

**GWR**

Great  
Western  
Railway

# GWR Department for Transport Community Rail Report 2025



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## Front Cover Image:

Students from Oasis Academy Temple Quarter created vibrant newt-inspired artwork to celebrate the hidden wildlife thriving beneath Portway Park & Ride station. Working with Severnside Community Rail Partnership and Platform rail education, the pupils learned about the station’s specially designed underground crossing, built to protect a population of great crested newts. Their colourful collages are displayed along the railings – a cheerful reminder of the importance of environmental stewardship.

## Sowing the seeds of community rail at Toby's Garden Festival

Toby's Garden Festival offered the perfect setting to celebrate the green-fingered spirit of community rail – and mark 25 years of garden glory at Yatton station.

Toby's Garden Festival is an annual event held at Powderham Castle in Devon during the first May Bank Holiday. Partnering with the Festival presented a brilliant opportunity to celebrate community rail and the people who make it thrive. As Official Travel Partner, we at GWR used the event to shine a light on the creativity, care and dedication of station volunteers – and to invite more people to get involved.



# Introduction

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This report highlights the exceptional contributions of the Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) we work with, whose commitment continues to enhance stations and strengthen local communities.

From commissioning artwork and cultivating station gardens to leading creative and educational initiatives, their dedication, energy, and imagination make a meaningful and lasting difference.

Over the past year, communities across the network have come together to commemorate Railway 200—the bicentenary of the modern railway. CRPs and station volunteers have played a central role in these celebrations, delivering projects that honour both the heritage and the future of rail. Initiatives included new planters, heritage boards, a bespoke bug hotel at Barnstaple and a project in Calstock showcasing the Tamar Valley’s rich market gardening history. Many of these activities were supported through the GWR Customer and Community Improvement Fund, helping to bring the spirit of Railway 200 to life.

Railway 200 has also provided an important opportunity to inspire the next generation. Outreach programmes across the network have introduced young people to rail travel, promoted safety awareness, and supported youth groups—including Scouts working towards their Platforms for Change badge. These initiatives help ensure the railway remains a place of learning, opportunity, and aspiration for years to come.

We have also seen a significant expansion of art within stations, with new commissions adding colour, creativity, and local character to shared spaces. Much like gardens, these artworks bring warmth, pride, and identity to their surroundings, offering an excellent alternative for stations without space for planting.

Gardening remains a core part of station volunteer activity, and we recognise the value this brings. Volunteer efforts brighten the journeys of thousands of passengers, support local tourism and help embed stations at the heart of their communities. We are sincerely grateful for the time, care, and expertise they contribute.

As we mark 200 years of the modern railway and look ahead to the future of rail travel, we recognise that this is a moment of transition—where longstanding traditions meet innovation and change. We want to reaffirm our commitment to supporting community rail and our station volunteers. Their creativity, enthusiasm and dedication are deeply valued, and we remain committed to providing the funding, resources, and guidance they need to continue making a positive impact in the communities we all serve.

All 11 CRPs we work with continue to deliver exceptional outcomes and each partnership is driving forward meaningful change. These achievements reflect the same spirit of innovation and connectivity that has shaped the railway over the past 200 years. The Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) that collaborate with GWR are operating at an exemplary standard and are recognised nationally for their impact. Their work is making a tangible difference in the communities we serve, enhancing local engagement, accessibility, and pride in the network. In addition, the commitment of station volunteers adds an invaluable extra dimension. Their contribution brings warmth, character, and distinctiveness to stations, supporting our business and helping communities to thrive.

We look forward to the year ahead, building on the momentum, partnerships and innovation inspired by the Railway 200 celebrations. The legacy created over the past year has strengthened our communities, deepened engagement with our network and set a strong foundation for continued progress and collaboration.



**Joe Graham**  
Business Assurance  
and Property Director

## Calstock In Bloom



Calstock in Bloom worked closely with Calstock Archives to create an outstanding mural which captures the rich history of the Tamar Valley market gardening industry. At its height in the 1950's it employed around 1,000 people to deliver a vibrant range of produce including daffodils, irises, strawberries, apples, pears and cherries. The produce was transported across the UK via the 'Fruit & Flower' trains that left the valley four times a day. The impressive mural now adorns the walls of Calstock station shelter, as a warm welcome to visitors to the area.

LOADING PLAN  
 1-2- FLOWERS  
 2-3- VEG  
 3-4- FRUIT  
 DESTINATIONS  
 LONDON  
 BIRMINGHAM  
 MANCHESTER





# Community Rail Partnerships on our network

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## Severnside Community Rail Partnership

The Severnside Community Rail Partnership utilises a collaborative approach to developing innovative projects which benefit communities served by routes radiating from Bristol.

The Severnside CRP is a Department for Transport Accredited Community Rail Partnership. It works with local communities to encourage the use of local trains on routes radiating from Bristol, to ensure that access to local stations is easy, and to enhance these stations so they provide a safe and welcoming environment. Station improvement projects are delivered with the assistance of volunteers, schools, youth groups and the Community Payback scheme. It also hosts a range of events and educational activities to encourage sustainable, healthy travel.

**Email:** [info@severnside-rail.org.uk](mailto:info@severnside-rail.org.uk)

**Webpage:** [severnside-rail.org.uk](http://severnside-rail.org.uk)



## TransWilts Community Interest Company

The TransWilts CIC is a Department for Transport Accredited Community Rail Partnership.

Its mission is to "carry on activities which encourage and promote increasing usage of public transport for the benefit of the communities living and working in Wiltshire and to represent the interests of local public transport users, promoting improved connectivity between local services and the national network."

In Wiltshire TransWilts Community Rail supports the Swindon to Westbury service route. It seeks to demonstrate and develop the importance of the railway to local communities and the local economy, promoting improved connectivity between local services and the wider national rail network.

**Email:** [sophie@transwilts.org](mailto:sophie@transwilts.org)

**Webpage:** [transwilts.org](http://transwilts.org)



### **North Downs Line – part of the Southeast Communities Rail Partnership**

The North Downs Line Partnership is managed by Southeast CRP which is a Department for Transport Accredited Community Rail Partnership.

Southeast CRP is an independent community interest partnership which works with local communities to encourage people to travel by train and to engage with their local railway.

The North Downs Line looks after stations between Reigate and Reading and strives to connect communities and their railway and to enhance wellbeing, sustainability and community development.

**Email:** [sara@southeastcrp.org](mailto:sara@southeastcrp.org)

**Webpage:** [southeastcrp.org/line/north-downs-line/](https://southeastcrp.org/line/north-downs-line/)



### **Worcestershire Community Rail Partnership**

The Worcestershire Community Rail Partnership was officially launched in November 2019.

Made up of a partnership of the West Midlands Rail Executive, West Midlands Railway, Worcestershire County Council, CrossCountry Trains, Great Western Railway and the Cotswold Line Promotion Group, it facilitates communities, businesses, tourist attractions and local councils in working with the rail industry to promote rail services across Worcestershire.

The Partnership area covers a diverse and unique mix of eighteen stations between Great Malvern, the Worcester Stations, Droitwich Spa, Kidderminster, Hagley, Bromsgrove and Redditch and along the North Cotswold Line: Worcestershire Parkway, Pershore, Evesham and Honeybourne.

**Email:** [hayley.cartwright@wmre.org.uk](mailto:hayley.cartwright@wmre.org.uk)

**Webpage:** [wcrp.org.uk](https://wcrp.org.uk)



### Reading Basingstoke CRP

This Community Rail Partnership encompassing GWR rail services and stations between Reading and Basingstoke. The remit of the CRP include promoting the line, improving stations, developing integrated transport solutions at each station, enhancing local tourism, building communities around each station hub and attracting volunteers to take part in activities that range from litter picking at stations, to art and gardening projects, timetable liaison, transport policy development, provision of rail bus integrated services, improving rail services including marketing, rolling stock and infrastructure enhancements, bringing redundant station properties back into community use, production of tourism and information and leaflets and much more.

**Email:** [mikey@hampshirecommunityrail.co.uk](mailto:mikey@hampshirecommunityrail.co.uk)

**Webpage:** [readingbasingstokecrp.co.uk](http://readingbasingstokecrp.co.uk)



### Three Rivers Community Rail Partnership

The Three Rivers Community Rail Partnership is a group of local authorities, local people and the rail industry working to promote train and local bus services and improvements to local stations and services and its parent organisation is the Hampshire Community Rail Partnership.

The Hampshire CRP is a registered Community Interest Company that provides a link between the railway industry and local communities throughout Hampshire and its adjoining areas to deliver social benefit.

Its main objective is to carry out activities which encourage and promote increased usage of rail and sustainable transport for the benefit of people living in, working in or visiting Hampshire. Partners can include any individual, business or organisation who wants to positively contribute towards and develop the local rail route, stations and local communities.

**Email:** [info@threeriversrail.com](mailto:info@threeriversrail.com)

**Webpage:** [threeriversrail.com](http://threeriversrail.com)



### **South West Wales Connected Community Rail Partnership**

Connecting Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Swansea & Neath Port Talbot for Sustainable Travel, Tourism, Leisure, Business & Well-Being.

South West Wales Connected is a Community Rail Partnership established by Transport for Wales and hosted by 4theRegion, a Community Investment Company. The overall purpose of SWW Connected is to encourage greater use of rail services through increased participation of local communities in their rail line and by a range of activities at, and surrounding, their station to provide economic, social and environmental benefits to the region's residents and visitors.

Its aims are to innovate and develop new ways of working, to create greater economic, social and environmental value for communities served by the railway and for the wider region.

**Email:** [eve@southwestwales.co](mailto:eve@southwestwales.co)

**Webpage:** [southwestwales.co](http://southwestwales.co)



### **Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership**

The Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership CIC was officially welcomed by the Community Rail Network as a CRP in June 2020.

The Partnership area covers a network of nine stations serving all principal communities in Gloucestershire including the Golden Valley Line, The North Cotswold Line, the main Birmingham to Bristol line and the Newport to Gloucester corridor.

The CRP activities cover 'bottom-up' community outreach, station adoption, community events and activities through to key input into strategic land use planning decisions, connectivity of bus and cycle routes to stations, and behaviour change.

**Email:** [info@gloucestershirecommunityrail.org](mailto:info@gloucestershirecommunityrail.org)

**Webpage:** [gloucestershirecommunityrail.org](http://gloucestershirecommunityrail.org)



### South Wessex Community Rail Partnership

The core objective of the South Wessex Community Rail Partnership (SWCRP) is to increase awareness and use of Bristol to Weymouth services which, in turn, help contribute to economic growth, carbon reduction and other key priorities for local authority partners. In addition to marketing the line and the destinations it serves, the partnership encourages participation from local groups, organisations and businesses, and most importantly, a growing membership of volunteers who generously give their personal time each year to enhancing stations, promoting the railway in their local communities, improving links to stations, and leading guided walks.

**Email:** [chantelle.bacon@southwessex.org.uk](mailto:chantelle.bacon@southwessex.org.uk)

**Webpage:** [southwessexcrp.org.uk](http://southwessexcrp.org.uk)



### Oxfordshire Community Rail Partnership

Oxfordshire Community Rail Partnership (OxCRP) is committed to improving access to sustainable transport, particularly supporting inclusion of under-represented groups. OxCRP takes a grassroots approach, empowering local communities to harness the transformative potential of rail connectivity, while bolstering sustainable tourism in the region.

Covering a network of 22 railways stations across the county, OxCRP works closely with residents, visitors, community organisations, local government, and transport operators. Our strategic framework is underpinned by local research, inclusive consultations, and community-led activities that advance sustainable transport and inclusion agendas in Oxfordshire.

**Email:** [info@oxcrp.org.uk](mailto:info@oxcrp.org.uk)

**Webpage:** [www.oxfordshirecommunityrail.org/](http://www.oxfordshirecommunityrail.org/)

## Devon & Cornwall RAIL PARTNERSHIP

### Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership

The Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership (DCRP) is a Department for Transport Accredited Community Rail Partnership.

DCRP brings together local authorities, GWR and others to support the counties' branch lines – benefiting local communities and the region's economy alike.

The Partnership works on eight branch lines;

- (1) Exeter to Barnstaple – The Tarka Line;
- (2) Plymouth to Gunnislake – The Tamar Valley Line,

- (3) Liskeard to Looe – The Looe Valley Line;
- (4) Par to Newquay – The Atlantic Coast Line;
- (5) Truro to Falmouth – The Maritime Line;
- (6) St Erth to St Ives – The St Ives Bay Line;
- (7) Exeter to Exmouth – The Avocet Line and
- (8) Exeter to Torquay and Paignton – The Riviera Line.

**Email:** [railpart@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:railpart@plymouth.ac.uk)

**Webpage:** [dcrp.org.uk](http://dcrp.org.uk)

## Our approach to Community Rail

In a challenging financial climate, where public budgets are increasingly constrained, it is essential that we continue to demonstrate the significant value delivered by Community Rail Partnerships across the network.

There is no better way to recognise the achievements of the Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) we work with than by showcasing, in this year's publication, the breadth and success of their projects. GWR continues to invest significant staff time and financial support into local community engagement, and—alongside our work with charities and community groups—we have structured our organisation to collaborate effectively with a wide range of partners and stakeholders.

This has been another highly productive year for everyone involved in Community Rail. Initiatives have once again surpassed expectations, championing social inclusion and promoting sustainable travel across the network. From creative activities designed to boost off-season ridership to programmes encouraging young people to travel confidently and safely, the impact has been both wide-reaching and meaningful.

