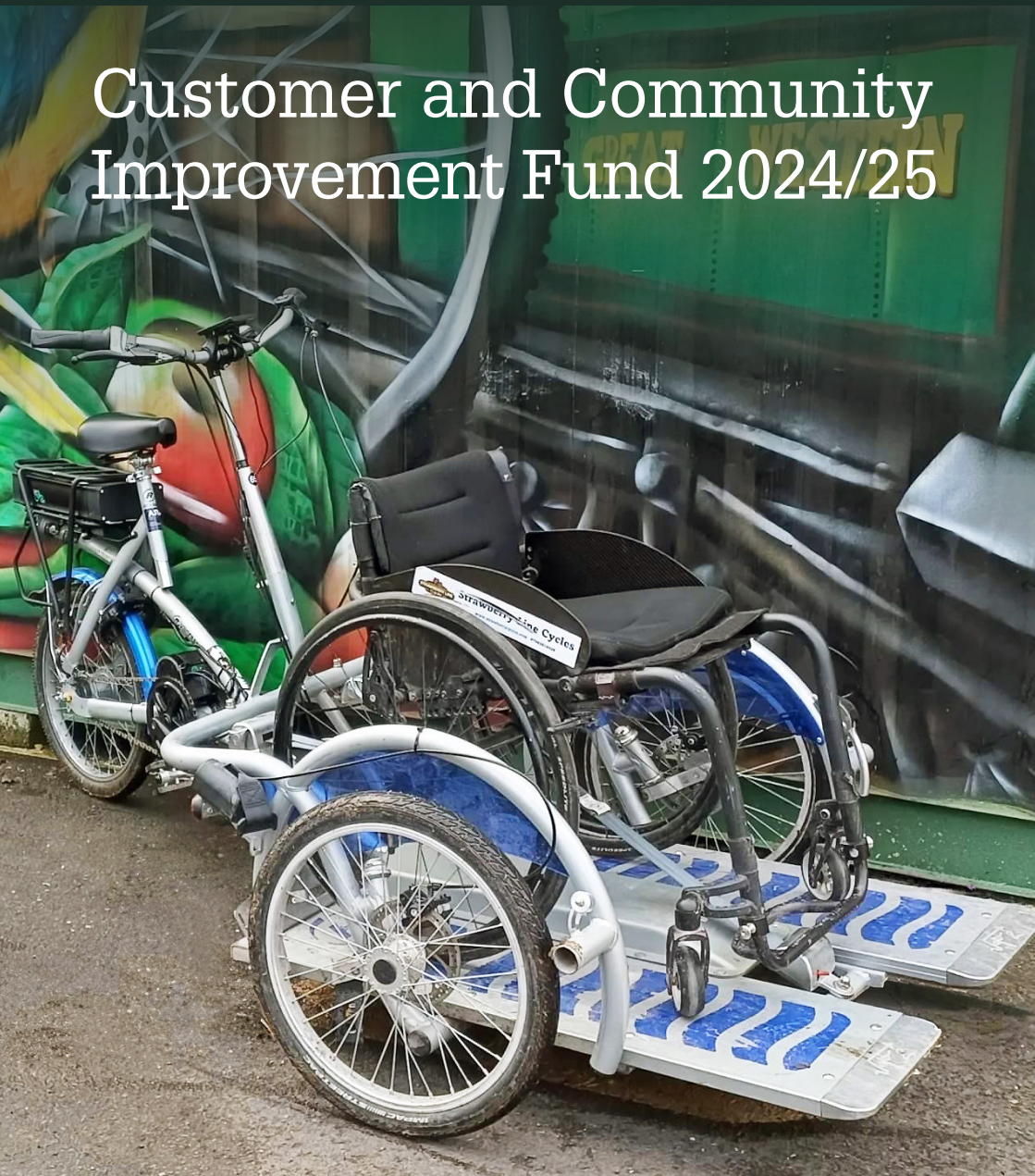




Great  
Western  
Railway

# Customer and Community Improvement Fund 2024/25



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**Front cover image:** Strawberry Line Cycle Project, a not for profit cycle hire scheme at Yatton station, used grant funding to expand their fleet of bikes to include a Veloplus wheelchair accessible bike which is also fitted with a power pack to give riders greater ease and the ability to travel further.

