



Great
Western
Railway

Social Value Report 2025/2026



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A GWR funded project with Gloucester Model Railway Club created a detailed replica of Gloucester Station, showcasing its past and present. The model is permanently displayed in the waiting room on Platform 2 at Gloucester Station

Foreword

“At Great Western Railway (GWR), we have long believed that the railway is more than a means of transport. It is a powerful force for positive change—supporting stronger economies, improving health and wellbeing, widening access to education and employment, and helping to build more inclusive communities.

For over 200 years, the railway has connected people to opportunity. Today, that role is as important as ever. Put simply, the railway changes lives. However, understanding and evidencing that impact in a meaningful and consistent way remains a complex challenge.

Over the past five years, we have addressed this through the Rail Social Value Tool (RSVT), an independent and robust framework that enables us to measure the difference we make. By assessing hundreds of metrics, it helps us capture our contribution across the environment, communities, local economies, and the opportunities we create. Just as importantly, it supports greater transparency and collaboration across our industry.

As the social value landscape continues to evolve, so too must our approach. The introduction of an annual review of RSVT metrics ensures as an industry we remain aligned with best practice, government guidance, and the expectations of the communities we serve. This strengthens our ability to measure what matters most.

This means that our report for 2025/26 looks different. However, its purpose remains unchanged—to provide clear evidence of our impact and to help us go further in delivering meaningful social value.

I am proud of the progress we have made and of the role our railway continues to play in supporting health, education, employment and social inclusion. This work is core to who we are as a business.

None of this would be possible without the commitment and collaboration of our partners. I would like to thank you for your continued support and shared ambition. Together, we are delivering real and lasting benefits for the communities we serve.

We welcome your feedback on this year’s report and look forward to building on this progress in the year ahead.”



Joe Graham
Business Assurance and Property Director



Executive summary

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

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

Having set out targeted strategies for improvement in our last Social Value Report, we are pleased to provide an update on our progress, as well as illustrate how we continue to enhance our impact on society, the environment, and the economy.

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

This Social Value Report is structured to provide a holistic overview of our activities across five of RSSB's social impact areas. As demonstrated throughout this report, the activities undertaken by our business can have a hugely positive impact on individual people's lives. Between 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026, GWR is proud to have delivered a total operational, environmental and economic impact valued at ***£704,276,260.75**.

*Figure based on an agreed methodology and a defined set of measurable metrics. The total value reported should be considered a conservative estimate, with additional unquantified value likely to exist beyond the scope of the metrics applied.

Social Value Impact 2025-2026

Employment and economic



386

jobs created

18.4%

ethically diverse

35.2% women

89.3% colleagues and apprentices are local to their place of work



314

people

placed in apprenticeships with a completion rate of **97.9%**



5.7%

apprentices from the 10% most deprived areas in England and Wales

£17m

investment in development or infrastructure that provides improved accessibility to passengers



Health, training and skills

36,006

hours of safety talks



6,929

students received real life learning through Prison Me No Way Junior Life Skills and the Junior Citizens Trust

732



safeguarding interventions, including

72 suicide interventions

93%

of stations Secure Stations accredited



47 engineering work placements



716,022

hours of workplace training

103

Mental Health First Aiders



Community

2,358

stakeholders attended consultation and engagement events



88% disabled people satisfied with their ability to access the facilities and services they need



4,918

people supported to use the rail network through try a train

384,634

Passenger assistance requests

77

station adoption groups across the network

£57,368 donated to charity through payroll given by

6.42% colleagues



£1,000,000

investment in Community and Customer Improvement Fund projects

Supply chain

£60m

spend with small and medium sized businesses



84

hours of small business / non-profit support

Environmental



0

waste to landfill

19.3%

colleague vehicles that are hybrid or electric



Our approach

RSSB Rail Social Value Tool (RSVT)

The Rail Social Value Tool (RSVT) measures five key social impact areas, which are:

1. Employment and economic
2. Health, training and skills
3. Supply chain
4. Community
5. Environmental

Time

GWR has completed this exercise to include data from 1 April 2025 until 31 March 2026 inclusive, encompassing 13 railway reporting periods. This will be referred to throughout this report as the 'reporting period'.

Change in metric values

For some of the metrics, the £ value associated with them has changed, in some cases this has increased, in other cases it has decreased. This makes it difficult to compare the £ value created year on year.

Therefore it is all the more important to focus on the activities themselves, observing where changes have occurred.

Removal of some metrics from the RSVT

Some metrics have been removed from the reporting system. GWR has continued to collate data where this is seen of value.

Some data has not been available this year

For some GWR internal functions, reporting data in the required format and timescales was not possible. This includes a number of metrics under the wellbeing theme. The result is that, in some cases, it has been difficult to compare like for like.

Avoiding overclaiming monetised social value

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

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

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

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

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

Geography

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

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

Monetised and non-monetised metrics

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

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

Detailed stakeholder information

Stakeholder information has been broken down across key topics including ethnicity, marital status, gender, sexual orientation and working patterns. We haven't included the number of stakeholders born outside of the UK, average age, ex-offenders, homeless, ex-service personnel or the highest level of education achieved.

Double counting

Two metrics were excluded due to the potential for double counting; both were included within another field instead. These metrics are shown below:

Impact area	Sub-category	Description	Input unit	Where has it been included instead?
RSVTD78/ RSVT21	Community spaces	Social value created from providing office rental or equivalent for free or discounted rate to VCSEs, SMEs etc	# hours	No. of hours counted in RSVT21 only, all other units (sq ft and discount rate) recorded in RSVTD78
NMRSVT11/ NMRSVT26	Access to lift facilities / Satisfaction with lift facilities	% of disabled people satisfied with their ability to get to / access the facilities and services they need / proportion of passenger assistance users who were satisfied	%	Recorded in NMRSVT26 only

Measuring what matters

Over the past five years, GWR has undergone a significant shift in how we understand and measure social value.

What began as an exploratory process – largely focused on casting the net wide to capture a broad range of data – has matured into a more thoughtful, intentional approach rooted in what truly matters to us and the communities we serve. We now have a firm grasp of what social value means to GWR and of the measures that are of greatest benefit to monitor and report.

Our teams too have developed a deeper awareness of the role we play in people's lives.

Across departments, we are having more meaningful conversations about the social impact of our work, challenging ourselves to go beyond the numbers and ask whether what we're measuring reflects our values and priorities. Increasingly, colleagues are bringing their own data to the table and asking how it can be reflected in the tool – rather than starting with the tool and working backwards.

This evolution has been supported by ongoing feedback with the developers of the RSVT, Loop, and through collaboration across the business, helping us to ensure that any monetised outcomes genuinely align with our activities and impacts.

As our understanding has grown, so too has our use of the RSVT. Since its pilot year in 2021-2022, the tool has changed significantly. Proxy values have been revised – some quite substantially – and new metrics introduced, while others have been discontinued. These developments have meant that year-on-year comparisons are not currently possible.

While some metrics are no longer available within the tool, GWR has continued to track those that remain important to our social value story. These span key areas such as fundraising and investment, diversity, employee satisfaction, harm prevention, rail safety engagement, workplace safety performance, inclusive design and apprenticeships. Many reflect longstanding commitments and have therefore been retained internally to provide insight across reporting periods. They are also included throughout the narrative of this report.

While being able to present our impacts in financial terms is useful, **our real drive is to understand impacts in human terms – what changes people are experiencing as a result of our activities.** Seeking to understand these changes is guiding our future approaches. New to this year's report, every section concludes with a callout reviewing our progress against last year's goals and outlining our ambitions for the year ahead.



The Loco Klub and their GWR funded project "The Wunderground 200" which was an immersive story telling, site-specific walkthrough experience celebrating 200 years of rail innovation

Operational, environmental and economic impact

In this reporting period, GWR has delivered a total operational, environmental and economic impact of £704,276,260.75. This is an increase of £500,690,466.78 since the previous reporting period. This increase is mainly due to the increased data collected in the health, training and skills and community impact areas and some negative metrics being recorded as the amount of change rather than the overall number (last year being the first time they were reported on, setting the baseline). The breakdown is illustrated below:

Headline figures

Total activity spend

£1bn

Total social value

£704m

from 197 metrics

Social value ROI

56.95%

Social

£359m

from 166 metrics

Environmental

£-20m

from 13 metrics

Economic

£366m

from 66 metrics

When broken down into the five social impact areas, Health, training and skills has the highest social impact value, whilst Environmental has the lowest. The table below shows the breakdown of social value by impact area:

Impact area	Total impact
Health, training and skills	£342,065,758.3
Community	£228,607,357.9
Employment and economic	£140,088,321.9
Supply chain	£13,887,972.6
Environmental	-£20,372,151.8
Total	£704,276,260.75

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

The negative value for climate and environment reflects the unavoidable impact of GWR operations – air quality. Carbon emissions have reduced since the previous reporting period. When looking at a further breakdown of the five social impact areas, GWR's highest value monetary values for the reporting period were as follows:

Impact area	Sub-impact	Unit of measurement	Achieved	Total social value
Health, training and skills	School outreach	Hours/ stakeholders	213 / 16,345	£177,069,965.1
Health, training and skills	Lifesaving incidents	Stakeholders	72	£143,226,585.36
Employment and economic	Jobs	FTE	6811	£87,791,814.81
Community	Stakeholder engagement	Hours / stakeholders	17,760/ 296	£80,762,441.81
Community	Volunteering – impact on volunteer	Hours / stakeholders	13,930 / 408	£53,759,396.79
Community	Railway station accessibility improvements	£s	£17,000,000	£49,810,000
Employment and economic	Gross operating surplus*	£s	-	£49,729,307.46

*Metric generated from RSVT43, RSVT49, RSVT52, RSVTA5, RSVTA4, RSVTA6



A GWR funded project with City of Portsmouth College created and delivered "A Ride Through Time," a Railway 200-inspired flash mob performance celebrating the history and future of rail travel

Monetised and non-monetised metrics

We want to present our social impact in a way that drives meaningful change. Understanding how our actions affect people's lives is central to this, but we also recognise the value in capturing that impact in economic terms. Presenting both monetised and non-monetised outcomes enables us to tell a fuller story – one that supports stronger decision-making and helps build the case for future social initiatives.

In 2025-2026, GWR was able to measure 47 monetised metrics, meaning GWR reported on 9 fewer metrics than last year, as several we had been measuring to date had been discontinued.

In 2025-2026, GWR was able to measure 148 non-monetised metrics. This means that GWR reported on 10 more metrics than last year.

Areas where data collection has increased and decreased include:

Monetised	Non-monetised
Increases in data collection	
Unpaid work experience – T-levels	Median pay ratio, 25 th percentile pay ratio, 75 th percentile pay ratio
Curriculum interventions including training around autism and child protection	% of stations with in person help / attendants
Volunteering – isolated impact on volunteer	Satisfaction with passenger assisted journey
Stakeholder engagement – education, community and industry	Payroll giving
Community spaces – office unit	Step free assets
Engagement in sports, cultural activities or hobbies – team sports	
Decreases in data collection	
Job quality – level of autonomy, leisure time, job is dangerous	Learning interventions
Mailed advice, social isolation, MHFA training	Access to facilities and services
	Employees trained to intervene
	% of people who are white in leadership

Data collected but unable to add to RSVT

- B5 – L2 qualifications (number of qualifications completed)
- D5 – engagement in sport and cultural activities or hobbies (number of people engaged)
- NMRSV16 – station adoption groups (change to number of groups)
- NMRSVT17 – station adoption groups (change to number of volunteers)

Employment and economic

Economic development 13

Employment and apprenticeships 23

Equality, diversity and inclusion 27

Economic development

Infrastructure enhancements

GWR has a long history of working in partnership with the communities we serve. We work to understand the role the railway can play in achieving local aspirations. Working with our partners and communities we bring forward improvements to stations and services that connect people with jobs, education, services and leisure opportunities.

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

We work closely in partnership with local authorities, sub national transport bodies, developers, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) and private sector organisations, as well as with the Department for Transport. Partnership work is led by dedicated Regional Development Managers from GWR and Industry Programme Directors from Network Rail, and we have dedicated teams of Development Managers, Sponsors and Project Managers.