Across the GWR network, CRPs are helping to remove perceived barriers to travel. They provide an essential link between the railway and the communities we serve, reaching audiences that train operators alone may not. Their work is transforming how people experience the railway, making stations and services more welcoming for those who may find rail travel unfamiliar or daunting. This is particularly important as we remain committed to ensuring that everyone—regardless of age or circumstance—can access and benefit from public transport.

Each CRP brings its own distinct local insights, shaping its work according to community priorities while contributing to the wider aims of the Department for Transport's Community Rail Development Strategy. Their local knowledge, networks and collaborative approach help inform the services we provide and support the delivery of the Government's broader vision for rail. To sustain this impact, it is essential that CRPs continue to have access to the right skills, funding and resources.



### Ashley Down Mural

To celebrate a year since Ashley Down station opened, Bristol-based artist Andy Council created a vibrant 24-metre mural along Concorde Way, paying tribute to the local area. The unveiling brought together the West of England Mayor Helen Godwin, community rail representatives and local residents – a fitting moment as the station celebrated both its first birthday and the nationwide Railway 200 anniversary.

## Wessex Wanderers celebrate 30 years

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In the summer of 2025 Wessex Wanderers Railway Walks celebrated an impressive 30 years of connecting people, places and railways.



Founded in 1995 by experienced Rambler Peter Gould, the Wessex Wanderers began as a creative way to boost passenger numbers along the Westbury– Weymouth line, which

at the time was under threat of closure. His simple but inspired idea – to promote the line through guided walks starting and finishing at stations – soon gathered pace.

Three decades on, the walks continue to showcase the beauty of the Heart of Wessex line, while encouraging sustainable travel and community connection.

On 5 July 2025, 17 ramblers, past and present leaders and supporters gathered at Westbury station to mark the milestone. After a celebratory drink and slice of cake, they set out on a four-mile anniversary walk to Penleigh and back via Dilton Marsh – a fitting tribute to the group’s enduring spirit.

## Consultation with Community Rail Network

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Community Rail Network are once again happy to support the proposed allocations of core funding as listed in the table to the CRPs across the GWR network.

Our relationship with the GWR Community Impact team builds on firm foundations as we continue to collaborate on supporting the development and impact of community rail across the network. We have jointly discussed the funding of the Community Rail Partnerships and are pleased to see that sufficient account of our views has been taken, with an index lined increase in core funding being provided this year for the CRPs. Over the last 12 months the increased number of station adoption groups, who are also members of Community Rail Network, shows a strong local focus on connecting communities to the railway and together maximises the groups’ funding opportunities. We have been delighted to

attend community events with GWR and to be part of their annual Community Rail and Stakeholder Conference linking together our shared objectives as set out in the Secretary of State’s Community Rail Development Strategy. This clearly demonstrates GWR’s commitment to support of the local, regional and national rail landscape.



**Paul Webster - Community Rail Network**  
Regions Support Manager

## Funding

### Continued funding of CRPs and Community Rail through our National Rail Contract (NRC) is essential.

Through the current NRC, GWR has been able to support both the essential running costs of each CRP and, crucially, their project activity. This support has been particularly important given the continued pressure on local authority budgets and competing spending priorities.

Our ability to provide match funding alongside local authority partners—often several at once—has encouraged those partners to maintain their contributions to core operating costs. Beyond this, GWR’s investment in project delivery has enabled CRPs to develop activity plans collaboratively with stakeholders. As a result, the initiatives delivered have broader community and customer relevance, and frequently attract additional funding or volunteer involvement.

GWR can also confirm that we have held discussions with every CRP across our network to understand their individual aims, priorities, and the level of funding required to achieve them.

<b>2026/27 Community Rail Partnership Core Funding*</b>	
Devon and Cornwall	TBC
Sevenside	TBC
North Downs Line	TBC
TransWilts	TBC
South Wessex	TBC
Gloucestershire	TBC
Oxfordshire	TBC
Reading Basingstoke	TBC
Worcestershire	TBC
South West Wales Connected	TBC
<b>Core Funding Total</b>	<b>TBC</b>

\*2026/27 CRP Core Funding amounts subject to DfT budget approval

# 2025 Community Rail and Stakeholder Conference

On 24 June 2025, we hosted our annual Community Rail and Stakeholder Conference at STEAM – the Museum of the Great Western Railway in Swindon, focusing on the theme of our journey forward.

We host this event annually to bring together all organisations and individuals involved in, or with an interest in, the Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) and wider community and stakeholder activities across our region. The purpose of the conference is to ensure our stakeholder partners are kept fully informed of key industry developments and receive the latest updates from GWR.

The event also provides an important platform for our CRPs to present progress on their work programmes, highlight local achievements, and engage directly with the broader stakeholder network. This opportunity for collaboration and knowledge-sharing continues to strengthen the relationship between community partners and the wider rail industry.

This year’s conference brought together more than 150 delegates in person, with additional participants joining online, ensuring broad accessibility and representation from across the region.

We were also pleased to welcome Lord Peter Henty as a guest speaker. His keynote address reflected on the legacy of Railway 200 and set out an aspirational vision for the next 200 years of Britain’s railway network. His contribution provided valuable historical context and reinforced the long-term importance of community-led engagement within the rail sector.



## Non-financial support

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GWR continues to provide a range of non-financial support to Community Rail Partnerships, including access to training, assistance with developing marketing strategies, participation in our local transport forums, and support in establishing collaborative working relationships with wider industry partners such as Network Rail and the Department for Transport. Specific examples of this support are outlined below:

**Training:** GWR provides access to a comprehensive suite of training courses for all Community Rail Partnership (CRP) Officers and Rail Education Officers across the network. Overnight accommodation is offered where required. The available courses include:

**Corporate Welcome:** This course aims to inform and motivate new starters. It provides an overview of GWR's organisational structure, purpose, and values, and explains the standards underpinning those values. The session also outlines how GWR works with wider industry partners.

**Discovering Great Experience Makers:** This training introduces GWR's customer experience framework. It explores different customer groups and their expectations and helps participants understand how their role contributes to delivering excellent service. Key learning includes:

- The six pillars of customer excellence
- The needs of leisure, business, commuter, and internal customers during normal operations and disruption
- How GWR measures customer experience success

**Disability and Equality Awareness:** This course enhances colleagues' understanding of the rights and needs of disabled and older passengers, including those with physical, sensory, cognitive, or non-visible impairments. The training supports improved passenger assistance and promotes confident, dignified travel for all customers.

**Emergency First Aid at Work:** This course covers the responsibilities of a first aider and includes training in incident and casualty assessment, CPR, automated external defibrillator use, the recovery position, seizure management, choking, shock, and external bleeding. Learning is assessed at the end of the session.

**Introduction to Sign Language:** The aim of this course is to increase colleagues' confidence in assisting deaf and hard-of-hearing customers. Participants learn finger spelling, greetings, key questions, numbers, days of the week, travel terminology, and vocabulary useful for both station and onboard interactions.

**Personal Safety, Bullying and Sexual Harassment Training:** Based on feedback from Community Rail Partnerships a gap in existing training was identified relating to personal safety and the handling of bullying and harassment. In response, Community Rail Partnership Officers, together with Platform colleagues attended a bespoke training session paid for by GWR and delivered by Worthwhile Training.

The session provided a safe and supportive environment for participants to share experiences and to develop practical techniques for managing a range of challenging situations. All attendees reported that they found the training valuable and indicated that the learning gained would be applied in their day-to-day roles.

The training also prompted Community Rail Partnerships to reflect on their existing policies and procedures, emphasising the importance of ensuring that all colleagues have access to appropriate training and ongoing support.

**Press:** We provide support with press releases at agreed project stage gates to promote both the community benefits of ongoing initiatives and the profile of the Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) involved. This ensures that the value of the work is effectively communicated to local communities and wider stakeholders.

**Accessibility Mentors:** Our Accessibility Mentor Team works closely with CRPs and Rail Education Officers across the network to provide specialist advice and guidance. The team also promotes our partnerships with organisations such as the National Autistic Society and shares resources—including station tour videos and sound-bite recordings—to assist anxious or unfamiliar travellers in preparing for their journey.

**GWR Staff Networks:** GWR’s staff network, REACH (Recognising Ethnicity and Cultural Heritage), organised the 2025 Carnival Train in collaboration with Severnside and TransWilts CRPs. Through this initiative, GWR provided travel for community groups attending the Notting Hill Carnival, celebrating the diverse cultural heritage of the region. This activity has strengthened internal understanding of Community Rail and enhanced local engagement between colleagues and community partners.

**Quarterly CRP Engagement:** GWR engages with CRPs through quarterly Catch-Up meetings led by the Business Assurance and Property Director. These sessions include business updates, opportunities for CRPs to contribute to business planning, thematic briefings on areas of interest, best practice sharing, and a roundtable discussion.

**Guidance and Support:** We provide guidance to CRPs and station adoption groups on all platform furniture installations, ensuring compliance with required permissions and safe working practices. Our volunteer retention scheme and annual volunteer newsletter promote inclusion and pride in the contributions volunteers make to their stations and communities. We also consistently promote opportunities to join existing station adoption groups or establish new ones.

**Stakeholder Engagement and Partnership Development:** Our Regional Development Team leads engagement with key stakeholders—including government, combined and local authorities, and businesses—and works collaboratively with CRPs to listen to community needs, understand key issues and aspirations, and jointly prioritise improvement opportunities. This ensures alignment with business objectives and maintains a pipeline of potential schemes for future consideration.

**Internal Collaboration:** We also facilitate internal collaboration with CRPs across a wide range of business areas. Teams that regularly engage with CRPs include Performance, Estates and Property, Public Affairs, Security and Safeguarding, and Integrated Transport.



**Weston-super-Mare**

Inspired by the idea of biophilia – our natural connection with life – artist Shruiti Bhojar worked with Weston’s home-education community at Open Return Gardens, a space run by Grow Feral that nurtures creativity and connection through nature. The resulting artworks celebrate gardening, growing and togetherness, now bringing colour and warmth to Weston-super-Mare station.

# Marketing

GWR offers marketing support to Community Rail Partnership (CRPs) across its network. This helps the CRPs promote destinations and services thereby increasing the number of passengers that travel by rail.

Working as a critical friend, GWR advises on developing ideas, determining marketing strategies, and promoting a range of CRP marketing initiatives through its own channels. During 2025, these have included:

## Video content

Video is a highly effective way to engage with both new and established audiences. During 2025, GWR worked with CRPs to produce videos covering everything from destination inspiration to travel confidence for neurodiverse students.

In the spring, GWR worked with Worcestershire CRP to [develop a video promoting their Malvern Hills Rail Trail](#). It launched with a collaborative Instagram post, followed by a Worcestershire CRP-led organic and paid social media campaign. This coincided with National Walking Month and ran alongside wider Visit Malvern marketing activity, amplifying its reach and generating more than 1,000 clicks to the CRP's [Rail Trails web page](#).



Spring also saw TransWilts CRP produce a travel confidence video with Fairfield College – a specialist College for young people with additional needs. The video, featuring Fairfield College students who also provided the narration, showed a day out by train travelling from Dilton Marsh to Trowbridge. The video will be used as a college resource with the participating students also gaining experience in video production and voice over techniques.

Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership continued to promote the South West via its Great Scenic Railways social media channels. This included partnering with GWR and Visit Exeter on the '[Sea Moor City](#)' campaign which promoted Exeter as the ideal base to explore both Dartmoor and the coast. The resulting video delivered over 100,000 views and 1,100 likes.



## Social media

GWR continues to support CRPs in their use of social media, including training in effective video communications, content development, social media strategy and best practice as well as the purchase of small items of kit to aid filming such as gimbals and wireless microphones.

Sevenside CRP deserves a special mention for their [influencer-led social media content](#) that promoted using integrated transport to explore Bristol's 'Gromit Unleashed' sculpture trail. The 8-week campaign ran across the summer holidays and involved collaborating with 32 different organisations around the city.



A new reel was released every week and in total they generated over 147,000 views and 2,488 likes. Meanwhile, the Facebook post that introduced the campaign attracted 722 likes and 27 shares – the most ever received for a Severnside post.

**Marketing consultancy**

Throughout the year, GWR provides advice and support across a broad range of marketing activities.

During 2025, these have included:

- BAU best practice on branding and marketing activities.
- Media releases either created or reviewed by the GWR External Comms Team.
- Where available, in-station poster space to promote CRP projects.
- Review of CRP-led promotional literature.

**Community initiatives**

Community is at the heart of all CRP activities and 2025 saw fantastic community-based marketing initiatives including:

Severnside CRP, in partnership with Upfest, installed new murals at Bedminster station, further cementing Bristol’s reputation as the home of street art and Severnside’s engagement with the medium to bring life and colour to Bristol train stations. The murals attracted media coverage from organisations including the BBC, Bristol247 and the Bristol Post.

Severnside also worked with GWR to develop printed and electronic communications materials for students and parents looking to buy scholar tickets and then helped to distribute these to schools and colleges within the Severnside area. This helped increased scholar ticket sales and reduce students riding without valid tickets.



Meanwhile, South West Wales Connected CRP celebrated Wales Week London by bringing the Porthcawl Male Choir to sing at Paddington whilst giving out their Car Free Guide to SW Wales. The resulting [video of the choir](#) achieved 100k of organic impressions.

**Partnership working**

Wherever possible, GWR seeks opportunities to collaborate with other partners who can help support CRP initiatives. For 2025, this included inviting CRPs to attend and present at GWR’s Destination Partnership Conference. As well as the CRPs, attendees on the day included representatives from Visit England, Destination Marketing Organisations, attractions, and other membership organisations including the National Trust. This not only exposed the CRPs to new potential partners but also helped raise awareness of how Community Rail can effectively support the visitor economy.