## Welcome

GWR is delighted to announce we are inviting funding bids for customer and community projects.

In 2023/24, we supported 52 projects across the GWR network, supporting customers, charities, community groups and voluntary organisations to deliver benefit in the communities we serve. We're pleased to open the bidding for the next financial year 2024/25 and have shared some more information here about what we can support and how you can make a successful bid.

This handbook outlines what the Customer and Community Improvement Fund is, the type of projects we can support, what we can't support, the application process and how to contact us should you have any questions.

We look forward to seeing a wide range of bids from across our network.

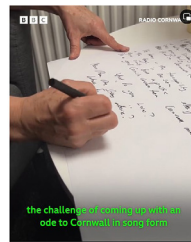
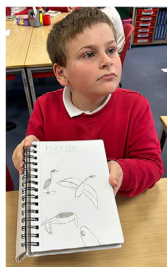


**SkillZONE** - this safety centre in Gloucestershire is designed to reduce unintentional injury from fire, road and leisure accidents, reduce anti-social behaviour and crime, improve health and wellbeing and increase social inclusion for all ages. They provide visitors to the centre with key safety messages around all aspects of rail travel and the funding granted to this project was used to improve the rail scenario making it more representative of what visitors would find in the community.

## What is the Customer and Community Improvement Fund?

Great Western Railway's Customer and Community Improvement Fund supports projects that have a customer and community benefit or address an area of social need, in a community we serve.

Social need is defined as having a benefit or providing support to wider society or specific groups that promotes health, wellbeing, equality or opportunity in ways which are not primarily for the commercial gain of the promoting organisation or the railway.



**Birds on the Branch Line** - the objectives of the project were; to aid the song bird's preservation; to raise awareness of local railway heritage; to increase confidence in using public transport and; to promote the beauty of the Looe Valley Line. Many of those that took part live in one of the top 5% most deprived areas of the UK and had never travelled by train before. This project focused on early engagement and education and its aims were to raise aspirations, levels of literacy and wellbeing, increase awareness of environmental issues, inspiring ways to find innovative solutions as well as rail confidence and the consideration of a career in the rail industry.

Our Customer and Community Improvement Fund is designed to support small and medium rail related projects that can be completed over the course of the 2024/25 financial year. We are particularly interested in schemes that benefit customers, increase rail travel, encourage carbon reduction, connect communities, people and places, support economic growth, promote inclusion and diversity, and educational programmes that support careers in rail or increase awareness and experience of public transport and rail safety. A good bid will show a strong level of community involvement and support and the proposal will have benefits that last beyond the duration of the project.

## What type of applications are we looking for?

We welcome a wide range of applications, particularly from organisations we haven't worked with previously or who propose innovative projects.

This could be a Local Authority, a registered charity or community interest company, school or college or a community or voluntary group. We would very much like to see applications from every corner of our network and bids will score more favourably the closer they are to a station served by GWR. **Bids must be related to the railway and proposals which don't relate in some way to customers (or potential customers), stations, railway property, rail services, rail education or careers in rail will not be considered.**

The list below identifies some of the categories of projects we are looking for.

### Educational

Programmes which deliver safety education, promote the rail industry as a positive career choice, reduce crime, support vocational skills training for young people or other marginalised groups, or increase awareness of local public transport. A good bid will contain details of how the project will continue in the years following the funding provision if required.

### Promoting rail travel

Promoting train services or providing information that will help marginalised groups use rail services. A good bid will encourage further use of public transport and make it easier to access and use train services. This could include holding events or community activities that promote the use of rail travel.

### Great Western history and heritage

Enriching the community through developing historic links with the Great Western network. A good bid will show how the project links to GWR's heritage and increases educational awareness of our rich history.

### Underrepresented groups

We are looking for any projects that promote inclusion and diversity, including activities to promote groups who are typically underrepresented in the rail industry workforce, including, women and girls and those from an ethnically diverse background. A good bid will show how the activity will help GWR to be a more diverse and inclusive employer.

### Research

Feasibility surveys or studies - to support future bids or to show ways to support customers, promote rail travel and careers in rail. A good bid will show how the feasibility study will support future development.

