



AC:RP
New life for local lines

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Rail Delivery Group



Community Rail & Social Inclusion

An exploration of community rail's contribution to social inclusion and how this can be developed

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2018

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Cover: Students and partners unveiling their 'Love Thy Neighbour' mural at Smethwick Rolfe Street Station.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to long-standing ACoRP partners Rail Delivery Group for their sponsorship of this report and ongoing support of community rail. Credit must also be given to the many ACoRP members and partners that contributed to this report, directly and indirectly. Particular thanks to those who helped with case studies and expert insights. We are also grateful to Dr Miriam Ricci and Professor Paul Salveson for their input and guidance.

Notes on terminology

Community rail

Community rail is a grassroots movement, comprising partnerships and groups working at regional and local level to connect communities with their railways (see below for more detail). This report focuses on community rail in Britain, where the movement originated and is largest, but may carry relevance elsewhere.

Social inclusion

Social inclusion is best understood as the opposite of social exclusion. People can feel excluded from society or parts of society due to multiple and connected social and economic circumstances. This can include unemployment, financial hardship, age, ill health and disability (physical and mental), substance abuse, discrimination, poor education or skills attainment, relationship and family breakdown, poor housing or being a victim or offender of crime. People can also be socially excluded if they face obstacles that prevent access to goods and services or their participation in social and community life that others do not face.¹ The Charity Commission defines activities and projects that promote social inclusion as those that help socially excluded people and communities overcome inequality and disadvantage and that promote equality and diversity.²

Equality

Equality is ensuring individuals and groups are not treated differently or less favorably, on the basis of their specific protected characteristics, including areas of race, gender, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation and age. The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society based on these characteristics.³

Diversity

Diversity refers to people representing a broad spectrum of demographic, social, ethnic, economic, religious and cultural backgrounds within and across communities. Respecting diversity means being open to and celebrating differences between people so that everyone can be recognised and actively participate within society.¹

Social cohesion

Social cohesion is a term commonly used when referring to the bonds or relationships that bring people together within and across diverse communities. The OECD further defines it as when society “works towards the well-being of all its members, fights exclusion and marginalisation, creates a sense of belonging, promotes trust, and offers its members the opportunity of upward social mobility”.⁴

Accessibility

Accessibility refers to, in the context of this report, practices and procedures that enable everyone – including those facing social exclusion – to be able to access and benefit from mobility, and specifically the sustainable, active and sociable mobility that railways help to afford. The Department for Transport defines accessibility as whether “...people can get to key services at a reasonable cost, in reasonable time and with reasonable ease”.⁵

Foreword

Rail is fundamental to the country's prosperity. After enormous growth, Britain's railway is increasingly important for connecting workers to jobs, businesses to markets, and people to their families and friends.

Building on significant investment from government and the private sector, our customers will see unprecedented improvements, with new trains, better services and stations, better connecting communities.

The Rail Delivery Group continues to work with ACoRP to further the case for community rail activity and support for it, as well as improving train operators' knowledge of how Community Rail can help them and the communities they serve. The railway doesn't just provide a vital transport service. As we know, it is also a key part of our social and economic future, both locally and nationally.

The rail industry recently signed up to a long-term plan which made four commitments to change and build on the railway's progress of the last 20 years. These are to strengthen the railway's contribution to the economy, to increase customer satisfaction, to boost local communities through localised decision making and investment, and to create more jobs and increase diversity.

We are running more trains, we want to develop better stations and improvements to the rail network which means we can connect more people and places with opportunity. We want to increase access to the railway, supporting more people to travel by train.

This report outlines the key work being done to promote social inclusion. We look forward to developing this work to support Community Rail over the coming decade.



Paul Plummer,
chief executive,
Rail Delivery Group

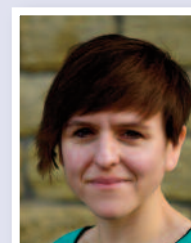
The community rail movement emerged from a backdrop of communities fighting to save their railway lines, aiming to reconnect local people with these lines, to generate increased pride, interest, and, of course, ridership.

Many community rail partnerships, and smaller groups like station friends, remain focused on promoting and enhancing their lines and stations.

However, there is growing consciousness within community rail, the rail industry, and key government and third sector partners, that the benefits being realised through community rail activities are far broader than boosting passenger numbers alone.

Community rail volunteering, which thousands take part in, is about far more than flower beds and fences: it brings people together, enhancing health, wellbeing and cohesion. Community rail arts projects, now prolific across Britain, not only brighten up stations, but create pride, awareness of local heritage, and a sense of connectedness. Initiatives to help different groups access rail travel link people who may otherwise be marginalised or disadvantaged to greater opportunities for employment, education and recreation. 'Traditional' community rail work to promote railway lines also plays a vital role in helping everyone to access to sustainable, healthy, sociable travel.

In short, community rail is enhancing social inclusion in a whole spectrum of important ways. This report provides an overview of this work, and insights into how community rail can be further supported and developed to bring wider, deeper value to communities and people's lives.



Jools Townsend,
chief executive,
Association of
Community Rail
Partnerships

Introduction and current context

Community rail is a growing, influential grassroots movement spanning Britain.

It is made up of nearly 60 (and counting) community rail partnerships, which work along whole railway lines, counties or regions, plus hundreds (probably 1,300+) of station friends/adoption groups and other small, local groups. These partnerships and groups are brought together under the umbrella of the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP), the organisation behind this report. The broad aims of community rail are to connect communities with their railways, and ensure people get the most from them and have a voice in their development. This work, in its many guises, bears great relevance to social inclusion, which this report explores, giving many examples of current work and suggestions of how this can be developed further.

Community rail activities vary greatly between localities, and rightly so as they are driven by local contexts, needs and opportunities. However, the concept of bringing people together, promoting social cohesion and inclusion, and delivering maximum benefit for local communities is a common thread, even if its delivery takes many forms. From ACoRP's work supporting, championing and advising our members within community rail, it is possible to identify five main ways that community rail is working in this arena, each over-lapping:

1. **Accessible journeys for all**
2. **Connecting people to opportunities and services**
3. **Stations as spaces for social growth and enterprise**
4. **Community rail volunteering**
5. **Engaging communities in art and heritage**

As is set out below, work in each of these areas appears to offer great value to communities and the railways themselves, and there is without doubt scope to develop this further. The social and economic value being delivered is difficult to quantify, but the case study examples, and discussion of academic research and expert views, in this report should help to evidence the difference being made to individuals' lives and whole communities. It is pertinent to note that, at the time of writing, a project is underway led by RSSB (sponsored by Network Rail and supported by ACoRP, the Department for Transport, train operating companies and suppliers), to assess the social value of the railways, which should also help those working in community rail and partner organisations to better assess and understand the impact being delivered through such work. This should aid further development of this important area of community rail activity, especially better supporting community rail partnerships and groups to prioritise and focus their efforts in an intelligent, evidence-led way, and achieve sustainable funding for such work.

The importance of addressing and enhancing social inclusion through and in connection with our railways – and further developing this work – is being acknowledged by government and the rail industry. At the time of writing, the Department for Transport is consulting on a renewed strategy for developing and supporting community rail over the coming decade. This consultation includes as one of its four themes 'Supporting communities, diversity and inclusion',⁶ showing strong government appreciation of the scope for community rail to have an ongoing, and increasingly profound, effect in this arena. The Rail Delivery Group, the umbrella body for rail industry companies, also recognises the importance of community rail's contribution to social inclusion, through its sponsorship of this report, and its set of industry priorities, or 'customer touchpoints', which clearly align with much of the work examined in this report. Its 'Britain Runs on Rail' report also identifies the need for closer partnership working across the industry to improve the accessibility of rail and the role of this in promoting social inclusion. The report commits to making improvements to infrastructure, transforming stations into community hubs, promoting local decision making, and increasing the accessibility and affordability of rail travel so more people can connect to opportunities.⁷

In addition to government and industry support and interest, it is important to note the huge amount of enthusiasm and determination among those working in community rail, on a paid and voluntary basis, for further developing this area. ACoRP's latest members' survey, and discussions at its seminars, clearly show that improving rail accessibility, engaging more diverse groups (notably young people) and related social inclusion issues, are major priorities across the movement. This, combined with industry and government support, and the inspiration and lessons to be gleaned from the catalogue of examples in this report, means there is great opportunity to advance this area of work to the benefit of communities across Britain (and beyond).

While the opportunity to continue and grow community rail's impact on social inclusion is clear, there are of course challenges to overcome. These often relate to limited capacity and resourcing within community rail, and sometimes the inherent difficulties, frustrations and bureaucracy that can arise in negotiating across multiple partners, and bringing together community interests with the complex and technical rail industry. This report touches upon some of these challenges, but emphasises the progress that has already been made, and suggests in the 'recommendations and ideas' on p27-28 how these can be further overcome through collaboration, mutual respect, and genuine partnership working, involving community rail, industry, but also (crucially in this area) wider public and third sector partners. ACoRP is pleased to be working proactively with its members and partners to take these suggestions forward, and ensure that community rail can play the fullest possible role in bringing about a truly inclusive society.

Part one: Accessible journeys for all

Community rail gives people a voice in the development of rail, empowering communities and helping to ensure that this development is in line with local needs and aspirations.

Supporting the railway to be more accessible, and supporting communities to access rail, is a critical part of community rail's role. Much community rail work is geared at helping people to feel able and confident to use our railways, particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable groups who may otherwise feel excluded. This opens up access to opportunities, as explored further in chapter two, including for marginalised people, promoting inclusion, fairness and equality, and reducing social isolation. The fact that community rail partnerships and groups combine being community-based, personable and local, with expertise in local transport, means that they are well-placed to play a pivotal role in enabling accessible journeys for all.

