

# GWR Social Value Report 2023/2024



# Foreword

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Welcome to this our third annual Social Value report.

We firmly believe that rail services are not simply about moving heavy vehicles at speed through often glorious countryside, or through busy urban developments. Rail services are all about people and communities. We connect families, we connect friends, we connect employers and employees, we connect students with schools and universities and tourists with some of the best locations in the UK.

It is not enough however to know that we are an essential service. We also need to know if we are getting that service right. This is more than simply measuring our punctuality and reliability, important though those things are, this is making sure we are truly making a difference to our communities. We are therefore proud to have been early adopters of Rail Safety Standards Board (RSSB) Rail Social Value Tool (RSVT) back in 2021, which started our journey in measuring our social value.

The tool has continued to grow and develop, and we regularly contribute to the RSSB RSVT steering group that is helping to develop greater consistency and greater accuracy in national reporting. This year the RSVT will undergo its biggest change since it was introduced. The tool is being migrated to a new platform, a suite of new metrics with more granular reporting options will be introduced, and the monetised value of some metrics have been updated based on a thorough review including steering group feedback and Green Book principles – a set of UK government guidelines for appraising projects and programmes, which includes approaches to evaluating social and economic costs and benefits.

This year we have chosen not to include a dedicated section on COVID-19 recovery within the report. The specific metrics are not available to us and as this category will shortly be removed from the RSVT we have chosen to demonstrate throughout the report how we are actively supporting post-COVID recovery through our social value initiatives and interventions.

Independently measuring and reporting the social value that GWR brings to its communities is a very real demonstration of the importance we place on our responsibilities. We want to know how we are doing so that we can get better, we want to know where we are delivering well so we can scale-up that work, and we want to know where we are not getting it right, so that we can fix the issue. We want to be the best we possibly can be, so that our customers and our stakeholders get the very best value from everything we do.

Your help with this is invaluable. We need your engagement, your thoughts, your challenge and your encouragement. Let us know how we can serve you better, and together we will help our communities thrive.



Joe Graham  
Business Assurance and Strategy Director



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# Executive summary

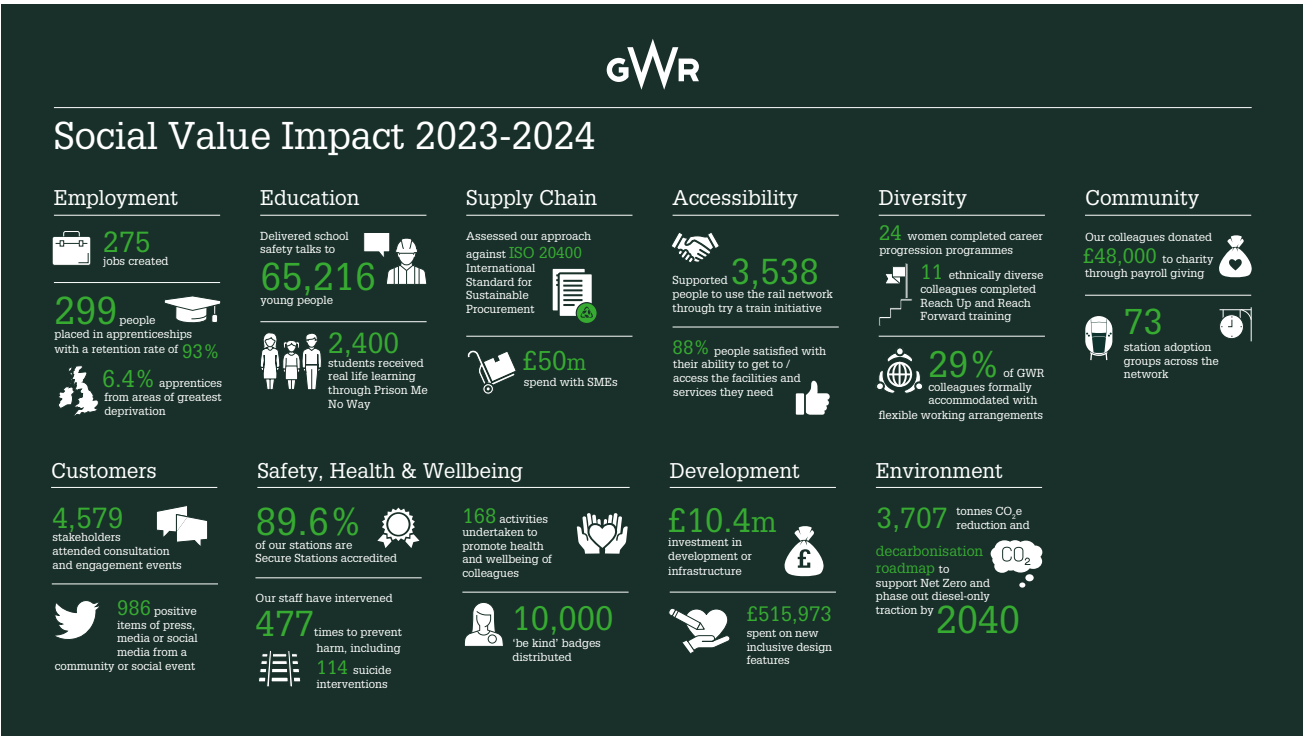
Great Western Railway (GWR) operates trains across the Great Western National Rail contract area, which includes South Wales, the West Country, the Cotswolds, across southern England and into London. This wide reach affords us the opportunity to have a positive and lasting impact on the wellbeing and prosperity of many thousands of people. At GWR, we recognise that operating as a responsible business is crucial to our long-term success and fundamental to delivering a railway that meets the needs of society, without compromising future quality of life.

For the third consecutive year, GWR has commissioned consultants, Akerlof, to assess our social value using the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) Rail Social Value Tool (RSVT). The tool measures the social value generated by our day-to-day operations, investments, and projects, allowing us to conduct a thorough analysis and report on the social value of our activities.

Having set out targeted strategies for improvement in our last social value report, we are pleased to provide an update on our progress to broaden and elevate the quality of our data reporting, as well as illustrate how we continue to enhance our impact on society, the environment, and the economy.

We equally recognise the importance of supporting the wider rail industry to continuously improve. As such, we are proud to play an active role within the Rail Social Value Tool Steering Group, which serves as a crucial platform for cross-industry collaboration and information-sharing related to social sustainability. Through our participation, we aim to drive the use and ongoing development of the RSVT to ensure it remains a useful tool for measuring social value across the rail sector.

This Social Value Report is structured to provide a holistic overview of our activities across 11 of RSSB's social impact areas. As demonstrated throughout this report, the activities undertaken by our business can have a hugely positive impact on individual people's lives. Between 1 April 2023 - 31 March 2024, GWR is proud to have delivered a total operational, environmental and economic impact valued at £638,160,302.37.



# Our approach

## RSSB Rail Social Value Tool (RSVT)

Developed as part of a progressive evolution of the Common Social Impact Framework for Rail, the RSSB has identified 12 key areas of social impact for rail, 11 of which have been adopted as part of our assessment

1. Employment, training and skills
2. Educational attainment
3. Supply chain resilience
4. Supply chain capacity
5. Rail accessibility
6. Workforce equality, diversity and inclusion
7. Community and charity
8. Stakeholder engagement and customers
9. Safety, health and wellbeing
10. Economic development
11. Climate and environment
12. COVID-19 recovery

We have chosen not to include a dedicated section on COVID-19 recovery within this year's report, as the specific metrics outlined within the tool are not available to us and RSSB has confirmed that this category will shortly be removed from the RSVT. However, as demonstrated throughout this report, GWR is actively supporting a post-COVID recovery through a wide variety of social value initiatives and interventions.

We have also combined supply chain resilience and supply chain capacity within a single section of this report.

## Time

GWR has completed this exercise to include data from 1 April 2023 until 31 March 2024 inclusive, encompassing 13 railway reporting periods. This will be referred to throughout this report as the 'reporting period'.

## Change in number or actual number

There are some instances where there is ambiguity as to whether to record the actual number of something achieved or the change from last year to this year. For the most part, the actual number has been used. Where the RSVT has asked for a change, or a change is the standard reporting format used e.g. with safety figures, this was included. The logic applied here is to ensure consistency through reporting periods.

## Avoiding overclaiming monetised social value

Central to analysing social return on investment is taking measures to avoid overclaiming. Overclaiming can occur when:

- An organisation claims value that it wasn't responsible for creating (attribution)
- Change could have happened without the intervention (deadweight)
- Negative impacts created aren't accounted for (substitution or displacement)
- The duration of the outcome is over-estimated (drop-off)
- An outcome is counted twice

The RSVT automatically adjusts monetised values. Each outcome has its own set of impact metrics that align with HM Treasury Guidance and are based on the type of outcome (e.g. health, employment, education).

In compiling the report, we have taken additional steps to avoid overclaiming by:

- Only including activities which GWR was responsible for
- Only recording activities which are additional to business as usual
- Including negative impacts as well as positive
- Considering how long impacts will last and adjusting the amount recorded to reasonably reflect the impact created
- Where activities are similar, we have recorded these as one entry only

Geography

The geographic definition of ‘local’ has been set as the ‘South West’ within the RSVT. While the South West serves as our primary area of operation, it’s important to note that our presence extends beyond this region. For instance, we have a strong presence in South Wales, and our report provides a comprehensive overview of our operations across multiple geographical areas from which we operate.

When calculating local apprentices, local employees, local spend and local supply chain, GWR has included those living within 25 miles of their location of work.

Monetised and non-monetised metrics

The monetisation of social value is the method of assigning a financial value to the change experienced by a stakeholder because of an activity or intervention. Monetisation helps to understand the relative importance to those experiencing the change to focus decision-making to maximise social value, as well as provide a consistent unit of measurement to enable comparison.

While monetisation provides a tangible way to measure the value of our social impact, it is by no means the complete picture. The RSVT therefore allows us to capture our activities through both monetised and non-monetised data across a range of impacts. Where possible, we have included case studies throughout this report to bring this data to life, ensuring a comprehensive approach where we showcase all aspects of social value, through both qualitative and quantitative means.