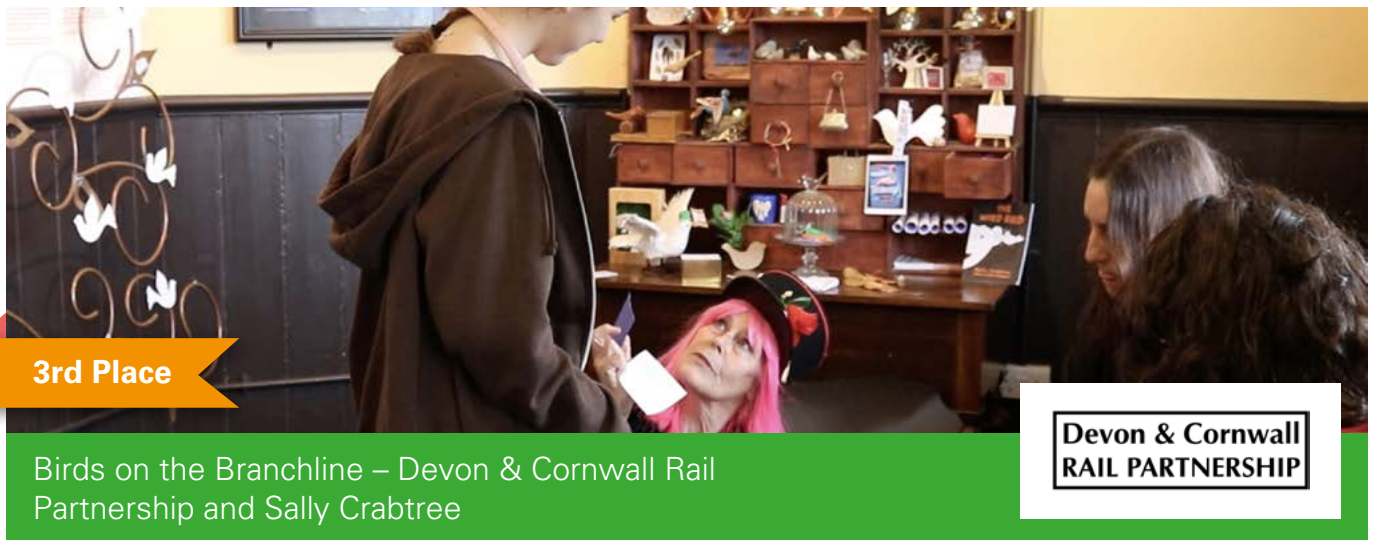
# Community Rail Awards



# Community Rail Awards

The 20th National Community Rail Awards took place on Thursday 13 March 2025 at Newcastle Civic Centre, providing a platform to spotlight and celebrate the contributions of community groups, partnerships, and volunteers. The event, organised by the Community Rail Network, was presented by Martin Gilbert (Managing Director, Lumo and Hull Trains) and Vicki Pipe (Head of Audiences & Programmes, Bletchley Park).

## Best Community Engagement Project



Birds on the Branchline – Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership and Sally Crabtree

Inspired by Looe Station and the number of wild birds that can be seen from the platform, ‘Birds on the Branchline’ was a project that used wildlife conservation to engage communities with their local railway line.

Led by the Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership and with advice from RSPB, artist Sally Crabtree devised a series of bird-themed activities for 10 different community groups with a range of abilities, including adults with physical disabilities, refugees and young people with anxiety disorders. Participants created songs and poems about nature and journeys, wrote articles for a Bird Zine about the plight of wild birds and their habitats, and even made bird feeders and boxes. After each workshop, participants were taken on a train trip, enabling them to share what they had produced and develop their confidence to travel.

To celebrate the finished project, a pop-up exhibition took place at Liskeard Station, a podcast was created and featured on the local radio, and in total over 265 people were educated about wild birds and their habitats, as well as being inspired and supported to travel by train.

*“This made me feel so calm. It took me away from all that I have been through.” (Participant)*

## Most Effective Communications Campaign



Winner

Black History Month Every Month – Gloucestershire CRP

GCRP  
Gloucestershire  
Community Rail Partnership

Gloucestershire CRP delivered a comprehensive communications campaign to celebrate the county's diverse cultural heritage and connect its Black history to the present day.

Local artist Rider Shafique was commissioned to create a new station exhibition. Using photographs and quotes, the artwork focuses on themes of identity and honouring the contributions of Caribbean migrants who worked for British Railways. The exhibition was installed at four key stations (Gloucester, Stroud, Stonehouse and Cam & Dursley), which collectively saw over 2.5 million entries and exits in 2022-23 (Office of Rail and Road's 'Estimates of Station Usage 2022-23' dataset).

The exhibition linked to Gloucestershire CRP's previous collaboration with Black Ark Media on Gloucestershire's first Black History Map. The map serves as a guide to discovering the diverse contributions of Black Britons to art, education, and culture in the local area, highlighting walking routes and active rail and sustainable travel experience radiating from Gloucestershire's nine railway stations, leading to a series of significant Black History sites.

By leveraging partnerships, coordinating across media channels and creating compelling content, Gloucestershire CRP successfully raised awareness of important cultural and historical themes while promoting community engagement and sustainable travel. The campaign's integration of art, history and community involvement created a rich, engaging experience that resonated with local residents and media outlets, achieving its core objectives of celebrating diversity, fostering understanding and connecting Gloucestershire's past with its present.

# Tourism and Leisure Award



With 16 pubs closing in the UK every week, Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership and Blackmore Vale Line CRP teamed up for a revitalised promotion of real ale pubs along community rail lines.

Together with South Western Railway, the partnerships created a new 'Rail Ale Trail' between Salisbury and Exeter, inviting visitors from near and far to visit pubs along the line, collect stamps and win a T-shirt.

The new trail expanded Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership's family of existing Rail Ale Trails on the Great Western Railway network, uptake of which had started to dwindle, despite the initiative's 20-year run. Tying in with the Salisbury-Exeter launch, the CRPs re-launched the existing trails with a photoshoot, website revamp, posters and social media campaign.

After launching in May 2024, the summer delivered the trails' best results since Covid, with 75 T-shirts awarded - triple the previous summer's total. Participants came from as

far afield as London, Shetland and Austria. Together they made 688 pub visits and bought 53 pub meals, injecting thousands of pounds into the local economy as well as boosting rail journey figures. What's more, this doesn't include the many who part-complete the trails but don't claim a T-shirt – meaning the real impact is even greater.

*"The rail ale trail is an old chestnut and it's good to see it revamped. The new web pages look great – I'm not surprised they've had good feedback!"* (Nicky Forsdike, CRA25 judge)

## Most Enhanced Railway Spaces



Mike Hodge Community Room at Bridgwater Station – Severnside CRP

Bridgwater Station is a beautiful Grade II listed building which had redundant and boarded-up rooms calling out for regeneration.

Severnside CRP had a vision of breathing new life into the station, creating a warm, inviting and accessible space where people in the community could gather, hold meetings and host small-scale events.

After conducting building surveys, gathering feedback from the community and securing funding from Great Western Railway, Railway Heritage Trust and Somerset Community Foundation, local contractors were appointed to undertake the renovations, including fitting bespoke doors and shutters sympathetic to the heritage of the station. The room was then equipped with furniture, Wi-Fi, video conferencing facilities and community artwork.

The Mike Hodge Community Room, named after a dedicated station volunteer (who is still going strong in his nineties!), was officially opened during Community Rail Week in May 2024. The space has already been used by local groups for meetings and

events, receiving overwhelmingly positive feedback and repeat bookings. Upcoming uses include NHS vaccination clinics and a Crimestoppers drama project for vulnerable youth. Severnside CRP envisions further regeneration of Bridgwater Station, including the potential reopening of a café as a social enterprise, and strengthening ties with the local college.

*“The space has been updated sensitively, with new fixtures sympathetic with the station building. The potential for long-term, tangible benefits for the community, working with local education and health partners, and the opportunity for replicating this idea, is evident.”* (Chris Selman, CRA25 judge)

## Empowering Diverse Groups



‘Joy of the Journey’ is an initiative designed to make rail travel more accessible and enjoyable for a wide range of community groups, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to experience the joy of travelling by train, regardless of background or ability.

Each month, South West Wales Connected takes up to three groups on a guided rail journey, offering a fun and relaxing day filled with activities, refreshments and opportunities to explore the scenic landscapes of the region. These journeys provide participants with a unique experience that goes beyond mere transportation, creating a sense of adventure and community.

The CRP has reached out to many corners of the community, including the Girls’ Rights Foster Group Neath, Carmarthen Youth Group, the National Autistic Society, a Nigerian mums and toddlers group, Sadies Butterflies LGBTQIA+ group, and students from the University of Wales Trinity St David.

Each group is provided with a platform to express their needs and concerns. South West Wales Connected then tailor each journey to the needs and interests of the group, ensuring that participants feel welcome, engaged and comfortable throughout the experience, particularly for those who may be anxious or unfamiliar with train travel.

*“Everyone really enjoyed this! The train ride was wonderful and relaxing, and everyone has been telling me how much they enjoyed the day. Some said they will be making the trip again as they didn’t realise that the train was so easy.” (Sadies Butterflies)*

## Influencing Positive Change & Sustainability



Winner

Youth Travel Toolkit – Gloucestershire CRP



Gloucestershire CRP sought to understand and address barriers to sustainable travel among young people, developing a practical toolkit empowering businesses to engage young people and consider their aspirations for greener travel.

Through workshops, surveys and research, the partnership brought together over 600 young people, five businesses and multiple rail industry partners to address sustainable travel challenges collaboratively, but with a youth-led approach. Gloucestershire CRP supported the young people to synthesise their research and findings into a comprehensive toolkit, as well as creating marketing assets to promote the toolkit more widely.

The project has positioned Gloucestershire CRP as a leader in youth-focused sustainable travel initiatives. Early indicators suggest increased interest from businesses in sustainable travel promotion and greater awareness among young people about their travel options. Cotswold Plus, a Local Visitor Economy Partnership, has incorporated the toolkit into its sustainability strategy, amplifying impact on sustainable travel among

visitors and supporting destinations, and 15 of the young people involved in the project expressed an interest in ongoing involvement through a dedicated youth transport forum.

This initiative demonstrates how community rail partnerships can drive positive change through inclusive cross-sector partnerships, leveraging youth perspectives, and creating practical solutions. By aligning with UN Sustainable Development Goals and focusing on long-term sustainability, the Youth Travel Toolkit project is building a legacy of sustainable transport for future generations in Gloucestershire.

*“A super project with evidence of significant impact. I’d love to see this approach rolled out to other parts of the rail network!”* (Nicky Forsdike, CRA25 judge)

# Influencing Positive Change & Sustainability



Severnside CRP’s ‘Fishing for Change’ offered families from disadvantaged neighbourhoods in Bristol and Bath a unique day out during the summer holidays using three different modes of sustainable transport.

The adventure started with a train ride, linking up with Bristol Community Ferries, before transferring to SeaCycler, an electric-powered punt made from recycled plastic for a ‘litter fishing’ experience, collecting litter from the harbour.

The project aimed to strengthen community cohesion by supporting families to try something fun and sustainable together, completely free of charge. With recent instances of knife crime prevalent in the areas participants live, the project incorporated early interventions to the crime epidemic through soft messaging and resources from Crimestoppers. While on the trip, families got to see some of Bristol’s historic landmarks from a new viewpoint and enjoy a creative session making ‘litter fish’ from the waste they collectively remove from the harbour.

130 people participated, removing 135kg of litter from the harbour, 78kg of which was sent for recycling. Families increased their knowledge of litter’s global impact and how everyone can make a real difference in their own local area. 98% of those who took part gave a five-star review and 82% expressed interest in future litter picking in their community. One participant even used the experience to apply for a green Blue Peter badge, demonstrating the lasting effects this project had on people’s passion for protecting our planet, and their understanding of how local actions can have global consequences.

*“This project raised my spirits, ticked all the boxes but above all made a difference and is replicable. Fantastic!”* (Barbara Saunders, CRA25 judge)

# Community Rail Partnership Project Sum and 2024/25 Case Studies



# Community Rail Partnership Project Sum and 2024/25 Case Studies

CRP engagement with GWR’s Community Rail Partnership project funding has been extremely strong, and we are keen to see this continue.

This funding has broadened the scope of activity across the network, enabling CRPs to engage with parts of the community that had previously had limited involvement with the railway, rail development, or local improvement initiatives.

This section presents a series of case studies demonstrating the projects delivered in partnership with CRPs during the 2024/25 financial year.

CRPs play a vital role in driving positive change from the ground up, developing initiatives that reflect the distinct needs and aspirations of

their local areas. They illustrate the importance of community-led approaches in shaping a more inclusive, sustainable railway.

Each case study outlines the aims of the project, how it was delivered, and the benefits realised within the local community. Collectively, these examples highlight the dedication, collaboration, and community focus that define the work of CRPs and demonstrate the ongoing value they bring to the regions they serve.



## Pewsey Primary School

Children from Pewsey Primary School have transformed their local station with vibrant artwork inspired by 200 years of railway history. Created as part of a project led by TransWilts Community Rail Partnership, the pupils’ pieces celebrate trains, travel and local heritage through a mix of styles and media. Twenty works were chosen for permanent display along the platforms, unveiled at a special event attended by the young artists, their teachers and community representatives.