Crucially, community rail also gives people a voice in the development of rail, empowering communities and helping to ensure that this development is in line with local needs and aspirations. In this way, it acts as a vital partner for industry and government, in opening up and promoting our railways, and for communities, in developing mobility and equity.

a) Accessible stations

Community rail works proactively with industry on achieving more accessible railway stations in a number of ways, including by:

- Advising train operators, Network Rail or relevant authorities of accessibility problems, and suggesting how these might be overcome. For example, at Driffeld, the station adoption group highlighted that the large, difficult-to-negotiate overbridge caused problems for anyone with limited mobility, families, cyclists, and people with baggage, with hopes that this may be addressed soon;
- Managing, spearheading and seeking funding for improvements to aid accessibility, in partnership with the rail industry. For example, the Bentham Line worked with Northern to achieve wider gates and doorways, ramps and signage at Bentham Station, aiding access to trains and station facilities, and has worked to achieve 'dementia friendly' status for the line's stations (see below);⁸
- Running workshops and visits at stations for groups facing accessibility barriers or who have particular support needs, to build confidence, familiarity and understanding. This is picked up further below;

- Coming up with new ideas, such as the 'Harrington Hump', which has made access from platforms onto trains at small stations affordable. There are a great many examples of community rail and industry working together positively in this area, resulting in many improvements to stations around the country, ranging from improved signage, to better lighting, to accessible toilets. However, there are also challenges, particularly to do with bureaucracy and sometimes slow progress taking forward community rail ideas and proposals. ACoRP is working with its members, rail industry partners and government to seek to break down such hurdles. Especially if these are overcome, there seems to be scope for community rail to play a heightened role in highlighting ideas and opportunities, and working alongside industry and the community to facilitate and raise awareness of improvements. There is also an opportunity for community rail to continue to develop links with charities and support providers to advance this field, such as to replicate the Bentham Line's dementia friendly stations project elsewhere.

b) Railway confidence schemes

Alongside working with the rail industry to encourage physical improvements to aid rail accessibility, most community rail partnerships and groups work to develop skills, understanding and confidence in rail use too. This is critical because transport barriers for disadvantaged groups comprise a range of social, cultural and psychological factors as well as physical ones.⁹

This work often takes the form of talks, workshops and visits, sometimes arranged on an ad-hoc basis with local



*Enjoying a train ride on Community Rail
Lancashire's Railway Confidence Programme*



Opening the dementia-friendly railway on the Bentham Line

schools, organisations and support groups, but often as part of an organised programme targeting local groups with particular needs and vulnerabilities. This work engages groups that may otherwise face difficulty or lack confidence accessing rail, including children, young people, elderly people, groups with physical or learning

Railway confidence

Community Rail Lancashire's Railway Confidence Programme has engaged more than 150 young people with additional and learning needs and disabilities with the railway. Through activities that build confidence and understanding, the project enables these young people to travel using rail in a safe and comfortable way, giving them lifelong skills and a significant range of positive experiences. It also opens up opportunities to access education, leisure, employment and healthcare. This promotes diversity and inclusion on local and national lines, and gives young people skills and opportunities for life, through rail travel.

See: www.downtheline.org.uk/projects/the-railway-confidence-programme/

Becoming a dementia friendly railway

The Leeds, Lancaster and Morecambe Community Rail Partnership (Bentham Line) has the aim of becoming a dementia friendly railway. This includes involving individuals living with dementia in auditing the stations so they are accessible, and training station staff and volunteers so that they can respond to passengers in a supportive way. The community rail partnership is also developing heritage and countryside walks from the train that are easily navigable and help to bring back memories, as well as outreach days and cake sales to raise funds for the work and communicate its importance. To achieve this, the partnership has brought in a range of partners, including train operators, community groups, tourism authorities, and Alzheimer's Society and Alzheimer's Research UK. Facilitated by ACoRP, they are also now working with The Challenge to involve teenagers, aiming to make the project cross-generational.

'Orange Wallet' confident traveller scheme

The 'Orange Wallet' is a collaborative project funded by the Welsh Government as part of the 'All Wales ASD strategy'. It aims to help anyone with a hidden disability, especially those on the Autistic Spectrum, cope more easily with public transport. It is based on schemes already running in Devon and Pembrokeshire.

The wallet is a communication tool, which can be used by people who may find it difficult to communicate their needs to staff when using public transport. It contains space for the user to insert written and/or visual prompts to show conductors, station staff or ticket offices. These prompts can be printed off from transport providers' websites. Staff are trained to recognise the wallet and how to patiently provide appropriate assistance.

Since its introduction, the wallet has become useful for many groups with hidden disabilities and confidence problems, including those with sight and auditory impairments and elderly people. It has been adopted by other public transport providers, including local buses, helping to ensure end-to-end journeys are accessible with consistent support. The scheme has been heavily promoted and engaged with by Wales and Borders community rail partnerships.

Recently, Arriva Trains Wales appointed a 'Confident Traveller Ambassador' with Asperger's who is a talented photographer. Robert promotes the scheme and has his photos exhibited at Llandudno station. Robert's dad says: "His confidence has really developed in recent years... He loves taking photos and it's been great for him to work on this project. As part of the ambassador role he's now going into colleges to talk to others who may suffer from confidence issues, teaching them coping strategies for travelling on the railway."



CASE STUDY

disabilities, people with mental health problems or other conditions. Some community rail groups are also working to support asylum seekers and refugees. For example, The Heart of Wales Line has hosted refugee visits from Swansea, with weekend breaks for refugee families in rural towns and villages.¹⁰

In some cases, these community rail confidence-building initiatives tie in with work to make physical improvements to stations, as with the Bentham Line case study above, and schemes by the rail industry to support certain groups to use rail more easily, such as the Orange Wallet scheme described below. In other cases, the work responds to needs and requests identified and made by rail industry partners or other organisations.

Much of this type of work is geared towards developing understanding of the practicalities of travelling by rail, such as to do with journey planning, ticketing, interchange and safety. By improving the ease and confidence with which people can travel by rail, this increases access to employment, education, training and recreation opportunities (discussed further below). Often, information to help people develop an understanding of the benefits of rail as a part of sustainable and healthy travel is being woven into such programmes, possibly providing additional benefits for these groups. This may have profound implications for individuals' and

'Try the Train' trips in Sussex

Supported and funded by rail operator Southern, Sussex Community Rail Partnership has run a series of 'Try the Train' trips for individuals with varying levels of learning difficulties, who might not have the confidence to travel independently by train. This involved a funded and escorted train journey between Redhill Station and London, and included the chance to practise how to buy a ticket, find the right platform, get on the correct train and off at the correct station, use the ticket barrier machine, who to ask if you get confused, and where to find services such as toilets and waiting rooms – all in a supportive environment. The groups also had the chance to meet Southern's accessibility manager to talk through any concerns, and feed back on any barriers they experienced or envisaged. With increased confidence to travel by train, opportunities for recreation and employment outside their immediate local areas became more accessible.¹³

CASE STUDY

communities' prosperity, health and wellbeing by helping to build long-term access to and understanding of healthy and sustainable mobility.

The potential of community rail groups and organisations to contribute to supporting asylum seekers and refugees is one that deserves further exploration, particularly to help ensure a warm welcome at an arrival station. The railway station is often the first experience of an asylum seeker or refugee arriving into a town or city, and the welcome they receive may have a great bearing on their feelings about the host community. Much like the 'City of Sanctuary' movement, which seeks to build a culture of hospitality for refugees seeking sanctuary from war and persecution,¹¹ stations could become sanctuaries, such as through positive images, signage in a range of languages and staff trained to help refugees.¹²

c) Working with community transport

Community transport services are working towards similar social aims as community rail.

There is much scope for the two to work together, providing a life-line to local services, and connections to rail. Many community rail partnerships have it as a key organisational mission to work with community transport services to promote equal access to the stations on their line and in some cases are linked strategically through hosting local councils and authorities.¹⁴ Working to help address the quality, availability and affordability of transport options for people who don't have access to a car or conventional bus services, community transport aims to deliver community benefit on a not-for profit basis. Examples include dial-a-ride, voluntary car schemes, community buses and wheels to work, increasingly plugging a gap where commercial or subsidised bus services have been withdrawn.

There are clear advantages of community rail and community transport services working together to promote integrated, inclusive journeys and increase mobility for those who are often most at risk of being isolated from services and opportunities near and further afield. As suggested in the Community Transport Association report on Demand Responsive Transport,¹⁵ community transport aids the 'first mile and last mile' approach to journeys, making getting to and from the station easier for those with additional needs. With many community transport services operating on a 'demand responsive' basis, users may have increased confidence that they will be able to make their train. This supports vulnerable individuals who may have more concerns for their safety and less confidence travelling generally and reduces the cost of using taxis. It therefore makes sense for railway confidence and outreach programs to collaborate with community transport organisations where possible to examine how the whole journey comes together.

Secondly, community transport operators, often volunteers living locally, have 'privileged insights into the world of people whose lives and choices are diminished by

not being able to get to the places they want or need to be'.¹⁶ This is very much the same for community rail officers and volunteers. It is important therefore to share knowledge to create an accurate picture of community transport needs and challenges facing vulnerable people when it comes to travel. These groups can help those currently excluded from rail to have a voice, in a way not that rail passenger surveys may not detect, and this may be particularly powerful when multiple groups work together. Community transport and community rail groups can also collaborate to make longer distance journeys an option, enabling access to services that are not available in local vicinity and outside the scope of localised community transport. This links to the points below about integrated end-to-end journeys, which community rail and community transport could work together to address.

d) Affordable travel

The accessibility of rail travel to as many people as possible depends not only on people's ability to physically access the railways, and confidence and skills in planning and making journeys, but also affordability.