Exclusions

In terms of Diversity Reporting, GWR was able to provide a detailed breakdown, however the RSVT does not allow for complex data to be included. For example, gender diversity cannot be entered as male = x, female = x etc, only allowing a single figure to be uploaded. Where this was the case, a 0 was entered and further details were included in the notes section. Metrics affected were:

- Gender
- Marital status
- Ethnicity
- Disabled
- Sexual orientation
- Religion and belief
- Caring responsibilities

Double counting

Of the metrics that were excluded due to the potential for double counting, all were able to be included within another field instead. These metrics are shown below:

Impact area	Sub-impact	Unit of measurement	Where it has been included
Climate and Environment	Physical activity and active transport	Number of people taking frequent mild exercise	Safety, health and wellbeing, physical activity and active transport, no of people taking frequent and mild exercise
Community and charity	Charitable and community volunteering Station adoption initiatives	Number of employees that volunteer Number of station adoption group volunteers	Number of people attending local and voluntary groups at least once per month for at least two months
Community and charity	Charitable and community volunteering	Number of people hours supporting local community integration such as volunteering and other community-led initiatives related to Covid-19	No of people hours supporting local community integration
Community and charity	Participation in and access to heritage and art	Number of people participation in rehearsed/ performed dance, singing, painting/ drawing/ sculpting, photography, crafts, book club or similar at least once a week for at least two months	Community use of space and facilities, no of people participating in regular rehearsed/ performed dance, singing, painting/ drawing/ sculpting, photography, crafts, book club or similar at least once a week for at least two months
Community and charity	Community use of space and facilities	Number of people using space and facilities through community groups	Community and charity, community use of space and facilities, number of people using space and facilities through community rail groups
Employment, training and skills	Local employment	Number of apprentices that are non-local	Employment, training and skills, apprenticeships created or retained, no of apprentices that are non-local
Employment, training and skills	Apprenticeships created or retained	General number of apprenticeship opportunities (Level 2, 3, 4+) created or retained	Included in various categories e.g. Young person, NEET's and people living in areas of economic deprivation
Employment, training and skills	Apprenticeships created or retained	Unknown level, number of apprentices (Level 2, 3, 4+) currently employed	All apprentices counted in other lines
Employment, training and skills	Local employment	Number of apprentices that are local	Employment, training and skills, apprenticeships created or retained, no of apprentices that are local
Employment, training and skills	Job creation	Number of FTE employment opportunities created	Employment, training and skills, job creation, no of jobs (general) created FTE
Employment, training and skills	Staff disability awareness training	Number of people completing a QLS L2 disability equality training	Employment, training and skills, learning interventions, no of people completing CPD accredited disability equality training
Rail accessibility	Network Rail Built Environment Accessibility Panel	Hours of engagement with panel or equivalent advisory bodies around operations	Rail accessibility, stakeholder engagement in design of assets and services, hours of engagement with Network Rail BE Accessibility Panel or equivalent advisory bodies on design
Rail accessibility	Inclusive design features	Cost to accessibility intervention	Rail accessibility, inclusive design features, total cost of new inclusive design features
Stakeholder engagement and customers	Complaints management	Number of complaints not defined elsewhere	Stakeholder engagement and customers, complaints management, no of complaints received
Stakeholder engagement and customers	Stakeholder engagement and consultation	Number of positive items of press, media or social media coverage as a result of community art and heritage projects	Number of positive items of press, media or social media coverage as a result of community or social event Stakeholder engagement and customers, stakeholder engagement and consultation, press coverage – community, art, heritage projects, no of positive items

# Our measurements against the RSSB Common Social Impact Framework and Social Value Tool

As demonstrated throughout this report, our actions can shape people’s lives. Between 1 April 2023 – 31 March 2024, we have increased awareness of our own social value activity, demonstrated through the additional categories we have recorded data against, alongside an increase of activities delivered across a range of impact areas.

There have been many changes in the RSVT reporting tool following its initial trial year in 2021-2022 and as a direct response to feedback from GWR and other train operators. This impacts on the comparability of impact reports year on year. For example, feedback from train operators led to a number of the proxy values being reduced, some quite significantly. The effects of these changes can be seen in the overall impact when expressed in financial terms.

In this reporting period, GWR has delivered a total operational, environmental and economic impact of £638,160,302.37. This is a decrease of £77,291,100.51 since the previous reporting period. This decrease is mainly due to reporting air quality data for the first time, correcting an error from the previous reporting period on capturing carbon data and a decrease in the number of life-saving interventions. The breakdown is illustrated here:

Social Value from Operational Impacts

Fiscal	£10,473,314.64
Economic	£12,020,302.02
Social	£402,711,493.99

£456,919,679.20

Social Value from Environmental Impacts

Fiscal	N/A
Economic	£-100,202,289.83
Social	N/A

£-100,202,289.83

Social Value from Economic Impacts

GVA Total	£281,442,913.00
LM3 Total	N/A

£281,442,913.00

When broken down into the 11 social impact areas, safety, health and wellbeing has the highest social impact value, whilst climate and environment has the lowest. The table below shows the breakdown of social value, excluding the economic impacts.<sup>1</sup>

Impact area	Total Impact
Safety, health and wellbeing	£188,629,760.89
Employment, training and skills	£153,537,919.94
Educational attainment	£77,377,675.78
Supply chain capacity	£15,336,403.00
Economic development	£15,231,278.90
Rail accessibility	£9,106,251.04
Stakeholder engagement and customers	£4,044,287.98
Community and charity	-£4,048,494.52
Workforce equality, diversity and inclusion	£-2,295,403.81
Climate and environment	£-100,202,289.83
Supply chain resilience	N/A
Total	£356,717,389.37

We are keen to be transparent in our reporting practices to enable us to use the information we gain to inform decision-making, policy development, and improvements aimed at maximising the positive impacts, while mitigating the negative ones. Capturing both positive and negative impacts allows for a balanced evaluation that takes into account the interests and wellbeing of our passengers, employees, local communities, and the environment.

The negative value for Community and Charity is driven by the inclusion of ‘Experience of crime, vandalism, litter and anti-social behaviour’. For the category climate and environment, the negative value reflects the unavoidable impact of GWR operations – air quality data was reported for the first time. There isn’t an opportunity to acknowledge the benefits offered by train travel, which leads to a monetary value which doesn’t fully reflect the range of positive and negative impacts.

When looking at a further breakdown of the 11 social impact areas, GWR’s highest value monetary values for the reporting period were as follows:

Impact area	Sub-impact	Unit of measurement	Achieved	Total social value
Safety, health and wellbeing	Life-saving interventions	Life-saving interventions (number of)	114	£170,982,376
Employment, training and skills	Learning interventions	Workforce training (hours)	723,537	£120,120,579
Educational attainment	Educational / curriculum support	School Safety Talks	65,216	£72,615,407
Supply chain capacity	Local supply	Total ‘local’ supply chain spend £	£15,336,403	£15,336,403
Economic development	Development Impact	£ value	£10,431,278	£10,431,278
Safety, health and wellbeing	Health, wellbeing and welfare support	No of adults benefiting from a health, welfare and wellbeing intervention	2,525	£9,881,406
Employment, training and skills	Job creation	No of jobs created - general (FTE)	275	£9,489,454

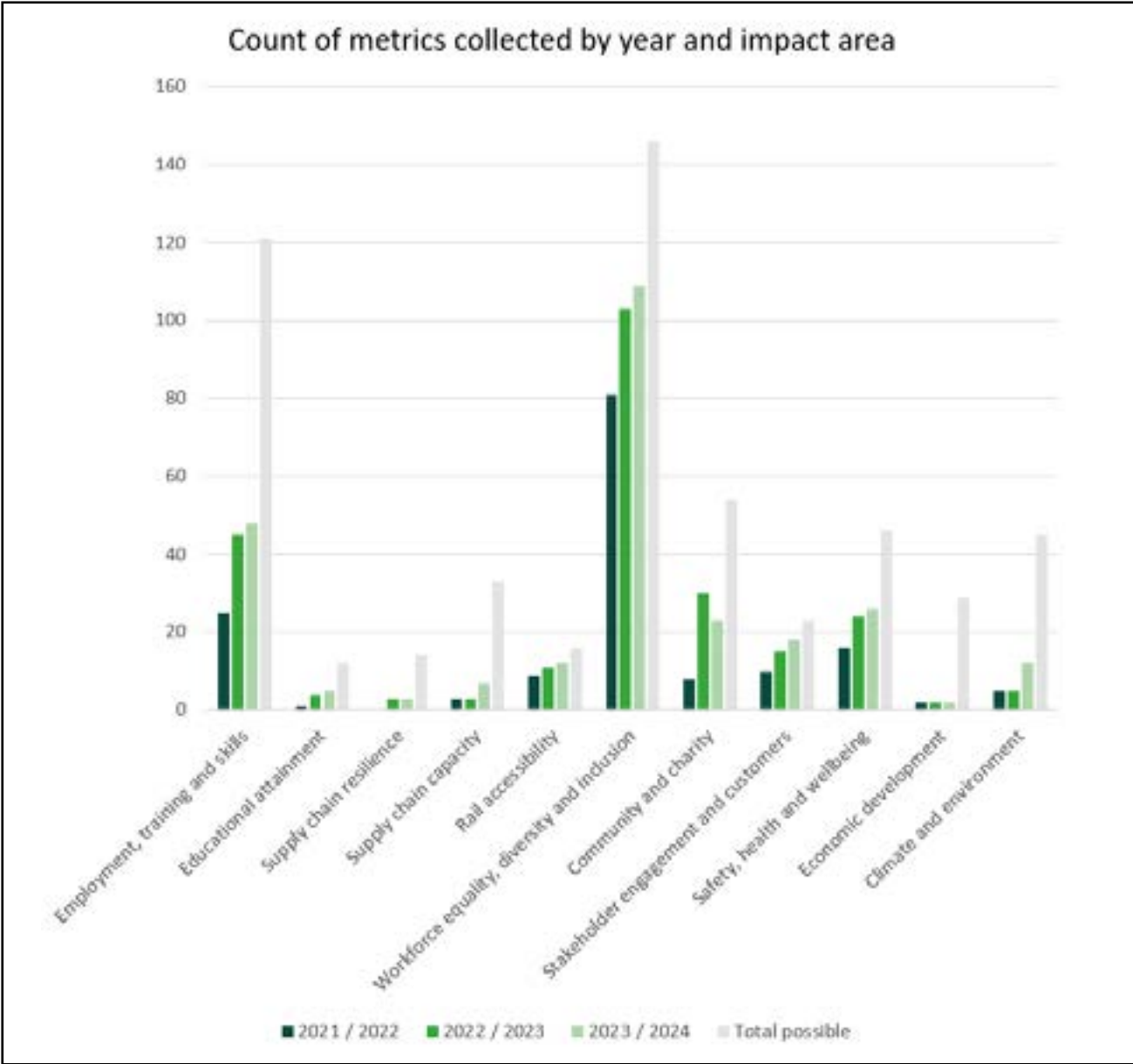
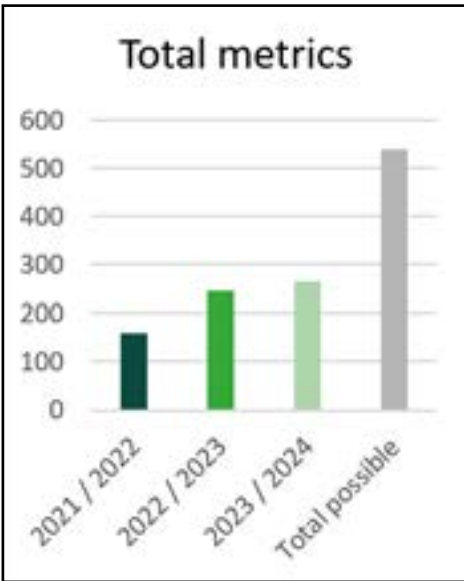
<sup>1</sup>The ‘total social value’ shown in the breakdown excludes the economic impact of local FTEs (GVA) and local spend (including an uplift). Gross Value Added (GVA) is an economic productivity metric that measures the contribution of a company or municipality to an economy, producer, sector or region.



# Benchmarking and continuous improvement

Through completing this social value assessment, we have deepened our understanding of what social value means for us across our operations. An increase in the scope of our data collection across the majority of areas creates a clearer picture of impact, which enables analysis of our strengths, areas for improvement, and additional opportunities.

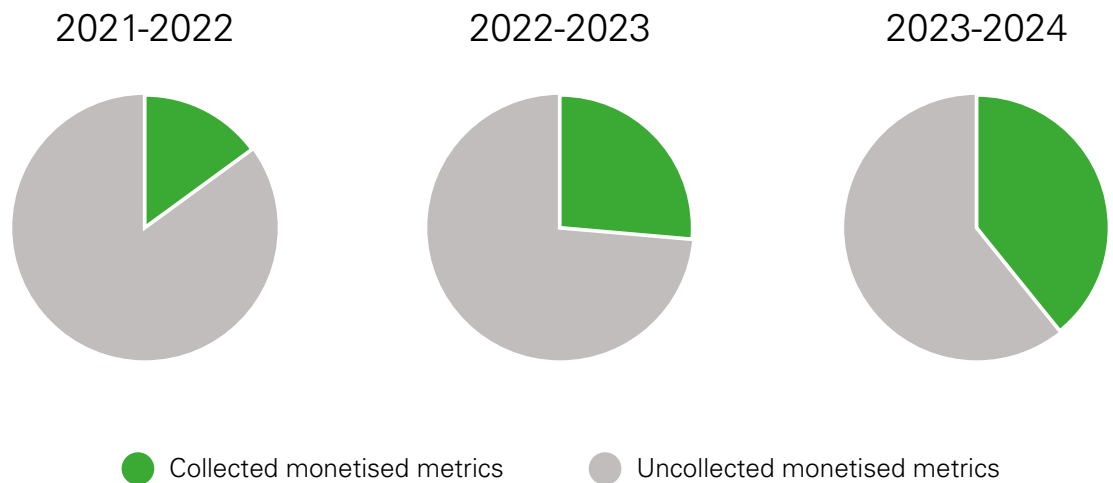
While being able to present our impacts in financial terms is useful, our real drive is to understand impacts in human terms i.e. what changes people are experiencing as a result of our activities. Seeking to understand these changes is guiding our future approach, detailed further within the 'Future aims and measures' section of this report.