Chippenham station enhancements

Improvement schemes

Investment in rail infrastructure has been shown to increase travel accessibility, provide improved capacity and connectivity, enhance the public realm around stations, increase property and land value within the vicinity and improve confidence in the area.¹

During the reporting period, we completed enhancement works at Chippenham station, transforming the south side to better integrate with buses, taxis and drop-off facilities. A new public realm and improved wayfinding have created a more welcoming, accessible environment for pedestrians, while a new Cycle Hub provides secure cycle parking.

These works form part of a wider, coordinated investment across both the north and south sides of the station, delivered in partnership with Swindon and Wiltshire LEP, Wiltshire Council and GWR. Together, the improvements reduce severance, strengthen Chippenham's role as a gateway, and, alongside wider service enhancements, help unlock regeneration and support long-term economic growth. The investment aims to make it easier and safer for people to move between both sides of the station, creating a stronger, more welcoming gateway to Chippenham. Alongside wider improvements to train services, this acts as a catalyst for regeneration and long-term economic growth.

GWR also delivered a gateline extension at Exeter Central, alongside enhancements to the concourse. This scheme significantly improves safety and passenger flow by removing a key bottleneck – the previous gateline on the bridge – which had caused excessive queuing.

¹Rail Delivery Group, 'Local Economic Benefits of Station Investment', 2018, https://www.raildeliverygroup.com/files/Publications/2018-03_local_economic_benefits_of_station_investment.pdf

New research reveals the “rail catalyst effect”

New research commissioned by GWR and produced by Development Economics highlights the transformative role of rail in supporting economic development across the UK, with stations as key “growth engines” that unlock jobs, housing and investment.

Analysing 11 locations across the GWR network, the study demonstrates how development around stations drives regional prosperity. This “rail catalyst effect” is projected to support over 1 million jobs and generate £79bn in economic value by 2036. On the GWR network alone, stations could create 238,000 jobs and contribute £14.25bn annually.

The findings also show that investment in rail infrastructure stimulates immediate economic activity, with construction near regional stations expected to add £7.1bn over the next decade.

Crucially, the report reinforces the importance of continued rail investment to unlock long-term growth, support communities, and enable access to employment, skills and opportunities across the UK.

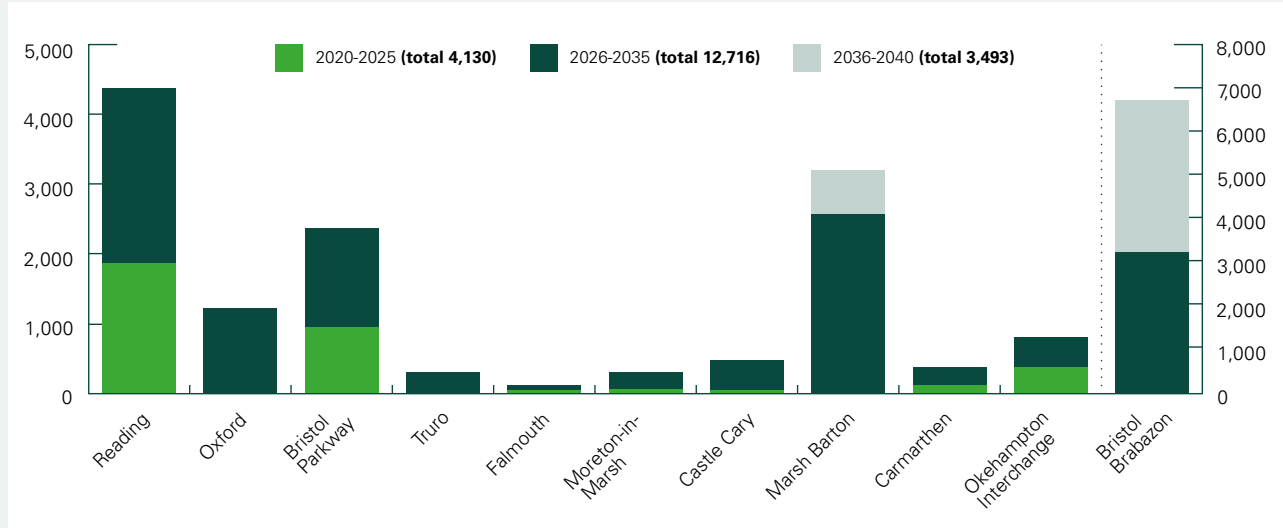
The findings of this report are clear: the railway, its stations, and the trains that serve them are powerful drivers of economic growth, community prosperity and regeneration.

Mark Hopwood,
Managing Director, GWR



Find out more

Figure 1.2: Housing development occurring near to selected Great Western Railway stations, 2020-2040



Central region – Gloucester

Enhancing accessibility, safety and connectivity

The context

Gloucester station plays a key role in connecting the city centre with surrounding communities, but its forecourt and underpass previously created barriers to access. The underpass offered an uninviting environment, with limited accessibility and a history of safety concerns, while poor layout and traffic flow in the forecourt restricted integration with other modes of transport.

Delivered in partnership with Gloucester City Council, Network Rail, Gloucestershire County Council and GFirst LEP, the scheme was backed by £6m of funding. This included £4.3m from the GFirst LEP, secured through a business case which demonstrated that the scheme could unlock £7.7m of direct investment in the station area and a further £165m of indirect investment across the city.

The solution

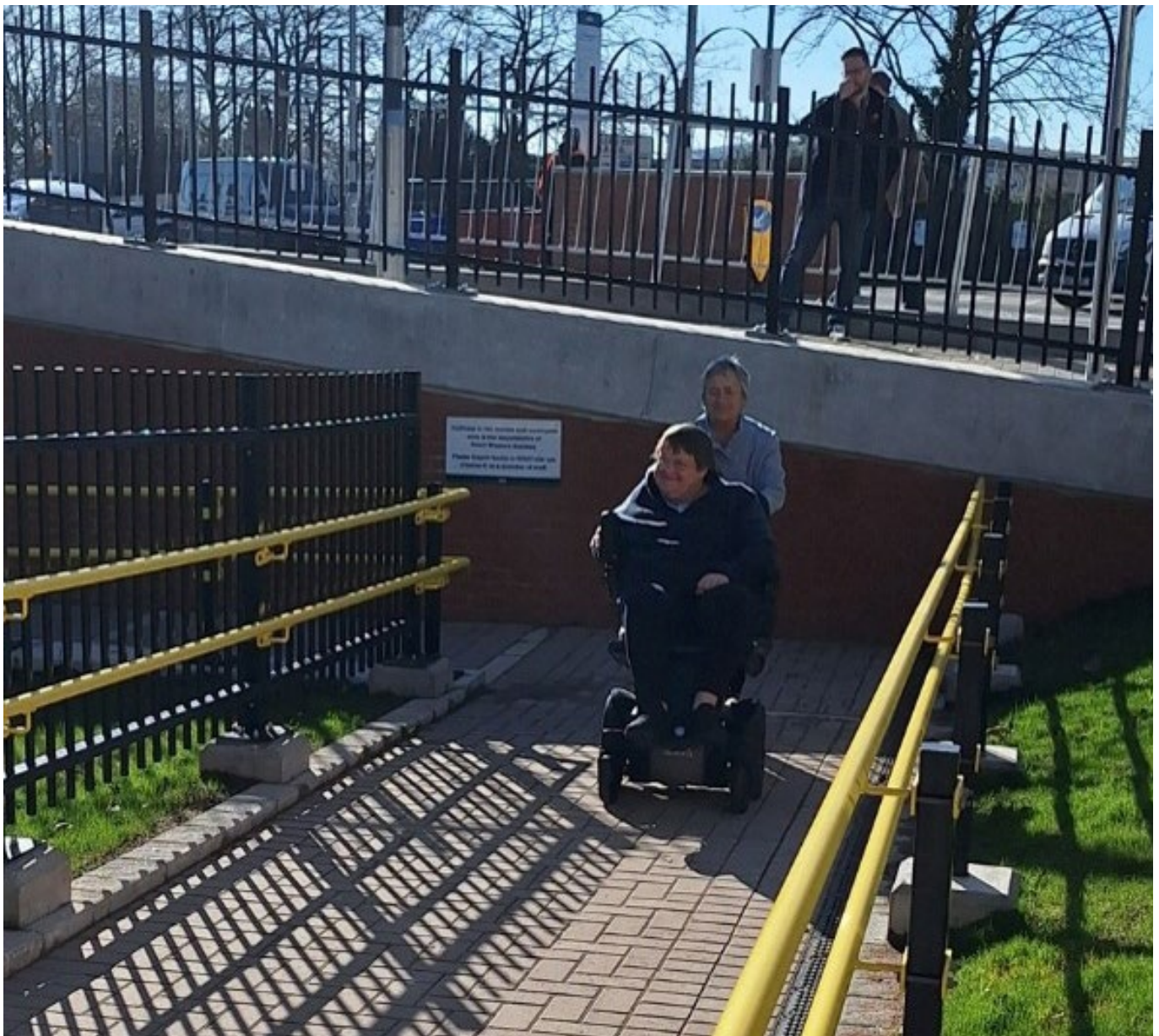
In February 2025, GWR and partners completed a comprehensive programme of improvements to the station forecourt and underpass. The forecourt was redesigned to improve access and integration, including dedicated bus access, a new highway junction to ease traffic flow, enhanced cycle parking, accessible parking bays and EV charging provision. The underpass was transformed to create a safer, more welcoming and fully accessible route. This included removing stairs at the southern entrance to provide step-free access via ramps, alongside a lighter, more open environment with improved lighting and enhanced CCTV.



Step-free access to the underpass

The impact

- Step-free access has opened up the station for more users
- A safer, brighter underpass has improved passenger confidence and experience
- Enhanced connectivity between rail, bus, cycling and car travel
- Strengthened links between Great Western Road and the city centre, supporting access to the Kings Quarter regeneration area and around 1,000 new jobs
- Passenger usage has grown to 1.7 million entries and exits in 2024/25, 14% higher than pre-Covid levels
- Demand for assisted travel continues to rise, with 6,646 requests recorded in 2024/25. In 2025/26, 6,851 assists were already delivered in the first eleven periods – 9.4% higher than the same period the previous year



Wheelchair user uses new underpass ramp then move the comment into a boxed quote that sits between text and pic above

Central region – MetroWest

Unlocking growth, homes and jobs in the West of England

The context

The West of England is one of the UK's most productive regions, yet its growth potential is constrained by poor transport connectivity. Only around 50% of residents can access a major centre within 30 minutes², while Bristol and Bath rank among the worst cities nationally for traffic congestion³. Improving rail connectivity is therefore critical to unlocking economic growth, supporting housing delivery, and connecting people to jobs and opportunities.

The solution

MetroWest is delivering a significant programme of rail investment across the region. Building on the success of two recently opened stations, five additional stations and two re-opened branch lines are planned by 2028, with further schemes in development. These improvements will extend rail access to around 100,000 more people. Partners are also working to enhance service frequency, with ambitions for “turn up and go” services on key suburban and branch lines.

The rail industry has now secured the funding to develop several schemes further, including enhancing frequencies on the Henbury line, linking Bristol Brabazon to Bristol Parkway, more new stations for the region, electrification infrastructure, and further station accessibility schemes. This equates to £7.6m of development funding available over the next two financial years.

The impact

Delivered in partnership with the West of England Combined Authority and local stakeholders, the programme represents over £400m of rail investment. Early service enhancements have already driven significant growth, with over 3 million additional journeys made on key routes – an increase of 28%. Future phases will unlock substantial economic and housing growth. The Henbury line, connecting to the new Bristol Brabazon station, will support a 20,000-capacity arena, enable 6,500 new homes and 30,000 jobs, and contribute an estimated £5bn to the regional economy. As part of the wider West Innovation Arc, improved rail connectivity will also play a central role in supporting up to 40,000 new homes across the region.

²West of England Growth Strategy

³Strategic Economic Audit of the West of England, The Brunel Centre, 19 March 2026

Reflecting on progress and future aims

Given the long-term nature of development projects, progress is measured over extended timeframes rather than a single financial year. The regional transport vision includes a fundamental ambition to expand the rail network, citing specific aims to:

- 1. Deliver the long-awaited Portishead line:** scheduled for 2028, this project will reconnect over 50,000 people with an hourly, 25-minute direct link to Bristol Temple Meads, with new stations at Portishead and Pill. The scenic route through the Avon Gorge will revive a line closed since 1964.
- 2. New stations:** deliver new stations at Charfield (2027), North Filton (2026) and Henbury (TBC).
- 3. Case Studies:** continue to explore the case for other new stations to enhance our suburban rail service.
- 4. Increase service frequencies on key routes:** with work already underway to enhance frequencies on the Henbury and Portishead branch lines to be reopened in 2026 and 2028 respectively.
- 5. Secure new trains for our region:** working with the Department for Transport and Great British Railways to reduce emissions, improve journeys and the passenger experience. This work is already underway with development funding secured to understand the infrastructure required to electrify the regional rail network.
- 6. Maximise the opportunity around our stations:** including by supporting the potential new town at Brabazon and the West Innovation Arc.