CRP Name	Project Name	Amount
Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership	Crediton Station Heritage Waiting Room Improvements	£3,250 plus matched funding of £3,250 from the Community Rail Development Fund
Gloucestershire CRP	Beyond the Platform	£9,735
Gloucestershire CRP and Oxfordshire CRP	Connecting Communities to Rail	£24,800
Gloucestershire CRP and Oxfordshire CRP	Independent Access to Nature	£24,740
Gloucestershire CRP and Oxfordshire CRP	Let's Talk Travel	£5,780
Gloucestershire CRP	Gloucestershire Queer History, Travel Needs Survey and Promotional Campaign	£19,950
Gloucestershire CRP	Tewkesbury Wellbeing Walks	£14,305 plus matched funding of £7,530
Gloucestershire CRP	Youth-led Transport Forum	£24,670 plus matched funding of £11,100
Southeast CRP	Travel Ambassadors Project	£7,867
Southeast CRP	Blackwater Valley Consolidation Poster Project	£1,400
Southeast CRP	Go Train – Rail Education Project	£21,000
Southeast CRP	Platforms for Change	£13,900
Severnside CRP	'Our Home' Bath Spa Community Art Scheme	£2,210 plus additional matched funding from Cross Country Trains
Severnside CRP	The Mike Hodge Community Room at Bridgwater Station	£6,000
Severnside CRP	Days Out By Train	£6,294 plus matched funding of £6,180 from the West of England Combined Authority and £2,358 from the Quartet Community Foundation
Severnside CRP	Promoting Rail Travel across Severnside by Digital Media	£9,280
Severnside CRP	RailWAY	£14,654
South Wessex CRP	Dorchester West and Maiden Newton Art Projects	£3,000
South West Wales Connected CRP	Railway Heritage Project	£9,000
South West Wales Connected CRP	Joy of the Journey	£8,200
South West Wales Connected CRP	Sustainable Tourism – South West Wales Without a Car	£13,000
TransWilts CRP	Social Media Project	£10,300

**Grant Awarded**

£3,250 plus matched funding of £3,250 from the Community Rail Development Fund



# Crediton Station Heritage Waiting Room Improvements

## General Overview of the Project

2024 was the 170th anniversary of the Crediton - Barnstaple line. To mark the occasion and complement the celebrations that Barnstaple Town Council led, our plan was to improve the heritage waiting room on the northbound platform at Crediton station. We aimed to do this by renewing the existing display and adding additional display panels to include heritage posters and photos of artefacts such as tickets and handbills.

This aimed to build on the 2019-2020 CCIF project that saw the waiting room refurbished and the original display researched and created. It would further improve the waiting room, add additional interest for passengers and help act as a focal point at the southern end of the line for the 170th anniversary. We led the project, liaising with the Turning Tides Project, local railway photographers and enthusiasts, the CCIF funded Devon Railway Heritage Project, Colour Rail photo library and the National Railway Museum.

## Project Delivery

Richard Burningham from DCRP undertook the research for photos and other materials. We reprinted and resited four of the Crediton panels which the Turning Tides Project researched and created in the 19-20 CCIF project.

North Devon Railway Development Group (this became the Tarka Rail Association) founder Roger Joanes is a renowned railway

photographer and kindly supplied some great photos without charge.

Likewise, David Gosling, founder of the Friends of Crediton Station, provided photos and other materials including from naming of the locomotive Crediton in 1946 and the 150th anniversary celebrations in 2001 for which he was lead organiser. David also provided the same items to the Devon Railway Heritage Project, and we liaised closely so that both projects could benefit from his materials.

One particularly historic photo of Crediton station is in the National Railway Museum’s collection and we liaised with them to obtain it, paying for display rights.

We obtained several other photographs from the Colour Rail photo library. Our subscription to the online British Newspaper Archive also proved useful as, using David Gosling’s original photo of the locomotive naming, we were able to find the press report of the naming event which provided useful extra information.

## Project Impact

We now have an excellent collection of photos and memorabilia for all to enjoy at the waiting room at Crediton station. An opening event at Crediton was held and local media invited. We are also promoting the project through the Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership website and social media.



Grant Awarded

£9,735



## Beyond the Platform

### General Overview of the Project

Beyond the Platform successfully brought together underrepresented communities and young people to explore and document GWR rail history through personal stories, creative workshops, and archival materials. The project highlighted railway career histories within South Asian and Caribbean diaspora communities, recognising their significant contributions to the UK rail industry.

### Project Delivery

Led by Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership (GCRP), the project was delivered in collaboration with local artist Rider Shafique, Gloucestershire Archives, the University of Gloucestershire, and local community organisations, significantly All Nations, a community organisation focusing on Black elders.

The six-month project culminated in a station-based exhibition across Gloucester, Stonehouse, Stroud and Cam & Dursley, a series of reels for social media, and a community-led launch event at Gloucestershire Archives & Gloucester train station, and press outreach ensuring long-term visibility and engagement with local railway heritage.

### Project Impact

Over 143 participants and professionals engaged with the project, with many contributing personal stories and creative responses.

Three community events successfully engaged diverse audiences.

Short films and audio stories shared on social media, reaching a broad online audience.

A high-profile station exhibition provided long-term visibility for the project's work.

Stronger relationships were developed between GCRP, community organisations, and Gloucestershire Archives, ensuring ongoing collaboration on inclusive rail heritage projects.

We empowered community organisations to consider ongoing workshops focused on memories for elders and engaged young people in rail heritage.

### Quote/testimonial

*"I didn't think I'd be so interested in this project, but I am! I'm so glad I came to your event."*

*"Wow I had no idea this was right on my doorstep."*

*"I walk past this church every day and didn't know that there used to be a station right here."*

*"This project brings back a lot of memories from my childhood."*





**Grant Awarded**

£24,800

## Connecting Communities to Rail

### General Overview of the Project

The Connecting Communities to Rail project was created to enhance community connectivity, promote rail travel, and address social and travel needs in Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire. Building upon evidence gathered over three years, the project implemented a community engagement toolkit in collaboration with communities, local groups, and authorities near rail stations.

The project addressed growing car dependency in new housing developments, noting that fewer young people are learning to drive and one in five households lack car access. This car dependency leads to isolation and inequality, particularly affecting young people, older adults, and disabled individuals seeking education and employment opportunities.

### Project Delivery

The project was delivered through several key activities:

1. Residents Survey and Research: A comprehensive Gloucestershire residents survey gathered insights from over 600 respondents about transport preferences, barriers, and motivations. This was distributed through stakeholder networks, community events, and social media.
2. Development of Access Maps: The team created several access and active travel maps for locations across Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire:
3. Community Engagement Events: Multiple events were held to gather insights and promote rail travel across key locations.
4. Strategic Outreach and Reporting: The team developed an engagement and influencing strategy to maximize the impact of communication.

These reports and insights were strategically shared with transport planners, local authorities, and rail industry partners to influence sustainable transport initiatives and support community needs.

### Project Impact

The project delivered significant impacts across multiple areas:

1. Community Engagement and Understanding: Directly engaged over 350 individuals across both counties, with a particular focus on marginalized groups and those in areas of higher deprivation. The youth consultation event provided valuable insights into barriers and behaviours for marginalised youth on the fringes of Oxford.
2. Practical Resources: Created and distributed over 500 Oxford Access and Active Travel maps, alongside numerous other access maps and travel confidence resources across the region. These maps provide lasting wayfinding tools to help people access rail stations.
3. Data and Insights: Generated comprehensive data on travel behaviours and barriers through surveys, consultations, and events. The Gloucestershire Residents Survey gathered over 600 responses, creating a substantial evidence base for future planning.

4. Strategic Influence: Findings and reports were shared with multiple partners in the rail industry, community sector, and public sector to ensure community travel and transport needs are understood and incorporated into planning.
5. Promotion of Rail Travel: All activities helped raise awareness of rail travel options and addressed barriers to access, particularly for those in marginalized communities.

### Quote/testimonial

*"The Oxford Access and Active Travel Map has completely changed how I think about getting around the city. I didn't realize how accessible the train station was from my neighbourhood until I saw it mapped out."* - Oxford resident

*"The youth consultation gave us a voice in how transport planning affects our futures. Many of us don't drive or can't afford cars, so having better connections to rail is essential for education and job opportunities."* - Youth participant from Leys CDI event

*"These community consultations have provided invaluable insights that will directly inform our transport planning priorities. The data on barriers to rail use among different demographics has highlighted gaps we weren't previously addressing."* - Transport Planner, Oxfordshire County Council



Grant Awarded

£24,740



## Independent Access to Nature Project

### General Overview of the Project

The Independent Access to Nature Programme was designed to improve access to outdoor experiences and cultural destinations for young people from underrepresented communities. The project aimed to address transport barriers, build travel confidence, and create new opportunities for engagement with nature, heritage, and local attractions.

The initiative focused on providing independent travel training, trip planning support, and confidence-building activities for young people across Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire. Key partners included community groups, youth leaders, schools, local councils, and transport providers.

### Project Delivery

This programme was created to directly address those barriers, offering tailored support to help young people plan and undertake trips to natural and cultural spaces by train. We focused particularly on young people from areas of socioeconomic deprivation, asylum seekers and other marginalised groups, working with trusted partners and ten other community organisations to design activities that were culturally responsive, accessible and confidence-building. Delivery included a mix of co-designed trips, travel planning support, and rail confidence sessions. Over the course of the project (July 2024 – March 2025), we facilitated 12 train-based trips for over 150 young people, incorporating travel confidence support and travel training, and ultimately supporting participants to access spaces further from home and opportunities previously out of reach. Alongside direct delivery, we promoted active travel (walking,

cycling and rail) through our refreshed travel confidence resources, and gathered feedback from participants to continually adapt our support.

### Project Impact

The project successfully engaged 78 young people in Oxfordshire and 74 participants in Gloucestershire. The Independent Access to Nature programme has delivered tangible, wide-ranging benefits for young people across Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire, particularly those from marginalised and underrepresented backgrounds. By addressing key transport barriers and promoting active travel, the project has had a positive ripple effect on travel behaviour, wellbeing, social engagement, and community resilience.

### Quote/testimonial

*"Today was something totally new. I haven't done kayaking before, and I also haven't been on a train before, so it was a good chance to learn how to use them. It was fun."*



Grant Awarded

£5,780



## Let's Talk Travel Project

### General Overview of the Project

The Let's Talk Travel (LTT) project was designed to address travel-related barriers that prevent job seekers, especially young people, women, and marginalized groups, from accessing education and employment opportunities. Research indicates that 40% of job seekers avoid opportunities requiring travel due to issues such as anxiety, lack of confidence, financial constraints, and logistical difficulties. Additionally, many face challenges in journey planning, which further hinders their ability to consider transport as a viable option.

LTT aimed to raise awareness of public transport options and build confidence among job seekers in Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire. The project distributed resources on travel confidence and sustainable transport, engaging with 269 job seekers and 99 professionals across 8 job fairs and community events across both counties. The events offered valuable outreach opportunities to research, understand and address community travel needs, where feedback was collected on the transport barriers faced, with particular focus on young people and marginalized groups.

### Project Delivery

The project was implemented through a multi-faceted approach designed to engage job seekers, particularly young people, women, and those from marginalized backgrounds, in building their travel confidence. By integrating community outreach, resource development, collaboration with key partners, and data collection, the initiative provided targeted support while gathering valuable insights into the most pressing travel-related challenges faced by job seekers and offering supportive travel confidence advice.

### Project Impact

The project successfully engaged 269 job seekers and community members, 99 professionals, and 48 organizations through eight major job fairs and community events, providing support across both Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire. The project successfully supported job seekers in Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire by addressing key travel-related barriers, increasing confidence in using public transport, and promoting access to education, employment, and training opportunities. The outcomes of the project include:

- Increased Travel Confidence Among Job Seekers
- Greater Awareness and Use of Sustainable Transport Options
- Strengthened Support Networks and Service Provision
- Improved Understanding of Transport Barriers
- Development and Distribution of Practical Resources
- Increased Engagement and Opportunities for Job Seekers

### Quote/testimonial

*"The Robin is a game changer for people getting to places they weren't able to before. It's made a massive difference. If that could be expanded further, that would be great."*





Grant Awarded

£19,950

# Gloucestershire Queer History, Travel Needs Survey and Promotional Campaign

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## General Overview of the Project

The Gloucestershire Queer History Map project was created to connect the LGBTQIA+ community to railways through exploration of local queer history while providing travel confidence through connections to rail and rail careers. The project addressed a critical gap in representation by documenting and celebrating LGBTQIA+ history across Gloucestershire, while simultaneously addressing barriers to public transport use among this community. With the LGBTQIA+ population in the UK steadily increasing and recent spikes in hate crime, the project aimed to build confidence within the community to travel to and around Gloucestershire via rail, raise awareness of specific travel support needs, and build community confidence to access rail industry careers.

The project ran from July 2024 to March 2025, culminating in the creation of the first-ever Gloucestershire Queer History Map linked to rail travel, a comprehensive travel needs report, and the archiving of LGBTQIA+ stories for future generations.