## Monetised metrics

We want to present our social impact in a way that drives meaningful change. Whilst it is hugely important to understand how our actions affect people's lives, we also recognise that showing the economic value of these changes helps make a stronger case for future social initiatives. Having a blend of monetised and non-monetised metrics allows us to achieve this.

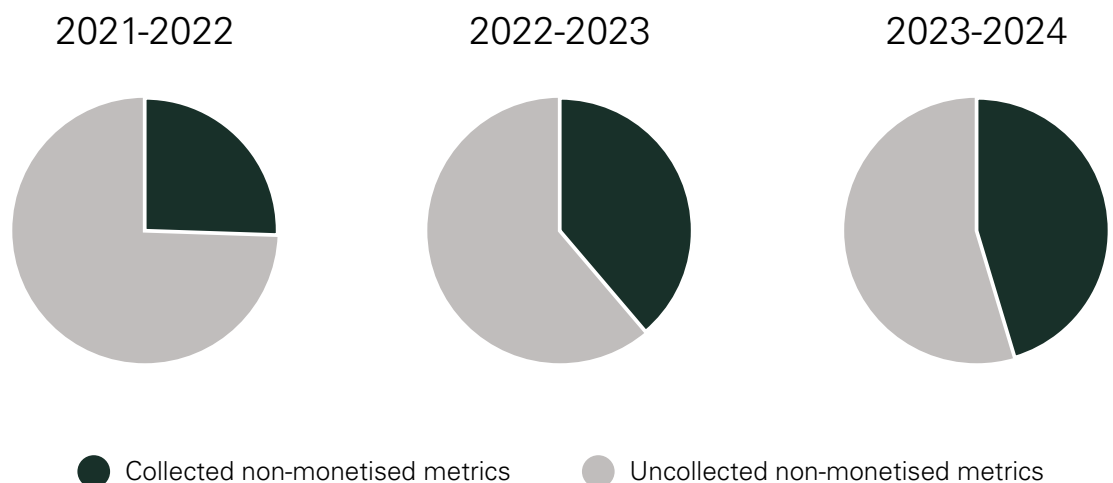
In 2023-2024, GWR was able to collect 82 (out of a possible 267) monetised metrics.



Areas where we have been able to improve our data collection include educational / curriculum support, in-work training, physical activity and active transport, press coverage, stakeholder engagement and consultation – co-design and people feeling able to influence decisions affecting their local area, completed qualifications, air quality and employment and training of people with disabilities – apprenticeships.

## Non-monetised metrics

In 2023-2024, GWR was able to collect 171 (out of a possible 272) non-monetised metrics.



Areas where we have been able to improve our data collection include % of schools and colleges who are 'priority educators', climate adaptation, training of people on inclusive design features, inclusive procurement – advertising opportunities, local suppliers and local spend, employment and training of people with disabilities – apprenticeships and % of workers who are directly employed.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>The data above is based on the metrics available within the tool in 2021. From next year, we anticipate this to significantly increase in line with RSVT changes.

# Delivering a positive social impact

## 1.0 Employment, training and skills

### Employees

We are committed to making GWR a great place to work and one where our colleagues reach their full potential. We have maintained our Investors in People Gold certification, who continue to assess our performance in leading, supporting and improving our people.



Employee engagement and satisfaction is regularly reviewed, and we are constantly looking for ways to improve our reward and recognition programme, ensuring we retain the best talent and attract a diverse workforce. In our 2023 Your Voice survey, 61% of respondents said that they would recommend GWR as a great place to work, with 72% saying they (generally) enjoy their job and find it satisfying. (Note - the survey response rate was 51%).

### Domestic abuse policy

To better support our employees, GWR recently introduced a Domestic Abuse Policy and Guidance. Available via the Employee Portal, the policy is designed to assist those who may be experiencing domestic abuse, providing essential information, resources, and guidance on how to seek help, develop safety plans, and access support.

During the reporting period, we created a total of 275 job opportunities. Among these, 24 were individuals aged 16–24, 52 were over 50 years old, 19 were ethnic minorities, 8 were people with disabilities, and 14 were located within the bottom decile of deprivation. 89.9% of our employees and apprentices are local, working within 25 miles of their home. Support was delivered to 137 people preparing for interview coaching sessions / workshops to support economically inactive adults into the labour market.

### Apprenticeships

Our award-winning apprenticeship delivery remains as strong as ever. Spanning 2,000 miles of the network, we continue to strive to exceed expectations and evolve our provision to ensure it remains at the forefront of the industry. 4.8% of our colleagues are apprentices and, compared with the previous reporting period, we have increased our presence of local apprentices from 68.8% to 73.2%, which is those living within a 25-mile radius of their workplace. The apprentices at GWR became more diverse this year with more people taken on who were not in employment, education or training, more young people and more females.

Our apprentice team is considered industry-leading, delivering 21 programmes at different levels (2-5), with 299 apprentices attending our rolling annual programme. Completion rates stand at a staggering 93%, against a national target of 64%, continually providing a pipeline of new talent for the industry, as well as upskilling our existing colleagues. 95% of our apprentices gained employment on completion of their certification. GWR also delivers the Duke of Edinburgh Business Gold programme to Customer Service and Engineering young apprentices.

# First Aid and Water Safety

## Apprentices build confidence through lifesaving skills

### The context

As part of GWR's Duke of Edinburgh Business Gold programme, 30 apprentices from various programmes embarked on a learning journey to acquire vital skills in First Aid and Water Safety. The challenge lay in equipping apprentices, with varying levels of ability, to navigate water safety protocols and master essential First Aid techniques.

### The solution

Under the guidance of qualified Royal Lifesaving Society Trainer/Assessors, apprentices engaged in both swimming pool and classroom sessions. These covered a spectrum of skills crucial for lifesaving, including shore rescue, shallow and deep water entry techniques, casualty management, and comprehensive First Aid training.

### The impact

Apprentices gained a heightened awareness and skills but also confidence in managing an emergency situation. Their testimonials reflect a sense of achievement and empowerment, emphasising the value of stepping out of their comfort zones and mastering life-saving skills.

"I am a person who has never felt confident jumping into a pool, and I feel this has improved my confidence drastically. Also being able to administer CPR to a casualty was a vital and important thing to learn and I am extremely grateful that I have now been taught how to administer this and potentially save someone's life... The most rewarding part of the week for me was being able to beat my time by 1 minute in the water. I was overjoyed and it really felt like I had accomplished something amazing. This has filled me with confidence for the future that pushing yourself does pay off."

**Elliot Whittaker, Customer Service Apprentice**

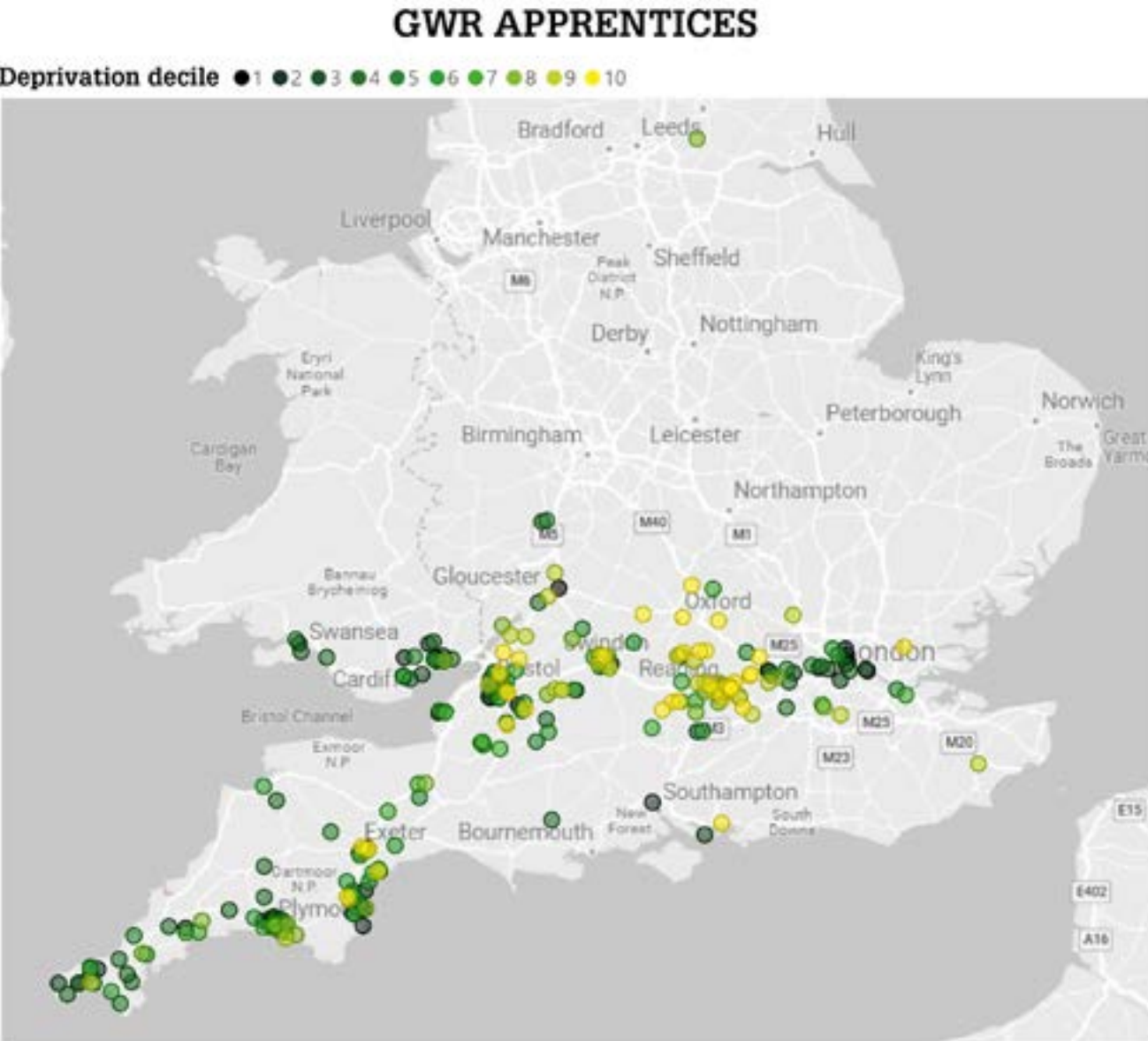




Levelling Up

The Sustainable Rail Blueprint’s Social Value Route Map highlights that rail plays a significant role in supporting Levelling Up. Our recruitment for apprentices looks right across the geographical areas of our business and we continue to engage with those areas of greater need to understand what we can do to help and promote our apprenticeships.

To illustrate the impact of our apprenticeship programme, we have mapped our apprentices against areas of deprivation, demonstrating where we are making opportunities accessible to those who will benefit most. Compared with the last reporting period, we have increased our percentage of apprentices from the most deprived areas<sup>3</sup> from 5.7% to 6.4%. In order to achieve this, we have worked with Princes Trust and have actively targeted areas of social economic deprivation, carrying out more careers events in these locations. Additionally, in 2023 we increased our recruitment intakes from one per year to four, giving young people more opportunities to join at a time which works for them economically.