Ashley Down – one of the newly opened MetroWest stations

East region – Connecting Oxford and Bristol

Improving access to key leisure and business destinations

The context

The Oxford-Cambridge growth corridor is a key economic priority for the UK, with the government focused on unlocking opportunities for investors and businesses to grow. Oxfordshire is home to world-leading universities, life science and research organisations, with GWR providing vital connections to key locations including Oxford University, Culham Science Centre and Milton Park near Didcot. Working closely with local government partners, we are supporting improved regional rail connectivity to enable this growth, aligned to Oxfordshire County Council's OxRail 2040 vision for better and more frequent links with the West of England.

The solution

To support this ambition, GWR introduced a direct rail service between Oxford and Bristol, operating on Saturdays from September 2024. The service was designed to create a new direct connection into Oxford, removing the need for interchange at Didcot or Reading. GWR is now working closely with partners to expand the trial to a two-hourly Monday to Saturday service.

The impact

- Journey times have been reduced by between 10 and 30 minutes depending on the time of day
- New leisure and tourism markets have been opened up, connecting customers to destinations including Oxford, Blenheim Palace, Bath and Bristol
- Strong support has been secured from key stakeholders, including Oxfordshire County Council, Swindon Borough Council and the West of England Combined Authority, backing proposals to expand the service



Christ Church College Oxford

Reflecting on progress and future aims

Given the long-term nature of development projects, progress is measured over extended timeframes rather than a single financial year. The following highlights key areas of continued focus and advancement for our Eastern region.

- 1. Green trains for growth:** plans are still in progress to replace the region's ageing Class 165 diesel fleet, supporting a cleaner, more sustainable network. GWR is working closely with the Department for Transport, Network Rail, and local partners to develop the business case for investment.
- 2. Oxfordshire Rail Metro:** GWR has been working closely with Network Rail and local stakeholders to deliver improvements to Oxford station to meet future customer demand and improve the customer experience. Schemes in progress include an upgrade to the existing ticket hall, and the creation of a new western entrance and additional platform.
- 3. Improved Gatwick Airport links:** enhancing direct connections to London Gatwick continues to be a key ambition for the newly formed North Downs Partnership. This collaboration includes GWR trialling overnight services to and from Gatwick in the early hours of Saturday and Monday mornings during the peak summer season.
- 4. Support housing growth:** GWR is working with developers and local authorities to support plans for New Towns at Heyford Park and Worcestershire Parkway. We are ensuring that rail travel is promoted as a key method of travelling to and from the towns, and that our stations are suitably upgraded for increased customer numbers.



Art On Route is a GWR funded project developed by Severnside Community Rail Partnership. The pocket guide and digital map help travellers discover street art, station murals and cultural attractions using sustainable transport, including trains, buses and ferries

West region – Devon and Cornwall

Keeping pace with passenger growth

The context

Across Devon and Cornwall, sustained growth in rail use placed increasing pressure on key stations. At Exeter Central, passenger numbers rose to around 145% of pre-pandemic levels. The existing four-gate ticket barrier became a bottleneck, causing overcrowding, safety concerns, and long queues extending across the station and onto surrounding streets, particularly during major events.

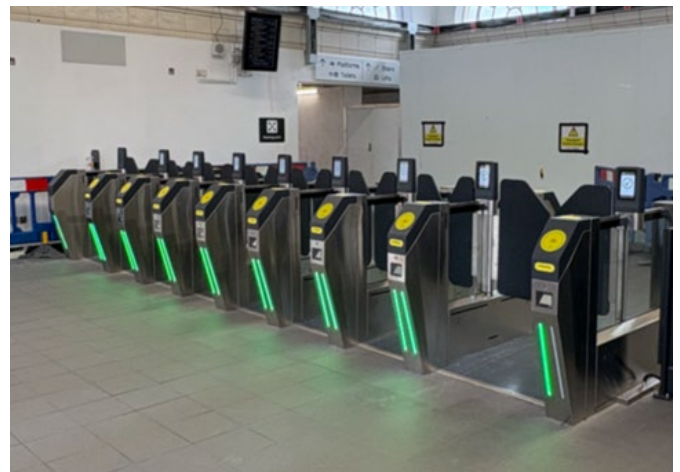
The solution

A programme of investment across Devon and Cornwall improved capacity, connectivity and customer experience. This included targeted infrastructure upgrades, new stations, increased service frequencies, improved rolling stock and station facilities, and the introduction of smarter ticketing.

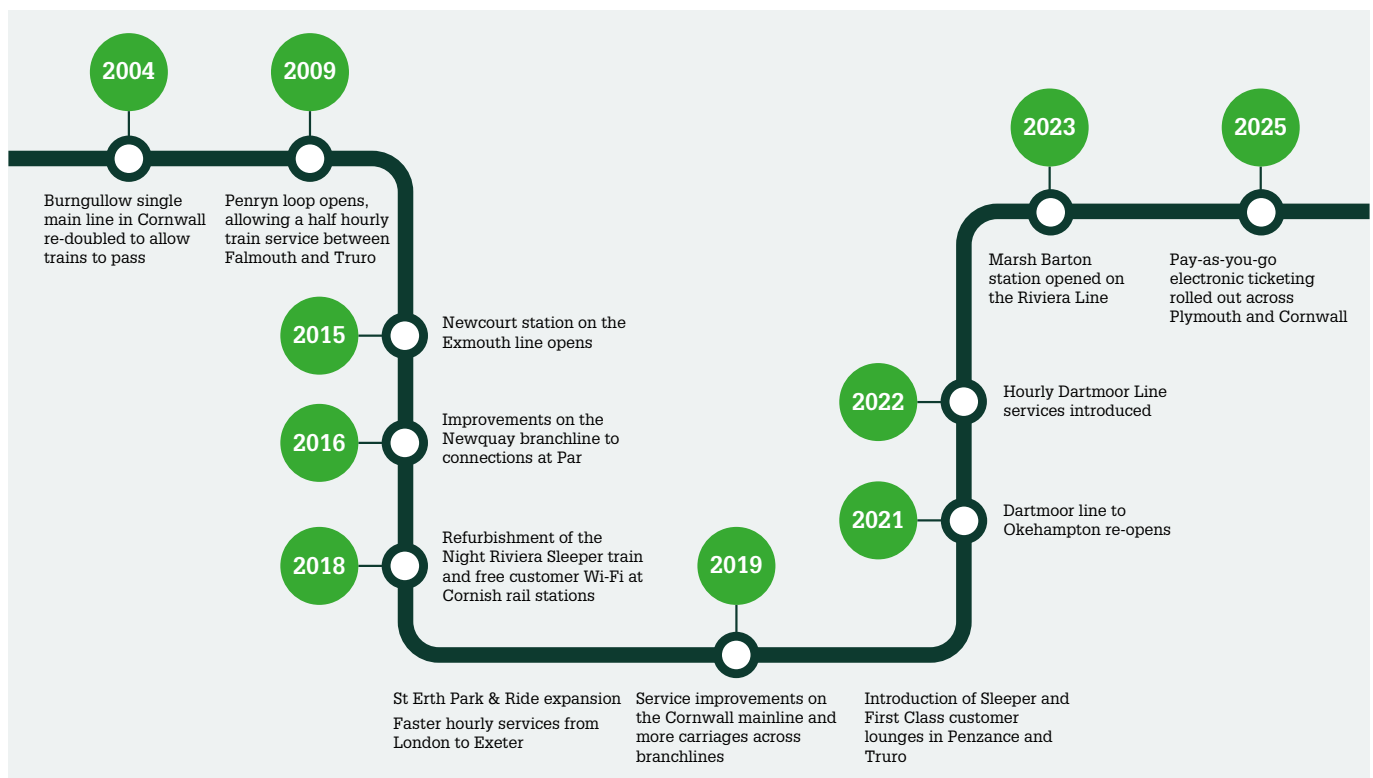
At Exeter Central, this was complemented by the expansion of the ticket gateline to increase capacity and improve passenger flow.

The impact

These combined interventions have supported a near tripling of passenger numbers across Devon and Cornwall over the past 20 years. At Exeter Central, the expanded gateline has reduced congestion and queuing, improved safety, and enabled faster, more reliable access through the station, particularly during peak periods and major events.



Exeter Central ticket gateline expansion



Devon and Cornwall programme of investment

Reflecting on progress and future aims

Given the long-term nature of development projects, progress is measured over extended timeframes rather than a single financial year. The following highlights key areas of continued focus and advancement for our Central region.

1. **Mid-Cornwall Metro:** in collaboration with Cornwall Council and Network Rail, GWR is launching a new hourly local train service on the Atlantic Coast Line to Newquay; the best timetable on this route since the 1960s. From 2027 a second phase will see a new direct, hourly coast-to-coast rail service connecting Newquay, St Austell, Truro, and Falmouth – four of Cornwall's largest urban areas. Once complete, over 50% of Cornwall's population will live within 10km of the route, significantly improving local access to rail travel and supporting more sustainable transport choices.
2. **Okehampton Interchange:** following the successful reopening of the Dartmoor Line, GWR is continuing to invest in Okehampton with a brand-new second station opening in the summer of 2026. Located just off the A30, the new site will offer 200 parking spaces and easy access for communities in North Cornwall and West Devon. It will be served by the same hourly train service, with plans to increase train length from two to three carriages in the Autumn to improve capacity and comfort along the route.
3. **Cullompton and Wellington new stations:** two new stations in Devon and Somerset are under development for opening by the end of the decade. Both stations were given conditional approval for funding last year, reconnecting these towns to the UK rail network for the first time since 1964.
4. **Devon Metro:** following phenomenal growth, which has seen 220% more passengers using the local rail network around Exeter over the last 20 years, further improvements are proposed, including enhancing the Barnstaple line with two trains per hour and improving services across Exeter through to East Devon.
5. **Plymouth Metro:** working with stakeholders in the region, plans are being drawn up to help support the UK investment in Devonport Dockyard. Thousands of new jobs and housing will be created over the next 10 years, and the railway has the opportunity to support this growth in a sustainable way, through a better suburban station service, more stations and more frequent rail services.

Employment and apprenticeships

Employment

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

Colleague engagement and satisfaction is regularly reviewed, and we are constantly looking for ways to improve our reward and recognition programme, ensuring we retain the best talent and attract a diverse workforce. In our 2025 Your Voice survey, 95% of respondents said that they would recommend GWR as a great place to work, a 5% increase on last year, while 95% said they enjoy their job, a 3% increase on last year. The overall survey response rate was 58%.

During the reporting period, we created a total of 386 jobs. Among these, 81 were individuals aged 16-24 and 71 were ethnic minorities, increases of 12% and 11.5% respectively. 89.3% of our colleagues and apprentices are local, working within 25 miles of their home.



Apprenticeships

Our award-winning apprenticeship delivery remains as strong as ever. Spanning 2,000 miles of the network, we continue to strive to exceed expectations and evolve our provision to ensure it remains at the forefront of the industry. This year, we are proud to have become the **first UK train operator to achieve platinum status**, as part of the Investors in People 'We invest in apprentices' accreditation.

Our apprentice team is considered industry-leading, with 314 apprentices attending our rolling annual programme. Completion rates stand at a staggering 97.9%, against a national target of 67%, continually providing a pipeline

of new talent for the industry, as well as upskilling our existing colleagues. GWR also delivers the Duke of Edinburgh Business Gold programme to Customer Service and Engineering young apprentices.

7.89% of our colleagues are apprentices and of those, 75.14% live within a 25-mile radius of their workplace. The map on the following page illustrates our new start apprentices' journeys.

Bringing apprenticeships to every role

To ensure development opportunities reach every part of the workforce, GWR identified a gap within depot cleaning teams, where shift patterns and varying digital confidence can make accessing training more difficult.