The affordability of transport and travel is central to achieving fairer communities through more equal access to opportunities, especially relating to employment, education and training (as discussed below). Research by the RAC Foundation shows that low-income households often spend 10% or more of their income on mobility,¹⁷ while not being able to access affordable transport options holds back people in poor areas, including by restricting access to employment (explored further below).¹⁸ The charity Sustrans argues that the increasingly high costs of running a car (a particular issue for younger age groups) and absence of practical, affordable alternatives for many, means millions of people must choose between debt and social exclusion.¹⁹

Most community rail partnerships carry out work to promote more affordable access to rail by increasing understanding of ticketing, as per the examples above, and promoting and encouraging use of the existing range of rail cards, passes and advance tickets that bring the costs of travel down. In a few cases, community rail organisations work with train operators to directly develop, manage and promote discounted travel schemes. Examples include the Settle-Carlisle Railway's Dales Railcard, offering discounts on the line for local residents,²⁰ and Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership's carnet ticket scheme on the Tarka Line, providing more affordable travel for families and part-time workers. In other cases, specific train operators run schemes to provide more affordable options to people that may otherwise struggle with the costs of travel, such as jobseekers attending interviews (see below on access to employment). However, there is perhaps scope for community rail and industry to work together to develop and promote such schemes more widely. This might help to address perceptions of rail as being prohibitively expensive, and enable our railways to play a greater role in achieving a more equitable society.

e) Giving communities a voice

With unprecedented investment now going into our railways, ensuring that communities' needs and aspirations are at the forefront of this development is key to it delivering maximum social value.

This tends to be an increasingly important part of community rail partnerships' (and to a certain extent station groups') work: advising train operators, transport authorities and other partners on needs and opportunities to develop services and facilities on their lines. As well as bringing a community perspective to strategic discussions on transport development, this often throws a spotlight on railway lines and localities that might otherwise receive less attention, including, often, communities suffering isolation and deprivation, as per the case study below. In this way, community rail might be argued to bring greater social equity to consideration of how we develop our railways.

In some cases, this work takes the form of community rail partnerships and groups highlighting and forwarding ideas and opportunities for rail development to help meet local needs, such as increased services, timetable changes, station improvements and infrastructure development. This might be with a view to improving access for particular groups, or to particular opportunities and services, or to support the development of whole areas. For example, on the Esk Valley Line, the Esk Valley Railway Development Company (EVRDC) has worked with the train operator to achieve an early morning service to give greater access to employment and the local hospital in Middlesbrough. The EVRDC also works to improve signage and information about the hospital station and make its use more attractive to patients, staff and relatives.²²

Sometimes, community rail partnerships are involved in discussions about major improvements over many years, helping to build a case for change, and bringing together wide-ranging partners to explore and evidence the impact it will have. For example, over many years Community Rail Cumbria championed and built a case for the introduction of a Sunday rail service for the communities along the Cumbrian Coast Line, which face many challenges to do with rural isolation and deprivation. The service is now planned to come into effect, and is confidently expected to provide a welcome economic boost to West Cumbria.²³

Throwing a spotlight on overlooked communities

EXPERT INSIGHTS

"It's fair to say that successive Governments tended to ignore the needs of local communities in their rail policies. Community rail has brought local rail to the attention of decision-makers and opinion formers in a positive way. Instead of portraying them as on life support, community rail has developed a vision of rail at the heart of vibrant local communities, both rural and urban, offering solutions not only to transport issues but wider challenges of regeneration, social inclusion – all part of the sustainable development agenda."

Professor Paul Salveson, community rail expert

TransWilts service reinstated

CASE STUDY

In Wiltshire, the TransWilts Community Rail Partnership and its volunteers carried out a range of community engagement and survey work to make the case and build support for a regular rail service to be reintroduced between Swindon and Westbury. Their work continued in support of a successful trial, and eventually to help launch and promote the reinstatement of the service. The service has now become a formal part of the rail franchise, with passenger numbers exceeding expectations. The data collected by the partnership is continuing to inform Great Western Railways, the Department for Transport, Wiltshire Council and other partners about the required facilities and services to handle with continued growth on the line.²⁵

Todmorden Curve

CASE STUDY

The 'Todmorden Curve' is a major infrastructure project by Northern, Network Rail and local authorities, which has greatly reduced journey times between Accrington, Burnley and Manchester. This has acted as a catalyst for economic growth and improved access to employment, by putting Burnley and Accrington within commuting distance of Manchester, and opening up leisure and tourism opportunities. Community Rail Lancashire played an important role in the project, by advising on local opportunities and needs, bringing partners together, and communicating the social benefits of the project. The project has also led to the introduction of a new Blackburn to Manchester service via the Todmorden Curve, which is currently funded by Lancashire County Council and jointly marketed by Community Rail Lancashire, Lancashire County Council and Northern.

Part two: Connecting people to opportunities and services

How connected people feel to opportunities and services can have a big impact on mental wellbeing. This is particularly so for older people, mental health sufferers, individuals with a disability and those living in poverty or disaffected from society.

For many – who do not have a sense of connectedness - there is greater risk of loneliness and social isolation.²⁶ Many people need but are currently disconnected in some way from public transport, for example those who do not have the means, ability or desire to own and drive a car, those living in remote rural areas, or those in isolated housing estates or areas where it is no longer possible to run profitable bus services.²⁷ Children and young people are also at risk of exclusion where they are reliant on public transport as their only means of getting around.

The provision of affordable, efficient and accessible railway services is an important enabler of social inclusion therefore, by allowing people to access life opportunities such as recreation, education and employment. The way in which people access opportunities, including the extent to which travel is sustainable and active, is also important to inclusion.

a) Access to recreation

Public transport can open up choices for leisure and recreation and play an important role in empowering people to reach accessible and affordable activities.

Access to recreational activity is an important factor in creating healthy and cohesive communities and promoting a good quality of life. It is a vehicle through which people have fun, connect with and integrate with others, develop new skills and competencies, and gain control over their wellbeing.

For children and young people, access to recreational pursuits and extra-curricular activities such as visits, sport, clubs and

broader social activities can enhance their confidence, broaden their spatial horizons, increase academic attainment and promote self-efficacy. A report by the Social Mobility Commission found that not being involved in such activities is potentially detrimental to young people and associated with reduced social wellbeing, lower perceived ability and positive behaviour. It also argued that individuals from lower social class groups are more likely to experience barriers to participation, and problems with transport accessibility can further prohibit these opportunities.²⁸

Many community rail partnerships and groups work along railway lines that connect cities and towns to rural areas, providing vital links for people to access recreational opportunities that are found in these different localities. They are working in a growing range of ways to ensure that everyone feels able and confident to use these links, and to promote the benefits of using the train to access such opportunities.

Promoting walking from and around stations is a key way community rail partnerships and groups can encourage healthy and sustainable leisure travel. Many promote self-guided or volunteer-led 'rail to trail' walks from stations. Walking has shown to have beneficial health outcomes, including reducing the risk of and treating conditions such as obesity and cancer, and promoting positive mental health and treating anxiety and depression.²⁹ It can also help the elderly stay active and improve cognitive function, and help those recovering from addiction or coping with bereavement.





CASE STUDY

Community Rail in the City

Community Rail in the City is a flagship annual community rail event that promotes sustainable travel for recreation. Coordinated nationally by ACoRP, it involves community rail partnerships promoting their activities and promoting visitor attractions along their lines in a number of mainline railway stations. Through displays and activities showcasing national parks, visitor attractions and Britain's hidden gems, combined with volunteers and staff advising on timetables, fares and accessibility, it is an important form of railway outreach. It helps to open up recreational rail travel by showcasing healthy, sustainable, cultural and enjoyable days out and longer trips for people living or working in major cities. See www.communityrail.org.uk

Accessible routes from stations into green spaces can additionally open up opportunities for visitors with physical and hidden disabilities, while organised walking programmes provide people with a routine, structured activity for exercise and social interaction, aiding rehabilitation and recovery.

Some, like the Penistone Line Partnership, offer an organised programme of free walks led by volunteers and are timed to coincide with connecting train services from nearby towns. Many, like Devon and Cornwall Community Rail Partnership and the Poacher Line, offer free leaflets and downloads to allow people to do walks at times that suit them.³¹ They vary from short and accessible (often 2-3 miles, from station to station), to longer, more challenging routes. The Heart of Wales Line Development Company is working with local authorities, Arriva Trains Wales and Network Rail to develop a 150-mile trail along the line, connecting attractions, villages and towns with the railway. The trail, which will be completed this year, will bring both economic benefits to Mid Wales by bringing in visitors, whilst offering healthy alternatives to the car.³²

Often providing insights on the locality, its heritage and landscape, such walks allow people to explore new locations, be exposed to local history and nature, help people to feel connected to their communities and others along the lines, and provide healthy, low-cost recreation.

There is a growing range of examples of existing or new walks near community railway lines and stations being used or designed by the NHS and support groups for people with health conditions. Many local groups that form part of the national 'Walking for Health' initiative by Macmillan and Ramblers are organising accessible walks from stations for individuals with health conditions travelling by train from nearby urban centres. Although open to everyone, the walks are particularly aimed at those who are less active and participants are often referred by their doctor.³⁴ This sort of activity is also starting to be picked up within the community rail field, as per the Bentham Line example opposite.

CASE STUDY

A walking app for the Penistone Line

On the Penistone Line, funding is being sought by the community rail partnership to develop nearby walks into an app 'Footpath', allowing users to access maps and route guides on a portable digital device offline and track their progress using GPS. This encourages new audiences, especially young people who are digitally literate but often less likely to access green space, to consider accessing walks by train. It is an innovative way of using new technology to engage with audiences that may not be comfortable using paper maps and have the confidence to explore independently.³³

CASE STUDY

Dementia friendly walks on the Bentham Line

As well as working towards dementia friendly stations, the Bentham Line is helping to ensure that walks from station are accessible for people living with dementia. Departing from Morecambe, Bentham, the Forest of Bowland (in an area of outstanding natural beauty) and Saltaire (part of a UNESCO World Heritage Site), the self-led walks aim to prompt longer-term memories and offer a supportive and positive excursion. They also provide access to nature, which is increasingly shown to improve the emotional and physical health of patients, including improved awareness and attention, self-esteem, independence and sense of control.³⁵ The Community Rail Partnership have developed leaflets that are simple, easy to read, and largely image based. The partnership is also working with Northern to ensure signage is clear and accessible on marked footpaths from the stations.

b) Access to employment

Railways provide an important lifeline for accessing employment and related training opportunities. Research has shown that transport problems and inequality can pose a significant barrier to people finding, accepting and sustaining employment.³⁶

Further, evidence suggests that many jobseekers are reluctant to travel beyond their local area to access employment due to a lack of trust in public transport, poor understanding of where they can get to, and a sense of unfamiliarity with places outside their immediate locality.³⁷ Community rail helps to address this through confidence-building educational work as discussed in part one, and by building positive connections and familiarity with the railway, such as through communications and events. In some cases, community rail provides tools and information to reduce the complexity of rail travel for less familiar. The Marston Vale Line, for example, works to provide clear signage to the station and simplified fare and timetable information.³⁸

Affordability of transport can also be a particular issue for unemployed jobseekers, or those transitioning into or between education and work, or between jobs. With increasing numbers of young people entering the labour market earlier through apprenticeship schemes with a low starting wage, the cost of transport can be huge, particularly when having to travel at peak times with no discount available.³⁹ Hence the contribution of community rail to promoting and enabling more affordable rail travel, as discussed in part one, is especially relevant to opening up wider access to employment.