Mapped against the English Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD, 2019) and Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD)



<sup>3</sup> Bottom 10% deprivation decile



## 2.0 Educational attainment

### Supporting schools and colleges

Our approach to supporting schools and colleges is providing young people with exciting opportunities for development, work experience and qualifications within the rail sector. It is also helping GWR colleagues to understand how we can make our business more engaging and accessible to the next generation.

We work with the National Schools Partnership, which helps us connect with young people and their families. We also maintain outreach programmes with local not-for-profit organisations to actively reach out to diverse communities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. For example, in the reporting period, we have delivered school safety talks to 2,980 young people.

GWR supports Junior Life Skills and Prison Me No Way across 279 schools and academies, 23 of which are priority educators, meaning they are located within the most deprived areas. We also support the Junior Citizens Trust programme in Oxford, a group consisting of various local authorities, commercial, and charitable organisations that work together to teach children how to be safe.

### Prison Me No Way

Prison Me No Way (PMNW) provides real-life learning experiences for children and young people between the ages of 8 and 18, helping them make positive choices that keep them from becoming involved in crime, stay safe and realise their full potential.

GWR supports this initiative by visiting local schools to deliver impactful talks that enable the young people to fully understand the dangers of the railway and that they can always approach teachers, railway staff and the British Transport Police. Presentations are aimed at students who range from 13-16 years of age, with different educational and social backgrounds. The talks cover trespass, third rail and overhead lines, the impact of social media, county lines, anti-social behaviour, fare evasion and suicide prevention.

Last year, GWR supported 2,400 students through these talks. Teachers commented positively about the honest and hard-hitting nature of the talks which the students really engaged with and appreciated



<sup>4</sup> Providers located within the two most deprived quintiles of the Index of Multiple Deprivation

### Junior Citizens Trust: Rail safety for children

Year 6 students from schools across Oxfordshire were invited to the Oxford Fire House for interactive railway safety sessions. The children are taken through a variety of rooms, each with different scenarios, such as a dummy on train tracks. We also show them a video of a 13-year-old who played chicken on a railway. Our Customer Service and Aspire Apprentices then discuss with the children about railway safety, including train speed and crossing protocols, helping them to work out for themselves how to help an injured person without putting themselves in danger. The programme instils a lasting awareness, with children consistently expressing their commitment to stay behind the yellow line and never go on the railway tracks.

"Walking into the railway room and seeing the model of an incident in front of them has a marked impact on the children that attend, and they are given the freedom learn through thinking on their feet and making decisions to solve problems. This is an invaluable learning opportunity that they don't experience in the classroom."

**Molly Giffard, Aspire Operations Management apprentice**





# The mighty traveller

## Learning beyond the classroom for young people with disabilities

### The context

Platform is a Community Rail education scheme that works with schools to empower young people in accessing the railways. Platform receives funding from GWR, Cross Country Trains and Community Rail Network, to deliver in-school workshops, encourage schools to use the railway, and create bespoke, rail-related resources that link to the curriculum at no cost to the schools themselves.

A Department for Transport report from December 2021 found that 27% of disabled non-rail users who had previously travelled by rail were unconfident in doing so, 19% found it confusing, 24% found it very difficult, 23% found it uncomfortable, and 42% overall stated that they were unlikely to travel by rail again.

### The solution

Platform's aim was to work with specialist settings, teachers, and their students to create bespoke packages that would remove the perceived barriers to rail travel for people with disabilities and to empower them to use the railway in the future.

Platform's Special Educational Needs Coordinator initially held meetings with schoolteachers to understand students' needs before preparing appropriate and accessible workshops. The Platform team then visited schools. For some groups, journey-planning workshops helped address barriers to travel, whilst for groups with non-verbal students, play-based workshops ensured safety messaging could be delivered through dressing up and activities.

As a precursor to a train trip, the workshops gave students the opportunity to shape where they wanted to go, empowering them to choose destinations. This was supported by engagement with train operators, including GWR's travel mentors and station staff, as well as complimentary travel.

### The impact

Platform has connected more people with disabilities and special needs to the railway, developing confidence to travel, as well as educating students on safety and available support such as our Passenger Assistance app. 17 teachers involved in the scheme provided feedback:

- 94% rated the communication and friendliness of the team as 'excellent'
- 94% felt their learners had benefited
- 100% would access the programme again

One headteacher felt so strongly in the benefits of the programme that he emailed every special school across Gloucestershire to highlight the scheme; four new Gloucestershire special schools made bookings as a result.



One unexpected result was when one student shared his desire to become a train driver, with an acknowledgement that this was not a career option for him due to medical needs. However, one of the GWR travel mentors arranged for this student to travel to Bristol to access the driver simulator training. His teacher described this as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for him.



# 3.0 Supply chain resilience and capacity

GWR's Sustainable Procurement Policy and other new ways of working drive impactful change across all areas of social value in our supply chain. We are making continuous, incremental improvements in all areas of supplier diversity and assurance, and we are excited about launching even more initiatives in the next 12 months.

Key achievements within the reporting period have included joining the [Supply Chain Sustainability School](#), improving the visibility of our [pipeline](#), strengthening our reporting capabilities, and initiating a supplier relationship management (SRM) programme across all categories of spend.

GWR is strongly committed to supporting small and medium businesses, which are an integral part of our supply chain and help drive local economic growth and employment. In the reporting period, we have increased our spend with SMEs by 13% to over £50m.

Our efforts to improve sustainable procurement practices continue, and we have worked with our supply chain to drive success through collaboration.

## Sustainable procurement

Collaborating with supply chain partners for a smart, sustainable solution

### The context

GWR has worked with Lyreco, a supplier known for its sustainable workplace products, for several years. However, as part of a broader rail industry initiative, we were challenged to explore new opportunities, coming together with other buyers to identify cost and carbon savings through our supply chain.

### The solution

Recognising that other buyers at certain sites were also using Lyreco, we took the initiative to understand if there could be the potential for combined deliveries, as well as understand how we could reduce the number of visits for our deliveries.

### The impact

Whilst GWR is currently the only buyer to have implemented these changes (with combined deliveries pending), we have transitioned to a weekly delivery schedule from the previous next-day approach, which has already yielded benefits. The shift has led to fewer miles driven and an increased 'average order value,' as each delivery now contains more items, resulting in less packaging.

"We believe that incremental change is a way to address sustainability in our supply chain and hope that by modelling different ways of working across our sector we can bring real change ultimately to our business and our customers."

**Laura Daniel, Head of Procurement, GWR**





# 4.0 Rail accessibility

GWR is responsible for providing easy and convenient mobility, so the railway can be accessed and used by as many people as possible, regardless of age, gender and disability.

Working with our partners, we aim to provide the smoothest door-to-door journeys possible, improving the integration of different methods of transport such as improved walking routes, increased car parking at key locations and investing in bike storage facilities. In the reporting period, GWR conducted 144 Diversity Impact Assessments and spent over £500,000 on new inclusive design features.

To ensure our services are accessible to all, our fleet has been modified to comply with ‘Persons of Reduced Mobility National Technical Specification for Interoperability’ (NTSN PRM), working with manufacturers to ensure new trains provide the best accessibility for customers.

We also offer a Passenger Assist service to those who require help to get on and off the train or while moving around stations. In the reporting period, 88% of those asked were satisfied with their ability to get to / access the facilities and services they needed.

“Passenger assistance was excellent. I was met before I left the train and was assisted off the train to the taxi rank outside the station. The passenger assistant stayed with me and helped me into the taxi with my luggage. Once again, I was assisted with courtesy and respect.”

## Customer feedback

Currently, 32.5% of GWR stations are considered completely step-free (Office of Rail and Road category A stations). In the last year, we introduced three new fully accessible stations built and put into operation at Portway Parkway, Marsh Barton and Reading Green Park. We also made Dawlish station fully accessible and step-free. Many of our other stations do have a degree of step-free access; however, we are working to make minor infrastructure enhancements to improve accessibility for our customers. We also contribute to the Rail Delivery Group accessibility network map to help passengers understand which journeys are best for them.

This year, 4,059 GWR colleagues attended disability equality refresher training, with 403 new starters attending disability awareness training as part of their induction.



## Accessibility Panel

At GWR our Accessibility Panel consists of various disabled customers and disability groups that help advise GWR on future projects and initiatives we introduce. The panel meets monthly and has a key focus on ensuring any new projects are designed to incorporate all our passengers despite the barriers disabled people face.

The Accessibility Panel has already played a key part in helping us design our new disability awareness training for the business. The training brings the lived experiences from members of our Accessibility Panel to life, demonstrating the impact that our colleagues can have on customers.



Accessibility panel meeting

## British Sign Language app and travel announcements

GWR launched a New British Sign Language App, which has been downloaded to all mobile devices, and provides a platform for live interpretation between GWR colleagues and customers where BSL is their first or preferred language. BSL travel advice has been rolled out at Bristol Temple Meads, London Paddington and Reading, and digital screens have been updated with the introduction of BSL travel announcements at these stations.





# Autism support systems

## Customised tools to help autistic people travel more confidently

### The context

Navigating train travel can often be overwhelming for autistic people. The sounds of the stations, unfamiliar layouts, not knowing what to expect and challenges in confidently interacting with staff can all make the prospect of travelling tough.

### The solution

To improve the travel experience for autistic people, GWR has implemented tailored solutions to support these rail users. Tools include video tours of key stations, enabling people to 'see' the station before they travel, alongside soundbite videos, which allow people to become accustomed to sounds they may experience. We have also created sensory packs that contain a sensory guide, fidget toys and assistance cards to help autistic people cope with their surroundings.

### The impact

These initiatives have made a tangible difference, and we have received great feedback on our video tours and sensory packs, with one of our customers commenting:

"I've shared with my son, and he loves it! He says that the fidget spinner, squeeze ball and bag are cool. He's completed the help card and name tag and says he'll take the bag and contents with him every time he travels from now on. The pack is a big hit in our house, and he says he's sure other children and adults will appreciate it too. I hope that helps; you have a satisfied customer."

Our soundbite videos have also been used for travel training by GWR and Community Rail groups, as well as other train companies.



GWR's efforts in enhancing support for autistic travellers have been acknowledged through the National Autistic Society Autism Friendly Award. This recognition deeply resonates with our mission to ensure that everyone, regardless of their challenges, feels welcomed and supported on their journey with us.



In addition, we've been working with the local community, hosting events and initiatives to raise people's confidence in rail travel, particularly for families and vulnerable groups. In the reporting period we have supported 3,538 people to use the rail network, through our 'Try a Train' initiative, an increase of 948 compared with last year. We have also supported 250,233 people to travel, who requested assistance because of a disability.

## Try a train

Many disabled people are unaware of the opportunities available to help them travel by train. There are a number of barriers to travel but the main challenge is usually confidence in knowing what to do and how to access the railway.

To help build this confidence in travel, GWR offers Try a Train trips. These trips focus on providing a real lived experience of travelling by train. This is done with a member of GWR staff who provides details on safe travel and options available to help.

The difference this initiative makes to individuals in their ability to be independent and travel safely is huge. For example, because of Try a Train trips we have been told of young people accessing further education opportunities by train, that they had previously rejected, as they had no means of travel.

"Thank you for all your support and allowing our young people to experience things they normally wouldn't, whilst also helping develop their confidence, self-esteem and take positive steps towards their prep for adulthood."

**Teacher, Mendip School**





# 5.0 Workforce equality, diversity and inclusion

GWR’s vision is to be a truly diverse and inclusive business where our colleagues, customers and communities have a sense of belonging. We want everyone to feel that they can thrive and progress regardless of who they are and without fear of judgement. We know that this is the keystone to enabling our colleagues to deliver great experiences for colleagues and customers alike.

