local lines.

- 6.5 Promoting existing train services and seeking improvements to services and facilities are key ways to help increase employment opportunities. There are many examples where, through their role as ambassadors for both the railway and the local community, community rail partnerships have identified service alterations to unlock new markets for the railways, such as the introduction of later services or Sunday services. It is vital that the rail industry continues to be open and responsive to these opportunities when they are presented to them. As well as exploring potential capacity improvements and timetable changes, we would encourage train operating companies to show flexibility on pricing for marginalised groups without access to personal transport and those looking to enter the world of work through supported or discounted travel. This is already happening, with the development of such offers as multi-buy tickets and offers for jobseekers such as Great Anglia's Job Track scheme. We will continue to work with industry to ensure marginalised groups are able to access transport.
- 6.6 Community rail can also support small businesses through community rail partnerships' purchasing policies, buying from local businesses. Where a small, local business or social enterprise has set up in a station building, there is an opportunity to promote and support them by running events which attract people such as station galas, thereby increasing the potential customer base for the business. Many community rail partnerships and station adoption groups have run events, such as special trains and farmers markets which have provided new retail opportunities for local producers.

Growing the Rail Network

- 6.7 Whilst all proposals to develop and grow the rail network will continue to be subject to the evaluation of their business case, community rail organisations can help to identify local opportunities for development in line with local needs and aspirations – be they enhancing existing facilities or developing new ones. Several community rail partnerships have identified potential new stations and enhancements to the rail network, and have been highly effective in building the case for investment and in some cases even helping to raise the capital needed. There is scope for community rail partnerships to work with Network Rail or their train operating company to identify opportunities to improve and extend rail services, whether by reviewing service patterns or connectivity to the wider UK rail network.
- 6.8 In this way, community rail can help to meet the Government commitment to identify schemes to unlock new housing or economic growth which offer good value for money, as described in more detail in 'Connecting people: a strategic vision for rail'. We are introducing a new approach to funding for major upgrades and enhancements in England and Wales from 2019²⁰, with a rolling programme of investment, focused

20 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rail-network-enhancements-pipeline>

on outcomes that provide benefits for communities, passengers, freight users and the economy. We would encourage Network Rail and ACoRP to support community rail organisations to provide input into this process.

- 6.9 It is important that the rail industry discusses any planned or potential developments with community rail organisations, to ensure their valuable local knowledge and input are considered as decisions are made. Community rail organisations can often also provide advice on funding options, for example identifying potential sources from local authorities or developers to enhance projects.
- 6.10 We would also welcome local authorities consulting community rail partnerships and station adoption groups on planning applications, so that they can help them to identify suitable sustainable travel and station investments projects which can be delivered through developer contributions such as Section 106 funding.

Linking with Heritage Railways

- 6.11 The latest figures from the Heritage Railway Association show the importance of heritage railways, with over 150 heritage railways, tramways and museums, varying from a few hundred yards in length to over 20 miles. This attracts 13 million visitors a year, including eight million passengers. Together, these railways employ over 3,000 paid staff and just over 22,000 volunteers and their value to the UK economy was estimated in 2013 to be around £250 million per annum.
- 6.12 Heritage railways principally provide an experience, for example a steam train ride, rather than providing public transport services – with only five heritage railways offering through services to the national network. In addition to this, there are 18 railways in Britain with physical connection to the national network and 17 with interchange stations and more are planned.
- 6.13 There is opportunity for community rail to link to heritage lines through joint promotion as part of the tourism offer, particularly where the heritage line adjoins the national rail network or is close by. Equally, the heritage line has a role to play in encouraging rail travel as a means to reaching their line.
- 6.14 A number of train operating companies offer through ticketing to heritage railways (a single fare ticket covering both the public transport leg of the journey and trip on the heritage railway) and promote them as visitor attractions, something which the Government will continue to encourage through franchising. A number of community rail partnerships collaborate successfully on joint initiatives with their local heritage operators.
- 6.15 As many of the attributes of community rail lines and services are similar to those of heritage railways, including the vital role played by volunteers, there is much that each can learn from the other and we would therefore recommend that both ACoRP and Heritage Railway Association help to broker mutually-beneficial relationships between members. There is already a well-established route for young heritage railway volunteers moving to work on the national network, and a similar approach could attract more young volunteers to community railways.

- 6.16 Additionally, Government has been clear with the independent Office of Rail and Road (ORR) through the current Periodic Review 2018 (PR18) process, which establishes the charges train operators must pay to Network Rail to access the national network, how important it is to support charter passenger services – this includes heritage railways. We wrote to the ORR in March 2018 advocating that the variable usage charges for those passenger charter services which access the national network should be capped to protect the important benefits they provide²¹. We very much welcome the ORR’s subsequent decision to cap increases in these charges.

Making Better Use of Railway Land and Stations

- 6.17 The volume of passengers at some smaller rail stations is too low to justify providing staffing for ticketing services alone. However, there is an opportunity to provide a blend of retailing, services and community activities to meet the specific needs of each station catchment. By looking to broaden the role of the station building to benefit from these economies of scale and thereby offer more to local communities, our railways can play a leading role in improving the way people live and work. Stations can provide retailing, act as community hubs, offer post office services, serve as libraries, be home to community gardens and displays, create opportunities for leisure or volunteering, provide active travel facilities such as for cycling, host crèches, and much more.
- 6.18 There are many examples where community rail has acted as the catalyst that has turned a once-neglected and redundant building into an attractive and interesting gateway and hub, benefiting passengers, local people and local businesses, particularly social enterprises and start-ups.