To help combat some of these issues, several train operators run 'Train to Work' schemes that provide free rail travel tickets to job-seekers and or run programmes of activities to help long-term unemployed gain experience in industry and grow their confidence. Greater Anglia, for example, provides up to six day-return tickets to attend job interviews within its network, and on securing work, individuals can apply for an initial two-month season ticket free of charge to help with commuting costs while they establish themselves in their new job and put their finances on a firm footing.⁴⁰ Others, like the case study opposite, provide work experience to develop skills and confidence among unemployed people. There may be scope for community rail to play a greater role in promoting these activities and hosting work experience placements, to provide a community-facing element in industry programmes, although partnerships may need support and guidance hosting meaningful and manageable placements.

Community rail is also helping to support the creation of more diverse roles in the rail industry and helping the next generation of railway workers to develop skills and understanding of community engagement, contributing towards a more inclusive railway. Community Rail Lancashire (CRL) works with Northern to deliver 20% of their apprenticeship scheme content. Apprentices in operational and service delivery roles spend a week with the CRL to introduce them to community rail and their projects, such as dementia-friendly stations and work with mental health organisations. The apprentices then plan, manage and

'Train to Work' work experience

East Midlands Trains' Train into Work scheme gives long-term unemployed people, young people not in employment, education or training, and ex-service personnel an opportunity to gain work experience across its teams. It helps to open up opportunities for those who have been marginalised from employment, while respecting and using skills gained through previous experience, contributing to a more inclusive and diverse workforce. The work experience includes customer service skills, learning about the railway and health and safety, and support with considering career aspirations, CV writing and interview skills. 90% of participants expressed interest in pursuing further education or employment, and possibly a career in rail, as a result. One participant commented: "I've picked up many new skills as part of the Train into Work programme that I wouldn't have been able to otherwise... It's given me that boost in confidence I needed and the drive to find employment."



deliver community projects over a 12-month period, aiming to increase involvement of community groups at stations in their remit.⁴¹ Another example is Tyne Valley Community Rail Partnership (TVCRP) and CrossCountry forming a unique partnership with Newcastle College's Rail Academy. To gain community-based practical experience outside the classroom, apprentices work with TVCRP on community rail projects funded by CrossCountry. This encourages students to apply their skills in a community setting, and instil an early awareness of community stakeholders in rail.⁴²

Finally, community rail is helping to open up wider employment opportunities for local communities through offering learning and skills development opportunities. Often this is through social enterprise and small business development at stations, and volunteering activities, so is discussed in more detail in parts three and four respectively.

c) Access to education

For young people, especially in rural communities, who cannot or do not want to drive, or (as is increasingly common⁴³) cannot afford to run a car, access to education, employment and training can be very difficult.⁴⁴

Since 2015, young people aged 16-18 are legally required to be in some form of education or training, but aren't entitled to school transport. This has created demand for more affordable transport options for this age bracket.⁴⁵

Increasingly, community rail partnerships groups are collaborating with train operators, local authorities and educational institutions to find ways to help more young people use rail to access education. However, there appears to be opportunity to roll out this work more widely. In some places, special passes have been created for students accessing an education along the line, entitling them to a discount. For example, Severnside Community Rail Partnership has worked with Great Western Railway and the British Transport Police to create a special combined ID card and discounted ticket for a local school in a particularly deprived neighbourhood, making journeys safer and more affordable.⁴⁶ In other cases, community rail partnerships help to promote regional travel passes that give young people discounts across a region's transport.



In Derbyshire, the 'b-line' card entitles 11-19 year olds living in the region 25% off full adult fares on local buses and trains, which can be used even at peak periods when commuting to school and college. The card can also be used on some journeys to nearby towns and cities providing the trip starts or finishes in Derbyshire. This makes access to education institutions outside of the area more accessible and promoting more educational choice for those who do not have the means to travel longer distances.⁴⁷

Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership work with several primary schools near the Looe and Tamar Valley lines to encourage children to act as green travel ambassadors and encourage their families to travel by train through a combination of creative travel mascots, competitions and free rail taster trips.⁴⁸ Community rail is also promoting healthier, more sustainable end-to-end journeys from home to rail and from rail to school, through initiatives such as walking buses and cycling training, as per the case study opposite.

Access to rail travel can positively contribute to social policy aims in higher education, particularly by widening access for under-represented groups who may have less experience and confidence of travelling outside their local area and for whom driving is prohibitively expensive. Rail travel may be the best option, but can be a daunting prospect for a student lacking the skills, support and role models.

Research has shown that an individual's level of confidence and ability to use public transport can affect access to higher education, the achievement of students in achieving in higher education and ultimately their employability.⁴⁹ Community rail partnerships and groups can and often do play an enabling role here, working with university and colleges outreach teams, and local organisations working to widen participation, to build confidence and skills in accessing rail travel, and consequently enabling more informed choices about education, training and employment.

d) Sustainable and healthy access to opportunities

As shown above, community rail is making a considerable contribution to supporting access to leisure, employment, training and education by rail.

However, it is important to highlight the particular value to social inclusion of community rail promoting and enabling access via sustainable, healthy, more sociable, means of travel.

Rail travel offers a more sustainable, healthier and more sociable alternative to driving, in the sense of: producing far lower emissions per person per mile, compared to single occupancy petrol or diesel car use;⁵⁰ not contributing to traffic congestion, noise and fumes that greatly harm communities;⁵¹

Bikeability on the Poacher Line

On the Poacher Line, the community rail partnership worked on a project with a local school academy and government-recognised cycling training 'Bikeability' to promote active, bi-modal travel, tying in with 'Bike Week'. The programme included training on how to be comfortable, confident and safe in the saddle and helped each student to create a personal travel plan of routes to school, how to ride into and secure a bike at the station, and how to interpret information screens. This innovative collaboration promoted a healthy, low-cost, sociable and often-quicker way to get to school. More students have since taken up commuting by public transport regularly.

See www.kentcrp.org/schools.



CASE STUDY

and there being increased opportunity for social interaction and healthy exercise than if driving alone from home to destination.⁵² This is beneficial to social inclusion in many ways, related to improved health, wellbeing and sociability of communities, but also the fact that socially disadvantaged people are more likely to suffer from the pollution and harm that traffic causes.⁵³ It also contributes to inter-generational equity, by helping to mitigate climate change and leave a healthier environment for future generations,⁵⁴ and offering a travel option to many young people who may be priced out of driving.⁵⁵

While community rail contributes already to these aims simply by promoting access to rail travel, it can heighten its impact (and already is in many cases) by specifically supporting and encouraging sustainable, active modes of travel to and from stations. Most rail journeys begin long before arriving at the station and finish well after leaving, so individuals' end-to-end journeys must be considered if rail travel is to be accessible to everyone. As Rail Delivery Group's 'customer touchpoints' state, passengers need to be able to understand the connections and routes available to them through other modes of transport both before arriving at the station and getting to their final destination. This is especially important to help people who are socially excluded, marginalised or disadvantaged. One of the key barriers for disabled people accessing public transport, for example, is a lack of consistency and integration between different transport providers involved on their journeys.⁵⁶

Many community rail partnerships and groups are therefore working to help improve connectivity between rail and other modes, with a growing focus on alternatives to driving. For example, many community rail groups work to provide better walking and cycling facilities and infrastructure at and around stations, such as applying for funding for bicycle racks and lockers, or overseeing projects to improve paths connecting stations to homes and town centres. Working with local cycling and walking groups, and bringing them together with train operators, they often provide and share information about cycling and walking routes to and from stations and embed bi-modal transport awareness into their outreach and confidence initiatives. Northern's Cycle-rail Forum is an example of how community rail can promote cycle use. With a membership of over 100 organisations including community rail partnerships, local authorities, cycling organisations, Passenger Focus, Rail Delivery Group, and local tourism bodies. It is a vehicle for sharing good practice, exchanging views and engaging in dialogue with Northern.⁵⁷

Community rail groups and organisations often work closely with sustainable travel organisations to encourage connected journeys and active travel. In Glasgow, a cycling resource centre has adopted Pollokshaws West Station and hosts the South West Community Rail Partnership. The cycling centre provides free bike repairs to children, low-cost bike hires and sales, commuter confidence building programmes and secure park and ride facilities in a convenient location for those who do not currently have access to such equipment and services. With many shared aims, the community rail partnership plays a key role in promoting these activities and promoting healthy and connected journeys.⁵⁸

Active Access for Growth in East Sussex

In East Sussex, Sussex Community Rail Partnership is part of a regional, sustainable travel change programme called 'Active Access for Growth', funded by the Department for Transport. It aims to grow and integrate cycling and walking initiatives across the region to provide longer term behaviour change towards active and sustainable modes of travel. It has an emphasis on boosting the local economy and improving health by widening access to employment, education and training and promoting healthy lifestyles and community development.