Over the past 12 months we have continued to focus on creating a more inclusive culture across GWR, including adjusting our recruitment activities to attract a more diverse workforce, supporting outreach programmes, and providing formal training and progression opportunities for our employees.

## Recruitment

At GWR, our aim is to build a diverse and inclusive team that can better serve our customers and communities. In 2023 we set ourselves ambitious targets to increase gender diversity to 28.3% and an overall ethnicity target of 9.15% by 2028. In April 2024 after year 1, we achieved 26.6% representation for women (0.1% shy of our year 1 target) and met our year 1 target for ethnicity of 7.3%.

We use specialist job boards to attract a wider range of candidates, promoting role models from underrepresented groups and providing documents in alternative formats to accommodate different needs. We also ensure that shortlists are split 50/50 by gender and include 20% ethnic minority candidates.

We ensure diverse interview panels to reduce bias in the selection process and all hiring managers receive interview training to help them identify the best candidates based on skills and experience. To support our targets, in 2024 we are launching a renewed ‘inclusive training for hiring managers’ in-person development workshop, that we will roll out in stages.

Our continued efforts over the past 12 months have demonstrated our success with 25.1% applications being from women and 32.9% from ethnically diverse colleagues (both increases on the previous 12 months’ data).

## Outreach

GWR is committed to fostering equity, diversity, and inclusion through strategic community partnerships to empower underserved groups. Our outreach programmes help us to connect with a myriad of community groups, to drive initiatives that create positive change and opportunities in the communities we serve.

Our latest partnership with Future First, a social mobility charity, aligns with our commitment to levelling the playing field for all young people. Together, we equip students with the skills and confidence to pursue their potential, irrespective of socio-economic barriers.

## Community outreach

In London, we proudly support FairShot Café, a superb organisation that offers young adults with a learning disability and/or autism the chance to gain real-life work experience through a year-long hospitality programme - growing the next generation of skilled baristas and cafe assistants.



FairShot Café

Further west, our collaboration with Llamau, Wales’s leading homelessness charity, focuses on empowering and equipping vulnerable youth and women, many of whom have experienced domestic abuse, with vital skills for independent and purposeful living. In Bristol, we also stand behind Babbasa’s mission to inspire and uplift underrepresented young people, providing pathways for skill development, mentorship, and workplace experience at their own pace.



Llamau



# The Prince's Trust

## Building confidence and enhancing employability

### The context

At GWR, we are dedicated to empowering young people to realise their full potential. This year, we partnered with The Prince's Trust to plan, recruit for and deliver an engaging 'Get into Customer Service' Programme in Bristol, targeting individuals aged 18-30 who were unemployed.

### The solution

We on-boarded 9 young people with a passion for customer service, all from diverse backgrounds. Through a 2-week training programme, we provided participants with invaluable insights into the different areas of our business. Our goal was to not only prepare them for potential roles within GWR but also equip them with transferable skills for their future endeavours'. Key components of the training included:

- Shadowing experiences with our operational teams at Bristol Temple Meads station, including Gateline staff, Customer Service Hosts, and Revenue Protection team members.
- In-depth training sessions covering interview preparation, presentation skills, and personal branding workshops.
- Certifications in Level 2 Food Hygiene and Emergency First Aid at Work (EFAW)

### The impact

Our aim was to see all participants 'graduate' the programme with greatly improved self-confidence and self-worth, consequently improving their employability potential and job chances post-programme. Following the training, 6 roles were offered to delegates following interviews, 3 participants accepted positions as Customer Hosts, one individual embraced a role as a ticket examiner, whilst another seized the opportunity to apply for a GWR apprenticeship programme, paving the way for long-term career growth. A further two participants await placement in the GWR holding pool, poised to embark on their journey with us.



### Culture

GWR is committed to promoting an equitable, inclusive and diverse culture, and taking concrete steps to make this happen. We currently support six internal employee network groups that promote inclusion and lived experience; 'Ability, Aspect (LGBTQ+)', Christian Rail, Futures (intersectional talent community), R.E.A.C.H (recognising ethnicity and cultural heritage) and Women in Rail.

In the reporting period, 29% of GWR colleagues were formally accommodated with flexible working arrangements, such as flexi-time, condensed hours, job-shares, homeworking and term-time.

24 women looking for career progression have completed our Step Up / Step Forward / Senior Women training programmes, while 11 of our ethnically diverse colleagues have undertaken Reach Up and Reach Forward training programmes. Of those who attended our women's development programmes, 41% on Step Up, 53% on Step Forward and 88% on Senior Women's Development Programme have received promotions. Of those who attended our development programmes for ethnically diverse colleagues, 34% on Reach Up and 30% on Reach Forward have received promotions.

In addition, GWR offers 'lunch and learns' and reverse mentoring programmes to provide opportunities for employees to gain an understanding of different cultures and perspectives.





# 6.0 Community and charity

From the incredible work Community Rail Partnerships on our network have been doing to meet the needs of deprived families to our Customer and Community Improvement Fund (CCI Fund), which last year invested £918,406 to support projects across the GWR network, we are supporting customers, charities, community groups and voluntary organisations to deliver benefit in the communities we serve.

## Fundraising and charitable giving

Our culture of giving back, engaging colleagues, and making a positive social impact is demonstrated through our colleague engagement in Payroll Giving, which allows our staff to give monthly to charity, tax-free. This year the percentage of GWR colleagues donating via payroll giving was 7.54%, collectively donating over £48k to charity. GWR also match funds any staff fundraising up to £200 per colleague per year. This year, we paid £8,797 in match funding directly to registered charities, as well as donating £17,544.75 of lost money found on the network to charity.

Our customers are also hugely generous in giving back. Delay Repay provides compensation for customers who have been delayed by 15 minutes or more. This compensation would usually be refunded back to the customer following an application via the GWR website. However, customers can choose instead to divert the funds directly to Samaritans and Railway Children. During the reporting period, a total of £71,261.86 was donated to charity by our customers.

## Community Rail Partnerships

Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) bring together local groups and stakeholder partners along railway lines to deliver a range of community engagement and promotional activities. GWR works with 11 CRPs on our network and their work delivers a wide-range of initiatives such as promoting careers in rail and rail confidence, improving mobility and sustainable travel, promoting inclusion and wellbeing, and helping communities have a voice. We are incredibly proud of the work they do. All new CRP Officers and new Rail Education Officers are offered GWR courses such as personal track safety, introduction to sign language, first aid and disability awareness training. In the reporting period, 10 people attended courses at no cost to themselves.

## Space for community use

In the reporting period, GWR spent £4,000 on making spaces and facilities available for community use. The old signal box at Bere Alston, lovingly restored in previous years, is now used regularly by Bere Alston Scouts who have adopted the station. GWR now has 73 station adoption groups across the network, and community volunteers have spent 6,510 hours participating in these groups.



## Promoting Bus Branch Lines

Bus Branch Lines are bus routes which link with rail services. GWR, alongside the Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership (DCRP), aimed to showcase the seamless integration of train and bus routes, promoting leisure destinations across the region.

Ten 'travelogue' short films were crafted, highlighting the convenience of transitioning from train to bus and spotlighting over 50 local attractions and businesses, encouraging day trippers and tourists alike.

The videos were recognised at a national level, reaching 500,000 people across Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter/X and YouTube, with more than 200 positive comments, including: "Let's do it", "I think I've found our next outing" and "I need to come again from Canada so I can do this".

Local businesses were thrilled. Feedback included: "It does the town proud!", "What a lovely advert for a day out" and "It's going to attract a lot more visitors". The videos success extended beyond the region, with DCRP assisting Purbeck CRP in creating similar films, and GWR adopting the approach in other network areas.

## The Great Train Tapestry

On International Women's Day, Gloucester MP Richard Graham unveiled a textile-based artwork celebrating women in rail history at the station. Created through a community project led by internationally renowned artist Lisl Ponger and funded by GWR's CCI Fund, the tapestry depicts how women have been involved in the rail industry over many decades, including WWII.

As part of this women in rail project, participants delved into archive research, uncovering stories such as the Indian diaspora in Gloucester who migrated to Gloucester to work on the railway and the tale of Isambard Kingdom Brunel's mother, who was abandoned by her husband in France on the eve of the French revolution.

The project empowered around 50 women from low socio-economic backgrounds, fostering skill-sharing and camaraderie. Those from cohort 1 shared their photography and research skills, whilst members of the sewing circle imparted their embroidery techniques. Regular meetings not only nurtured creativity but also promoted mental wellbeing within the community.

The blend of research and newfound artistic abilities enriched the participants' understanding of the role women have played in the history of GWR, all powerfully reflected in the final tapestry.





# Carnival train

## Celebrating Caribbean culture



### The context

GWR REACH and Network Rail Cultural Fusion are staff networks focused on advancing diversity and inclusion. Discussions on cultural heritage led to the idea of a Carnival Train, inspired by Notting Hill Carnival's vibrancy. In collaboration with Severnside Community Rail Partnership and Network Rail, GWR aimed to celebrate Caribbean culture, offering free rail travel from Bristol to Paddington to make the event accessible to underrepresented groups facing financial barriers.

### The solution

Severnside CRP facilitated engagement with target groups including Bristol Black Carers, Bath Black Families Education Group, Bath Ethnic Minority Senior Citizens Association and St Nicholas of Tolentine school, who were all delighted to accept the opportunity. Two reserved carriages on a scheduled train were loaded with snacks and art packs for attendees to festoon the carriages with carnival themed artwork. A Caribbean café provided Jamaican snacks, and a steel band greeted over 100 excited guests at Paddington, making the journey part of the carnival experience.

### The impact

This first-of-its-kind event strengthened GWR's relationships with these community groups, and provided exposure on a national scale, enhancing the railway's reputation for promoting diversity and inclusion among the industry's key political audiences and influencers, along with colleagues and local communities.

"To describe Sunday in three words - wonderful, special, memorable... it was a day of enjoyment from the moment we met at the platform. The snack box was a surprise, with familiar food items, and was enjoyed by all and shared when we found a place to have lunch with family and new friends we met. For many it was their first visit to the carnival and for others, like me who had not been for years, to follow a float and the dancing, loved it. We plan to go next year."

**Pauline Swaby-Wallace, BEMSCA Manager, Bath Ethnic Minority Senior Citizens Association (BEMSCA)**

"I have had all the parents coming to me saying how amazing it was and how grateful they are they were able to have tickets. It really was wonderful for our families."

**Rachael James, Head Teacher, St Nicholas of Tolentine School**





# 7.0 Stakeholder engagement and customers

## Stakeholders and customers

GWR holds a database of 3,126 stakeholders. With such a large network and wide array of partners and stakeholders, we work hard to build strong regional relationships. In the reporting period, over 4,579 stakeholders attended GWR consultation and engagement events.

GWR helps more than 100 million passengers reach their destination every year, operating 200 stations and serving South Wales, the Cotswolds, London and the South West. Our Customer and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy enables us to develop an in-depth and accurate understanding of the needs and aspirations of our customers and stakeholders, and we have a dedicated team of Regional Growth Managers who work with stakeholders to develop plans and find funding for joint projects.

## Feedback and communication

The data for this report has been collected during a year of significant disruption to services, primarily due to Network Rail infrastructure failures, flooding and weather-related delays, as well as the ongoing industrial action. GWR has continued to promote clear and open channels of communication, encouraging regular feedback through surveys, social media and customer service channels, taking on board suggestions for improvements.

Half of stakeholders feel that GWR information provision during periods of disruption has improved over the last 12 months, with three quarters of stakeholders satisfied with information provision for general updates and during disruption.