21 http://orr.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/27467/department-for-transport-letter-regarding-vuc.pdf

Case Study: Ridgmont Station

The Marston Vale Community Rail Partnership has led the redevelopment of the last remaining building on the Marston Vale Line, bringing a Grade II-listed station building back into community use.

Opened in September 2013, it is a hub of activity, providing a Heritage Centre and tea room which has become a tourist attraction in its own right. The building also acts as a tourist information point and base for the community rail partnership. It provides office space, a meeting room and accessible toilets.

The station is a lively community hub, providing employment and volunteering opportunities. Many of the volunteers did not know each other before they started, but have since formed new friendships.



- 6.19 To continue to make progress in this area it is important for the rail industry to adopt a flexible approach to lease conditions and maintain a consistent, communicative approach founded on respect and trust when engaging with community groups.
- 6.20 Community rail partnerships and station adoption groups have the ability to initiate schemes to put unused or underused railway land and buildings to better use, both for their own benefit and that of the wider community. On railway land, there are opportunities to receive a licence or lease from the landowner (in the majority of cases that being Network Rail) to improve the station and surrounding area, and engage the community through garden, art projects, heritage displays, engagement of volunteers and community groups, and other small-scale projects. As well as benefitting community wellbeing and cohesion, such improvements positively impact on passengers' and non-passengers' perception of their local railway and station, helping to build positive relationships and a sense of pride, potentially influencing people's decision making on how and if they would use the railway in the future. However, current systems for progressing schemes appear lengthy and therefore off-putting. We recommend that Network Rail consider appointing a community rail property champion to oversee the adoption nationally of a more flexible and streamlined approach both for licensing and responding to subsequent enquiries and requests,

and one where timely updates are communicated to community rail organisations and other relevant stakeholders. Network Rail will need to ensure that all process improvements do not impact their operations, safety or regulatory obligations.

- 6.21 Additionally Network Rail should always consult with community rail organisations in regard to the disposal of land or buildings or to any planned changes or developments on their lines or at their adopted stations.
- 6.22 It is important for train operating companies to carry out audits to identify potential sites for possible action and to support community rail organisations to help local communities to find alternative uses for these redundant spaces.
- 6.23 The continuing modernisation of the rail industry means that many of the buildings of yesteryear cease to have a role, as commercial changes and technology have rendered them redundant. Not all will attract a commercial interest and Network Rail and train operating companies will need to adopt a more pragmatic approach with regard to this redundant space. We recommend that they offer up leases on peppercorn rents to not-for-profit community organisations where Network Rail is satisfied there is:
- no business case to pursue a commercial let;
 - it would enable the themes of this strategy to be met; and
 - the award would not be contrary to Managing Public Money guidance.
- 6.24 This will help create community hubs to support the sustainable development of community rail, with any surplus income that is generated being reinvested in future projects. It will also help to transform these buildings into attractive spaces that promote the railways and allow local pride to flourish.

Key actions to deliver the aims of this chapter:

- Network Rail and train operating companies to engage in a timely manner with community rail partnerships and station adoption groups when developments are proposed or planned.
- Department for Transport to support collaboration between train operators and the heritage rail industry through franchising.
- Network Rail and ACoRP to support community rail organisations to input into the funding approach for major upgrades and enhancements in England and Wales from 2019.
- ACoRP and the Heritage Railway Association to promote and broker mutually – beneficial relationship between their members.
- Network Rail to consult with community rail organisations over the disposal of land or buildings, or any proposed changes on their lines or at their adopted stations.
- Train operating companies to help identify redundant space at stations and work with community rail organisations to breathe new life into them.

7. Government's Commitment to the Delivery of the Strategy

- 7.1 Civil society is changing and the role of Government in relation to civil society is changing too. We want to encourage individuals, communities, voluntary organisations and businesses to shape how the issues that matter to them are addressed and take more responsibility in addressing them. We want to encourage them to collaborate and rethink the way public policy and service is delivered, including what the role of businesses, charities, and communities is in creating a vibrant civil society.
- 7.2 This strategy puts community rail organisations at the vanguard of this change, providing an opportunity to consider new ways of tackling entrenched and emerging social issues by maximising partnerships.
- 7.3 The successful delivery of this strategy is dependent upon the active involvement of the rail industry, ACoRP, local authorities, sub-national transport bodies and, most importantly of all, community rail organisations. It also needs the support of other partners, sponsors and investors.
- 7.4 To support them in delivering this this, the Government will:
- Require train operating companies and ACoRP to regularly report to the Department on their community rail activities and hold regular bilateral meetings with them, to ensure progress with delivery of the strategy.
 - Maintain a dedicated, central community rail team within the Department for Transport to help facilitate the community rail sector through providing policy and technical support to central and local government, train operating companies and ACoRP.
 - Support the National Community Rail Steering Group to provide strategic direction to the community rail sector, and strategic advice to the rail industry on community rail needs and development.
 - Monitor the delivery of the strategy through the National Community Rail Steering Group on an ongoing basis and undertake a periodical review of the strategy every three years to ensure it remains relevant and effective.

- 7.5 The Department for Transport will continue to work across Government to ensure that the important role which community rail can play in delivering benefits for communities across a number of broader objectives, including on public health, civil society, and integrated communities, are promoted, understood and supported.