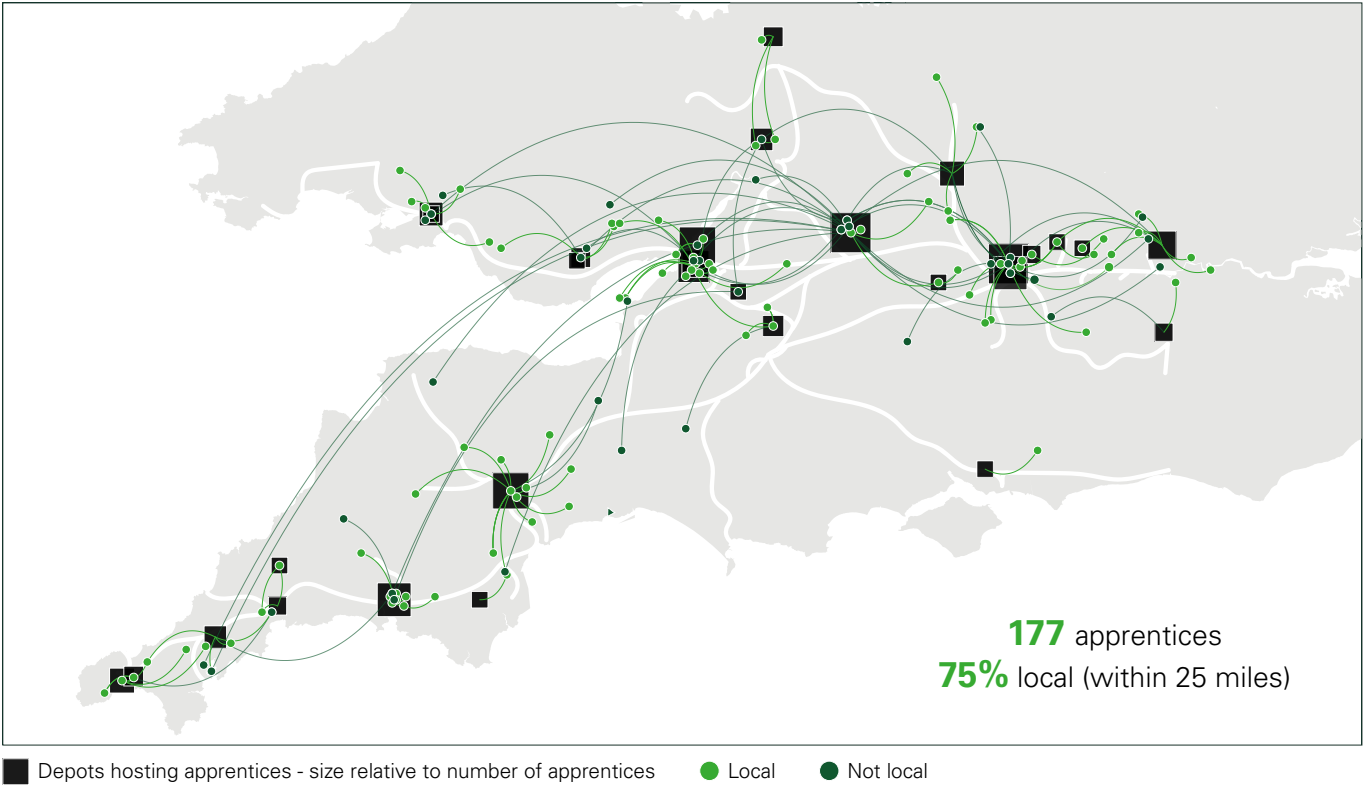
Partnering with Exeter College, we introduced a Level 2 Hygiene Operative apprenticeship. Designed around real operational needs, the programme removed barriers upfront, enabling cleaners to take part in structured, accessible training for the first time.

Five cleaners joined the initial cohort, marking an important step in broadening access to skills development and strengthening capability across the operation.



Upskilling the train cleaning team at Laira depot has helped transform both performance and morale... This investment clearly demonstrates that their role is valued and has opened a pathway for career progression... The team is now benefiting from their new learning, helping to bridge gaps between safety, compliance, and cleaning standards. Whilst creating a workforce that feels empowered to take pride in delivering a cleaner, safer travel environment for all."

New start apprentice journeys



Map of new start apprentice journeys

GWR's apprentice cohort saw a meaningful shift in diversity this year, with underrepresented groups rising from 39.3% to 42.1%. The chart below illustrates new apprentice intake across GWR's regions, broken down by deprivation decile. The spread across all ten deciles demonstrates the programme's reach into communities of every socioeconomic background.

New start apprentice backgrounds by work region



On the left is the deprivation level of each apprentice's home area, and on the right is where they work. The thicker the band between them, the more people it represents.

Life-saving skills

GWR equips apprentices with essential water safety training

The context

Water safety is a critical public health issue, with drowning remaining one of the leading causes of accidental death worldwide, particularly among children and young people aged 1-14. Recognising the importance of prevention, GWR identified an opportunity to equip apprentices with practical, potentially life-saving skills that extend beyond the workplace and into local communities.

The solution

We introduced hands-on water safety training for apprentices, focused on building confidence and practical rescue capability. The training covers essential techniques such as straddle jumps, shallow water entries, towing methods, and effective vocal communication for incident response, ensuring apprentices are prepared to act safely from the shore, water's edge, or a watercraft.

The impact

The training has significantly improved apprentices' confidence and awareness around water safety. Participants not only gain the ability to respond in emergencies but also develop personal resilience, with many progressing from low confidence or non-swimmers to capable individuals able to apply lifesaving techniques and support to others in real-world situations.

Apprentice Train

During National Apprenticeship Week, GWR operated a special 'Apprentice Train' from London Paddington to Exeter St Davids, marking 10 years of partnership with The Duke of Edinburgh's Award and Railway 200.

Crewed by apprentices and supported by DofE Youth Ambassadors, the service showcased railway careers, engaged customers and promoted opportunities across the network, working with partners including Exeter College.

The initiative raised awareness of apprenticeships, celebrated over 80 Gold DofE achievers since 2015 (with 82 more participating in 2025), and reinforced GWR's commitment to developing future talent.



The 'Apprentice Train' formed the 10:35 service from London Paddington to Exeter St Davids on 13 February 2026. The special service celebrated National Apprenticeship Week, marked 10 years of GWR's partnership with The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, and supported Railway 200, recognising the railway's rich heritage and future opportunities



The training that GWR do with their apprentices is amazing for the apprentices and the local community. I have been involved with the training and it's brilliant that a local club benefits from the donation GWR gives, whilst allowing their trainers an opportunity to deliver the programme.

Mal Jones,
Royal Life Saving Society Examiner

Reflecting on progress

1. **Expanding our apprenticeship offer for specific job roles:** we are working across many functions to ensure our apprenticeship offer is up to date and fit for purpose. Last year we worked with our train cleaning team to offer them the Cleaning Hygiene Operative apprenticeship.
2. **Developing apprenticeship pathways to support progression:** our approach to supporting colleague development was recognised through the “We Invest in Apprenticeships” Platinum award.
3. **Working with schools, colleges and local communities:** our work across this area continues to grow. We have visited many educational settings across the GWR network this year, delivering not only careers advice but employability skills such as interview and CV writing. In particular, we have seen over 5,000 young people attend our safety presentations and Prison Me No Way work which is a staggering result.

Future projects and aims

4. **Expanding our apprenticeship offer for specific job roles:** this year we will review the Train Driver apprenticeship offer. This is in response to the minimum age for train drivers reducing from 20 to 18, helping to address driver shortages and bring more young people into the role.
5. **Developing apprenticeship pathways to support progression:** we will continue to develop new pathways to support colleague progression and development; while regularly benchmarking our programme to ensure we provide the highest level of support.
6. **Working with Schools, colleges and local communities:** we will strive to increase our engagement across all areas.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

GWR remains committed to creating an inclusive workplace culture, one that is representative of the communities we serve. Over the past 12 months we have continued our work to promote diversity and ensure inclusion by contributing to and delivering training, running site visits and events, sharing content, supporting diverse outreach programmes, and providing progression opportunities for our colleagues.

Recruitment

At GWR, our Recruitment Team continues to make great progress in building more inclusive practices and improving diversity in hiring. From partnerships with inclusive job boards such as VERDICA (Values, Ethics, Respect, Culture, Inclusion, Data, Accessibility), to broadening how roles are promoted and simplifying recruitment processes, there has been significant activity over the past 12 months.

Key changes include providing interview questions in advance for all station roles, piloting enhanced neuro-inclusive hiring within the Engineering Directorate and rolling out Inclusive Hiring Training for managers. These initiatives have run alongside ongoing attendance at diverse careers fairs and events across the network.

This focus is reflected in our data. In this reporting period, 24% of applicants were women and 36% were from ethnically diverse backgrounds, resulting in 33% of new hires being women and 14% from ethnically diverse groups.

Outreach

Our outreach programmes continued to connect us with diverse community groups across the GWR network. We mindfully partnered with a range of organisations to support individuals from underrepresented and marginalised groups, focusing on those most in need of opportunity and resources.

Notably, we have supported women returning to work through Smart Works in Bristol and extending our collaboration with Future First

by funding an additional school in Penzance to access careers and employability support. We also worked with AFK in London to deliver employability programmes for young people with disabilities and neurodivergence.

Along the south coast, we supported Breakout Youth, an LGBTQ+ charity delivering employment-focused workshops. In Bath, we partnered with Young Carers Development Trust to provide careers mentoring, and in Taunton, we strengthened our ongoing work with Bold & Brave Café, helping young people build retail skills and confidence through real-world experience.

Bristol Smart Works

As part of our community outreach, GWR funded Smart Works, an innovative charity supporting women to re-enter the workplace, as it opened its first site in Bristol.

Smart Works provides clothing, styling and tailored careers support to women facing barriers to employment, including those from diverse ethnic backgrounds, different age groups, and those with disabilities or caring responsibilities. The programme helps build both confidence and employability.

Through GWR's funding, 12 women have completed the full Smart Works careers and employability programme.



GWR colleagues Sam Gingham and Vicky Jones, our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Managers

Culture

GWR is committed to creating a culture where colleagues feel safe to bring as much of themselves to work as they wish. A key part of fostering a sense of belonging is empowering our colleague networks. We continue to support Aspect (LGBTQ+), Ability, Christian Rail, FUTURE (early careers), REACH (Ethnicity) and Women in Rail. In the reporting period, these networks led a range of initiatives, including period product provision, contributing to Executive Leadership Team discussions through a 'Challenge Board', and celebrating events such as Carnival Train and Pride across Exeter, Cardiff, Bristol, and Windsor and Eton.

Alongside this, our EDI team has engaged directly with colleagues across the network, hosting pop-up stalls to gather feedback and answer questions on inclusion. We have promoted events through our Inclusion and Wellbeing Calendar and continued to share learning through internal channels.

This year, we supported 44 colleagues to take part in inclusive career progression programmes. Representation in leadership stands at 4.1% for ethnic minority colleagues and 26.5% for women.

Cultural celebrations

At GWR, we value events that reflect diverse lived experiences and heritage. Our aim is to create meaningful spaces that foster connection and celebrate what makes us different.

In 2025, we expanded the range of cultural events celebrated, including greater recognition of Hindu festivals such as Diwali, Raksha Bandhan and Holi. Events held in Swindon and London built on our earlier learning about these important dates in the Hindu calendar.

Led by passionate colleagues, including members of the REACH colleague network, these events brought people together to learn and celebrate diverse backgrounds. Colleagues shared food, stories and took part in traditional ceremonies, joined by peers and senior leaders from across the rail network.



GWR Diwali celebration

The King's Trust

Work experience programme at Bristol Temple Meads

The context

As part of our annual business plan, GWR delivers a wide range of work experience placements across the network, supporting young people from the communities we serve. Bristol and its surrounding areas are home to many young people who struggle to find employment opportunities. In 2025, we continued our partnership with The King's Trust to deliver a one-week customer service work experience programme at Bristol Temple Meads.

The solution

In November 2025, GWR hosted a cohort of eight young people from the Bristol area for a practical, week-long placement. Participants worked alongside colleagues across a range of customer-facing roles, including Revenue, Guards, Onboard and Stations. Travelling across the network with GWR buddies, they gained hands-on experience supporting customers in real working environments. Each day included structured reflection

sessions with The King's Trust and EDI team, enabling participants to capture their learning and consider how to apply it to future employment opportunities.