Despite a 16% increase in the number of complaints, in the reporting period we resolved 97.7% of all complaints within 20 days of being received, a slight improvement from last year. The proportion of stakeholders who rated their interactions with GWR as good or very good in 2023 was 74%, and 70% of people agreed that GWR is committed to delivering the best quality service to passengers. Both ratings maintained from 2022.

In the reporting period we've received 699 communications of positive feedback.

## Poppies to Paddington

More than 200 poppy wreaths were carried to the capital on 10 November 2023 as part of GWR's latest Poppies to Paddington operation. Five 'Poppy' trains – starting from Plymouth, Carmarthen, Taunton, Worcester Shrub Hill and Great Malvern – made their way to London ahead of the remembrance service at Paddington's iconic war memorial.

Partnering with The Veterans Charity, the Royal Navy Air Station Culdrose deployed a Merlin Mk2 helicopter to carry poppy wreaths from its base to Plymouth.

With planned engineering work preventing trains from running between Penzance and Plymouth, Go South West kindly provided its 'Poppy Bus' to collect wreaths from stations throughout the region and carry them to Plymouth, meaning the fourth Poppies to Paddington operation still served Cornwall.



Taking part were Royal Navy personnel, alongside West Cornwall MP Derek Thomas, the mayors of Penzance and Helston, representatives from the NHS and GWR, as well as veterans from all three services of the Armed Forces.

The service especially remembered the 81,000-Armed Forces personnel who took part in the Korean conflict, particularly those of the Gloucester Regiment and the Royal Fusiliers, who were involved in some of the heaviest fighting.

## A smarter way to travel

### Pay-as-you-go touch smartcards for Swindon and the Stroud Valley

#### The context

To encourage a modal shift and sustainable travel, GWR extended its popular Bristol pay-as-you-go touch smartcard to include stations stops from beyond Bristol, towards Swindon, and along the Stroud Valley between Swindon and Gloucester.

#### The solution

Rolling payments and tickets into one, the smartcard calculates the best value on the day of travel. Additionally, it applies Weekly Season ticket price capping for end-to-end journeys between two stations over a Monday to Sunday seven-day week. Railcards can also be loaded onto customer's pay-as-you-go card, with discounts automatically applied, while a 50% child fare discount is available if they register a child.

#### The impact

This streamlined approach is simplifying the purchasing and travel process for passengers, and ensures that they always receive the most advantageous fare.





# 8.0 Safety, health and wellbeing

## Safety and security

Safety is GWR's number one priority, and we are committed to keeping our railway the safest in Europe. 89.6% of our stations are Secure Stations accredited, recognising how we are working with our partners to reduce crime and play a greater role in safeguarding vulnerable people. We achieve this through our well-trained frontline staff, physical design measures and stringent risk management procedures. In the period our staff have intervened 477 times to prevent harm, including 114 suicide interventions.

Testament to GWR's commitment to safety, in the reporting period we have achieved zero fatalities across the network. With an increase in elderly and vulnerable customers, GWR continues to reinforce the right conduct through our behavioural safety campaign "BeSafe", cascading our Golden Rules posters throughout the business.

## Lifesaving equipment provision

Having early access to a defibrillator in the event of a Sudden Cardiac Arrest, can increase survival rates dramatically.

GWR has installed 89 defibrillators across its station network, providing public access to our workforce, customers, and the community.

Bleeding control kits were also fitted within each defibrillator cabinet, which help to control life threatening bleeding prior to the arrival of an emergency ambulance. We also purchased 12 mobile defibrillators, for use at large events such as Cheltenham Races and Glastonbury, as well as 2 indoor defibrillators.



## Safeguarding on Rail Scheme (SRS) accreditation

### Protecting vulnerable people on the railway and beyond

#### The context

A full audit of GWR's delivery against the Safeguarding on Rail Scheme (SRS) criteria took place in February 2024, carried out by a British Transport Police (BTP) assessor. The tool measures rail sector organisations' work to protect vulnerable children and adults at risk on rail transport and covers a wide range of aspects, including leadership, communication, interventions, our colleagues, and training.

#### The solution

Assessment activities included a planned visit to Exeter St Davids Railway Station, interviews with a cross section of GWR colleagues, partners, and a review of key documents.

"It was evident both through interviews and with evidence provided that the Great Western Railway Senior Team are dedicated to Safeguarding and have a real desire to build on what is already business as usual in continuing to make this a success."

- **Sarah White, Detective Chief Superintendent, Head of Crime and Public Protection, British Transport Police**



## The impact

GWR achieved an incredible score of 100%, a testament to our significant efforts to protect and safeguard vulnerable people travelling on our network. Positive comments from the assessor included our collaborative approach with BTP, the clear drive for safeguarding from senior leadership and the excellent examples of interventions front line colleagues had made. They also cited GWR's engagement in campaigns such as White Ribbon UK, Railway Children, Samaritans, Prison Me No Way and other local charities as best practice.

"The engagement in numerous projects is incredible, ranging from mental health, learning disabilities, youth engagement schemes, neurodiversity and so much more. It is clear that GWR is pushing boundaries and looking beyond the railway to seek solutions to tackling vulnerability." - **Assessor.**

## Health and wellbeing

Within the rail industry, shift patterns, demanding time frames, challenging working conditions, and exposure to potentially distressing events are fundamental to promoting good mental health among our workforce. Our Wellbeing Taskforce brings together colleagues from across the network and from different functions to share best practices and ideas. Together, we've hosted 168 community health, wellbeing and welfare projects or interventions during the reporting period and distributed 10,000 'Be Kind' badges, whereby we worked with other train operating companies to combat conflict in the industry and help colleagues and customers have better conversations.

We use the Assessbook GWR learning portal to support our Mental Health First Aider training programme and REACTMH training, which is a way to open the door to having a meaningful, wellbeing-focused conversation with the aim of helping someone improve their mental health. As of 31 March 2024, GWR had 90 Wellbeing Champions, 2 Co-Chairs, 5 Lead Wellbeing Champions, and 120 Health First Aiders. We are supported by Wellbeing Support Managers in Stations and the OTSIG Wellbeing Project.

We also monitor and aim to improve employee attendance by implementing in-house Occupational Health and Wellbeing programmes. In the reporting period, circa 3,000 GWR colleagues benefitted from a health and wellbeing intervention and 83 colleagues attended our annual wellbeing conference. In recognition of GWR's commitment, Wellbeing was shortlisted for the 2023 Personnel Today Awards for the Health and Wellbeing Award - Public Sector. Wellbeing also worked with the REACH staff networks and Community Rail and was awarded 'Best Community Engagement Project' for the 'Carnival Train'.

## Bereavement and trauma support for colleagues

This year, GWR introduced TRiM Trauma Risk Management to provide support for colleagues impacted by a fatality. TRiM is a caring and supportive framework led by peers that is tailored to handle situations involving trauma or potential trauma. It helps peers understand common responses to traumatic events and identifies individuals who may need immediate medical attention through careful risk assessments. It's not just a one-time intervention; TRiM offers continuous monitoring and support to ensure ongoing assistance. We now have 4 TRiM managers and 8 TRiM practitioners based in Control at Western House to pilot this initiative.

In May 2024, we also hosted a grief workshop in partnership with the Rail Industry Bereavement Support Group. The session aimed to help colleagues understand grief, provide coping mechanisms, including how to treat symptoms of grief and returning to work after a loss, as well as providing an open floor for discussion to share experiences.



# Queenagers

## Supporting and empowering women over fifty

### The context

Queenager is a term adopted by Eleanor Mills, Founder and Editor in Chief of Noon, to refer to women in their midlife. By the time women reach fifty, over half have been through significant life events including divorce, bereavement, redundancy, caring for elderly parents or teens failing to thrive, as well as dealing with their own health issues and menopause.

GWR wanted to recognise this and understand how to better support women over fifty in their personal and professional lives.

### The solution

Noon is a community that support women through challenging life events and inspires them to embrace new goals and dreams. GWR partnered with Noon to run a series of workshops to better understand our colleagues' experiences and identify how we could better support women during this phase of their lives and careers and offer more opportunities for their development.

### The impact

Over 30 women from across GWR joined the workshops to share their stories. GWR is now using the valuable insights to inform its future people strategy. We hope that the support we implement as a result will enrich the lives of our colleagues and pave the way for a more inclusive and supportive workplace culture.



## Wellbeing van

To reach colleagues in engineering depots who would never ordinarily engage with occupational health services, GWR's mobile unit attended engineering depots across the network to ensure no colleague experiencing health issues related to their duties would go unidentified.

The feedback was fantastic from both colleagues and managers, and the face-to-face engagement helped to reduce ill health. Following two recent visits to depots in February and March, the incidence of absence due to sickness in both locations has trended downwards, from 6.15% to 4.03% and 4.26% to 3.69% respectively.





# 9.0 Economic development

## Infrastructure enhancements

GWR has a long history of working in partnership with the communities it serves. We work to understand the railway's role in achieving local aspirations and bringing forward improvements to stations and services that connect people with jobs, education, services and leisure opportunities. New infrastructure and services can be vital for revitalising our towns and cities.

The RSSB Social Value Tool helps us demonstrate the significant impact that the railway can have on the economic development of an area, which is helping us enhance the business cases for future investment and widen the potential list of funding sources.

In this reporting period, GWR has secured and invested £10.4m in development and infrastructure enhancements, working closely in partnership with local authorities, subnational transport bodies, developers, Local Enterprise Partnerships and private sector organisations, as well as with the Department for Transport. Partnership work is led by dedicated Regional Development Managers from GWR and Industry Programme Directors from Network Rail.

## Our improvement schemes

Investment of rail infrastructure has been shown to increase travel accessibility, provide improved capacity and connectivity, enhance the public realm around stations, increase property and land value within the vicinity and improve confidence in the area.<sup>5</sup>

During the reporting period, GWR completed schemes at Newbury (station building and forecourt enhancements and business growth units), Reading West (new station building), Moreton-in-Marsh (cycle hub) and Castle Cary (additional car parking and improved access).

Working with our partners, we have also invested in improved transport integration at stations across the network through ticketing initiatives, marketing, wayfinding and information. Additional services, funded by the West of England Combined Authority, were commenced between Bristol and Westbury and between Bristol and Gloucester in May 2023. These have resulted in a significant uplift in journeys on these routes. May 2023 also saw the introduction of new services between Swansea and Carmarthen, offering new and enhanced journey opportunities for west Wales.

Investment streams from our partners are sourced to support many of these schemes, precisely because of the wider benefits that flow from increased accessibility and useability of train services. Our partners are keen to continue investing in the rail network to increase rail use and deliver their objectives for the economy, environment and wider society.

<sup>5</sup>Rail Delivery Group, 'Local Economic Benefits of Station Investment', 2018, [https://www.raildeliverygroup.com/files/Publications/2018-03\\_local\\_economic\\_benefits\\_of\\_station\\_investment.pdf](https://www.raildeliverygroup.com/files/Publications/2018-03_local_economic_benefits_of_station_investment.pdf)

# Reconnecting communities

## Three new stations on the GWR network

### The context

During 2023, three new stations appeared on the GWR network; Reading Green Park (promoted by Reading Borough Council), Marsh Barton (promoted by Devon County Council), and Portway Park & Ride (promoted by Bristol City Council). Each was included in the Local Transport Plan, with investment secured through Local Enterprise Partnerships and the Government's Levelling Up and Restoring Your Railway initiatives.

Opening up sustainable travel opportunities, the stations are all on the periphery of their urban areas, offering a mix of park & ride, city centre access, industrial estates and sporting and leisure access.