## Project Delivery

The project was delivered through a carefully structured, community-led approach:

1. Research and Community Engagement (July-September 2024)  
Identified key LGBTQIA+ locations and histories through preliminary research with Gloucestershire Archives, uncovering stories ranging from 1716 court records to recent Pride events. Attended Pride events across the county (Tetbury, Cinderford, and Gloucestershire Pride) to engage the community, build travel confidence, collect stories and travel experiences. Conducted direct engagement with community members at events, capturing 67+ personal stories and travel insights. Distributed resources including leisure trails, access maps, and travel leaflets.
2. Data Collection and Analysis (September-November 2024)  
Created an interactive map for people to pin their stories and places of significance, revealing locations like Mary de Crypt church which held secret meetings for LGBT people in the 1970s/80s. Developed and promoted a travel survey capturing transport needs and barriers. Conducted focus groups and workshops with LGBTQIA+ community groups. Engaged with archives regarding gay and lesbian community history in Gloucestershire.
3. Map Development (October 2024-February 2025)  
Mapped locations and histories on MyMaps platform. Drafted a design brief with priority given to LGBTQIA+ designers. Created and promoted a communications campaign to gather additional stories for the archives. Researched and reached out to LGBTQIA+ illustrators for map design.
4. Delivery and Archiving (February-March 2025)  
Finalised map design with colourful template and inclusive approach. Added "How to be an LGBTQIA+ ally" section based on research. Included a welcome letter from our project managers to introduce the resource. Designed a marketing campaign. Incorporated Railway 200 celebration into the project as an added feature. Submitted final materials to Gloucestershire Archives

## Project Impact

- Created the first comprehensive documentation of LGBTQIA+ history in Gloucestershire
- Provided a platform for over 67 direct engagements and stories to be recorded and preserved
- Established new connections between LGBTQIA+ community groups across the county
- Enhanced visibility and recognition of LGBTQIA+ history and contributions to Gloucestershire
- Developed a resource that will continue to educate and inform for years to come
- Identified key barriers to public transport use among LGBTQIA+ communities, including safety concerns, cost, rural isolation, and accessibility issues
- Generated specific recommendations for transport providers
- Improved training for British Transport Police in handling hate crimes, as community members reported seeing swastikas spray-painted in Gloucester
- Enhanced bus connections from rural areas to rail stations
- Bus and rail service at smaller stations
- Provided travel confidence resources to community members
- Connected areas of historical interest to local train stations, encouraging exploration by rail
- Created a permanent archive of LGBTQIA+ stories and experiences at Gloucestershire Archives
- Raised awareness of rail industry careers among LGBTQIA+ community members

- Built confidence in local LGBTQIA+ communities for living safely in Gloucestershire

## Quote/testimonial

*"I enjoy getting the steam railway from Cheltenham, everyone was friendly. Passenger assist app is really helpful on the trains."* - Tetbury Pride attendee

*"We don't like to travel alone, prefer to travel with people we trust and feel safe with."* - LGBTQIA+ community member, Tetbury

*"I'm sad that there are no gay clubs anymore in Gloucestershire as going to Bristol for a night out is not financially feasible for many people."* - Male couple from Tetbury





## Grant Awarded

£14,305 plus matched funding of £7,530

# Tewkesbury Wellbeing Walks

## General Overview of the Project

The Gloucestershire Wellbeing Walks project was created to improve travel confidence, independence, and access to the mental health and wellbeing benefits of train travel and walking experiences, specifically for adults facing disabling barriers to wayfinding or active travel in Gloucestershire.

The project was led by Faatimah Bham of Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership (GCRP), in collaboration with Art Shape, community groups, health and wellbeing organisations, and a designer for the final rail-to-trail walking map.

The core activities included six community-led workshops, four walking trails developed for the map, and the creation of an interactive walking resource. The project focused on Ashchurch for Tewkesbury station, ensuring accessibility and connection to the main Tewkesbury town, using integrated travel.

## Project Delivery

The project was delivered through a structured plan:

- Engagement with key partners, including health and wellbeing organisations, creative groups, and community networks, to ensure a collaborative and inclusive approach.
- A series of six co-creation workshops, where participants identified and refined four walking trails, contributing insights on accessibility and travel confidence.
- Collaboration with a designer to incorporate community-generated feedback into a high-quality, user-friendly walking map.
- Development of an interactive walking resource, designed to encourage participation in rail-to-trail experiences.

- A targeted social media campaign, delivered in partnership with community organisations, to raise awareness and promote the project.

Regular meetings with social prescribers, community groups, and Art Shape ensured that the project remained focused on accessibility and inclusion.

## What was the impact of the project?

- Engaged over 60 participants through workshops, and 50 professionals through meetings and engagements.
- Developed four accessible walking trails from railway stations.
- Created a leisure map, linking Ashchurch for Tewkesbury station to trails.
- Partnered with six community organisations for long-term impact.
- Encouraged travel confidence and wayfinding skills among participants.
- Organisations exploring how to integrate the map into their health and well-being programs.

## Quote/testimonial

The greatest positivity was found in responses to the feedback question that asked whether being involved in the project had benefited individual wellbeing. The creative workshops were a big hit for this group. The transport theme was well received, as was the chance to draw. Comments such as “wonderful and relaxing” “relaxing, sociable and enjoyable” and “positive and relaxing” were used to describe the activity.





## Grant Awarded

£24,670 plus matched funding of £11,100

# Youth-led Transport Forum

## General Overview of the Project

The Youth Transport Forum was created to empower young people, particularly those from underrepresented groups, to actively contribute to shaping the region's transport future while increasing confidence in rail travel and promoting rail sector careers. The forum aimed to get a group of young people together to discuss their transport priorities and design initiatives to address gaps and barriers they face when accessing public transport. These youth-led designs and insights would then be compiled into a report to send to stakeholders with the hope of influencing positive developments around the future of travel and transport for young people in the region.

## Project Delivery

The planning stage of the project began in October. After deciding on the structure of the forum and the timescale, a comprehensive recruitment campaign for the forum was drawn up. The recruitment phase lasted for two months from November to January and involved an online sign-up form being produced and promoted, alongside information about the forum, across multiple different channels. This included social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn. The forum was also promoted through stakeholders and their respective organisations, emails, in-person outreach events, newsletters, flyers, posters, blogs, vlogs, press releases, universities, and other youth groups such as the Gloucestershire Youth Climate Forum.

## What was the impact of the project?

The Youth Transport Forum had a wide-ranging impact across all aspects of the project. This included:

- The opportunity for young people to have their voice heard.
- The opportunity for delegates to work with other like-minded and dedicated young people on important topics.
- Improved life skills and knowledge of the delegates.
- Increased awareness of rail careers among delegates and young people more broadly through the careers in rail events.
- Increased understanding among young people of concepts such as carbon emissions, carbon savings and carbon calculators.
- Greater understanding of the travel and transport priorities for young people.
- The insights gained through the project will have been brought together in the Youth Transport Forum report. This will impact and inform discussions on the future of travel and transport for young people, helping to influence positive developments across the region.

## Quote/testimonial

*"I've really enjoyed working with the other members of the youth forum, it's great to be able to work with like-minded people and some of the conversations we had really allowed me to take a different perspective on things that I maybe thought I was sure about."*





**Grant Awarded**  
£7,867

# Travel Ambassadors Project

## General Overview of the Project

The Travel Ambassadors programme was created to explore experiences of people with disabilities using train services to travel. The Travel Ambassadors had to plan and execute 3 trips in which they had to provide feedback in forms of ‘how to guides’. Essentially being the voice of people with disabilities.

The programme was run and orchestrated by Optalis staff with 5 pre-existing Optalis clientele taking on the role of Travel Ambassadors. Resources were made by the Travel Ambassadors. Infographics, photo collages and videos were made by Optalis digital communications staff.

## Project Delivery

- Onboarding / hiring process for Travel Ambassadors
- Mapping meeting and trip dates & times before the Travel Ambassadors started
- Giving the Travel Ambassadors autonomy to plan trips with guidance from Optalis staff
- Biweekly meetings between Donna and Aiden to run through progress, barriers and concerns. Meetings also laid out actions to ensure the programme remained on track.
- Trip overview forms to be written in advance to ensure tickets for train / place of interest had been purchased in advance.

## Project Impact

The Travel Ambassadors programme had a widely positive impact. The opportunity enabled five pre-existing Optalis clientele to take on the role of Travel Ambassadors which gave them the confidence and experience to enable the next steps in securing future employment. The wider impact of the

project was that the feedback and resources created by the Travel Ambassadors and Optalis staff provide people with disabilities real life experiences with advice on how to overcome difficulties and barriers. As a service, the impact is large as the insight from their experiences have raised awareness to the potential challenges and difficulties in our client’s day to day lives and we can incorporate the knowledge into our work to continue advocating for our clientele.

## Quote/testimonial

*“I would definitely do this again”* – One of the Travel Ambassadors

*“I am really happy with what we have achieved”* – One of the Travel Ambassadors





Grant Awarded

£1,400

## Blackwater Valley Consolidation Poster Project

### General Overview of the Project

The project was initiated by SCRP and Blackwater Valley Countryside Trust to encourage people to use the train to Explore Nature in the Blackwater Valley. There are rail to train walks along the Valley, starting and ending at each station. Funding was received from GWR for commissioning a piece of artwork by Claire Watson to a brief from Sara Grisewood SCRP and Chris Smith BVCT, focusing on species of wildlife and plants found in the Blackwater Valley.

### Project Delivery

Sara Grisewood and Chris Smith briefed the artist who created several roughs and stages before it was approved. Red Rocket created the design, and it had a final approval from GWR Branding and Marketing in February 2025; final copies were printed as Double Royal posters for the Community Rail poster frames. Posters were installed during March; and a launch took place on 4th April.

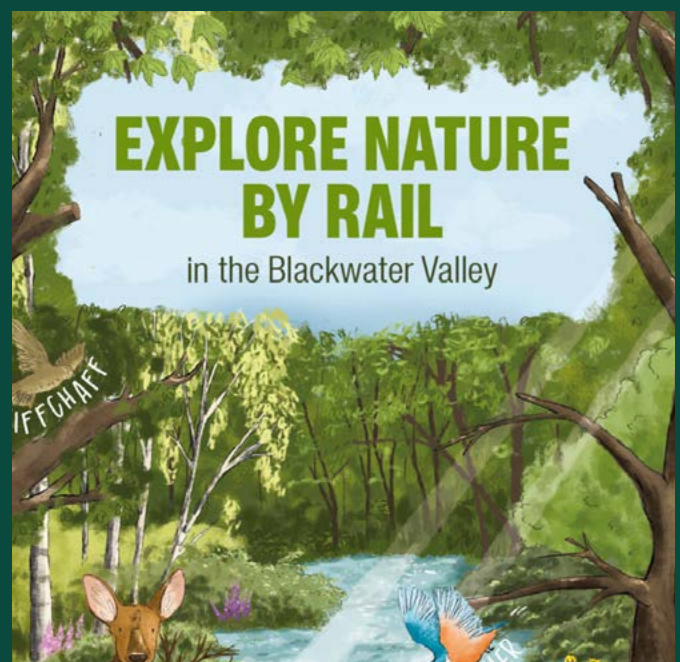
### Project Impact

The poster has already received many compliments, and it will be an excellent way to catch peoples' attention at stations. The QR code on the poster has links to the Rail to Trail walks in the Blackwater Valley and how to access nature. The poster will be displayed at Guildford station and has potential for display at Gatwick and Reading stations too. It will have a long-lasting effect at stations with its eye-catching artwork, and great text too: Explore Nature by Train.

### Quote/testimonial

Keith Dibble, Rushmoor Borough Council:

*"People think of the Blackwater Valley as a built up urban area but actually it is full of pockets of nature and this poster encourages people to get out there, leave their cars, and use sustainable travel to access these areas, promoted by the Blackwater Valley Countryside Trust."*





Grant Awarded

£21,000

## Go Train – Rail Education Project

### General Overview of the Project

The project was to deliver an education programme to schools, colleges and community groups in the area adjacent to the North Downs Line.

### Project Delivery

Now that this project is established many schools and organisations book repeat visits. The calendar has been almost filled with bookings for 2025 and we have now received bookings for 2026 too! This year we worked with new schools such as Papillon House School in Dorking, St. Joseph's in Redhill, Holly Lodge School in North Camp, St. Bede's in Redhill, Portesbury School in Camberley, and community groups such as Fifi's Vision.

Number of workshops, train trips, station visits and participants:

#### April 2024 – March 2025

- Delivered 22 x Try a Train workshops for 228 people
- Delivered 43 x Try a Train trips for 360 people
- Delivered 39 x school workshops for 1,120 pupils
- Delivered 19 x school station visits for 513 pupils
- Worked with 29 schools and organisations

Following on from the success of our first paper-based Treasure Hunt we started working with 'Really Quite Something' in the summer of 2022 on our first app-based Treasure Hunt on the North Downs Line called 'Lost on the North Downs Line'. It launched in May 2024.

We have been working with the Platform Rail education team to create a series of new 'Railways Careers' films. The first two films are ready, and we hope to add more to the series over the next year.

### Project Impact

The overwhelming feedback from participants continues to be that they feel more confident to travel on the train. Younger pupils are more aware of the benefits of train travel on their own health and the health of the planet. Some schools are now running our new 'Railway Careers' workshops where they are learning about the different types of jobs available on the railway.

### Quote/testimonial

*"They (the students) realised it's not as scary as they thought! A greater understanding of how everything works!"* Teacher – Gosden House School, Shalford

What was the best part of the student's workshop? *"Very practical with real examples of tickets. Good tips on safety and who to ask for help. Lots of questions to keep the children engaged."* Teacher – Westende Junior School, Wokingham

*"It helped with nerves and anxiety that some of the group would feel. They now understand the yellow line and know who the members of staff are."* Teacher – Addington School, Woodley





Grant Awarded

£13,900

## Platforms for Change (Scouts) Project

### General Overview of the Project

Delivery of the Go Train education project generated interest from local Scout groups along the North Downs Line. Education officers at SCRCP had identified Scout groups who could benefit from a Go Train delivery of rail travel safety training, confidence building & highlighting local rail services on the line. The project plan was to deliver to three Scout groups, across three terms (in one financial year). The Scout groups would be engaged outside of the competing demand of the school environment, which will deliver the project to a new audience.