The programme concluded with a skills session involving GWR, The King's Trust, the 2025 cohort and alumni. This focused on translating their experiences into CV content and reflecting on how the programme could act as a springboard into employment, within rail or beyond.

The impact

All eight participants developed practical skills and insight into a variety of customer-facing roles within GWR. They gained key transferable skills, as well as a First Aid at Work NVQ accreditation.

Through working with diverse and passionate colleagues across the network, participants built their understanding of careers in rail and developed examples they could use in future role applications.



The King's Trust November 2025 cohort

Reflecting on progress

1. Increasing diverse representation:

progress has been made in workforce diversity, with increases in the number of women, LGBTQ+ and ethnic minority colleagues joining GWR. We have also seen an increase in the number of colleagues disclosing a disability, with disclosure of demographic data improving across most characteristics.

2. Ethnicity target of 9.15% by 2028:

GWR has surpassed its interim trajectory towards the 2028 target, with 9.5% of colleagues now from an ethnic minority group, up from 8.2% in the previous year.

3. Building new partnerships:

new outreach partnerships have included Bristol Smart Works, Breakout Youth, Future First, AFK, Young Carers Development Trust, and Bold & Brave, supporting initiatives focused on employability, skills development and access to opportunities for underrepresented groups.

Future projects and aims

1. Strengthening inclusive leadership:

a key priority is building the confidence and capability of our managers and leaders to lead inclusively through this transition.

2. Employee Network Group:

over the coming year, we aim to deepen collaboration with our Employee Network Groups, supporting their growth and the value they bring to the communities they represent.

3. Expanding inclusive initiatives:

we will continue to develop existing initiatives, including expanding access to free emergency period products for colleagues and customers through our partnership with HeyGirls. We will also increase uptake of Read&Write software delivered by Everway and promote broader EDI learning through our inclusion partner Onvero.

4. Embedding inclusive practices:

we will strengthen the foundations of our inclusive culture by working closely with Recruitment, Learning and Development and Policy teams to ensure our approach translates into meaningful action and change.

5. Neurodivergence training:

finally, neurodivergence training will be introduced as part of our commitment to creating a more neuro-inclusive GWR for current and future colleagues.

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Training and skills

Colleague development

Our approach to skills and training is focused on creating inclusive, meaningful development opportunities for colleagues at all levels. From apprenticeships and professional qualifications to leadership programmes and mentoring, we're helping our people grow in their roles and build long-term careers within the rail industry.

Over the reporting period, GWR delivered 716,022 hours of workplace training and supported 6,735 individuals to complete non-accredited training courses, an increase of 38.1%. We also supported 11 young adults through The King's Trust, offering career mentoring, mock interviews, CV support, and practical careers guidance.

Mentoring continues to be a key element of our development offer, with 391 active mentoring relationships last year across our operational, alliance, and apprentice programmes. This year we have been using a new platform to help capture the mentoring process. We are particularly focused on supporting under-represented groups and have continued to expand development programmes designed to help colleagues progress into their first management, senior leadership, or 'head of' roles, helping our workforce better reflect the communities we serve.

Ascent: developing future leaders

GWR's Ascent programme is designed to strengthen leadership capability by building confidence, self-awareness and strategic thinking. Bringing together colleagues from across the business, it creates a rare opportunity to step back from day-to-day responsibilities and focus on personal and professional growth.

Participants highlighted the immediate impact. Edwina Milford reflected that the programme "created space to think about how I operate day-to-day," with peer feedback that gave her confidence to step up and contribute more at a senior level. She has since progressed into a senior leadership role.

For Varun Mathur, the experience was "extremely positive and genuinely impactful," combining practical tools with reflective learning. He noted it helped him "think more strategically" and strengthen how he communicates, leads and approaches challenges.

By equipping colleagues with the skills, confidence and perspective to operate at a more strategic level, Ascent is helping to build a stronger, more connected leadership community across GWR.



Varun Mathur and Edwina Milford

First aid training

Confidence to act when it matters most

The context

Early intervention has been proven to reduce recovery times and prevent injuries from worsening. A study commissioned by the British Red Cross found that up to 59% of injury-related deaths could be prevented if first aid is applied before emergency services arrive.⁴

The solution

GWR recognised the importance of equipping colleagues with the skills and confidence to respond effectively in emergency situations, introducing first aid training at multiple levels to ensure our people are prepared to act quickly and appropriately across a range of incidents. The training goes beyond compliance, focusing on building practical capability and confidence to support both customers and colleagues when it matters most.

The impact

The programme has strengthened confidence across the workforce, equipping people with valuable life-saving skills that extend beyond the workplace. For our apprentices, it not only supports safer working environments but also contributes to their personal development, such as progression towards their DofE Gold award, helping individuals build resilience and gain valuable life skills.



I have been involved with this programme for over 15 years and have seen the impact that this had on the apprentices, and their families and colleagues. I recall an apprentice was in Reading off duty walking along the river and saw somebody in trouble. They immediately took control of the situation, gave assistance, put them in the recovery position and waited with them for the emergency services. That's amazing and worth the training.

Andrew Hughes,
Regional Apprenticeship Manager



⁴ British Red Cross, Don't Stop at 999, accessed 26 March 2026

Supporting schools and colleges

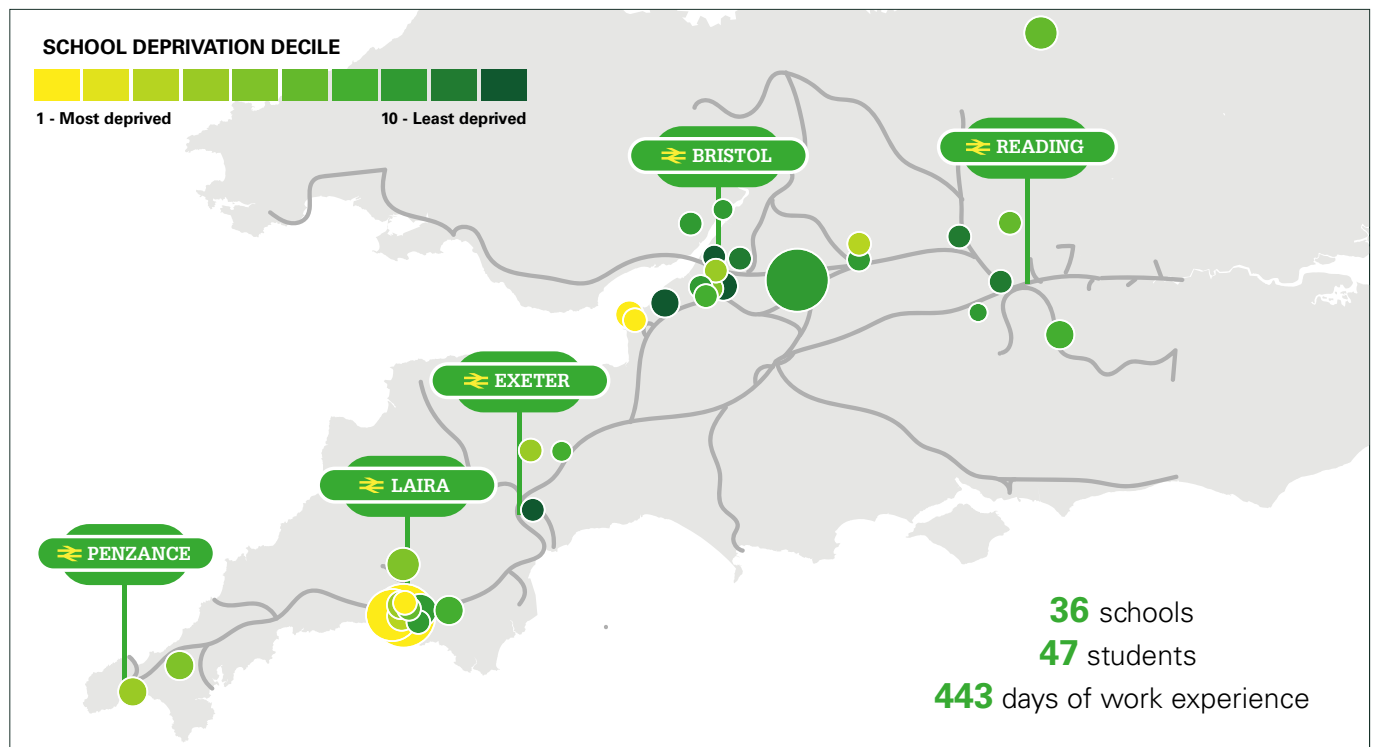
Our approach to supporting schools and colleges is to provide young people with exciting opportunities for development, work experience and qualifications within the rail sector. We also aim to help GWR colleagues understand how we can make our business more engaging and accessible to the next generation.

We work with the National Schools Partnership, which helps us connect with young people and their families. We also maintain outreach programmes with local not-for-profit organisations to actively reach out to diverse communities and those

from disadvantaged backgrounds. GWR has supported 6,929 young people through Junior Life Skills, Prison Me No Way and the Junior Citizens Trust programme in Oxford, a group consisting of various local authorities, commercial, and charitable organisations that work together to teach children how to be safe.

The map below shows the spread of work experience placements hosted by our engineering depots across the network, colour-coded by how deprived each school's location is.

Engineering work experience



Engineering depots hosting work experience students



School - bubble size indicates number of placement days (1-82)

Reflecting on progress

1. **Strengthening leadership and management capabilities:** work continued on enhancing the skills of those new to management through to senior leaders. Areas of focus were supporting improved attendance at work with skills training in Managing Grievances and Managing Absence, developing interviewing skills for hiring managers and providing a more structured development path for new managers. Leaders, and others identified as high potential, were offered development programmes to expand their thought leadership, explore perspectives external to the rail industry and prepare them for further career development.
2. **Customer experience training:** we have completed the research and development of the next phase of our customer experience training – The GEMs Connection.
3. **Targeted Disability and Equality training:** over 4,000 customer facing colleagues attended Disability Awareness Training, with an additional 750 new joiners also receiving this training.

Future projects and aims

1. **Training strategy to strengthen leadership and management capabilities:** GWR's future training strategy focuses on strengthening leadership and management capabilities to equip our people with the skills to lead a diverse workforce, manage change effectively, and sustain high-performing teams that consistently deliver for customers and the business. This investment will support a smooth transition into the public sector.
2. **Customer experience training:** delivery of The GEMs Connection commenced May 2026 and prioritises colleagues in customer-facing roles to further enhance service quality.
3. **Targeted Disability and Equality training:** we will continue to reinforce our commitment to inclusion through targeted Disability and Equality training, ensuring all colleagues are empowered to provide accessible, respectful, and inclusive experiences.

Safety and security

Safety

Safety is a core focus for GWR, and we are committed to keeping our railway one of the safest in Europe. In the reporting period we have achieved zero passenger or colleague fatalities across the network despite further increases in leisure travel, which means that we are carrying a higher proportion of elderly and other vulnerable customers. We continue to try to assist our more vulnerable customers wherever possible. For colleagues, GWR continues to reinforce safe behaviours through our “Think Safety” messaging, which focuses on three priorities: Be Prepared, Stay Alert and Keep Engaged.

Security

93% of our stations are Secure Stations accredited, recognising how we are working with our partners to reduce crime and play a greater role in safeguarding vulnerable people. We achieve this through our well-trained frontline colleagues, physical design measures and stringent risk management procedures.

Currently, 63% of our colleagues on duty during operating hours are trained to intervene – reflecting our strong focus on upskilling through partnerships and specialist training. Many have attended Samaritans courses, completed safeguarding refresher training, and undertaken Railway Children e-learning, helping them to identify and support those at risk. In the reporting period, our staff have intervened 732 times to prevent harm, including 72 suicide interventions.



GWR funded project 'Street First Aid' was created to address low public confidence in responding to emergencies and to improve safety across Wiltshire communities on the GWR network, particularly in areas with limited access to first aid training

Angels on board

Making rail travel safer for women and girls

The context

Perceptions of fear and personal security can be blockers to women and girls using the rail network, even with all the measures that are in place to ensure passenger safety, such as station design, staff training and collaboration with British Transport Police and partner agencies. Reports of harassment and violence, including staring, catcalling, upskirting, and the risk of assault, continue to rise, leading many women to avoid travelling alone. Confidence to intervene or report incidents is low, meaning women often adapt their plans to protect themselves.