### The impact

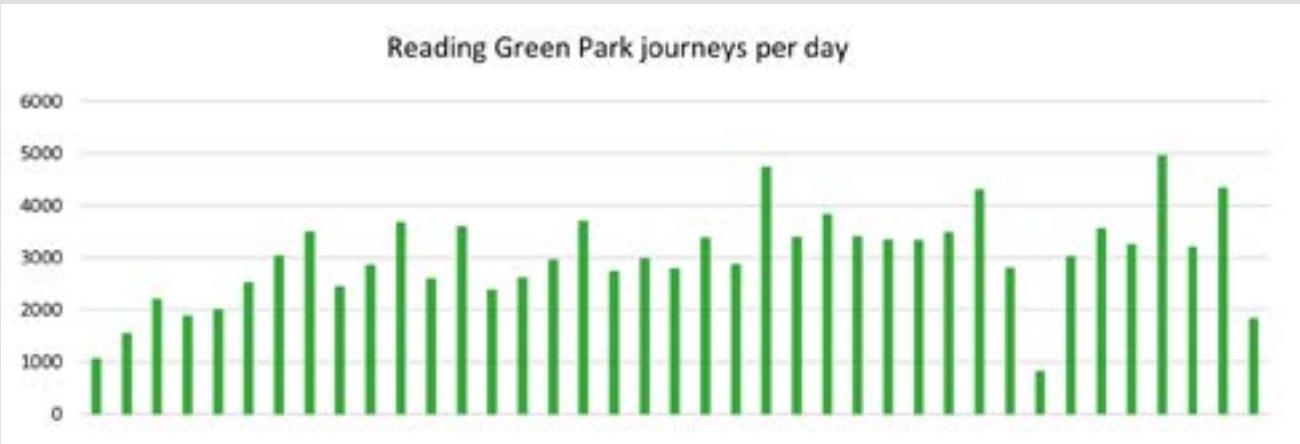
Over 200,000 new journeys were generated on the rail network in just 10 months.

### Reading Green Park

This station is helping to ease congestion on the A33 road and unlock growth potential in the south of Reading. The station has been crucial for allowing surrounding development to come forward, and serves the Green Park Business Park, which covers 195 acres of landscaped employment land and includes 1.5 millionft2 of workspace, supporting 9,000 employees. The station was a key feature in Reading Borough Council's Core Strategy as it unlocked a further 16,000m2 of employment (an estimated 1,600 jobs) and the Green Park Village containing 737 new dwellings in the area.



In the first 12 months the station generated 164,000 journeys. It is estimated that at least 44% of those journeys (72,160) were brand new to rail travel. While local journeys (e.g. to Reading) predominate, journeys to London also represent a significant proportion of trips (24%).





**Marsh Barton**

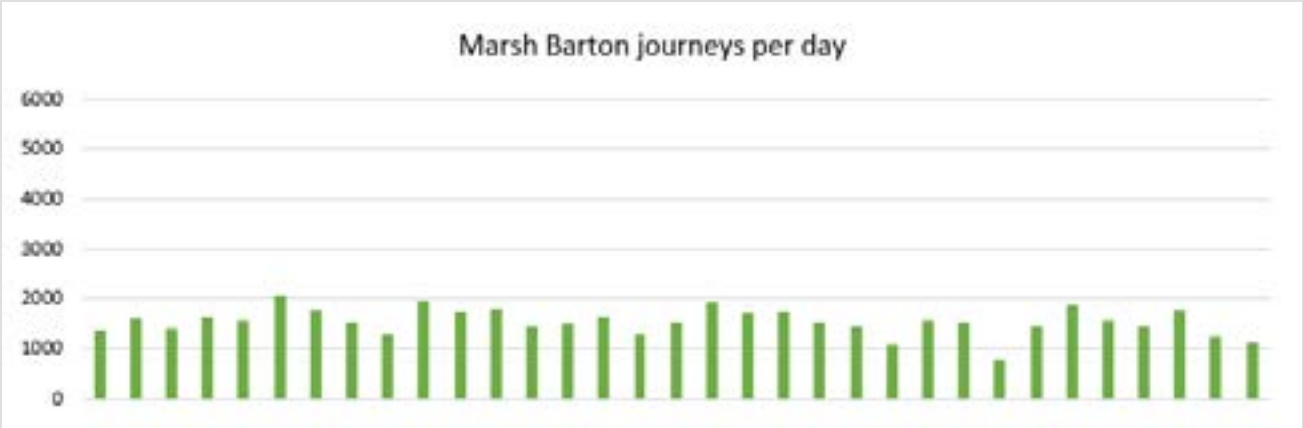
Situated in the centre of Marsh Barton Industrial Estate, this station provides direct employment access to one of the biggest employment sites in the South West of England. Exeter's largest trading estate covers 1.2 square miles and encompasses over 500 businesses.

Improving social inclusion, particularly for those without access to a car, the station is within walking distance from County Hall (Devon County Councils administrative base), the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital (serving Exeter, North, East and Mid Devon), Riverside Valley Park (40 hectares of public green space access around the River Exe).

Exeter and Marsh Barton suffer from substantial traffic congestion at peak times. The development has seen a new pedestrian and cycle bridge developed, which is segregated from the road. This has improved access to employment and amenities for vulnerable road users, offering an alternative to an otherwise narrow country lane with limited forward visibility and reducing reliance on private vehicles.



At Marsh Barton, the first 10 months of operation has generated 74,000 journeys. It is estimated that a relatively high proportion of these (82% / 60,680 journeys) are new to rail, because the Marsh Barton area was previously not easily accessible by train. Local trips predominate, with journeys to Exeter the greatest flow.



**Portway Park & Ride**

Located alongside the existing bus Park & Ride site on the A4 Portway, close to Junction 18 of the M5, Portway Park & Ride provides another choice of sustainable travel into city centre, as well as destinations along the Severn Beach line and connections to the wider rail network, through the 30-minute GWR train service.

It serves the local community of Portway, with 9,000 residents now able to access an improved public transport corridor and access to the rail network.

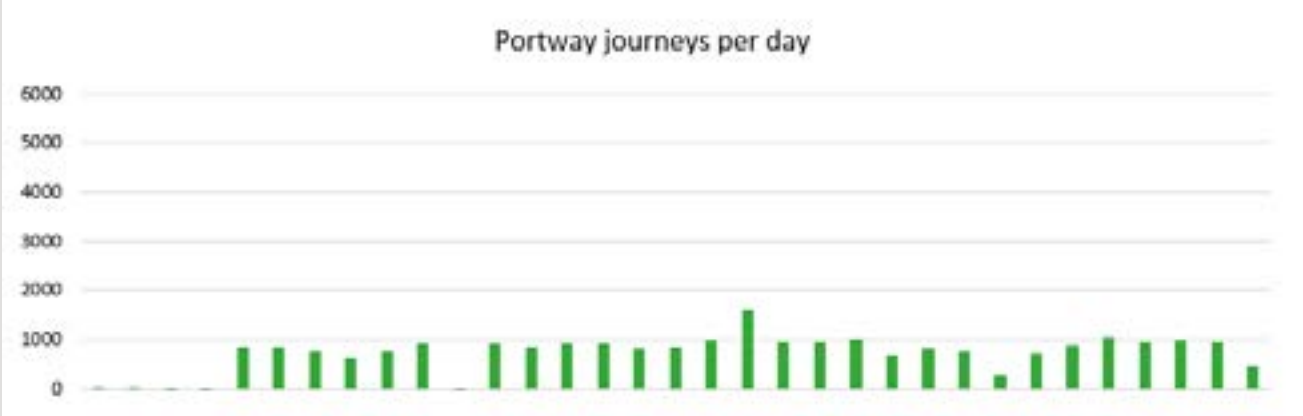
The station also provides a vital jigsaw piece in tackling congestion in the city. The Park & Ride serves bus and active travel improvements, providing an improved public transport offer into Bristol city centre with associated benefits for de-congestion and air quality.

Public Transport Interchange at the Portway site means existing GWR customers on the Severn Beach line have a new convenient location to switch to bus for alternative destinations not served by rail.



In the first 9 months of operation, 37,000 journeys were made. It is estimated that 75% of these journeys (27,750) are new to rail.

Bristol Temple Meads is the most popular destination, suggesting the station supports journeys to the Temple Quarter area, as well as onward destinations by train and access to the city centre. Bristol University is accessed from Clifton Down station, which is likely to make a significant contribution to its popularity as a destination.





### Stakeholder satisfaction

The work that GWR does in this area is recognised and valued by communities. According to an audit of stakeholder satisfaction undertaken each year, the majority of our stakeholders (69%) continue to agree that GWR is a significant contributor towards the economic health of their community. The auditors recorded a number of verbatim quotes from stakeholders which illustrate the perceived importance of GWR to local and regional economies:

“Utterly vital as it provides rail links to Oxford, London, Worcester, Hereford and from these places across the country for many working people and also bringing in tourists which support a large proportion of the Cotswolds economy.” (Councillor).

“Our town is a commuter town essentially and good, reliable services contribute to the town’s growth and to sustainable transport into cities with low emission traffic zones.” (Rail Group)





## 10.0 Climate and environment

### Net zero and decarbonisation

The rail industry has a substantial opportunity to play a role in mitigating climate change and achieving Net Zero emissions by 2050. GWR collaborates with Network Rail and the Environment Agency to assess the effects of extreme weather events and create contingency and long-term risk management strategies. Additionally, Network Rail is committed to creating a low-emission railway and has set ambitious science-based targets to reduce carbon emissions.

Ensuring effective measurement and management of our environmental impact is crucial for our business success. We prioritise running trains on electricity whenever feasible and are currently developing a decarbonisation roadmap aligned with the Government's net-zero commitment. By 2040, we aim to phase out all diesel-only traction. Our investment in cutting-edge battery-operated train technology strongly supports this objective.

## Moving towards net zero

### Engaging year 6 students in environmental education

#### The context

The UK Government has set a legal commitment to achieve 'net zero' greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. Government targets for decarbonising the railways require that all diesel-only trains be replaced by 2040 in the UK (2035 in Scotland) with low-carbon alternatives. In February 2023, GWR integrated the emissions-free and hybrid trains manufacturer Vivarail into its operation, taking the significant opportunities afforded by this technology to support the pathway to net zero.

#### The solution

There are over 14,000 diesel rail vehicles in operation in the UK and, whilst traditional electrification is seen by many as the gold standard to decarbonise, this approach is expensive and takes time. GWR is therefore trialling Fast Charging Battery Trains. These trains use electricity but can be charged quickly using a less expensive grid connection, providing a zero-carbon solution.

#### The impact

GWR's Fast Charge Battery trial is hoped to show promising results. They can cover 7.5 kilometres for every minute of charging, significantly lowering emissions and other environmental impacts such as noise and air quality. If successful, this trial could demonstrate a more cost-effective and environmentally friendly alternative to traditional electrification.

"This work is a key part of our commitment to reduce the carbon emissions of our train fleet with a view to removing all diesel-only traction from the network by 2040, in line with the Government's Transport Decarbonisation Plan."

**Simon Green, Engineering Director, GWR**





# Climate change awareness

## Engaging year 6 students in environmental education

### The context

In September 2023, GWR’s Environment Team arranged to deliver an environmental workshop to a class of year 6 students at Starcross Train Station. In the classroom, the students had been learning about climate change and how their local town and the people of Starcross have been affected by rising sea levels and extreme weather conditions.

### The solution

During the workshop we discussed the importance of the rail network in transporting and linking people to nearby towns and the city of Exeter for work and other activities. GWR outlined how flooding has impacted this section of the rail network and the wider impact this has on the local community. The team also spoke about mitigation measures to protect the railway and prevent further damage from extreme weather, using the work Network Rail has undertaken at Dawlish as a case study.

### The impact

The students learned how travelling by train can benefit both passengers and the planet, and more broadly demonstrated how large companies are working hard to ensure that they have a sustainable future.