### Project Delivery

Project delivery started in May 2024 working with the Crowthorne Beavers group with three safety workshops aimed at different age groups. The safety workshop was delivered to the group in their Scout Hut. The next part of the programme included a visit to Reg's Garden at Farnborough North Station. Several different activities, including a Scavenger Hunt, were included in this trip. Other activities included reusing hot chocolate and coffee cups as plant pots to plant seeds and building bird boxes. The last part of the programme was a train trip to Guildford, and a station visit (including four activities at the station including buying tickets, reading the departure boards and a platform tour).

### Project Impact

We have developed new resources for use with wider range of age groups. We have built relationships with Scout groups who may work with the Line Officer on future projects. Local Scout groups were unaware of Reg's Garden. They are now in touch with the volunteers who look after Reg's Garden, and they hope to work on future projects at the community garden.

### Quote/testimonial

*"The best part of the visit to Reg's Garden was giving my Scouts the opportunity to use a community garden and to be able to get involved. They loved the Scavenger Hunt in the dark!"*

*"We have loved the whole partnership through Platforms for Change. The activities tick off a lot of badge work and were enjoyed by all. Thank you!"*





## Grant Awarded

£2,210 plus additional matched funding from CrossCountry Trains

# 'Our Home' Bath Spa Community Art Scheme

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## General Overview of the Project

GWR Station Manager Oana Apetroaie and Severnside Community Rail Partnership worked together to find opportunities for community engagement at Bath Spa station. An area was identified as a suitable location for a creative display. Over the following year, Severnside CRP engaged several local community groups through our travel confidence scheme, Days Out By Train. From this, a relationship with Bath Welcomes Refugees (BWR) blossomed. Learning more about BWR's programme, it became clear that the opportunity to facilitate creative workshops with them, and to produce new artworks for display at the station would be a mutually beneficial idea. The final launch took place in November 2024 and the works are on permanent display within the station.

## Project Delivery

The project theme was 'Our Home', with the aim of generating images and conversations about what home means to us. What reminds us of home and what makes a place a home. SCRCP created a steering group for the project, involving members of Bath Welcomes Refugees, the station team and GWR communities' team. This group set out the scope of the project and what the

delivery would look like. This informed the funding applications and the artists' brief. Once funding was secured, SCRCP took responsibility to ensure all permissions were in place for the installation and drafted the call out for an artist.

Local artist Kurda Yar Kurda was selected from the shortlist due to her experience of working with the refugee community and her considerate planning for the participants. Working with SCRCP and BWR, she coordinated three workshop dates to coincide with the regular BWR activities, enabling more of the families to engage. The refugees and recently settled participants were mainly Ukrainian, Syrian and Afghan. To make the project welcoming to all, the posters were translated into six different languages: English UK into Pashto, Dari, Chinese HK, Chinese ZH, Arabic and Ukrainian. These were circulated by BWR with their service users and local contacts.

Following the workshops, the final 70 artworks were scanned and curated by Kurda. She selected some as a stand-alone pieces, while others were collaged into new artworks by Kurda, imitating ornate tapestry and rugs from her home country of Iraq.

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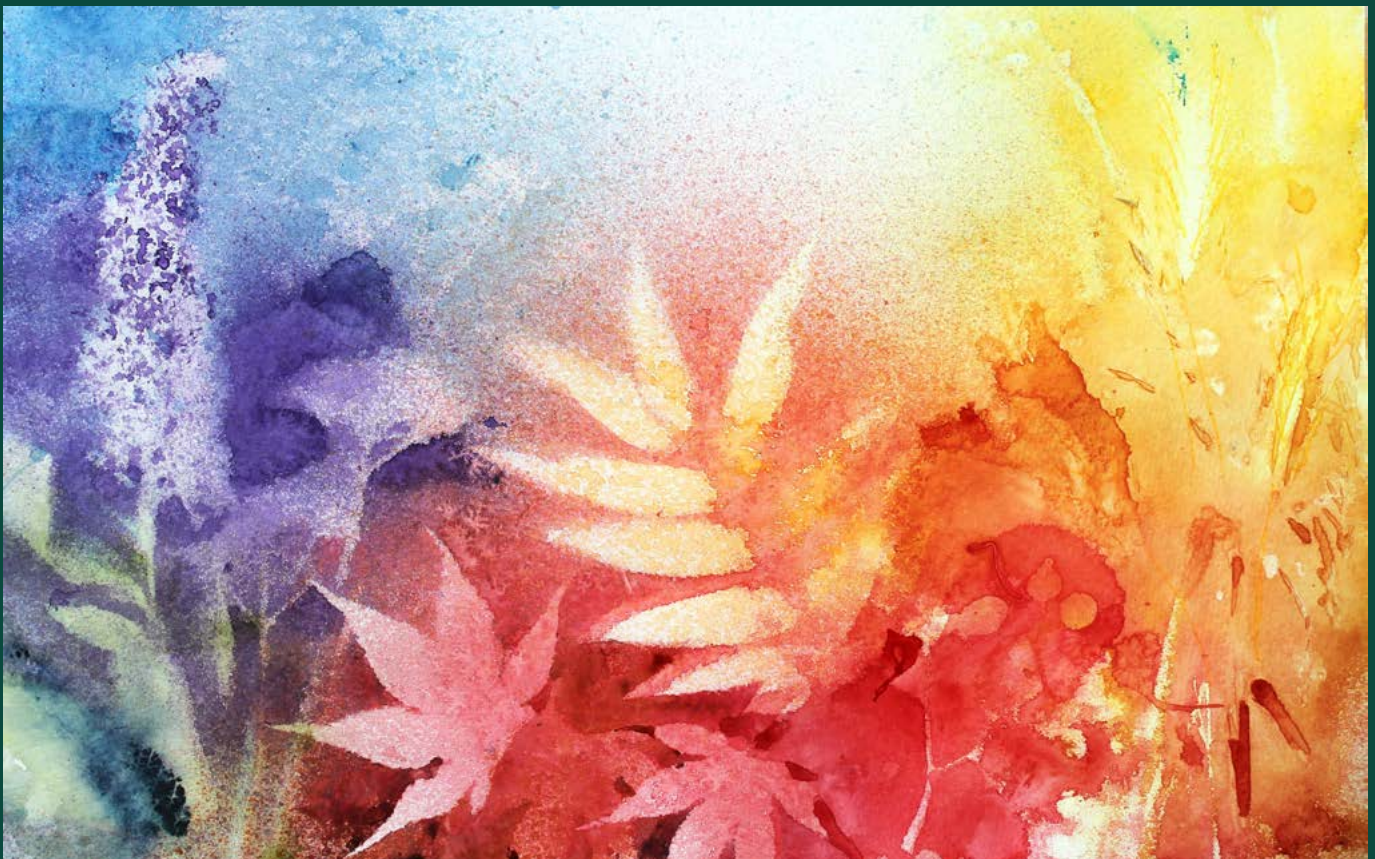
## Project Impact

Our ongoing relationship with Bath Welcomes Refugees has become stronger and we are in conversation with them to include rail confidence trips as part of their regular engagement with refugees. The volunteers have shown interest in Community Rail with one of them offering to support an art scheme at nearby Oldfield Park Station. The art works have received positive feedback and opened conversations about Bath's response to welcoming refugees to the city. Several members of the public were keen to learn more about Bath Welcomes Refugees and see how they could support the organisation. Kurda Yar and BWR have used the art works to make prints and cards to help fundraise for the charity.

## Quote/testimonial

*"This artwork will provide an eye-catching display for the thousands of customers passing through the station in the run-up to Christmas. We would like to congratulate artist Kurda Yar, Bath Welcomes Refugees and Severnside Community Rail Partnership for bringing such a meaningful project to fruition."*

*"The project has been a wonderful opportunity for positive representation of people Bath Welcomes Refugees supports. Everyone enjoyed participating in the workshops and their work has been beautifully combined and integrated into the finished pieces."*





Grant Awarded

£6,000

# The Mike Hodge Community Room at Bridgwater Station

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## General Overview of the Project

The project to develop a community hub at Bridgwater station was conceived by Severnside Community Rail Partnership as an opportunity to re-use redundant rooms and to be an enabler to connect the local communities around the station, such as the adjacent Eastover and St John's Street areas, as well as the wider Bridgwater community. The ideal also linked into the Bridgwater Town Deal bid, which developed the route from the station to the town, known as the Celebration mile, with the station being a key portal.

The main refurbishment of the room was completed during the spring of 2024, with a formal opening taking place on 22nd May of that year. The refurbishment phase of the project was funded by GWR CCIF, GWR, the Community Rail Development Fund, Rail Heritage Trust, and the Somerset Community Foundation. This latter group were pleased to support this project as this part of Bridgwater is seen as part of the town that has had less funding investment for community projects, and this project could be the catalyst to other such activity.

Further funding was secured towards the purchase and installation of additional furniture, video conferencing equipment, security and fire protection to enable to the room to be offered as a well-equipped, contemporary meeting space. Dynamic furniture choices allow the room to be arranged in board room style or as a more open space to cater for a wide range of group meeting and small-scale events.

## Project Delivery

Items purchased were selected based on the results of a survey of local organisations, members of the local community and passengers in the early (pre-refurbishment) phase of the project. All groups who used the room in the weeks immediately after opening were invited to contribute to ideas for equipment which they might make use of when hiring the space. These views informed the final list. Local suppliers were used where possible, and local contractor Western Rail Services, who delivered the main refurbishment, supported the installation of the security door and bespoke window shutters.

## Project Impact

Even before the formal opening bookings had been received from Bridgwater Civic Society and Peace group, and the Co-Op Bus Group, and has been used for a range of in person and hybrid meetings. Feedback has been 100% positive, and the room being re-booked by every group, without exception. The space was booked by the NHS for autumn and spring vaccination clinics. This gave people living around the station easier access to the vaccination programme, saving having to travel to their GP surgery. Several multi-agency meetings have taken place in the room to help find solutions to support a group of young people from Bridgwater whose behaviour is putting themselves, and others, at risk on and around the railway. This group have been especially challenging and having the community space utilised means a greater people presence at the station outside of ticket office opening hours, creating a greater sense of security to passengers.

### Quote/testimonial

*"The Mike Hodge room has meant that the local community close to the Railway Station has a room and space that can be used for events. This is extremely important as there is no Community Centre facility close by. The Mike Hodge room will be used as a warm room for local people and also for used for learning and leisure activities."* Cllr Michael Lerry, Bridgwater Town Council

*"For us to be able to access an ideal space to allow us to bring Covid and 'Flu vaccinations to the local community is a great asset. It helps us enormously to bring healthcare away from the busy, and sometimes difficult to access, hospital areas and ensure that as many of the eligible local community as possible are protected against the winter viruses. We are looking forward to using the space for the forthcoming vaccination programme and have found the process of booking the space easy and straightforward."* Jane Burt RN Clinical Supervisor & Deputy Clinical Lead, Somerset NHS





## Grant Awarded

£6,294 plus matched funding of £6,180 from the West of England Combined Authority and £2,358 from the Quartet Community Foundation

# Days Out By Train

## General Overview of the Project

The Days Out By Train project was designed to better understand barriers to rail travel by offering free facilitated day trips by train to community groups who have perceived barriers to rail travel. Sevenside Community Rail Partnership (SCRIP) were keen to make local stations feel more accessible for all users and hoped this project would build confidence in using the local rail network, help to provide a voice for the communities, and showcasing local destinations. The project had match funding from the Quartet Community Foundation and West of England Mayoral Combined Authority (WEMCA).

## Project Delivery

The initial stages involved the Community Development Officer researching and contacting eligible community organisations supporting the targeted groups across the five local authorities that Sevenside CRP work within. Word of mouth gradually became the main method of referral due to the positive feedback the scheme was receiving, and the scheme being championed within wider community networks. Sevenside CRP revised two existing surveys using an online impact reporting tool as well as photographic consent forms and general risk assessments which would be adapted for each trip.

## Project Impact

The project offered more than just train trips, the visits to independent venues supported the local economy and the relationships fostered enabled the Partnership to continue to work with the communities. For example, Bath Ethnic Minority Senior Citizen's Association (BEMSCA) participated in GWR's Carnival Train to Notting Hill; Dementia

Friendly Bradford on Avon are now keen to link in with neighbouring CRP TransWilts to look at trips for residents in the nearby towns of Melksham and Trowbridge. There are ongoing plans with Silvacare, Easton Community Centre, Faithspace and Lockleaze Neighbourhood Trust to facilitate more trips. Continuation funding has been secured via The Motability Foundation to deliver trips over the course of the next 2 years.

Using the Rail Safety Standards Board's Rail Social Value Tool, the relevant matrix forecast a social value return of £307,008 on the investment of £14,832 in this project. Total engagements/contacts from community setting visits and trips: 205. Total number of trip participants: 115. Trips hosted: 11

## Quote/testimonial

*"Malcolm hasn't stopped talking about it! In fact, we enjoyed it so much we are probably going to go again tomorrow as the weather is so good. We didn't realise it was such a relatively quick and easy journey by train."*

*"You were a joy to be with and gave our group a wonderful day out. GWR are very lucky to have you, so confident and fun. Good luck in your future."*

*"I think, going out to different places in small groups is vital for the well-being of Dementia patients and their carers."*





Grant Awarded

£9,280

## Promoting Rail Travel across Sevenside by Digital Media

### General Overview of the Project

Funding was secured to Sevenside Community Rail Partnership (CRP) to continue to work with locally based digital medial service Introtweet to develop its social medial presence across Facebook, Instagram and TikTok and specifically to promote car free journeys to local events, for example.