See:

www.eastsussex.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/localtransportplan/funding/active-access-for-growth/

CASE STUDY

Mobility and social agency

"Research I conducted with disadvantaged young people in Bristol found that physical mobility is key in helping individuals to acquire social agency. By being mobile, alone or with friends and family, and through different means of transport - both active and motorised - young people can develop the skills and confidence to explore the city beyond their comfort zone.

Exposure to and positive experiences of using an alternative means of transport other than the motor car from a young age may contribute to developing an open-minded outlook towards all transport modes, which in turn may help prevent locking young people into unsustainable travel patterns, in particular solo driving."

Dr Miriam Ricci, Centre for Transport & Society, University of the West of England

EXPERT INSIGHTS

Cycling inclusion in Glasgow

Bike4Good, a cycling charity, runs a flagship programme in the Govanhill area of Glasgow, which has high levels of social deprivation. To help break down the barriers of accessing the city's bike-share facilities, it offered a lower annual membership fee of £3 for people in deprived postcodes or accessing it via community partners, compared to the normal fee of £60. It also offered a free phone number, cash payments instead of card, waived damage payments and ran cycling confidence sessions. The programme significantly improved participants' physical health and fitness, grew their cycling confidence and helped them to develop friends in the community. It also improved access to services, work/training and study and made it easier to access health services.⁶⁰

CASE STUDY

On the Medway Valley Line, the community rail officer is hosted by sustainable travel charity Sustrans, and runs a programme of activities with young people at key transitional points (entering secondary school and college) to encourage use of sustainable transport and multi-modal transport. On the Poacher Line, the community rail partnership is working with 'Bikeability' to offer a skills-based programme tailored to the local community. All of this work is promoting long-term sustainable travel choices and behaviour, which can help to widen travel horizons, provide important skills, and increase people's ability to be independent, flexible, resilient and responsive to opportunities on a long-term, possibly life-long, basis.

Bike sharing schemes at stations can promote more inclusive access to active travel. Railway station bike schemes are growing in popularity across the UK and a study has shown that in 2016, 40% of people using such schemes did so in conjunction with using a train. This extends public transport beyond the station in a way that is more flexible than other modes such as bus, which can be more expensive and serve limited corridors.⁵⁹ Community rail partnerships and groups could play a greater role in helping to identify opportunities to introduce more of these schemes, based on their local expertise, and working with partners to communicate the benefits and develop confidence and understanding in how to use it.

In these ways and more, through collaborative working with transport providers, authorities and other local partners, community rail is succeeding in widening access to a multitude of opportunities to people who may otherwise be marginalised, isolated or excluded, enabling them to be independent and participate in society.

But while the community rail movement is already successful in enabling and promoting sustainable and healthy end-to-end journeys, there seems scope to significantly develop this area of work. Supporting community rail to develop skills, knowledge and capacity in this area, and working with government and industry to look at breaking down common regulatory and bureaucratic barriers, is therefore a priority for ACoRP. More detailed recommendations are on p27-28.



Two participants on the 'Days out by Train' project

Enabling a day out by train

CASE STUDY

Days Out by Train was designed and delivered by the Centre for Transport & Society, University of West England, working with the Severnside Community Rail Partnership and funded by Great Western Rail through their Customer and Communities Improvement Fund. Launched in 2015, it aims to support and facilitate access to rail for disadvantaged and low-income communities.

Eligible organisations supporting socially and economically disadvantaged communities in the area could apply for the free group tickets to organise a day out to a variety of destinations. The objective was to provide not only a boost to participants' well-being, but for families and individuals to develop confidence using the railways, and to open-up new engagement opportunities for organisations working with disadvantaged groups.

Over 2,000 people took advantage of the initiative, including refugees, asylum seekers, people with mental and physical disabilities and families on the breadline. The scheme had a diverse user profile, with 48% of participants from non-white British backgrounds and other nationalities, and only 18% in employment.

Partner organisations identified socially disadvantaged groups that would benefit from the scheme, and organised the trip for their chosen group. This model allowed the scheme to be tailored to

compliment the needs of different groups and service users. The scheme was a significant enabling factor in helping organisations working with the more disadvantaged in our society to deliver their mission, especially given the decline in social care resources. Having their transport costs covered allowed these organisations to deliver greater and enhanced activities, promoting mobility, that would not have been possible through their existing resources.

A staff member from a local organisation supporting refugees commented: "We only have a small budget so without free train travel, a trip of this nature would not have been affordable. Our organisation runs a weekly drop-in welcome centre for asylum seekers and refugees, in particular from Sudan, Iran, Eritrea, Syria, Somali, and Afghanistan. Trips like this provide a vital break and respite for people seeking sanctuary."⁶¹

Part three: Stations as spaces for social growth and enterprise

Many train stations across Britain are being transformed and rejuvenated into stations that greatly benefit not only passengers, but also the wider communities around them.

These projects are usually driven by community rail partnerships or small local community groups, with support from the rail industry, with a vision of getting more from our railways, bringing stations back into the heart of communities, and making a difference to local people. Their efforts are turning many stations into thriving community hubs, with space and facilities for arts, education, enterprise, volunteering, healthy living and social interaction. As well as direct benefit for those taking part (considered further in parts four and five), this generates pride and interest in the railway from the community, enhances stations, and provides a warm welcome to the area. In many cases, these community stations also support social enterprise and small business development, developing business and skills, increasing access to employment, and delivering a raft of social inclusion benefits.

a) Different uses for 'community stations'

An array of 'community stations' innovations and successes are examined in ACoRP's 2017 report with Rail Delivery Group, available at <http://bit.ly/2qHGM4o>⁶²

It provides an overview of inspirational work by station friends and other community groups, community rail partnerships, and their commercial, public and third sector partners, to return station buildings and land to community use. It shows the opportunities available in such work, and provides examples, advice and recommendations to community groups and the rail industry.

The report examines three broad and overlapping categories of community stations projects: the 'incredible edible' station, involving cafes, catering and food growing; the creative station, involving art, museums and literature; and the station as a marketplace or cluster, involving multiple, mutually-supportive uses, often including enterprise and business spaces, and spaces for community groups to meet and work. Under each of these categories numerous examples and their impact on passengers and communities are considered. The report concludes that the benefits of such projects are considerable and wide-ranging, to do with:

- Economic development and regeneration – such as through social enterprises, support for local businesses and community groups, skills development through volunteering and work experience, in some cases geared at groups that may otherwise be disadvantaged, and contributing to wider regeneration (explored in more detail below);
- Better quality stations for passengers – including more welcoming, useful, and sometimes safe and accessible, station environments, such as through services like shops, cafes and cycling facilities, points of interest and learning like notices and displays, greater human presence, and often renovation and physical improvements;
- Stations brought back into the heart of communities – stations become more central to and useful for the community, offering facilities for individuals and community groups, providing a source of pride and enjoyment, and becoming positive gateways and hubs for the area, in turn building a more positive relationship between community and railway.

The examples in the report therefore show how stations can act as highly beneficial hubs that promote social inclusion, attentive to local needs and opportunities, and taking advantage of stations' unique offering as public (and often historic) space that can and should be central to community life, and which probably played a key role in role heritage. Through community stations initiatives, community rail ensures that stations reflect the needs of whole communities in their design and use. It also helps to return often disused, under-used and run-down property, which may otherwise not have a viable commercial use, back into use as a community asset. This may be just as important in large city stations as it is in smaller ones. For example, in Bolton, a new community development partnership has been set up to manage community use of redundant space on this large station.

Developing the railway's social impact

"Network Rail's strategy to improve the social performance of the railway focuses on two key areas: 'Caring for Communities' and 'Improving the Passenger Experience'. We are keen to work with partners across the industry to better understand the full range of ways the railway benefits society and contributes to social inclusion, and to ensure that rail investment programmes deliver maximum social value for the communities they serve. Our project with RSSB, ACoRP and other stakeholders will allow us to not only evaluate the social value generated from individual community projects, but use social value as a contributing factor to support investment decisions at planning stages."

**Sarah Borien, sustainability strategy manager,
Network Rail**



As the report makes clear, there are challenges in delivering (and maintaining) such projects, such as bringing in appropriate funding and support, maintaining momentum through what can be a long process, and sometimes needing to make the case that community projects will deliver greater value than holding out hope for a 'commercial let' that may not materialise. However, the report shows how these challenges can be overcome to deliver great benefit to communities, and ACoRP works to support and advise such projects, and engage industry and government, with this aim. The hope is that this will inspire and support more groups and organisations to develop community stations, to the benefit of our railways, heritage, and economy, but moreover to spur the type of community-led, sustainable development that makes a huge difference to people's lives.

Skills for life at Severn Dee Travel

CASE STUDY

Severn Dee Travel is a not-for-profit organisation run by volunteers and the community rail partnership. At Gobowen Station it provides ticketing and a station café that offers work experience opportunities to students with special educational needs from Derwen College. Working in a safe and supportive environment, students undertake a high-quality work experience placement where they learn basic catering and customer service skills. This directly links to their vocational studies and supports their longer-term career aspirations by providing an authentic opportunity to develop work-related skills. The project directly contributed to Derwen College receiving an 'outstanding' for the opportunities it provides for personal development, behaviour and welfare to its students. The Ofsted report stated: "[The station café] provides students with the opportunity to develop excellent social, vocational and wider employability skills while working in the heart of the community. They learn to work as a team and communicate with customers."⁶⁹

b) Social enterprise

As noted above, many community stations are providing space and impetus for social enterprises to start up and develop.