“Coral engaged the children with her knowledge of the local railway systems and local area, educating them about the sustainability of the railway and the direction in which the service will be moving in the future. After learning about the impact of climate change on the Devon coastline in the classroom, the children were able to deepen their knowledge of this, as Coral was able to give further examples and testimonials of how climate change is affecting the Devon coastline and how GWR is working with other authorities to tackle these issues. I will be emailing Coral and GWR again in the next academic year to arrange another workshop with my next cohort of children.”

**Natalie Hann, year 6 teacher, All Saints Babbacombe Primary School**

### Waste, water and energy use

GWR continues to operate in accordance with the international standards for environmental and energy management, maintaining our ISO 14001:2015 and ISO 50001:2018 certifications across the business. Our environmental and energy management system is allowing us to drive improvements in waste, water, and energy consumption and a successful external audit by Lloyds in early 2024 found our management system to be continuously improving and fully supporting the GWR sustainability agenda.

In the reporting period, GWR achieved its non-hazardous waste recycling target, with an overall recycling figure at 75%, an increase from 70% in FY22/23. We are working closely with both suppliers and vendors to improve our recycling on site and will continue to examine how to best capture recycling efforts across the network.<sup>6</sup>

Through the installation of automated water meters, we continue to closely monitor water consumption across our portfolio. Real-time data is allowing us to see peaks and troughs in consumption, enabling us to rapidly identify and repair any leaks. After a trial of reduced water flow taps, GWR is now installing water-saving taps across our stations to reduce consumption and based on a similar project by FirstGroup, this could reduce total station water consumption by up to 30%.

<sup>6</sup>Waste data is typically calculated based on recorded weight, where this is unavailable, an estimation is given based on average container threshold

### Carriage wash reduces water consumption and energy use

GWR renewed the carriage wash at Saint Philips Marsh Depot under the network rail Depot Renewal Programme, as the existing machine was beyond its useful operating life. The new machine incorporates a reclamation system that recycles 70% of the water used, passing the used water through a settling tank and series of sand and carbon filters prior to it being reused. The new carriage wash also harvests rainfall, further reducing the amount of fresh water required.

“Apart from cleaner trains, we expect to see significant future savings in terms of water consumption and energy use, with the installation projected to reduce our annual water bill by circa £3,500 at this depot. This is a great example of providing a better service to customers, whilst lowering our overall environmental impact and carbon emissions.”

**Dan Walker, Senior Environment and Decarbonisation Manager, GWR**





# Future projects, aims and measures

Guided by Akerlof, last year, GWR completed a comprehensive review of the 11 social impact areas, to understand where we could make improvements in our data collection, as well as harness existing data to drive focused improvements. We have detailed below our progress against these aims.

Given the significant changes expected within the RSVT, our primary focus for the upcoming reporting period will be to identify and understand the impact of these changes. As the impact areas have been reduced from 12 to 5, our goal is to understand the new structure and determine which metrics GWR intends to measure in the future. Whilst over the past few years our efforts have been dedicated to exploring the various metrics in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of social value, the next phase in our social value maturity will be about prioritising and refining our approach, targeting measures that hold significance and relevance for GWR.

Our objective is to establish a new social value roadmap for 25/26, which will outline our commitments to continuously improve the way in which we measure and maximise our social value.

## Progress against the social value route map

### Employment, training and skills

In an improvement from the previous reporting period, we were able to collect an additional 3 metrics. As targeted within our route map, these were in relation to a breakdown of level 2, 3 a 4+ in-work training qualifications completed.

### Educational attainment

Achieving our aim, this year we began to capture the number of priority educators receiving curriculum enrichment talks. To enhance our social value delivery, we are looking to work with Network Rail to introduce T Levels in Engineering, a technical qualification for students aged 16 to 19.

### Supply chain resilience and capacity

As targeted within the route map, in this reporting period, we captured an additional 4 metrics relating to contracts advertised via a free, publicly available tender advertising service, local contract opportunities awarded, and local supply chain spend.

We also reassessed against ISO20400 to progress our sustainable procurement strategy, began our partnership with the Supply Chain Sustainability School, and developed a new digital dashboard to strengthen our reporting capabilities.

### Rail accessibility

In our route map, we proposed to conduct a review as to whether an inclusive design course could be budgeted for and delivered for key GWR colleagues, where it would benefit specific roles. This was swiftly undertaken and seven GWR colleagues attended the course. This included colleagues from the economic development team, who now have the knowledge to influence design changes for the benefit of colleagues, passengers and the community.

Our DfT audit was also completed, and we are awaiting its conclusions in terms of an 'accessibility audit appraisal score'.

### Workforce equality, diversity and inclusion

In this reporting period, we captured an additional 4 metrics. These included data on PAYE contracts, the marital status of employees, and the number of apprentices with disabilities, achieving our aim to measure additional under-represented groups. Due to the changes that are about to take place within the tool, we have postponed our metrics review to coincide with the business-wide review detailed above.

### Community and charity

GWR provides significant funding through our Customer and Community Improvement Fund (CCI Fund) to external organisations, who then deliver projects that result in positive social value outcomes. Due to this, the type of metrics we can capture will flex year to year. For example, in the previous reporting year, due to a partnership with an initiative to tackle homelessness, we were able to track three metrics around the number of people moved from homelessness into secure housing or temporary accommodation, which we were unable to capture for this reporting period. In the coming year, we will work with the organisations we fund to track these positive outcomes and report them through the RSVT, where appropriate.

### Stakeholder engagement and customers

As targeted, in this reporting period we captured one additional metric. Liaising with Savanta, our independent survey company, we developed a question to capture whether stakeholders feel able to influence GWR's decisions that impact their local community, with 42% agreeing that they felt they could. The results were included in GWR's annual Stakeholder Survey.

To improve the accuracy of our other data collection, last year, we set up an event tracker to record attendance at public affairs events throughout the year. This enables us to provide more precise data on the number of stakeholders attending consultation and engagement events across GWR.

In this reporting period, the total number of passenger journeys increased from 77,164,815 to 82,761,721, a 7.25% rise. Despite the increase in overall activity, the rate of complaints did not significantly change, remaining at approximately 0.07% of the total journeys. Although a decrease would have been preferable, maintaining stability is an accomplishment in itself, and we are pleased we have put ourselves in good stead for the next twelve months. Moving forward, we will continue collaborating with various departments across the business, focusing on service quality and sustainability to uphold our dedication to reducing complaints in every aspect of our operations.

### Health, safety and wellbeing

Safety and security metrics are meticulously measured and monitored within GWR, allowing us to deliver targeted initiatives to improve operational, colleague and passenger safety. In response to the metrics suggested within the tool, we have continued to capture the number of sessions in which GWR has delivered safety messages, as well as the of people reached with safety messages.

Over the last year, we have improved our process for near miss and defect reporting and our Safety Plan 2024/25 provides in-depth information on our commitments to safety improvement over the coming year, for our colleagues, customers and stakeholders.

In terms of wellbeing, the foundations for the Occupational Health Power BI reporting tool have been created with the development of a data warehouse. We are investing in our analytics capabilities providing assurance of continued support and development of the new tool. Development of the Occupational Health Power BI reporting tool is scheduled to be completed by Q1 FY 24/25.



Economic development

The economic development impact area represents a significant opportunity for providing additional data. Over the next year we will have a greater focus on collating data on the development and growth unlocked by our schemes.

We are therefore targeting 3 key metrics for inclusion within the 2024-2025 Social Value Report. By the end of this year, we will have developed a plan to identify and begin recording housing sites unlocked by access to train services, including private and affordable homes and retail / commercial space.

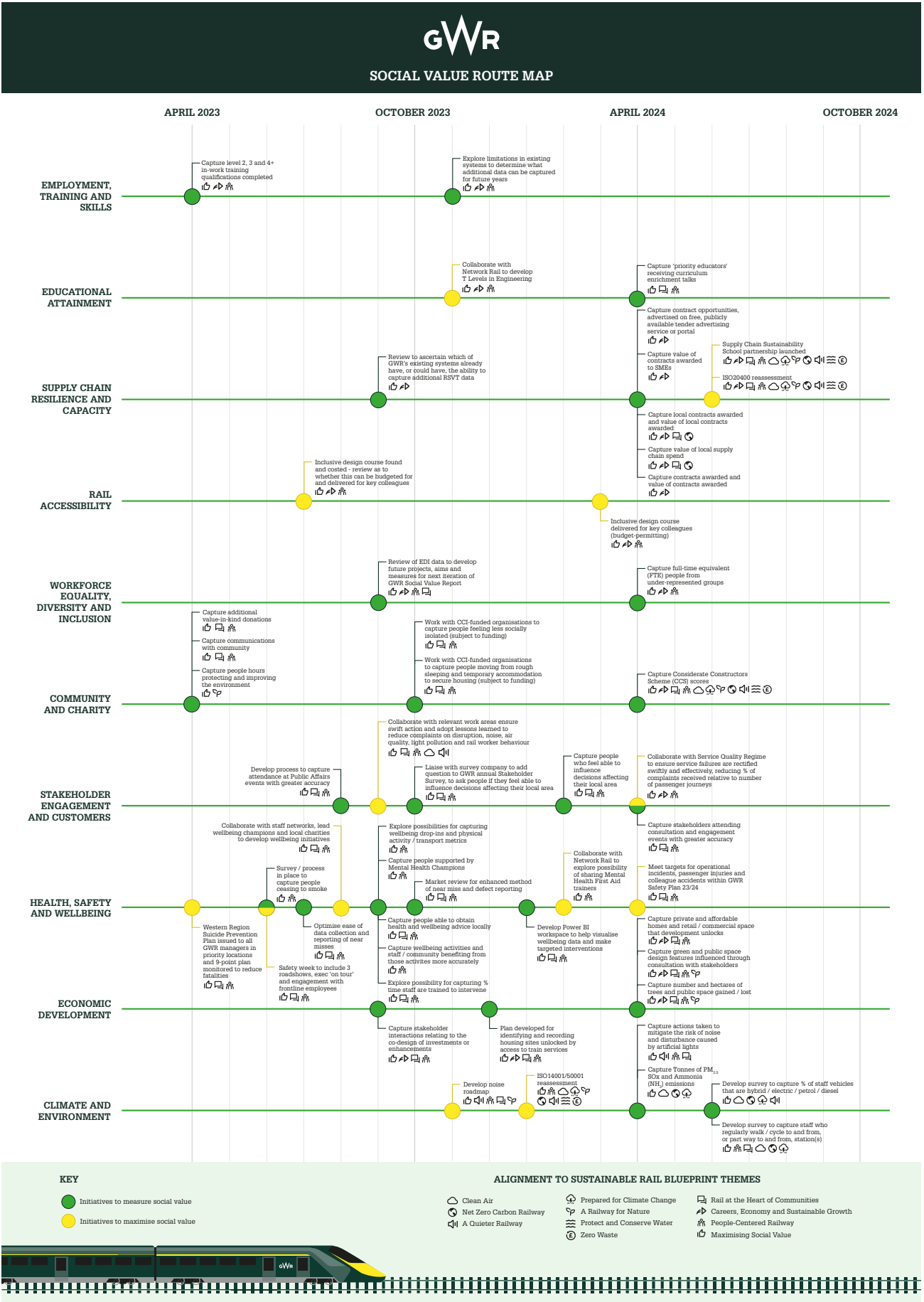
Climate and environment

The primary drive from government and the rail sector has been on decarbonisation. As such, much of our resource has been directed towards this area of focus.

Compared with last year we have captured an additional 7 metrics, relating to supplier’s climate adaption measures, reduction in carbon emissions, air quality and light pollution. As targeted, in the last year, we have developed a noise roadmap, which is helping us to capture actions taken to mitigate the risk of noise. By this time next year, we also intend to have developed staff surveys to capture the type of vehicles our colleagues drive and whether they regularly cycle or walk to stations.



Social Value Route Map 2023-2024







Alind