- Pride events at Bristol, Weston-super-Mare, Burnham-on-Sea and Taunton
- Food events, eg. local 'Eat Festivals'
- Music, arts and literature festivals,

The concept was to intersperse content promoting rail travel with other Sevenside Community Rail Partnership activity, such as encouraging use of the new Community Room at Bridgwater station and viewing Sevenside Community Rail arts trail at local stations.

### Project Delivery

The Taunton based social media management agency Introtweet were commissioned to develop a strategy with Sevenside Community Rail Partnership. It was agreed the agency would create content and post across three platforms – Facebook, Instagram and TikTok - as this spread would reach older audiences and younger people. The package included days for video content creation, and posting across the three platforms and paid advertising on Facebook. A mid project review during Autumn 2024 highlighted the content was not generating the levels of engagement anticipated. It was therefore decided to cease the arrangement and seek advice on content being developed by other sources.

Local emerging influencer Ben Parsons was commissioned to create a series of spring visits by rail to independent places to eat

close to Clifton Down, Bedminster and Yate stations. Ben used the opportunity to include a visit 2 local attractions, Clifton Lido and Windmill Hill City Farm who both collaborated with the content, generating extra views.

### Project Impact

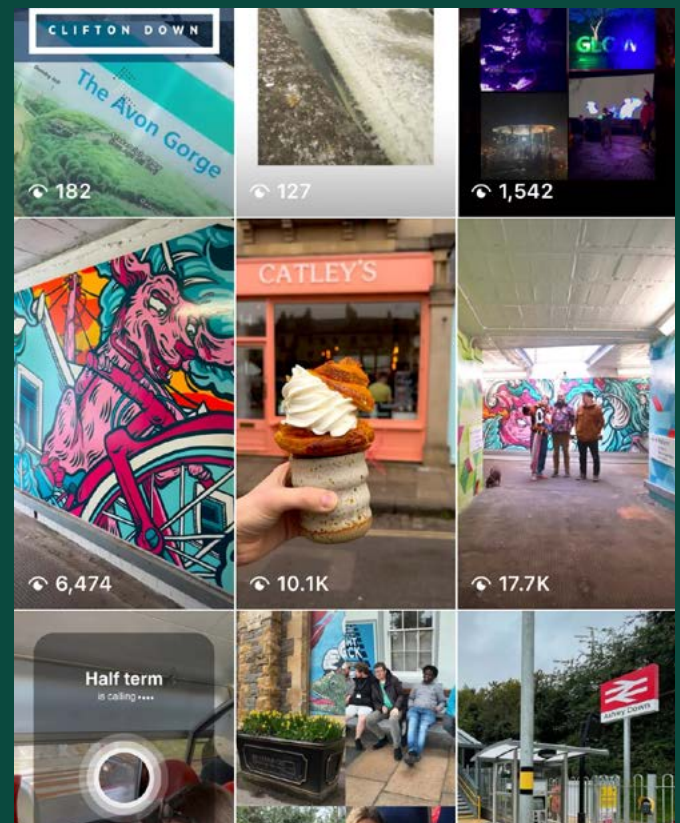
Awareness of events and things to do during the Summer were raised by the Social Media posts and encouraged more rail ridership to access these events.

### Quote/testimonial

*"Great idea getting the train from Temple Meads to Clifton Down, so stress free"*

*"So much easier jumping on a train than that fighting for a parking space isn't it"*

*"Great idea, I'll be doing this for sure"*



**Grant Awarded**

£14,654 plus additional funding from other sources



## RailWAY

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### General Overview of the Project

The project was created due to Platform seeing an increased demand for careers workshops, especially from primary schools for their Upper KS2 cohorts based on Ofsted Guidance and Pilot careers schemes.

Platform was prompted to develop their bespoke railway-focused careers workshops and deliver these to schools across the five community rail partnership areas covered by the scheme, to the benefit of students across all key stages. This includes mainstream schools (primary and secondary) and specialist settings (primary to post-16). The workshops provide an early introduction to challenging stereotypes and raising awareness of the huge number and vast range of careers available, and - for older students - the different routes into the industry, including the GWR and Network Rail apprenticeship schemes.

### Project Delivery

Platform agreed that, depending on their age, students would learn:

- How the rail industry offers a wide range of careers – at the station, on the train, on and around the tracks, and behind the scenes
- The concept of personal strengths (skills and attributes) and the part these play in being effective at your job
- Key career terminology such as salaries, pensions, skills, qualifications
- Some of the pathways available to someone interested in a career in the rail industry, such as apprenticeships
- How the railway can be a gateway to other career, education or training opportunities
- Key rail safety messages

They agreed a clear plan for what they would cover at each key stage of mainstream education, such as which specific careers they would teach the students about and designed age-appropriate sessions for Early Years through to KS5.

Platform increased their online posts relating to careers. Posts on Facebook and Instagram make effective use of their RailWAY logo, photographs, testimonials, a brief summary of the delivery and links to their website. They also reposted any posts made by schools and colleges following their RailWAY sessions.

### Project Impact

GWR CCIF

Number of RailWAY workshops delivered: 1,299

Number of RailWAY workshops delivered + confirmed bookings: 1,598

GWR Additional

Number of RailWAY workshops delivered: 683

Number of RailWAY workshops delivered + confirmed bookings 1,095

On average, about a third of students ended Platform's UKS2+ workshops either interested to find out more or definitely wanting to work in the rail industry. 6 parents/ carers (7% of respondents to student QR stickers) said: *"My child is now desperate to work in the rail industry!"*

During a roleplay scenario in a junior school in Wiltshire, Platform chose a girl to come up and play the part of the train driver. *"She can't drive a train!"* declared a male student, quite innocently. *"That's a man's job!"* Platform was able to address this misconception in a friendly, non-judgemental way, leaving the

male student feeling informed, the female student reassured and both students empowered.

**Quote/testimonial**

*“Gave the children live action detail and examples of what jobs are available and what qualities you need. The pupils had to choose other children they thought had the qualities needed to be successful at the*

*jobs. Really interactive and friendly team, the children were engaged throughout and had opportunities to get involved.”* Wilden All Saints Primary School, Worcestershire

*“I really appreciate you visiting and making such a great impression on the children - who knows how many children you might have inspired to think about a career in rail!!”* Cotford St Luke Primary School, Somerset



Grant Awarded  
£3,000



# Dorchester West and Maiden Newton Art Projects

## General Overview of the Project

South Wessex CRP recognised that Dorchester West and Maiden Newton stations needed a splash of colour—and a stronger sense of community ownership. To bring this vision to life, they partnered with Art Life, a Dorchester-based group supporting people living with depression, anxiety and other mental health challenges.

For many members, this project was their first experience of painting or creating artwork. Guided by their art teacher, Leonora Phelan, the group embraced the theme “Landscapes of Dorset”, drawing inspiration from the places they know and love.

The result has been extraordinary: 30 original artworks, now proudly displayed on dibond panels at both stations. The vibrant pieces have transformed the spaces, and the local community has responded with genuine enthusiasm and pride.

What began as an effort to brighten two stations has grown into something far more meaningful—creativity, confidence, and community connection brought to life through art.

## Project Delivery

The Community Rail Line officer managed the project, had regular meetings with Leonora (teacher from Art life). Weston Rail did a great job installing the artwork after getting permissions from Jordan Welsby – GWR Station Manager.

## Project Impact

The community and the people who created the artwork got to see their work showcased at the station for everyone to view and enjoy adding brightness and happiness to the station.

## Quote/testimonial

*“The artwork has truly brought the community together. People are stopping to admire the pieces, and they’re bringing a welcome sense of colour, joy and connection to the station. It’s added brightness and positivity to the space, reinforcing a genuine feeling of community pride.”*



## Railway Heritage Project

### General Overview of the Project

The Railway Heritage project, led by South West Wales Connected, was dedicated to celebrating and preserving the rich railway heritage of the South West Wales region. Through a series of community-focused gatherings at local railway stations and event spaces, the project brought together railway enthusiasts, historians, museums, and the general public to share knowledge, stories, and a collective passion for trains and the history surrounding them.

### Project Delivery

The inaugural meeting took place in Swansea in January 2024, followed by a successful event in Llanelli in May 24, with a gathering in Neath in November 2024 due to growing interest. We put together a celebration event for Railway 200 in March 2025 to celebrate the Mumbles railway and also created an audio heritage walk from Swansea train station.

### Project Impact

At each of these events, attendees had the opportunity to explore the region's history and its broader vision. Participants were invited to contribute their unique perspectives and showcase photographs or projects, whether

they were long-time history buffs, creative minds, or train enthusiasts. The gatherings foster an inclusive environment where people of all backgrounds could connect over a shared love for railway heritage. Through this project, South West Wales Connected has succeeded in creating a welcoming space where individuals and groups can informally engage with their local railway history, preserving stories and memories for future generations.

### Quote/testimonial

*"Absolutely ace event today. Put us down for next year because it has to be repeated. It was one of the best networking events we have ever encountered. Well done for all your efforts and the way in which you kept chasing and chivying up us all. As for the weather? I have never been so excited at the erroneous nature of the weather forecast. Keep in touch and well done again."*





**Grant Awarded**  
£8,200

## Joy of the Journey

### General Overview of the Project

The South West Wales Connected “Joy of the Journey” project was much needed for community groups in order to create confidence with rail travel. It aims to make rail travel more accessible and enjoyable for diverse community groups, promoting inclusion and sustainability.

### Project Delivery

Each month for 1 year, we hosted up to three group train journeys across the region providing participants with a fun, relaxing day out that highlights the ease and beauty of rail transport. Activities and refreshments were included to create a memorable experience. Groups such as the Girls’ Rights Group Neath, Carmarthen Youth Group, National Autistic Society, LGBTQIA+ groups, special needs schools and students from the University of Wales Trinity St David’s all took part.

The aim was to break down any barriers to rail travel, particularly for individuals or groups who may have limited access to public transport, or who may not typically consider rail travel as a viable option.

Contact and outreach to groups across the region and making connections with tourism and council departments allowed us to discover the community groups who were most in need of this project and of respite.

### Project Impact

Particularly important were the connections made between groups who wanted to meet after this project and made it all worthwhile. This demonstrated the importance of the project and how much it was needed. It has connected the community rail partnerships with many new friends. More people now want to get involved in rail and, having seen how easy and safe rail travel is, will consider it for their future journeys.

### Quote/testimonial

*“Everyone really enjoyed the train trip. The train ride was wonderful and relaxing and the day was fantastic. Everyone has been telling me how much they enjoyed it. And some said they will be making the trip again as they didn’t realise that the train was so easy”- Sadies Butterflies.*



*“The train was clean & comfortable, the scenery lovely & the fact we were in a group made it better and the best day of the year according to one of our members. We were able to talk about the destination & what we had seen & done. Eve helped make it an enjoyable day. Very informative about the trains, different discounts & services available also sorting out the lunchtime refreshments of which we were very grateful.*

*We would seriously think about going to destinations by train as a group in future.*

*Thank you again for a brilliant day.”- Pontardawe ‘Age together’ group.*

*“A great way to enjoy a day out together. You can walk around and talk to different people. Or sit quietly and enjoy the view. Great for people who don’t get many opportunities to travel and see new places and are isolated. The trains were brilliant! And we’re sure everyone, not just us, will want to take the train again!”- Nigerian Mums and Toddlers group.*





**Grant Awarded**  
£13,000

# Sustainable Tourism – South West Wales Without a Car

## General Overview of the Project

We saw an opportunity to create a much needed brochure that promoted traveling across our region sustainably. It aimed to increase awareness of responsible tourism by offering practical tips for exploring the region with minimal environmental impact. By highlighting sustainable travel options and engaging local communities in the process, the brochure empowers both visitors and residents to support a more sustainable future. Whether you're a local or a visitor, the guide invites you to discover South West Wales with a lighter footprint.

## Project Delivery

We compiled a list of places and venues to be included in the brochure and worked on brochure design and print, making sure that it would not be time sensitive and can be used all year round.

## Project Impact

In line with its commitment to sustainability, the brochure also aims to empower local communities by actively involving them in the promotion of sustainable tourism. By giving a voice to the community, the brochure fosters a sense of shared responsibility for protecting the region's resources while encouraging locals to take pride in their efforts to support eco-friendly tourism.

## Quote/testimonial

*"A wonderful and insightful guide"*

*"Fantastic idea of what to do when we are planning as a family and looking forward to taking our bikes to explore"*





**Grant Awarded**  
£10,300

# TransWilts Social Media Project

## General Overview of the Project

The project was developed to raise awareness of Community Rail and inspire more people to volunteer and get involved with our work at TransWilts CRP. To support this, we partnered with a social media management service to design and deliver an impactful digital strategy. Today, social media serves as a virtual hub for travel inspiration, where users can discover destinations through captivating photography, engaging videos, and visually appealing, first-hand stories shared by travellers.