The UK Government describes social enterprises as: “a business with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for shareholders and owners.”⁶³ Social enterprises impact on social inclusion because they respond to the needs of their communities and tackle disadvantage through their operation and outputs. Research by Social Enterprise UK shows that social enterprises: are often located in communities experiencing social deprivation; promote job creation and diversity; create innovation in community services and products; and support the public sector.⁶⁴

Railway stations are ideal places for social enterprises to thrive. They have guaranteed footfall, good transport links, are usually centrally located in towns, villages or suburbs, and often have space on platforms and buildings that would otherwise go unused. By enabling social enterprises to take up such space, ideally for a peppercorn rent, major benefits can be accrued both for the railway and social inclusion. It helps to create dynamic spaces where people can come together and feel connected to their community, as described above, and creates economic opportunities. This is especially important as more villages are losing their shops and post offices and other key services, social enterprises in stations can be a lifeline.⁶⁵

There is much evidence of social enterprise initiatives across community rail, large and small, helping excluded individuals to actively participate in a socially-valuable activity and feel part of their communities.⁶⁶ Many social enterprises in stations help those who are at risk of exclusion from the labour market return to work, and (re)integrate with society generally. Station cafés like Severn Dee Travel Café at Gobowen Station (see left page) and Strawberry Line Café at Yatton Station, offer opportunities for adults with learning disabilities to gain important life skills and catering skills.⁶⁷ Severn Dee also operates an independent rail agency where anyone can book tickets and get journey advice, wholly funded by the commission from ticket sales. This can help people who may struggle to use online ticketing and journey planning systems due to disability or lack of computer skills or access. It offers a personalised service to the passenger at no extra cost, which is valuable for those who may require additional assistance or lack confidence.⁶⁸ As mentioned in part one, there are also examples of sustainable and active travel enterprises on stations, which additionally support social inclusion through providing access to affordable, healthy transport.

Not all social enterprises benefitting from space at stations are directly related to using the railways. In Carmarthenshire, Black Mountain Food, a Community Interest Company operating as a cooperative, use a new station building at Llandeilo to sell and distribute locally grown, organic food to remote communities.⁷⁰ Like many other social enterprises on railways, it supports small scale local suppliers, which in turn support inclusive economic growth.⁷¹ The Heart of Wales Line Development Company initiated the contact and was instrumental in encouraging the social enterprise to use the new building – an example of how community rail groups and organisation are often the ‘bridge’ between wider community groups and social enterprises, and the railways.

Many community rail partnerships and groups work to encourage, support and advise others on setting up and running social enterprises in station buildings, liaising and collaborating with rail industry stakeholders to gain the appropriate permissions and infrastructure to operate successfully and safely. Without their help, many social enterprises may not consider station buildings as a potential venue. For example, Tyne Valley Community Rail Partnership has recently supported a local charity in winning a lease from Northern Rail to operate a platform kiosk that employs adults with additional needs.⁷²

Paying it forward at Newark Station

CASE STUDY

Station buildings at Newark Station have been transformed into a community café with funding from East Midlands Trains, Network Rail and The Railway Heritage Trust. Volunteers from the National Citizenship Service helped to complete the café. Run on a voluntary basis and linked to the charity FareShare, it provides meals for £3 made using surplus supermarket produce that would otherwise be wasted. It promotes social eating and encourages people to engage with each other in a warm, friendly environment, where they can enjoy conversation over a low-cost, tasty meal. It offers weekly meals to homeless people and operates a “Pay it Forward” scheme where anyone, including businesses, can contribute a small amount toward a meal for someone who cannot afford it.⁷³

Part four: Community rail volunteering

Volunteers are the life-blood of community rail, carrying out, coordinating and supporting much of the work.

They make up an estimated 1,000 station adoption/friends groups⁷⁴ around Britain, and also support community rail partnerships (which tend to have a small number of paid staff too) via their local station groups, or directly by assisting activities or acting as board members. Transport Regeneration's 2015 study estimated there are 3,200 community rail volunteers giving 250,000 hours per year nationally,⁷⁴ but we now know this to be a major under-estimate, as we and train operators develop a better understanding of the extent of station adoption. For example, Northern believes there to be 3,200 volunteers across its network alone and 70% of stations adopted.⁷⁵

Volunteers' activities are diverse, but most commonly include maintaining station gardens, planters and noticeboards alongside basic station upkeep such as litter-picking and reporting bigger problems. They also include hosting school visits, running community events, guiding walks, conducting passenger surveys, and helping vulnerable people to use the railways with confidence. This volunteering has been estimated to have an annual value to the rail industry of £3.4m (again, likely to be a gross under-estimate).⁷⁷ It also makes a major contribution to social inclusion, through impacting on the health, wellbeing and social interaction of the volunteers themselves, but also benefitting others through the results of the actions. There are also some indications that volunteering in connection with the railway may be particularly valuable, because of the visibility of the actions and additional contact it brings with the wider community. However, although the existing contribution to social inclusion of these activities is without doubt considerable, there are challenges to better assessing this, and scope to develop it further.

a) Value to community and industry

Volunteering brings people into contact with one another in a positive and meaningful way and allows those from different backgrounds to interact.

In this way, it provides a network of social relationships that help people to feel connected to their communities.⁷⁸ Station adoption and friends groups provide a place where people feel valued and safe, and where people perceive themselves to be included, feel part of the community and feel they have a degree of influence over things that matter. Through voluntary activities at stations, stations not only more attractive and secure, but a sense of community ownership develops too, and a sense that the station and railway is an asset for everyone. Furthermore, as volunteers develop stronger links to their locality, they become more likely to participate in other local activities, driving up active citizenship and social interaction further.⁷⁹



Volunteers from Mytholmroyd Station Partnership

Community action days are increasingly popular across the community rail movement and a good way of promoting community cohesion, which is essential in creating vibrant and healthy communities.⁸⁰ These events usually involve a large-scale and rapid transformation of a station or surrounding area, drawing in members of the community, local businesses and often railway industry stakeholders to volunteer their help. This not only builds awareness of community rail and the railway, but also brings diverse groups together

with a shared purpose, while generating a real sense of achievement and civic pride. As research has shown, the participation of communities in these kind of activities demonstrates the power of collective voice and action, empowering communities to recognise existing skills, knowledge and expertise.⁸¹ Volunteering can also grow a community's sense of resilience to difficult physical, economic and social circumstances. In Mytholmroyd, West Yorkshire, for example, the station has become a focal point for celebrating and commemorating the way in which the community came together to help and recover from flooding. Research has shown that resilient communities are more able to draw on their resources to cope with change and shock, as well as to plan interventions that can reduce the potential for or impact of future negative events.⁸²

Rail Journey to Recovery

Community Rail Cumbria has built a partnership with the charity Turning Point to help people recovering from substance and alcohol abuse to build confidence and social interaction while contributing to community rail volunteering projects. Their work includes basic station maintenance and upkeep, such as gardening and painting fences. By volunteering on stations, the service users are in close contact with members of the public and feel part of society rather than isolated from it. A video produced for the project shows the impact this is having on individual participants:

See www.vimeo.com/239789281.



CASE STUDY

There is certainly more to be done to widen the demographic base of voluntary community rail groups. However, community rail is continuing to diversify, and there are many examples of groups and partnerships that are becoming more reflective of the communities they serve.

b) Value to volunteers

Individuals tend to derive great value from participating in voluntary activity. There is considerable and growing research into the motives of people who volunteer and subsequent positive benefits to health, wellbeing, skills and happiness.⁸³

In community rail, the most common motives to volunteer have been found to include a desire to serve the community, seeking a sense of purpose, and engaging in mental and physical exercise.⁷⁵ This corresponds with the New Economics Foundation's 'five actions for individual and societal wellbeing', which have widely been adopted by the NHS and policy makers (Give, Be Active, Connect with Others, Keep Learning and Take Notice).⁸⁶

Volunteering is a key way people can experience happiness, contentment and engagement, develop positive relationships with others, and have a stronger sense of purpose and control. For people suffering mental health problems, the act of giving to, and cooperating with, others is especially valuable, due to the way it can stimulate the reward areas in the brain to improve feelings of self-worth and strengthen and build relationships, thus improving mental wellbeing. However, this type of participation in social and community life can improve wellbeing for everyone. Indeed, research has shown that wellbeing is largely determined by the levels of engagement with other people and in meaningful projects. This suggests that participating in community rail volunteering and delivering visible benefits to the community as a result is likely to pay significant wellbeing dividends.

There are increasing examples of community rail partnerships and groups partnering with organisations that aim to improve the wellbeing of some of the most vulnerable and marginalised members of society. It seems clear that there are significant mutual benefits from community rail groups working in partnership with wider voluntary and charitable groups. By involving them in community rail activities, and working with them to diversify volunteering opportunities, greater social benefits can be achieved from our railways and

London Road Station's rejuvenation

At London Road Station, Brighton, volunteers grow fruit and veg in a previously disused space, maintain pretty gardens and planters that brighten up darker corners, provide pick-your-own herb boxes, oversee station heritage and notice boards, and have weekly socials.⁸⁷ Their work therefore provides the volunteers with access to: enjoyable social interaction; outdoor exercise; healthy, locally-grown produce; food growing and gardening skills; and a sense of achievement from the station's visible rejuvenation. The wider community and rail passengers benefit from: a more welcoming station; information on local heritage; free herbs; and even reduced crime.⁸⁸

See:

www.londonrdstationpartnership.wordpress.com.

CASE STUDY

Beyond Boundaries at Commondale Station

Comondale Railway Station on the Esk Valley Railway, lies within the North York Moors National Park. The unstaffed station has been adopted through a volunteer programme, organised by a locally-based voluntary organisation 'Beyond Boundaries', who offer inclusive activities for adults and young people with learning difficulties. A shared interest held by many of the members – including those who are on the Autistic Spectrum and those with Downs Syndrome – is the railway. The chance to engage others with similar interests and hobbies, including passengers and visitors, has proved invaluable. The station has become a focal point for art and horticultural projects, which has helped to promote health, wellbeing and confidence for those involved. Their presence on the platform is also building tolerance and understanding from staff and passengers, and promotes the station as an inclusive and welcoming space.⁸⁹

CASE STUDY



Photo Credit: Northern

for communities. In some cases, these projects engage the service users or beneficiaries of these partner organisations in volunteering. As the case studies below suggest, and from wider anecdotal evidence, this appears to carry particular benefits to these volunteers, due to the work being highly visible, and involving contact with rail passengers and local people. ACoRP is working to support and encourage more of this type of work across the community rail movement, given the scope to have a profound impact on social inclusion.

c) Employability and skills development

The effect of volunteering generally on developing skills and employability is well established through research and is high on the policy agenda, especially in times of high unemployment and insecure work.