The solution

The Angel Project started in Gloucestershire, where volunteers support women and girls on nights out by assisting vulnerable individuals and providing a safe, reassuring presence in town centres. This inspired a model adapted for rail travel.

In early 2025, through GWR funding, the Angel concept was extended to some GWR routes. On Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings Train Angels now travel on key services between Worcester and Swindon, including Cheltenham Spa, Gloucester, and Stroud. Wearing bright pink vests and backpacks, they are easily identifiable to staff and passengers. They carry first aid kits, period products, phone chargers, anti-spiking tools, water, clothing, and many other essential items.

Their training includes first aid, CPR, defibrillator use, de-escalation, negotiation, domestic abuse awareness, suicide prevention, safeguarding, and mental health first aid, enabling them to identify vulnerabilities and intervene safely. The Train Angels also provide practical reassurance such as ensuring mobile phones are charged, helping plan safe routes home or assisting with onward travel.



GWR funded the recruitment and training of 12 "Train Angels" to safeguard vulnerable women on GWR routes emanating from Gloucester

The impact

The presence of Train Angels has given lone female passengers renewed confidence to travel on trains at night – whether for commuting or enjoying social activities. The partnership has also expanded to support young women at key stations using rail services to attend festivals and sporting events across the GWR network, strengthening safety beyond the train itself.

The Angel Project has received national recognition, including acknowledgement in Parliament, where the collaboration with GWR was also highlighted as an innovative and meaningful approach to improving safety for women and girls.

“

This is something that has been needed for quite some time. We often see young girls (and even young boys) travelling alone on our services at night.... The Angels can provide a reassurance that is so valuable, and it gives our passengers peace of mind as well as extra peace of mind for colleagues too.

GWR staff working along the route

“

Great to spend time with Night Angels in Stroud last week... they are a brilliant volunteer-led organisation, working to keep women safe at night, and the impact they have locally is truly inspiring. It was especially great to hear about their strong partnerships with local businesses and GWR, showing what collaboration can achieve.

**Alex Davies-Jones MP,
Minister for Victims and Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)**



In January 2026 Minister Alex Davies-Jones and Stroud MP Simon Opher visited the Train Angels and Night Angels in Stroud to praise their community safety work

Reflecting on progress

Over the past year, GWR has delivered against the following priorities set out in the 2025/26 Safety Plan.

- 1. Reducing slips, trips and falls:** work to reduce slips, trips and falls has included the formation of cross-functional working groups to develop colleague briefing materials, customer-facing posters and communications, and support trials of anti-slip technologies, particularly at stairs and the train/platform interface.
- 2. Reducing red signal risks:** operational safety activity has included targeted work to reduce Signal Passed At Danger (SPAD) risk, supported by strengthened incident analysis and more frequent and higher-quality conversations about red signal risk during in-cab assessments.
- 3. Enhanced risk management:** we have developed a centralised library to capture non-personal risk assessments. This provides greater visibility across the organisation and helps us identify any gaps or inconsistencies in our risk assessment processes. Additionally, we have reintroduced the bowtie methodology to analyse significant cross-functional risks, strengthening our ability to understand causes, controls, and potential consequences. The bowtie method links hazards, causes and possible consequences to create a 'bowtie' shaped diagram to assess and manage risk.
- 4. Long-term, multi-agency safeguarding approach:** working alongside partner agencies and other organisations, we provided ongoing support to communities, including using the Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) response blueprint- a multi-agency framework used by local authorities and police to handle community nuisance. It focuses

on three core pillars: early intervention, immediate justice, and victim support and multi-agency relationships to manage safeguarding issues as they have been identified across the network.

Future projects and aims

Full details of our targets and interventions can be found within our Safety, Environment and Security Plan 2026/27.

- 1. Protecting vulnerable customers:** 34% of station accidents involve customers over the age of 60. We will strengthen support for vulnerable passengers through proactive colleague engagement, partnerships with accessibility and older age organisations, new accessibility points at unstaffed stations, and trials of AI-enabled CCTV at Stroud and Slough to detect slips, trips and falls.
- 2. Safeguarding and violence against women and girls:** we will deliver mandatory safeguarding and sexual harassment training, appoint a board-level safeguarding lead, we will continue to promote the wearing of body worn camera by front line colleagues, establish a passenger group for women and girls, and support the introduction of an industry-wide staff reporting app – in line with the Rail Delivery Group's VAWG Charter.
- 3. Reducing anti-social behaviour:** over 80% of anti-social behaviour encounters involve Revenue Protection, Guards and Gateline teams, with ticket disputes the most common trigger. We will improve conflict management through refresher training, equip Guards to issue Unpaid Fare Notices digitally to reduce confrontation, and participate in the Cambridge University / RDG nudge messaging trial to support frontline colleagues.

Health and wellbeing

In this reporting period, GWR's Wellbeing team delivered hundreds of local and network wide activities including wellbeing awareness days, mental health breakfasts, ACTIVE! (GWR's physical activity staff network) events and charity fundraisers, raising at least several hundred pounds at individual events and supporting multiple national and local charities.

We've expanded our structured support through Trauma Risk Management (TRiM), training 30 colleagues in total, 22 practitioners and 8 managers, with plans to train at least another 10 practitioners in the foreseeable future. In the period we delivered 203 TRiM interventions. Alongside this, 103 colleagues were trained as Mental Health First Aiders, and we introduced a new Care, Support and Welfare Integrated Managed System (IMS), launched a Virtual GP service, and achieved Silver "We Invest in Wellbeing" accreditation, awarded by Investors In People.

Our staff Wellbeing Fund approved 139 bids totalling £16,791.40, with typical awards ranging from £40-£300. This has funded grassroots initiatives that have improved physical health, mental wellbeing, team connection and environments across all regions and roles. GWR's ACTIVE! staff network has grown to 110 members, with 168 colleagues also following our club on Strava – a fitness tracking app where members log activities and cheer each other on. In 9 months we delivered 8 events, including GWR's entry to the Railway 200 challenge, which drew 124 participants across 24 teams and clocked up 3,267 activities and 7,224 miles. Alongside this, our Be Kind campaign distributed 10,000 badges and posters, helping to ease tension in customer interactions and visibly promote a kinder, safer culture across the network.

Wellbeing and resilience workshops in prisons

Access to stable work and mental health support are two of the strongest protective factors against reoffending. People leaving prison need tools to manage stress and build resilience alongside the technical skills that help them find employment.

The GWR Wellbeing Manager delivered wellbeing and resilience workshops at three prisons, integrated into wider employability programmes run in partnership with First

Rail. Sessions covered stress management and coping strategies, everyday resilience skills for the transition from custody to work, and encouraging peer support and help-seeking once in employment.

The workshops equipped 36 prisoners with practical techniques to manage stress and support their transition into employment, complementing existing pathways from custody into rail roles.

Prisoner feedback

“Thanks for today's skills workshop. Really enjoyable - has given me motivation / interest in positive future employment.”

“The event was good and so were the experiences they have shared. Could we get details of the people upon release to discuss job opportunities?”

“Information around disclosures, the job opportunities available and wellbeing was really interesting, it left me feeling very positive.”

“Perfectly planned. Staff had high energy and made it engaging.”

“Great people, friendly, inclusive.”

“People talking about jobs and companies being who they are.”

“The fact that not just the labour heavy work are hiring those with a criminal record, jobs such as the train driving will take on someone with a record.”

Trauma Risk Management (TRiM)

Supporting colleagues after traumatic events on the railway

The context

Colleagues working on the railway can be exposed to traumatic events – fatalities, near misses, assaults and serious incidents. These can have a significant impact on mental health, contributing to distress, sickness absence, reduced performance and, in some cases, staff leaving the industry. Traditional responses have often relied on ad hoc manager support or external clinical referral, which can be slow to access and may not feel psychologically safe. GWR needed a structured, peer-led approach that could support staff in a timely, consistent way while reducing stigma around mental health.

The solution

TRiM is an evidence-based, peer-support process originally developed in the UK military. It trains selected colleagues as TRiM Practitioners and Managers to recognise signs of traumatic stress, carry out structured post-incident assessments and signpost colleagues to further support where needed, without assuming everyone will become unwell.

GWR's TRiM programme sits within a wider Care, Support and Welfare Integrated Management System, providing a clear governance structure, a trained network of 30 TRiM Practitioners and 8 TRiM Managers across three regions, structured incident briefings and assessments, and defined referral pathways into Occupational Health, Employee Assistance and mental health services. The team are all volunteers, keeping costs minimal.

The impact

In the reporting period, the TRiM team responded to 75 incidents – 50 involving fatalities or serious injuries, 21 potentially traumatic incidents and 4 cases of workplace violence. This support delivered an estimated £245,383 in saved time and avoided absence, with projected savings of at least £390,000 based on recent trends.

The Post-Event Team Review (PETR) process identified additional affected colleagues who were not originally recorded in incident logs, reinforcing a “leave no one behind” approach. Attendance at PETRs by those invited increased by 40%, driving greater cross-division collaboration around post-incident support, improved risk controls and more accurate incident and absence reporting.

Our Wellbeing Manager Lucy Shephard and Senior IMS and Risk Assurance Manager Lee Bladen, were highly commended at the Rail Staff Awards for spearheading the introduction of TRiM.



Reflecting on progress

1. **Data-informed decision-making:** shock/trauma, work accidents and fatigue were added as categories in the absence system. REACT welfare conversations are now logged on colleagues' records, enabling the Wellbeing Team to collate data and target responses based on the needs of specific business areas.
2. **TRiM outcomes:** the volunteer TRiM network grew to 8 TRiM Managers and 30 Practitioners. Across 83 recorded contacts, an estimated £245,000 in saved time and avoided absence was delivered during the reporting period.

Future projects and aims

1. **Data and evidence:** we will refine data collection around incidents, TRiM contacts, PETRs, absence trends and staff feedback, enabling outcomes to be quantified through emerging rail social value metrics. We will also develop simple measures for Be Kind and our prison workshops, including participant feedback and onward employment data where available.
2. **Deepening trauma-informed support:** we will continue to grow our TRiM teams, complete BTEC Level 5 training for managers and fully embed TRiM and REACT in the Care, Support and Welfare IMS by early 2026. Referral pathways will be strengthened using PETR learning reviews, and Mental Health First Aiders will be requalified to ensure consistent provision across the network.
3. **Expanding preventative wellbeing:** we will extend wellbeing and resilience workshops in prisons and explore similar offers with community partners, linked to employability pathways into rail roles. We will build on the ACTIVE! model, staff Wellbeing Fund and network-wide campaigns to keep preventive mental health visible year-round.
4. **Inclusive reach and local ownership:** we will ensure all regions and roles, including smaller or higher-risk locations, have access to wellbeing champions, TRiM support, Be Kind activity and ACTIVE! events. The Wellbeing Fund will continue to empower managers and local teams to co-design low-cost, high-impact activities that support culture, inclusion and peer support.

Supply chain



Supply chain resilience and capacity

GWR's commitment to sustainable procurement continues to drive meaningful change across all areas of social value in our supply chain. This year, we have focused on embedding sustainability into our procurement tendering activities. This is part of the activities being undertaken prior to seeking an ISO 20400 Sustainable Procurement re-assessment.

We have also made further progress in supplier diversity and assurance, with over 393 suppliers now registered with Achilles and 194 providing sustainability metrics. These developments enhance transparency, accountability, and the overall sustainability of our procurement practices.

GWR remains strongly committed to supporting small and medium businesses, which are an integral part of our supply chain and help drive local economic growth and employment. In the reporting period, our staff invested 84 hours in supplier engagement events and our spend with SMEs reached £60m, reinforcing our dedication to working with smaller businesses and driving positive regional impact.



Training and travel

Strengthening collaboration to reduce costs, emissions and support local economies

The context

GWR identified an opportunity to better connect how we deliver training and manage travel, by strengthening collaboration between suppliers. While Customer Experience training and Travel Management were delivered through separate providers, we saw potential of bringing these services together to improve efficiency and create greater value.

The solution

We worked with both providers to take a more joined-up, partnership approach. By using the Travel Management provider's expertise and systems for venue sourcing, the Training Provider no longer needed to manage this separately. This reduced administration, overheads and improved consistency for our teams. It also allowed us to promote the use of local venues wherever possible.

