



Customer and Community Improvement Fund 2023/24



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Font cover image: Green Man Trust and Oasis Cardiff delivered a refugee integration project which supported refugees in Cardiff to travel to the Green Man festival site and gain experience as stewards, in retail and practice their English language skills.

Welcome

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

In 2022-23, we supported 131 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 2023/24 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.



The Cornwall Heritage Trust ran a range of events celebrating the history and heritage of the Luxulyan Valley

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.

Our Customer and Community Improvement Fund is designed to support small and medium projects that can be completed over the course of the 2023/24 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.



Buckinghamshire Council explored opportunities to improve access to Bourne End station by walking, cycling and public transport



Samaritans recruited new volunteers and delivered events across the GWR network, including Exeter St Davids

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 GWR station. Bids must be related to the railway.

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 and work experience 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 customer groups use rail services benefiting the community. 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.

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 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 customer 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.

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.

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 -

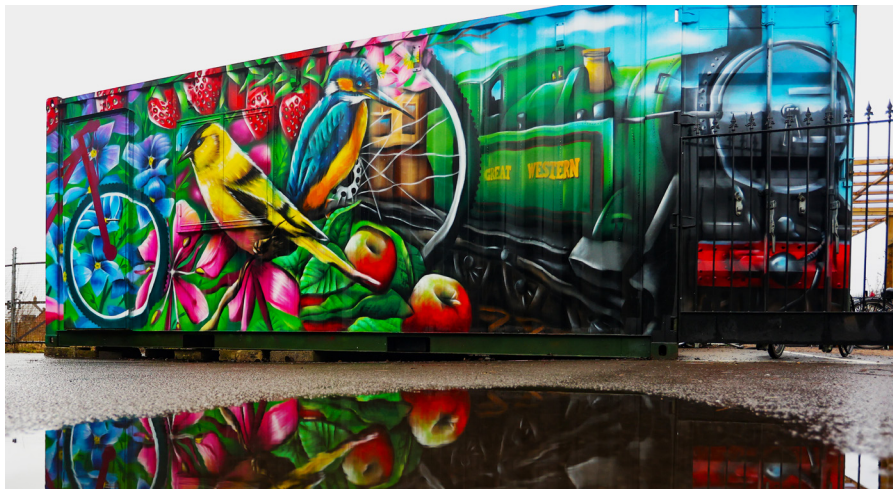
Encouraging integration between public transport modes to benefit customers and communities. A good bid will aim to quantify benefits, explain how this will benefit the local community and have identified other relevant public transport operators to integrate with.

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.



A new mural at the Strawberry Line Cycle Project at Yatton station, funded by GWR and the Community Rail Network's Community Rail Development Fund

Projects must;

- Be within our network area – 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 aligned to one of the categories above. Projects can address more than one of the categories and those that do will be judged positively.
- Outline deliverability of the project, with clearly stated objectives and a delivery plan to ensure the project is completed in full before the end of February 2024. Any consents required should be secured in advance of the bid.
- Have an organisational bank account

Projects must not;

- Generate commercial benefit for the organisation bidding
- Request more than the maximum value of £75,000
- Generate a direct revenue benefit for GWR
- Use funding to support organisational overheads which are not directly related to project delivery
- Require ongoing funding beyond February 2024, 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

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 a 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 2024



The fund supported the Social Business Wales Awards, sponsoring the Social Enterprise Building Diversity, Inclusion, Equity and Justice Award

How to apply

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

Following the submission of your application you must then email PDFs of:

- Your organisation's logo and brand guidelines

Without the supporting documents your application will not be considered.

We have kept the 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.

We very much want to receive bids from everyone who wants to bid and so this year we will also accept video and 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 Thursday 25th May (Friday 19th May for video and audio submissions).

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 of the project 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. This may take up to four weeks. We may need to arrange a visit to site, ask for more information or clarifications to help with the funding process.

Successful bids will need to sign a funding agreement with GWR, provide their financial details and provide updates on delivery during the project. They will also need to provide a mid-project update and an end of project report.

Scoring of bids

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.
- **Deliverability** – 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 the funding period.
- **Availability of matched funding** - Bids which have secured match funding will be prioritised.
- **Legacy** - Bids should identify, where possible, any lasting benefits to the community or individuals involved.

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.



The Tarka Rail Association is developing a case for the extension of the railway from Bamstaple to Bideford.

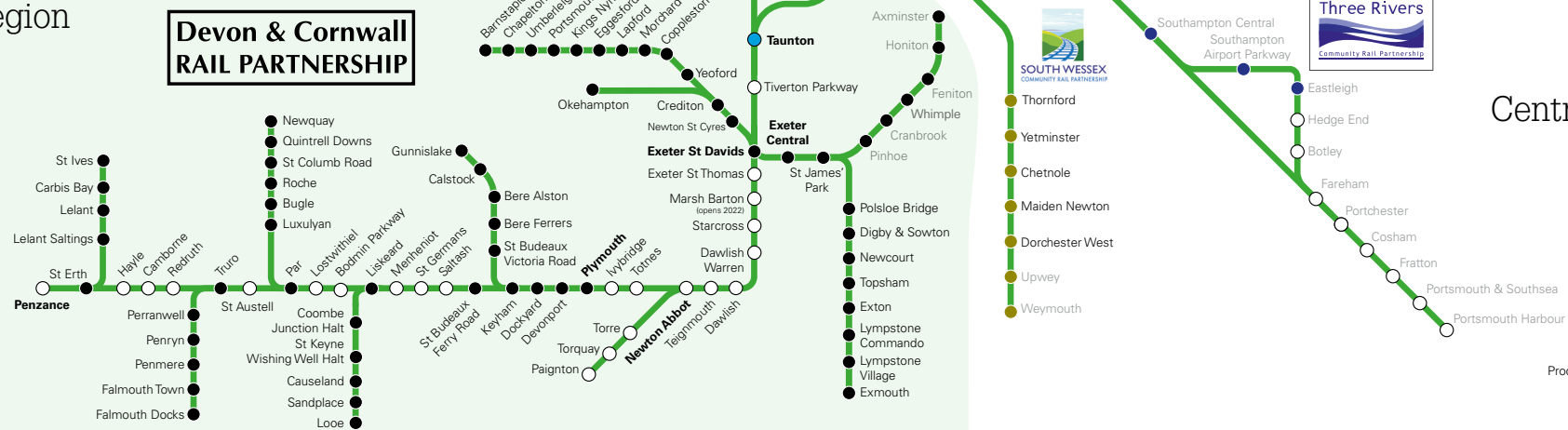


Totnes Pride is just one of the Pride events we supported across the GWR network

GWR CRP Route Map

- Black station name - managed by GWR or NR
- Grey station name - managed by another TOC
- Devon & Cornwall CRP
- Gloucestershire CRP
- Reading Basingstoke CRP
- Severnside CRP
- South East CRP
- South West Wales Connected CRP
- South Wessex CRP
- Three Rivers CRP
- TransWilts CRP
- Worcestershire CRP

West region



Supporting your bids

If you have any queries about the application process, please contact:

Community.Fund@gwr.com, we would be delighted to hear from you about your idea and provide support.

Community Rail and Station Adoption

GWR works with, and supports, 10 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.

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



Dawlish Town Council constructed an accessible, inclusive Play Park with railway features



Plymouth Youth Music Service placed Plymouth's People's Piano on the station concourse



South Gloucestershire Chinese Association hosted a traditional Chinese Dragon dance for Lunar New Year

Who have we worked with previously?