Various studies have examined the role of volunteering in increasing employability; particularly through the way it develops job-specific hard skills, transferable soft skills and by increasing an individual's social capital.⁹⁰

Volunteering can help individuals to develop skills needed for new employment, create new social networks that might open-up opportunities for alternative employment, and meet others in similar situations.⁹¹ Other studies have highlighted the importance of activities like volunteering – outside of formalise education and work – in helping to develop a mindset to help individuals manage the uncertainty and risk of employment insecurity and thus promote greater social equity.⁹²

For young people particularly, community rail volunteering opportunities could also help develop non-cognitive skills and support character development. By engaging with a social action project such as station improvement or fundraising, for example, individuals learn how to work with others, cope with difficult situations, overcome setbacks and undertake basic project management, all of which are increasingly valued by employers but are also skills for life. By

having early engagement with the railways and local station life, they are also more likely to engage with community rail, and probably use rail, on an ongoing basis. Station and railway volunteering projects can provide opportunities for individuals and groups to contribute to wider voluntary schemes and awards such as Duke of Edinburgh and National Citizenship Service. These schemes not only deliver value in terms of skills development, but also bring more people in touch with the railways and increase the chances of them participating in other community rail activities. It can also provide a vehicle through which community rail can engage more diverse groups in their activities, especially as these wider programmes will have their own outreach initiatives to promote inclusion.

Many community rail partnerships and groups are developing programmes with universities and colleges to offer

volunteering opportunities that provide scope for more sophisticated skills development, while providing huge value to their communities. Severnside Community Rail Partnership are beginning a new project in collaboration with the Centre for Transport and Society at the University of West England to recruit and train students as Volunteer Rail Ambassadors. Ambassadors accompany small groups of participants from socially deprived backgrounds on short rail journeys, helping them to build confidence to use

local rail services independently. The students gain skills and knowledge for their studies and become more aware of their local communities. Devon and Cornwall Community Rail Partnership, based at the University of Plymouth, also offers a range of volunteering to provide students from different disciplines the chance to apply their knowledge in practice and add value to the area. This ranges from story-book making to student masterclasses generating innovative ideas for rail improvements.⁹⁴ Such schemes can also help to give communities a voice in rail development, as discussed in part one.



Northern's National Citizenship Challenge

This year, Northern has supported 400 young people to complete the National Citizenship Challenge. This is a national voluntary programme for 16-18 year olds that helps them to develop skills, confidence, leadership, independence and citizenship. As part of this, participants deliver a community action project of their choice. In Bradford and Calderdale, 80 young people spent time travelling on the Northern network to meet community groups from different backgrounds, cultures and age groups to get a fuller understanding of local communities. The project involved providing a safe environment for participants to learn how to use trains independently, allowing them to further explore the area, have an increased sense of mobility, and maintain friendships made on the programme.⁹³

Many people face transitions in life that lead them to seek new experiences through volunteering. With an ageing UK workforce and a rising pension age, older workers are having to think creatively about how to sustain an income and adjust to working in new environments and often part time or on precarious work contracts.⁹⁶ A report carried out by the Institute for Volunteering Research found that volunteering can play a significant role in a person's life as they transition from work to retirement by providing a 'structured' means of making a meaningful contribution to society and to replicate aspects of paid work lost when paid work opportunity has ceased. It also allows individuals to continue learning new skills and giving something back, which all contribute to increased feelings of happiness and reducing feelings of isolation.⁹⁷

d) Corporate volunteering

Corporate volunteering, which is increasingly common within community rail, offers important opportunities for employees to develop communication and self-confidence, build leadership and teamwork abilities and, importantly, enhance social and cultural understanding and community connections.

It can also give community rail groups access to valuable skills and knowledge through working alongside industry partners.⁹⁸ Network Rail has an award-winning corporate volunteering programme where employees at all levels are given up to five days of paid volunteer leave per year and are encouraged to volunteer their time on community projects. Staff have worked with community rail groups, supported rail safety work, adopted stations, and organised stand-alone projects. This has included revamping Radcliffe-on-Trent Station on the Poacher Line, joining forces with East Midlands Trains and Sustrans East Midlands.⁹⁹

Another excellent example of work to deliver better community use of rail assets for the benefit of social inclusion is an Network Rail event at Euston Station on Christmas Day to provide lunch for homeless people.¹⁰⁰ They also participate in community projects outside of the railway, which is a valuable way of raising awareness of rail and the people that make it work, but builds good relationships with communities.¹⁰¹

CASE STUDY



Network Rail Volunteers
at Chichester Station

Salford Central's adoption by On the Out

At Salford Central, the station has been adopted by a local voluntary organisation On the Out, which provides ex-offenders with support on their release, at a point when they may not otherwise choose to work openly within mainstream services. Their work helps re-integration into the community through volunteering and training opportunities. This helps them make the adjustment back into employment, plus their work at the station aims to create a positive presence within the community and soften negative views of past offenders.⁹⁵

CASE STUDY

Part five: Engaging communities in art and heritage



Arts and heritage projects are a major element of community rail, helping to create inclusive networks, engage new audiences and excluded groups, increase pride and ownership and create a powerful community identity.

It is well-documented that community art that focuses on cultural well-being, self-expression and creativity helps to improve and bind communities, promoting social inclusion both through the impact of the project and the process of creation itself.¹⁰² Projects that help to create awareness of and engagement with local history and heritage, which local railways invariably played a key part in, can similarly help people to feel connected, rooted and positive in relation to their area.

a) Art projects

Participatory community art projects occurring in and around stations play a strong role in making stations into brighter, more welcoming gateways for their communities, while being a vehicle through which community rail can promote social inclusion.

Train stations provide an excellent focal point for community art. As important public spaces, often of historic importance, many offer a blank canvas for reaching new audiences and encouraging reflection and intrigue. As an important gateway into a community, station art projects can impact on how residents feel about where they live. Indeed, research has shown the role the arts play in helping to galvanise community engagement, participation in planning and in creating a shared sense of identity and pride.¹⁰³ It can also provide a grassroots, creative response to common issues at stations, such as graffiti, anti-social behaviour and litter, which can make a station feel unclean and uncared for, and may prevent passengers from feeling safe and comfortable when arriving and waiting.¹⁰⁴

The process and creation of station art in itself promotes social inclusion as it brings diverse groups and partners together to create something that represents and benefits the whole community, in a space that aims to be welcoming and accessible to all. It empowers communities with a way to drive through local change, enabling communities to learn and share skills, build community spirit and develop constructive ways to work together. In this way, it encourages different cultural groups to interact, promotes cross-generational contact, and provides community rail groups with a way to include diverse groups in activities and attract funding from

wider sources. The networking between amateur, community and professional bodies, groups and organisations through community art projects has also been shown to promote social cohesion.¹⁰⁶ In community rail, successful projects often draw in other groups and associations that play pivotal roles in the local area, and can provide a shared space for artistic impression and community work.

Ladywell welcomes everybody

In Ladywell in London, the community applied for and were awarded a licence from Network Rail and funding from their local council to install a large public art mural to help tackle graffiti under the railway bridge after a number of complaints. Local artists were commissioned and the new vibrant mural 'Welcome to Ladywell' proudly welcomes people to the community. It started more discussions in the community to look at more opportunities. Ladywell ward councillor, Bill Brown, said: "This is a great example of the local community coming together and getting involved in participatory democracy. They decided to use funding provided by the council to do something to brighten up their area and, at the same time, show that Ladywell welcomes everybody – just like the borough does."¹⁰⁵

CASE STUDY

The growing number of arts projects and schemes on and around our railways can also contribute to wider social policy

aims on wellbeing and health. An inquiry by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing found that community-based arts projects, like those in community rail, can help to meet major challenges facing health and social care including ageing, long-term conditions, loneliness and mental health and save money in the health and social care.¹⁰⁷ Art can also provide a way for individuals who may struggle to communicate due to disability or illness to express themselves and can also be therapeutic for mental health sufferers.¹⁰⁸ Displaying art work created by these groups at stations can promote tolerance and understanding of difference and diversity. It can also transcend language barriers and is a powerful way of creating an atmosphere of inclusion at stations, creating an environment that reflects the local community and celebrates multiculturalism. It can also encourage skill development, improve self-confidence and even lead to ambitious education and career options.¹⁰³

There is also growing evidence of art providing impetus for new community rail work to spring up. Participants in station art are likely to feel they have made a positive difference to their community and, in the context of community rail, may have an increased propensity to participate in local rail-related activities. At Stone Station, the train operator engaged a local art group to create a series of 'Visit Stone' community art posters, which promoted participation and pride in the railway and directly led to a new Friends of Stone Station adoption group being set up.¹⁰⁹ On a larger scale, after the hugely successful 'Mural for St James' in Walthamstow, London Overground, operated by Arriva Rail London, developed a route community rail partnership with public art at its heart, linking some of the most culturally diverse communities in the country. Building on the positivity and partnership work of projects like these can therefore be instrumental in growing community rail and its profile, and engaging new audiences.