The impact

This approach has strengthened collaboration across our supply chain, reduced duplication and improved efficiency. By prioritising local venues, we have supported businesses in the communities we serve, helping to direct spend towards these local economies, reduce travel distances for colleagues, and lower associated carbon emissions.



By working closely with stakeholders and suppliers, GWR is integrating sustainability into our procurement strategies and supply chain practices, ensuring that our approach not only enhances efficiency but also delivers meaningful, lasting benefits for our business, our customers, and the wider community.

Julie Paget,
Head of Procurement, GWR



Imperial Health Charity received GWR funding to create a mural outside St Mary's Hospital A&E, next to Paddington Station. The artwork celebrates Railway 200 and the long-standing relationship between the railway and Britain's healthcare system, highlighting 200 years of shared history and innovation.

Reflecting on progress

1. **Enhance supplier engagement:** the team held 4 Pre-Market Engagement days, the outcomes of which were used to amend the procurement tender documentation.
2. **ISO 20400 assessment:** due to changes in both the Procurement and Sustainability team resources, the ISO 20400 assessment was postponed and will be undertaken in the new financial year.
3. **Strengthening relationships with SMEs:** we continued to support our SME supply chain including, but not limited to, providing feedback on unsuccessful tenders to strengthen future bids, as well as offering guidance on contracts, insurance, and payment terms.

Future projects and aims

1. **Enhance supplier engagement:** the GWR Procurement team will enhance supplier engagement through a series of activities, including Pre-Market Engagement days and a dedicated Supplier Event.
2. **Sustainable Procurement Strategy:** we will review and refine our strategy, supported by an assessment against the ISO 20400 international standard, with the Procurement team using the RSVT to enable more data-driven decision-making as part of the re-assessment.
3. **Strengthening relationships with SMEs:** strengthening relationships with SMEs remains central to our approach, promoting inclusivity and diversity within our supply chain.
4. **Social Value Act 2025 alignment:** we will be aligning our processes with the Social Value Act as part of our planning for public ownership. This will enable greater transparency and collaboration across the supply chain, in line with our broader Supplier Relationship and Contract Management objectives.

Community

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Community and charity

From the incredible work the Community Rail Partnerships on our network have been doing to meet the needs of their local community to our Customer and Community Improvement Fund (CCI Fund), which last year invested £1 million to support projects across the GWR network, we are supporting customers, charities, community groups and voluntary organisations to deliver benefit in the communities we serve.

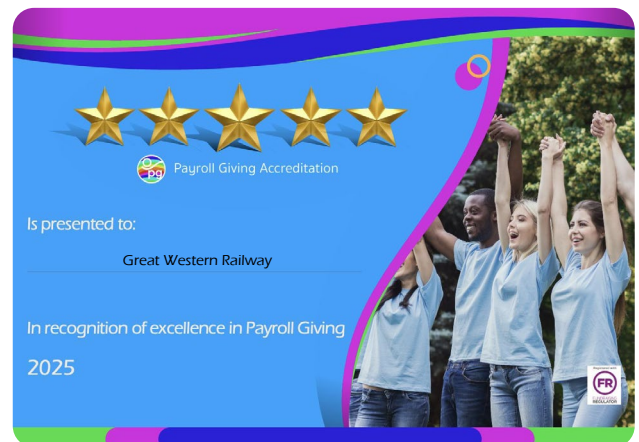
Fundraising and charitable giving

Our culture of giving back, engaging colleagues, and making a positive social impact is demonstrated through our colleague engagement in Payroll Giving, which allows our staff to give monthly to charity, tax-free. This year the percentage of GWR colleagues donating via payroll giving was 6.42%, collectively donating £57,368 to charity.

This sustained level of participation enabled GWR to achieve the Payroll Giving gold quality mark in 2025.

GWR also match funds any staff fundraising up to £200 per colleague per year. This year, we paid £7,968 in match funding directly to registered charities, as well as donating £17,297 of unclaimed money found on the network to good causes.

Our customers are also hugely generous in giving back. Delay Repay provides compensation for customers who have been delayed by 15 minutes or more, however customers may opt to donate compensation to Samaritans or Railway Children. During the reporting year, customers donated a total of £63,089, reflecting continued public support for these charities.



Children taking part in 'Fishing for Change', a GWR-funded project delivered by Sustainable Hive CIC with Severnside CRP, Platform Rail, Bristol Community Ferries and Young Bristol. The programme provided fully funded transport-based adventures for families with low social mobility, including litter-picking activities in Bristol Harbour aboard SeaCycler, a recycled plastic fishing punt.

Community Rail Partnerships

GWR works with 11 Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) to deliver locally focused engagement, promote sustainable travel, and strengthen community connections with the railway. Over the past year, CRPs have continued to deliver high-impact, award-winning initiatives that respond to local needs and create lasting value.

- Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership (DCRP)'s More Time in Looe initiative improved the Looe Valley line timetable from May 2025. Working closely with GWR, local priorities were translated into tangible improvements, reducing journey times from Plymouth to Looe by up to 20 minutes.
- Gloucestershire and Oxfordshire CRP's (GOCRP) established a Youth Transport Forum, which created a meaningful platform for young people to shape transport discussions and ensure their voices are heard across the region.
- Southeast CRP developed a Travel Ambassadors programme, supporting disabled people to build confidence and independence when using public transport to access heritage sites and outdoor spaces.
- Southeast CRP also delivered a 200 Blue Plaques project, collaborating with researchers, historians and community groups to uncover and celebrate railway stories. The project produced 200 plaques. 100 plaques highlighted people, places and even animals that have a connection to the development of the railway. The remaining 100 illustrate the breadth of modern careers to inspire the next generation of railway staff.



Find out more

Station adoption

Our Station Adoption programme continues to grow, supported by an active and dedicated volunteer base. By year end, the programme included 296 community volunteers and 77 station adoption groups, who together contributed over 17,760 volunteer hours.

Station volunteers play a vital role in enhancing our stations, contributing through gardening, planter maintenance, litter picking and wider community engagement activities. Their dedication enriches the passenger experience and strengthens community pride in the railway.



Find out more



Bikes Beyond Bars

Rehabilitation through skills development

The context

While 97% of prisoners say they want to stop offending, the odds are stacked against them. Opportunities to build meaningful skills are limited and purposeful activity in prisons remains low, with many individuals spending long periods in isolation and undertaking repetitive, low-skill tasks. Securing employment after release is a key factor in reducing reoffending, yet pathways to develop relevant skills are often lacking.

The solution

GWR has supported the charity Life Cycle to establish its "Bikes Beyond Bars" programme at HMP Bullingdon, using funding from the Customer and Community Improvement Fund. The initiative refurbishes donated bikes from GWR's lost property, restoring them for resale to provide affordable, sustainable transport for local communities.

The programme provides hands-on training in a professional workshop, enabling learners to develop practical mechanical skills while working towards a Cytech Level 1 qualification. Alongside technical training, participants build confidence, self-belief and a sense of direction, with opportunities to take on paid roles and mentor others. Small cohort sizes of eight ensure focused, personalised support throughout.

On completion, participants can progress into paid orderly roles, where they build essential soft skills by maintaining the workshop and supporting new learners. This creates a positive cycle of mentorship, skill-sharing and leadership.

The impact

The four-week, full-time programme delivers tangible outcomes, with participants gaining industry-recognised qualifications and progression opportunities. Feedback from prisoners shows 80% feel more positive about their future, 63% want to learn more about careers in the cycle industry, and

92% want to continue training after release. The programme has received national recognition, including the Prison Reform Trust's Robin Corbett Award, demonstrating its role in supporting rehabilitation and long-term social impact.



Bikes Beyond Bars at HMP Bullingdon

“

I'm much more confident in myself. I can focus better. I feel great, I stuck to it and achieved my goal. I want to work in the bike industry. It would be a great achievement.

Emmet, HMP Bristol

“

Our work isn't just about teaching bike mechanics; it's about opening doors. Thanks to the support of Cytech and GWR, we're helping people build practical skills, gain confidence, and take meaningful steps towards a better future. It's a collaboration that's genuinely changing lives.

Ed Norton, CEO, Life Cycle

Reflecting on progress

1. **Railway 200:** in preparing for Railway 200 – a nationwide, yearlong celebration in 2025 marking the 200th anniversary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway – we supported initiatives that highlighted the railway's past, showcase its relevance today, and demonstrate its role in a sustainable future. Through this work, we continued to encourage young people to explore the wide range of careers available within the rail sector.
2. **Customer and Community Improvement Fund:** to ensure our funding reflected the priorities listed above, the 2025/26 Customer and Community Improvement Fund was focused on Railway 200 aligned projects. This encouraged strong involvement from community rail partnerships, education providers and local groups across our network.
3. **Station Adoption Fund:** recognising the importance of local ownership and community pride, we continued our commitment to the Station Adoption Fund, supporting adopters who deliver projects that enhance stations and benefit the communities around them.
4. **Transparency and collaboration:** throughout the year, we maintained strong partnerships with organisations including Crimestoppers, Network Rail and Department for Transport Operated (DfTO), and published a full end of year report on Community Rail activities to share progress, outcomes and learning.

Future projects and aims

1. **Community and outreach priorities:** we will prioritise projects that enrich our communities, support local needs and promote greater engagement with the railway. Our funding approach will continue to encourage participation from community rail partnerships, education providers and local groups across our network, ensuring that support is directed where it can make the greatest difference.
2. **Station Adoption Fund:** we will maintain our commitment to the Station Adoption Fund, enabling adopters to lead initiatives that enhance station environments and strengthen community connection. We will also publish our annual report on Community Rail activities, providing transparency on progress, outcomes and learning.
3. **Strengthened partnerships:** as the industry transitions and we move under Department for Transport Operator (DfTO) by the end of 2026, we will place even greater emphasis on aligned working with Network Rail and other train operators. Strengthening these relationships will support more consistent delivery, improved coordination and clearer shared priorities across the network.

Stakeholder engagement and customers

Stakeholders and customers

GWR maintains a database of over 4,000 stakeholders and keeps them regularly updated on issues including project progress, timetable changes and rail improvement works. This includes members of Parliament, councillors, local authority officers, town and parish councils, business groups, universities, schools and colleges amongst many others.

In the reporting period, 2,058 stakeholders attended GWR consultation and engagement events, comprising 1360 of staff hours of direct engagement.

GWR helps nearly 90 million passengers reach their destination every year, operating 199 stations and serving South Wales, the Cotswolds, London and the South West. Our Stakeholder Engagement Strategy enables the Public Affairs team to develop an in-depth and accurate understanding of the needs and aspirations of our customers and stakeholders, and we also have a dedicated team of Regional Development Managers who work with stakeholders to develop plans and find funding for joint projects.

Feedback and communication

Each year, GWR commissions an independent audit of its stakeholders. For many years, this has been carried out by the polling firm Savanta. The 2025/26 survey was carried out from November 2025 to January 2026. The survey output demonstrates that the relationship between GWR and stakeholders remains strong, and the results from this year suggest they have improved across the board. GWR is performing well historically against its KPIs and the disparities between regions and stakeholder groups are also narrowing.

Overall performance and confidence have seen significant improvements. This has resulted in an increase in GWR's advocacy score to 198 in 2025, a significant 19 percentage point increase on last year.

This is the 6th highest score GWR has had since this tracker started (out of 15) and is much higher than has been seen over the last 2 years. GWR engagement with communities continues to come out well and remains a key driving factor in perceptions. And perceptions of service performance too have remained positive overall.

In previous waves of this research there have been significant differences in perceptions by region for stakeholders. However, in this wave perceptions are overall in line across regions. It is encouraging to see the positive trajectory in the Central region, concerns around operational performance and engagement seen previously have been reversed over 2025.

Those believing that GWR is currently heading on the right track has also increased to seven in ten, an increase of ten percentage points. Community engagement is the key driver of these positive scores, with over a third of stakeholders highlighting this as a reason.

Compared with last year, there was a 2.3% increase in complaints per journey from 2024/25 to 2025/26 and we resolved 97% of all complaints within 20 working days of being received. The proportion of stakeholders who rated their interactions with GWR as good or very good in 2025 was 80% an increase of 5% from the previous year.



2025 GWR Community Rail and Stakeholder Conference held on 24 June 2025 at the STEAM Museum in Swindon

Reflecting on progress

Over the next five years, GWR is focused on delivering improvements that reflect the priorities of our stakeholders and customers.