## Accessibility


Aiding groups who may feel unable to use train services as part of daily life, to reduce social isolation and to showcase rail. This includes both infrastructure and non-infrastructure projects that improve the rail experience of people with disabilities and other specific needs. A good bid will demonstrate the ongoing positive impact on individuals from participating in the project or the impact the proposed changes will have.

Please note GWR runs Try a Train activities for individuals and groups, building confidence with rail travel. There is more information at [GWR.com](https://www.gwr.com).

## Disused buildings

Bringing back into use a building, on or near the station, for the benefit of our customers and the community. Good submissions will consider the building's future potential, how it will assist the community, and how the maintenance and upkeep of the facilities will be managed in the years to come.



 tigerlilyquinn Sharing some more of my camera roll from our time with @visitdeanwey

We packed in so much in just a couple of days and I have to say I think we were truly spoilt visiting the area in Autumn because all the leaves were just so beautiful. 🍂

We travelled by @gwr into the Forest of Dean and the places we visited were:

Beechenhurst (free) highly recommend the sculpture trail

@cleanwellsaves this was such an interesting and fascinating place to visit and like nothing we had tried before

@perrygrove\_railway so sweet and Mabil's highlight. Despite travelling predominantly on trains (we are a car free family) she still loved a mini steam train!

We also took a walk along Offas Dyke to Wirtzour's Leap which was stunning! Highly recommended if you have the time to fit it in.

I thank you to @visitdeanwey and @gwr for sending us on this

**Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Tourism** - this project promoted rail travel to under-represented groups encouraging low income, urban families to use public transport to visit the area and experience the health and wellbeing benefits that this rural destination affords. The area benefits from several gateway railway stations served by GWR such as Gloucester, Ashchurch for Tewkesbury and Ledbury as well as bus services and low-cost family-friendly accommodation and attractions.

## Walking and Cycling

Promoting walking and cycling links to and from stations. A good bid will detail convenience, potential numbers of users and how the facility will be maintained in years to come.

## Public transport integration

Encouraging integration between public transport modes to benefit customers and communities. A good bid will aim to quantify benefits, explain how this will benefit the local community and have identified other relevant public transport operators and stakeholders to integrate with.

## Promotion and Wayfinding

Improving information to make using rail easier for customers and promoting services through signs, posters, social media, film and music. A good bid will identify the issue being addressed and show who will be benefit.

## Seed Funding and New Projects

Providing start up funding for new charities, social enterprise or community groups to deliver customer or community benefit.

## Projects must;

- Be within our network area, please see map on page 10 - for the purposes of the Customer and Community Improvement Fund we are defining our network as: within any local authority served or passed through by GWR.
- Deliver a benefit to customers or the community and be aligned to one of the categories above. Projects can address more than one of the categories and those that do will be judged positively.
- Consider the time it will take to deliver the project. When reviewing your delivery plan, please factor in appropriate time for project initiation including start up agreements. We strongly suggest your project is deliverable within a 6 month window from initiation.
- Have an organisational bank account.



The **Turning Tides Project CIC** is based at Crediton station in the Tea Rooms and their focus is on Equal Access. Having an inaccessible space with no disabled toilet for public use directly impacted the disabled people that access the railway from this station. Funding was provided to refurbish the tea room's toilet facilities which are also available to members of the public during opening times. This rejuvenation project has positively impacted the local community and demonstrates how accessible toilets can be created whilst respecting a listed building and its heritage. It has also improved the station's facilities for all travellers - not just disabled people.

## Projects must not;

- Generate commercial benefit for the organisation bidding.
- Request more than the maximum value of £50,000.
- Generate a direct revenue benefit for GWR.
- Be for GWR staff training.
- Duplicate existing projects already funded by GWR or the rail industry, including Try a Train confidence building activities.
- Use funding to support organisational overheads, including ongoing salary costs, which are not directly related to project delivery.
- Require ongoing funding beyond March 2025, unless committed from elsewhere.
- Request funding for rail travel - unless the travel is part of a rail education programme or to build confidence in individuals who have not previously travelled.
- Apply for sponsorship of events or awards evenings.

## Projects could;

- Have matched funding, this would be beneficial but is not required. Any supporting funding should be clear about conditions associated and whether this has already been committed.
- Be less than £1,000 in value – it would be great to see a variety of small-scale projects providing local benefit across our network.
- Be delivered by Schools, Colleges or Universities; projects working in education can be delivered until the end of the academic year - July 2025.