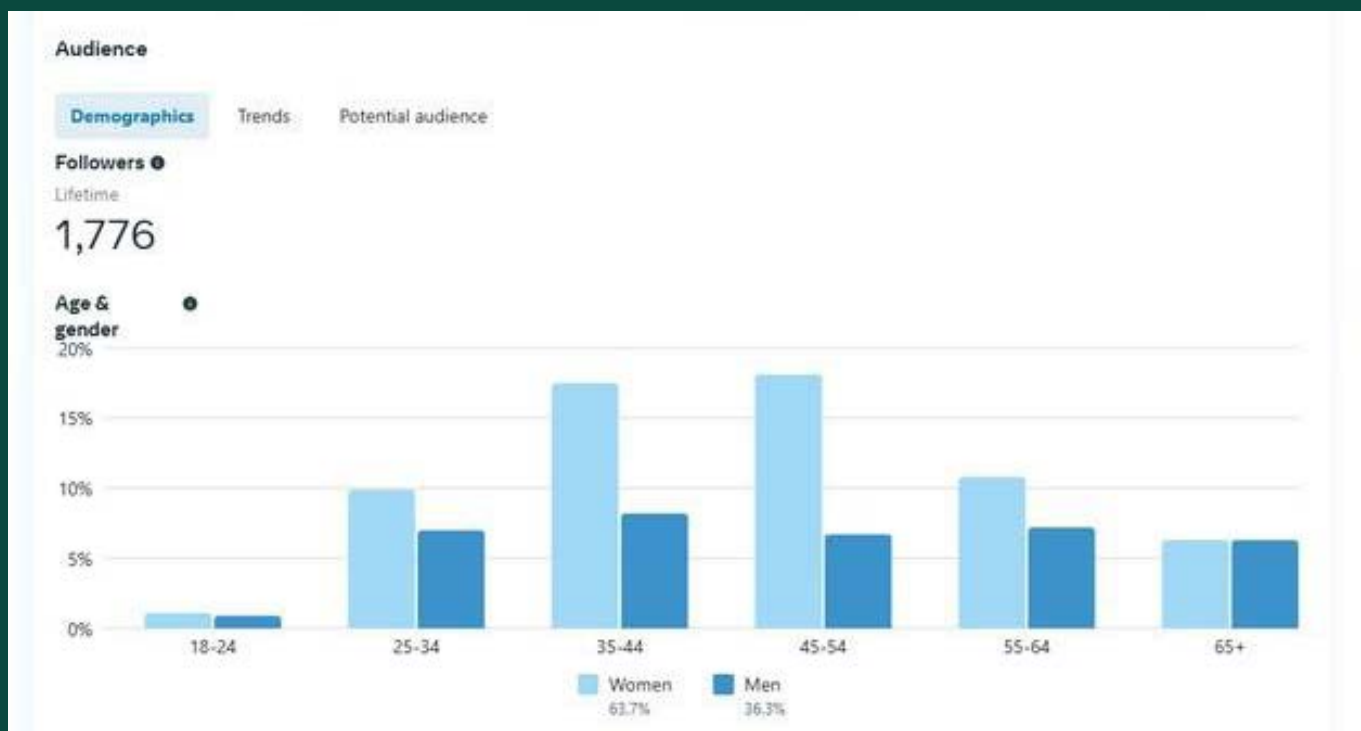
## Project Delivery

Our partner, IntroTweet, were granted access to our social media channels and led the delivery of the project. We held review meetings every few months to discuss objectives, refine our goals, and collaborate on specific campaigns.

## Project Impact

IntroTweet has made a substantial impact on our social media presence, significantly boosting both our profile and engagement across all platforms. It is encouraging to see that, even after the initial phase of activity, our metrics have continued to rise. The strong upward trend over the past 90 days is particularly positive, showing that our ongoing efforts are delivering sustained improvement.

Additionally, the increased number of news stories published on our website has been a valuable complement to our social media activity, helping to drive more users through to the site and further strengthening our overall digital performance.



# Welcome Aboard

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This year has seen a significant and positive increase in volunteer participation across the Community Rail.

**New volunteer groups have been established at Castle Cary, Yeoford, Evesham, Shipton, Looe, Newquay, Exeter Central and Shalford. Existing teams at stations including Chippenham, Trowbridge, Warminster, Barnstaple, Torquay, Paignton, Penmere, Swindon, North Camp, Exeter St Thomas, Shalford and Pewsey have also grown through the addition of new recruits.**

Station adoption continues to play a vital role within the community rail ecosystem. More than 1,000 station adoption—or ‘station friends’—groups are now active across the country, collectively covering over a third of Britain’s stations. These groups not only enhance the appearance of stations and their surrounding areas, but also help transform them into welcoming, vibrant community hubs.

The benefits of station adoption are wide-ranging. Volunteers report improved health and wellbeing through their involvement, while communities benefit

from increased cohesion, support for local development, and the promotion of more sustainable travel. Station adoption also contributes to the overall success of the railway by creating environments that better serve passengers and encourage greater use of the network.

This year has also seen excellent engagement with young people, and we are grateful to the existing volunteer network for the warm and supportive welcome they have provided.



# Volunteer Newsletter

Our annual volunteer newsletter is sent to all station volunteers each December, accompanied by a Christmas card, a new volunteer pin badge, and an advent calendar.

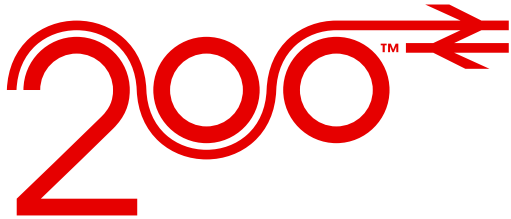
At GWR, it's incredibly important to us that our station adopters feel valued, recognised, and appreciated for everything they do.

The newsletter brings together volunteer stories and highlights the fantastic work they do to care for their stations and champion local lines. Each edition includes interviews with volunteers, top gardening tips, safety reminders, and a dedicated space to celebrate external awards and achievements.



# Station Adoption Fund

This past year GWR’s Station Adoption Fund has played a vital role in supporting station volunteer groups bring Railway 200 to life, celebrating 200 years of the modern railway with creativity and community spirit.



The Railway 200 campaign not only honoured two centuries of innovation but also aimed to inspire a new generation to imagine the future of rail.

The UK was the birthplace of the modern railway, a pioneering achievement that soon transformed travel around the world. Reflecting that same spirit of progress and connection, Railway 200 sparked a flurry of activity nationwide – with communities everywhere joining in.

The 11 Community Rail Partnerships across the GWR network were represented in force, with volunteers creating imaginative and lasting contributions.

From revamped planters and striking murals to new history boards and creative community projects, volunteers in Avonmouth, Barnstaple, Calstock, Dorchester West, Honeybourne and Penmere brought stations and stories to life in remarkable ways.

This roundup highlights just a few of the many Railway 200 projects that were completed - a collective tribute to 200 years of railway innovation, and a confident nod to the future. If these projects are anything to go by, the next chapter of rail travel looks brighter than ever.



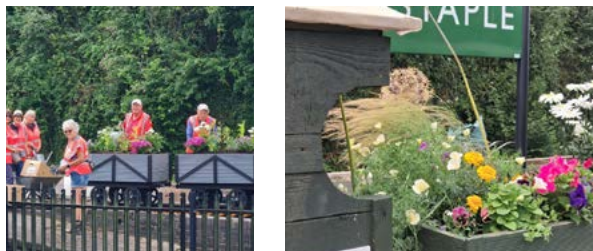
## Avonmouth

### Breathing new life into Avonmouth’s Secret Garden:

This cherished green space by the station has been transformed into a vibrant wellbeing hub, celebrating 200 years of railway history through food, community, and culture. By growing heritage vegetables and culturally relevant crops, the garden supports the local community while also serving as a haven for wildlife.

### Barnstaple

With the help of a local Men’s Shed, volunteers have refreshed the station with new railway wagon planters and a bespoke signal box-style bug house. A heritage team also helped create new displays celebrating the station’s 170 years of history.



### Calstock

At Calstock station, a striking new mural now brightens the shelter, celebrating the Tamar Valley’s proud market gardening heritage. Created in collaboration with Calstock Archives, the artwork captures the industry’s heyday in the 1950s, when ‘Fruit & Flower’ trains carried the valley’s daffodils, strawberries, apples and more to markets across the UK – a vivid reminder of how rail helped the region’s produce flourish.

### Dorchester West

Dorchester West marked Railway 200 with the unveiling of three new posters celebrating the station’s history, from its opening in 1857. The designs showcase the station’s proud heritage. The ceremony was attended by dignitaries including Dorchester Deputy Mayor Councillor Robin Potter, who helped unveil the posters and cut the cake to mark the occasion.



### Honeybourne

Volunteers at Honeybourne have been busy bringing the village’s rich railway heritage to life through the new Heritage Rail Tales and Trails project. The initiative creates a walking trail from the station, marked by storyboards that share the history of the local railway – from the old line to Cheltenham Races to the lives of the people who worked along it. The trail offers visitors and residents a chance to discover Honeybourne’s railway past while enjoying the wellbeing benefits of exploring the outdoors.

### Penmere

Penmere station in Falmouth celebrated its centenary with a special community open day. The event marked 100 years since the station opened in 1925 as Penmere Platform, and was organised by the Friends of Penmere Station. Visitors enjoyed period-inspired entertainment, a display of historic train tickets and photographs and vintage vehicles. Earlier in the year, a commemorative plaque had been unveiled, marking the exact day the station first welcomed passengers.



# The Future

We hope this report demonstrates how our shared efforts in community rail and station adoption are shaping vibrant, resilient communities across the GWR network, turning the ambitions of the DfT’s Community Rail Development Strategy into real change and real opportunity.

In a year when public spending continues to feel the pressure of inflation, it’s more important than ever to highlight the true value delivered by community rail partnerships across our network. Their tireless work not only strengthens local connection and supports sustainable development, but also provides an exceptional return on investment.

Through both financial and in-kind support, GWR has been privileged to help communities bring their ideas to life. Community Rail and station adoption remain central to our business, to the wider railway, and to the wellbeing of the communities we serve.

As we prepare to move over to Department for Transport Operated, our commitment to CRPs and station adopters is as strong as ever. We continue to lobby the DfT to safeguard our station adoption fund and,

at the very least, protect the core funding levels CRPs already received from us. The award-winning work delivered by our existing partnerships shapes our vision, and it’s vital that we build on good practice and apply lessons learned to secure the future of Community Rail.

2025 marked a major milestone: the 200th anniversary of the modern railway. Railway 200 offered a unique opportunity to celebrate how rail has shaped Britain over two centuries, while also looking ahead. As the network modernises and prepares for growth, these celebrations have helped inspire more people to choose rail and encourage the next generation of innovators to join the industry—becoming the history-makers of tomorrow.



## Trowbridge Mural

Trowbridge railway station has received a bee-friendly upgrade from the Bee Friendly Trust. A once-neglected corner now features two self-watering planters and a vibrant mural celebrating pollinators.

The planters are filled with lavender, rosemary, salvia, ceanothus, creeping herbs and daffodils—pollen-rich plants that offer vital food and shelter for bees in an otherwise paved environment. These small green pockets help pollinators move safely between larger habitats.

Behind them, local artist Sarah Harris has brightened the station with a colourful mural showing people tending a flower-filled garden.



# Dig in. Help out. Grow together.

**See your station flourish – volunteer locally and watch your care take root and thrive.**

Joining your local GWR station adoption group is a great way to stay active, meet like-minded people and help grow exciting new community projects.

Through volunteering, you can help bring platforms and waiting areas to life with plants, planters and seasonal displays – turning them into greener, more inviting spaces for all.

At GWR, we work with 287 volunteers across 94 locations, making a real difference – enhancing local stations while boosting health and wellbeing through community gardening.

Thinking about joining a GWR station adoption group or starting your own? Visit [gwr.com](http://gwr.com) to find out more or get in touch at [community.rail@gwr.com](mailto:community.rail@gwr.com). We'd love to hear from you!



## 25 years of garden glory

**For more than a quarter of a century, the dedicated volunteers at Friends of Yatton Station have cultivated a thriving, sustainable garden, complete with an enterprise café and cycling hub. This is their inspiring story.**

The Friends of Yatton Station is a devoted group that has spent the past 25 years transforming their local Somerset station.



The group cares for the station's historic garden, an award-winning retreat since at least the 1920s that had, over time, fallen into disrepair. In 1999, local volunteers came together to breathe new life into the space and return it to its former glory.

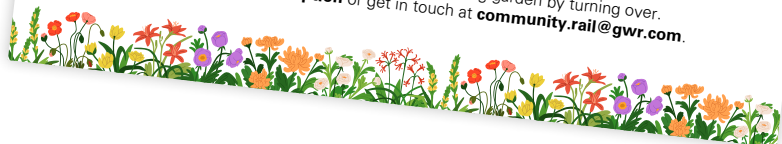
Although it was thick with brambles and huge ash trees, explains Faith Moulin, she could still see the "bones" of the garden. "I thought, 'Well, it would be great to restore that to a thing of beauty'" she says.

It's no surprise that the Friends of Yatton Station have been rightly recognised in the Royal Horticultural Society's It's Your Neighbourhood Awards. Their ongoing efforts have transformed the garden into a space that is not only beautiful but also sustainably managed – a true testament to their hard work and dedication.

The station is also home to the Strawberry Line Café and Cycle Hire, which proudly employs people with additional needs and learning disabilities, who gather flowers from the garden to brighten their table displays.

What began as a modest effort to revitalise an old garden has since blossomed into an award-winning haven – enriching the community, delighting visitors and supporting local wildlife and pollinators alike.

**Feeling inspired?** Find out more about GWR's station adoption groups and how you could help cultivate the next award-winning garden by turning over. Visit [gwr.com/station-adoption](http://gwr.com/station-adoption) or get in touch at [community.rail@gwr.com](mailto:community.rail@gwr.com).



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