- 1. Class 175 trains:** to help resilience across our network, 26 Class 175 trains will be joining our fleet. The first Class 175 entered passenger service in December 2025, following the withdrawal of the remaining Castle Class trains.
- 2. Improving the reliability of services:** changes in the timetable on the North Downs line this year improved punctuality by around 5%.
- 3. Demonstrating the value of rail:** GWR continues to put the economic and social value of rail at the heart of its operation. By promoting Railway 200 through various events including the national launch at London Paddington station, or hosting the national Railway 200 remembrance service, GWR played a significant role in demonstrating the rail industry's part in the nation's history, and as a travel method of choice. Each year, GWR publishes its Social Value Report, as well as two Customer and Stakeholder Reports which demonstrate the business's economic value as well as being open and transparent on the progress of the business.

- 4. Partnership working:** collaborating with third parties is part of GWR's DNA. Over the last year, work has continued on new stations at Okehampton Interchange, Charfield, Cullompton and Wellington, as well as new lines and stations on the Portishead and Henbury lines. While these developments haven't yet come to fruition, all are being delivered with third parties.

Future projects and aims

- 1. Preparing for public ownership:** GWR is anticipated to enter public ownership in 2026 as part of the Government's generational reform of the railways. We will ensure the business is prepared for this transition and stakeholders/partners are kept updated as the process progresses.
- 2. New station and services:** working with third party partners, this year we will look to open new stations at Okehampton Interchange, Bristol Brabazon and Charfield, as well as launching Mid-Cornwall Metro and, subject to approval, direct services from Bristol to Oxford.
- 3. Improving service reliability:** alongside Network Rail, we will continue to drive for improvements in punctuality and train service performance. The continued rollout of the Class 175 fleet throughout this year will aid capacity concerns in Devon and Cornwall.

Rail accessibility

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

Working with our partners, we aim to provide the smoothest door-to-door journeys possible, improving the integration of different methods of transport such as improved walking routes, increased car parking at key locations and investing in bike storage facilities. In the reporting period, GWR conducted circa 72 Diversity Impact Assessments.

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

We also offer a Passenger Assist service to those who require help to get on and off the train or while moving around stations. In the reporting period, 88% of those asked were satisfied with this service, giving an average rating of 4.46 out of 5 stars.

Currently, 35% of GWR stations are considered completely step-free (Office of Rail and Road category A stations). This has increased from last year due to making Tilehurst fully accessible. Many of our other stations do have a degree of step-free access; however, we are working to make minor infrastructure enhancements to improve accessibility for all our customers. We also contribute to the Rail Delivery Group [accessibility network map](#) to help passengers understand which journeys are best for them.

Improving passenger assistance at unstaffed stations

GWR is seeing increasing demand for Passenger Assistance. At unstaffed stations this means Train Managers must both dispatch trains and support customers. Passengers requiring assistance are often located at different points along the platform, making it hard for Train Managers to identify who needs help and increasing the likelihood of delays.

To address this, GWR is trialling designated boarding points at selected stations across Devon and Cornwall. These clearly marked areas indicate where customers should wait for assistance, helping Train Managers quickly identify and support customers.

The trial will be evaluated using performance data and feedback from customers and colleagues, with the potential to expand across more unstaffed stations if successful.

Passenger Assist Boarding Point

If you need help boarding the train, please wait here.







Booking Passenger Assistance
 Disabled and older passengers can book assistance up to 2 hours before travel through our Passenger Assist team.

Telephone: 0800 197 1329 **App:** passengerassistance.com

Text Relay: 18001 0800 197 1329 

Good to Know
 Mobility scooters must be no more than 700mm wide, no more than 1200mm long and weigh 300kg or less (including the weight of the customer using it). You are permitted to travel with a maximum of three pieces of luggage, which can include two large suitcases (up to 23kg each) and one smaller item.

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Accessible by design

Putting inclusion at the heart of future train procurement

The context

As GWR begins planning for the next generation of trains, there is a key opportunity to shape accessibility from the earliest stages of design. Too often, accessibility is treated as a minimum compliance requirement. The challenge was to take a different approach, ensuring future trains are designed with accessibility at their core, informed by lived experience.

The solution

The project team worked closely with GWR's Accessibility Panel, made up of people with a range of lived experiences and disabilities. Through a series of workshops, the team explored challenges with existing trains and gathered practical feedback on improvements. The panel's insights informed the development of a clear specification of what an accessible train would look like, which could guide the future procurement of new trains.

The impact

The initiative has resulted in a defined specification that goes beyond minimum standards to embed accessibility from the start. It provides a strong foundation for future train procurement, helping to ensure new fleets deliver a more inclusive experience for all customers.

In addition, we've been working with the local community, hosting events and initiatives to raise people's confidence in rail travel, particularly for families and vulnerable groups. In the reporting period we have supported 4,918 people to use the rail network through our 'Try a Train' initiative. We have also supported 384,634 people to travel through Passenger Assistance, an increase of 71,929 on last year, with customers rating their assisted journeys an average of 4.46 out of 5 stars.

“

I cannot thank you enough for your visit and talk today! The students loved it and the presentation was absolutely fantastic and to get to handle a ticket, think about using the trains and all of the questions was just fantastic. It was well planned, expertly thought out and one of the best talks I have seen.

Try a Train feedback

“

We had a few first-timers today, and it could not have gone any better for them. It is so important that they know what travel options are available to them as they move towards independence. I think you have gained a few new fans!

Try a Train feedback

“

“In developing the train specification for the Regional Fleet Renewal Programme, being able to discuss the challenges, compromises and ideas with the Accessibility Panel has been invaluable, and it will be great to see that engagement reflected in the accessibility of our future trains.

Ian Blondel, Technical Lead, GWR

Reflecting on progress

- 1. Deliver a high number of assistance requests:** we delivered a record year for Passenger Assist, with over 384,634 supported across the network – an increase of 21% on last year.
- 2. Refresher accessibility training:** all frontline colleagues attended refresher training on disability awareness between October 2025 and March 2026.
- 3. Changing Places Toilets:** we completed a feasibility study for a Changing Places Toilet at Exeter Central station, which will become the second on the GWR network, following the facility already in place at London Paddington. These enhanced accessible toilets include space for carers, hoists, and adult-sized changing benches, removing a major barrier to travel for many. We are now looking at funding options.

Future projects and aims

- 1. Improve the resilience of Passenger Assist:** any failed assistance is a learning opportunity. We will actively review incidents to understand how we can improve our delivery.
- 2. Public Sector Equality Duties:** as GWR moves into public ownership, our obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty require us to actively consider how our decisions affect disabled people and others with protected characteristics. The accessibility team will support colleagues across the business to apply this in practice.
- 3. A new electronic process for hand over assists:** we will be moving to a digital handover through the Passenger Assist App, so that every team along a route knows who they're meeting, when, and what support is needed – improving communication between stations.
- 4. Improve the experience of customers at stations:** we will roll out clearer signage for Welcome Points, Help Points and Assistance Boarding Points, making these easier for passengers to find.



Environmental



Environmental

Net zero and decarbonisation

There is significant opportunity for the rail industry to contribute towards reducing the impact of climate change and achieving Net Zero by 2050. GWR is working with Network Rail and the Environment Agency to review the impact of extreme weather events and develop contingency and long-term risk management plans.

Measuring and managing our environmental impact is key to the success of our business. We continue to run trains on electricity wherever possible and are progressing battery traction trials as part of our approach to reducing emissions from rail operations.



Fast charge battery train trial

Setting a new world record

The context

Diesel trains on the GWR network are reaching the end of their life, with some dating back to the 1980s. Replacing them presents both a challenge and an opportunity: how to decarbonise rail in a way that is affordable, scalable, and practical for branch lines. Full electrification is effective but expensive and complex to install. Battery technology offered a potential alternative but needed to be proven in real-world conditions.



Find out more

The solution

GWR launched a fast-charge battery train trial, testing a converted electric train equipped with onboard batteries and rapid charging technology on a live passenger route. The system uses lineside battery units and short sections of charging rail to recharge trains in minutes, avoiding the need for continuous electrification. Crucially, the trial focused not just on performance, but on environmental impact, measuring carbon, air quality and noise in real operating conditions.

The impact

The environmental benefits of battery traction are now well understood. Considering emissions associated with electricity generation, our trial proved that the battery train's CO₂ emissions are around 80% lower than those of a diesel multiple unit (DMU). This reduction improves further as the proportion of renewable energy in the electricity supply increases, with zero emissions at the point of use. Despite an initial embodied carbon cost of ~400 tonnes CO₂e to convert the train to battery power, this is offset in just two years, thanks to expected annual savings of over 250 tonnes CO₂e. Local environmental benefits were equally significant.

Data collected at West Ealing saw peak NO₂ levels fall by 90%, dramatically improving air quality, while noise levels dropped from 93 dB (very loud) to 63 dB (moderate – quiet), transforming the experience for passengers and nearby communities.

The trial has also delivered benefits beyond its original remit, contributing to wider industry learning and collaboration. Technology and insights have been shared with national and international stakeholders, including Train Operating Companies (TOCs), Rolling Stock Leasing Companies (ROSCOs), Network Rail, local authorities, universities, the UK Department for Transport (DfT), and Government Ministers. Presentations have been delivered at over 20 stakeholder engagement events with professional bodies and industry groups such as the IMechE, IET, RIA, PWI, Innovate UK and the Rail Engineering Graduate Scheme. The project has also received global media attention, including recognition for achieving the world record for the furthest distance travelled by a battery-powered train on a single charge.

A passenger-carrying service has now commenced, providing further operational data, particularly in relation to long-term battery performance, which will help to inform future applications of battery traction across the rail network.



In August 2025, the Class 230 battery train set a new world record for the longest distance travelled by a battery-powered train on a single charge, covering over 200 miles.

Waste, water and energy use

GWR continues to operate in accordance with international standards for environmental and energy management, maintaining ISO 14001:2015 and ISO 50001:2018 certifications across the business. Our environmental and energy management system provides a structured approach to managing and improving waste, water and energy consumption.

During the reporting period, onsite recycling volumes have been broadly maintained compared to the previous year, as we continue to work closely with suppliers and colleagues to improve segregation and maximise recycling across stations and depots.

We continue to monitor water consumption across our portfolio, using available data to understand usage patterns and identify opportunities to reduce waste.

A range of targeted initiatives have been delivered to improve energy efficiency and reduce environmental impact across the network. These include the continued rollout of LED lighting, the introduction of platform lighting and occupancy sensors, and behaviour-led initiatives such as revisiting “Project Turn It Off”, all supporting more efficient day-to-day energy use.

Operational improvements at depot level are also contributing to reduced energy consumption, with infrastructure upgrades delivering measurable efficiency gains and informing further opportunities across the estate. In parallel, enabling infrastructure such as EV charging is being introduced to support the transition to lower-carbon operations.



East Looe Beach

Reflecting on progress

1. Reducing operational emissions:

alongside long-term planning for diesel fleet replacement, the Idling Reduction Programme has delivered early-stage outcomes. These include the implementation of a data-led approach to identify idling hotspots and target interventions, increased operational compliance driven by improved staff awareness, and strengthened cross-functional coordination. Renewable energy initiatives included the installation of solar panels at a station, integrated into the platform shelter and lighting columns, supporting on-site renewable energy generation.

Future projects and aims

1. Reducing operational emissions:

we aim to prepare the business for a lower carbon future through the continued rollout of the Idling Reduction Programme, alongside further real-world data gathering from the fast-charge battery train trial to inform future opportunities or battery traction.

2. Improving resource efficiency:

this remains central to our approach. Expanding sub-metering and improving data visibility will help identify further energy-saving opportunities across stations and depots. We will build on our existing waste and recycling efforts by exploring opportunities to simplify waste segregation, trial alternative materials, and support behaviour-led changes across stations and depots.

3. Climate resilience:

as climate risks increase, GWR will strengthen resilience through activity informed by our Weather Resilience and Climate Change Adaptation (WRCCA) work – developing responses to extreme weather and working closely with Network Rail to monitor and manage infrastructure vulnerabilities, including drainage and flood-risk locations.

Contact details

For further information on this document or to learn more about our Social Value, please visit **GWR.com**, scan the QR code, or or contact **community.rail@gwr.com**.