## How to apply

Applications must be made online through [GWR.com](https://www.gwr.com).

We have kept the application form as simple as possible, with strict word limits. If we need more information, we will contact you. Please make sure your answers are targeted on the question asked and support the criteria set out in this guidance. Our team are available to help with questions on bidding and the process.

If you would like a copy of the application questions and/or the opportunity to speak to someone about your bid before you submit it please contact [Community.Fund@GWR.com](mailto:Community.Fund@GWR.com).

We very much want to receive bids from everyone who wants to apply so we will also accept video or audio bids. These bids can take longer to process so please get in touch with the team if you'd like to submit a bid in this format.

## What happens next?

Bids will be accepted up until 2359 on Monday 25 March 2024.

Once you have submitted your application it will be reviewed and considered for funding.

### Projects will be classified as:

#### Successful

The project is one we would like to fund. We will contact you to confirm some more details and get things moving.

#### Potential

We like the project; however, we have some reservations and would like you to answer some further questions before we can consider its potential for this year.

#### Unsuccessful

The project is not successful. We will try and tell you this quickly and explain why we could not support your application.

We will be back in touch with bidders as soon as possible after the deadline. We may need to arrange a visit to site, ask for more information or clarifications to help with the decision process.

Successful bids will need to sign a funding agreement with GWR, provide their financial details and provide regular updates on delivery during the project. There is also a contractual requirement for an end of project report.

## Scoring of bids

Projects must relate to the railway and applications will be judged against a number of criteria:

- **Alignment with Customer and Community Improvement Fund categories** – Does the project deliver a benefit for one (or more) of the categories in the guidance. Projects will need to identify a primary category.
- **Addressing Social Need** – Bids should identify who in the community will benefit and how their project will deliver social benefit.
- **Level of Community Engagement** – Bids should identify how well supported the project is from members of the community and its beneficiaries. Bids that can evidence strong support from the community will be highly scored. Where bids can demonstrate excellent engagement in delivery this will also score well.
- **Deliverability** – All projects must be completed by 31 March 2025. Bids should have clear objectives and a plan of action outlining how the objectives will be met and how the project will be delivered within this funding period. Bids that can demonstrate a robust delivery programme, and where risks are known and managed, or where there are no significant barriers to implementation will be scored highly.
- **Availability of matched funding** - Matched funding is not essential however, bids which have secured match funding will be prioritised.
- **Legacy** - Bids should identify, where possible, any lasting benefits to the community or individuals involved. Projects which result in demonstrable lasting benefits will be most highly scored. Examples might include help securing a job or saving a life.



**Platform Rail Education and Southeast Communities Rail Partnership** have specialist teams delivering rail-education to young people across the GWR network. Both teams noticed a recurring theme during workshop delivery, this being dangerous myths and misconceptions young people have about the railway, which range from inaccurate and unhelpful to incredibly dangerous and potentially life-threatening. This project created an engaging, innovative and informative video, presented by young people, highlighting the key myths and misconceptions, and explains why they are wrong.

We often receive a lot of high-quality bids, unfortunately we can't support them all with the funding we have available. All bids will be scored on the above criteria and there will be a review process to ensure projects are distributed across the GWR network and across the different areas we are supporting. Decisions will be communicated as soon as reasonably practical and will be final.

# GWR CRP Route Map

Yate Black station name - managed by GWR or NR

Iver Grey station name - managed by another TOC

○ Station not currently part of a CRP

● Devon & Cornwall CRP

● Gloucestershire CRP

● Oxfordshire CRP

● Reading Basingstoke CRP

● Severnside CRP

● South East CRP

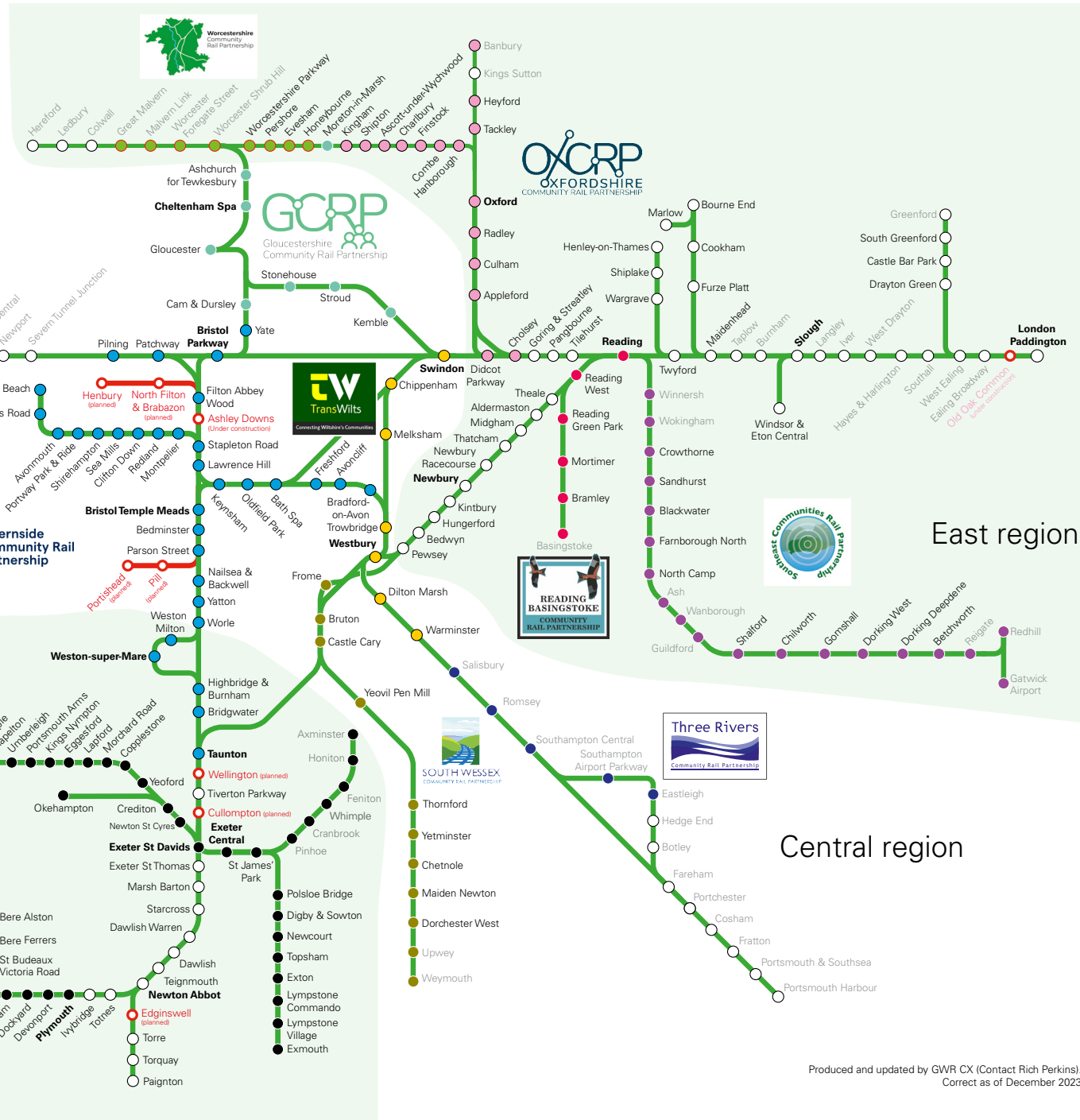
● South West Wales Connected CRP

● South Wessex CRP

● Three Rivers CRP

● TransWilts CRP

● Worcestershire CRP



South Wales

Devon & Cornwall  
RAIL PARTNERSHIP

East region

West region

Central region

# Community Rail and Station Adoption

GWR works with, and supports, 11 Community Rail Partnerships across our network and welcomes and encourages station adoption.

If you would like to join an existing station friends group, or you would like more information about setting up a group at your local station, please contact us on [community.rail@gwr.com](mailto:community.rail@gwr.com).

You can also find out more about the community rail movement on our website here: [GWR.com/CommunityRail](http://GWR.com/CommunityRail)



Barnstaple In Bloom have adopted Barnstaple Station



Friends of Bruton Station



Volunteer at Freshford Station



Grow Feral have adopted Weston Super Mare Station



Bramley Bloomers, adopters of Bramley Station



Friends of Yatton Station