For train operating companies and other industry partners, art and other creative projects can encourage meaningful collaboration with communities and make a positive social impact. The Heart of Wales Line Development Company for example is working with Arriva Trains Wales and local artists to develop a line-long arts trail to mark the 150th anniversary of the line this year. This will include semi-permanent installations along the line, open studio weekends that are accessible by rail and performances.¹¹² As has been argued elsewhere, the true principles of community rail extend over boundaries between different train operators, and joint projects that involve multiple partners can often be powerful and ensure a big return on investment in terms of social impact and benefit to the railway's use and reputation.¹¹³



Revitalising Burnley Central

CASE STUDY

The aim of this project was to revitalise Burnley Central station in a way that would be relevant to current and future passengers. British Asian passengers make up one of the largest groups of rail users in the North West, but, according to Passenger Focus data, they are consistently less satisfied across a range of areas compared to white British passengers.¹¹⁴ A station arts project engaging the young British Asian population, through the local primary school, provided the opportunity to ensure meaningful social representation of this group. Community Rail Lancashire worked in close collaboration with the University of Manchester's 'Multilingual Manchester' unit and a local artist to design a project that reflected the diversity of the area. Community Rail Lancashire took the young people on sensory train journeys to generate the vocabulary for the creation of abstract station artwork and the children then chose the

languages that were significant to them, including English, Urdu, Punjabi, Chinese, Hungarian and Spanish. The teacher said, "This is the best project we have ever done, the children have enjoyed it so much and the artwork looks fantastic!"

Love thy neighbour at Smethick Rolfe Street

CASE STUDY

Smethwick Rolfe Street Station is in an inner-city area of Birmingham with high levels of cultural diversity, and was in need of regeneration. London Midland worked with Smethwick Abrahamic Foundation, which brings Muslims together with all faiths to improve their community, to form the station's first adoption group. With help from Network Rail and West Midlands Railway, the group re-established the station garden. At the same time, BTEC Art students from a local college consulted the community to produce a large art mural to celebrate the many cultures of Smethwick. The result was a permanent, colourful and transformative art work that reads 'Love thy neighbour' in many different languages, celebrating diversity and

reflecting the whole community. Students from the same college helped to transform an unused room at the station into a meeting and exhibition space that could be used by the community, enabling the station to take part in Heritage Open Day. With many people engaged across cultures, ages and abilities, lasting relationships have been formed, and the community has transformed the station into a wonderful hub and gateway of which they can be proud.¹¹¹

b) Heritage projects

Much like community rail projects that use art to revitalise stations and engage new audiences, projects that focus on celebrating a community's heritage can also promote social inclusion.

Local heritage is highly valued and station buildings themselves, which are often full of historic significance architecturally and to the locality, can matter to communities a great deal and form part of their shared identity. Stations can also play a key part in enriching the fabric of townscapes and landscapes and how communities experience them. People may gravitate towards historic station buildings because they can provide associations with the past and encourage social interaction. As a jointly commissioned report by the British Property Foundation, The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and Historic England found, the regeneration of historic buildings (like some stations) carries many important social outputs as well as economic benefits. This includes improvements in personal safety and the reduction of crime, community involvement and sense of ownership, a sense of community pride, employment and inward investment.¹¹⁵

However, it is not just the buildings themselves that offer potential for promoting social inclusion related to local heritage. Stations can house memorials, both permanent and temporary, to commemorate events that have affected the community in the near or distant past. The Friends of Batley Station, for example, took part in the 'Great Get Together' to honour the memory of Jo Cox, late MP for Batley and Spen, and co-founder of the group. The station was adorned with pictures of Jo, bunting and knitted flowers, and the event

Romsey Station war memorial

For many years, volunteers of the Three Rivers Community Rail Partnership have commemorated the 100 year anniversary of WW1 through different activities, including a regularly-changing display in Romsey Station's waiting room, wartime re-enactments with the Young Archaeologist's club, and fundraising activities for a military charity. In 2016, Great Western Railway sponsored the installation of a monument to mark the 100th anniversary of World War One, which has transformed a barren plot of land into a town landmark. At the moving unveiling ceremony, many members of the community, from veterans to school children, came together to reflect upon and remember



CASE STUDY



Friends of Batley Station next to their memorial for Jo Cox

drew over 80 volunteers and members of the community, sparking conversation and interaction.¹¹⁶

Many stations remember world wars and those who gave their lives in those communities, including railwaymen and women who died during active service.¹¹⁷ There are also many plaques, pictures and exhibits set up and managed by community rail groups that commemorate local achievements, legends and moments of resilience following disasters and hardship. These may help to create collective memory and compassion, and demonstrate community strength.

Other stations are used as spaces for museums celebrating local history. At Ridgmont Station, a heritage centre tells the story of the station and its residents and the nearby Ridgmont Brickworks. Elsewhere in Glasgow, the Kilmarnock Heritage Station Trust has an archive housing photographs, maps and architectural plans for various stations relating to The Glasgow and South Western Railway Company, preserving these historical documents for future generations.¹¹⁸ Research shows that museums and heritage centres like these play an important role in reaching out to socially excluded groups. They can: encourage personal growth and development among those at risk of exclusion; empower disadvantaged communities by increasing self-determination through increased interest and pride in their area; and positively represent diversity and challenge stereotypes. They can also enhance educational achievement and promote lifelong learning, tackle unemployment and reduce crime.¹¹⁹ The Heritage Lottery Fund also points to growing evidence that museums (and galleries) have a positive effect on health and wellbeing.¹²⁰

By being based at stations, these important facilities can benefit from connections and accessibility for visitors and the opportunity for community rail to link museum outreach to wider community activities. For community rail, such museums and centres can also unlock access to more diverse funding across arts, heritage and cultural sectors. It also opens up access to other networks of knowledge and further opportunities for collaboration.



Millom's Discovery Centre

CASE STUDY

The creation of Millom Station's Discovery Centre was a major renovation project that brought a disused and historic station building back to life, coordinated by Community Rail Cumbria but involving many local partners and volunteers. Its volunteer-led local history museum has a 'mine shaft' entrance leading to an indoor street layout containing growing collection of some 10,000 artefacts recording the town's past. Its Rail Room explains the role of rail in local history. The centre now hosts school and group visits, and provides a focal point for the town's rediscovery of its past and its future regeneration.

See www.millomdiscoverycentre.co.uk.

Kilmarnock Connections

CASE STUDY

Kilmarnock Connections is a community public art installation that transformed a station underpass into a living-museum artwork that is owned by the town, its people, businesses and local groups, and reflects its unique history and future. Led by award-winning community arts organisation WaveParticle and initiated by a partnership led by ScotRail, the project was developed under the theme of 'connecting the town to the station' and sought to ensure that local knowledge, history and ambitions were at the heart of the design process. Over 250 people, including local schools, college and community groups directly fed into its creation through a series of workshops and meetings that encouraged people to bring drawings, stories, anecdotes that said something about the town. The project has seen the community taking pride and ownership of their heritage and has created a shared and inclusive community asset that celebrates the town's history and allows for ongoing community participation, making it dynamic and flexible, so it will grow with the community.¹²¹ The project is linked to wider regeneration at Kilmarnock to turn the station into a true 'community station'.¹²²

Recommendations and ideas

Throughout, this report highlights opportunities for further growth and development of community rail activities to promote social inclusion, and how ACoRP, government, industry and other partners can continue to work with community rail to unleash this greater potential.

To sum up how community rail can generally be supported to deliver increased impact on social inclusion, ACoRP recommends that government, industry and other partners continue to work to:

- Support the development of community rail's capacity, capabilities and independence – working with ACoRP to help community rail to achieve more, through greater and more diverse funding, and development of skills, confidence and capability, especially to broaden and enrich community engagement. This should include the ongoing development of rail industry support for community rail, but also attention to how community rail's independence and unique position as a grassroots movement is protected and enhanced.
- Remove bureaucratic and other barriers to community rail delivery – much has been achieved in recent decades, but there is more to be done to overcome practical and bureaucratic barriers to community rail's delivery. In particular, there seems a need to address common barriers in developing stations for community use, improving station accessibility, and connecting rail with other sustainable and active modes, and to develop clearer, more efficient, consistent processes for community rail to engage with the rail industry on such matters.
- Ensure effective collaboration with community rail – again, there are many positive examples and great headway has been made, but effective engagement of and genuine collaboration with community rail, by the rail industry, but also local transport authorities, planners and developers, could be further enhanced. In particular, there is scope to further draw on the community rail network to ensure transport and wider development meets community needs, and that communities have a voice.
- Championing and communicating community rail – working with community rail partnerships and groups to champion community rail, and supporting them to communicate their plans and successes, seems crucial to widening community rail's reach, representation, influence and ability to engage partners.

We also suggest below specific opportunities for developing community rail under each of the five headings. These are designed to provide ideas and tips relevant to those working in community rail partnerships and groups and their rail industry partners, although many are also relevant to wider parties. We would emphasise the need for support, funding and collaboration, as set out above, to enable this work to be delivered on a broader and ongoing basis.



1. Accessible journeys for all

Community rail partnerships and groups may be able to:

- Collaborate further with local groups, charities and other voluntary organisations that support socially marginalised or disadvantaged groups that may otherwise struggle with rail accessibility. Such partnerships can be used to support rail accessibility and confidence schemes, ensuring that these groups' needs are met and that they are engaged and have a voice in the railways.
- Consider whether projects by other community rail partnerships and groups to engage groups with particular needs would be beneficial to adapt in your area.
- Help to promote national and regional discounts cards/rail cards/promotional offers that can make travel significantly more affordable. Consider an outreach approach, taking this message to community and voluntary centres, job centres, Citizen's Advice Bureaus and schools, to help everyone to access and benefit from these savings.
- Explore with train operators and/or transport authorities promotion of existing locally-available deals (such as rover or multi-modal tickets) that might improve affordability for key groups, and discuss any opportunities to set up and promote additional schemes.
- Look for opportunities to combine work to improve rail accessibility and confidence with other areas of work covered in this report, such as volunteering, arts projects, promoting sustainable access to opportunities, and community stations development. Bringing together such work could reap huge benefits for social inclusion.

Rail industry partners can:

- Ensure clear, efficient, responsible and simple processes are in place for encouraging and responding to community rail partnerships and groups highlighting accessibility problems and needs, and ways to make improvements.
- Work proactively with community rail to identify opportunities to improve accessibility and support community rail to coordinate such work with other local partners, ensuring the communities' needs are at the forefront.
- Investigate options to offer special concessionary tickets for vulnerable groups that drive up passenger numbers on off-peak services. This may include working with local charities that support people from disadvantaged communities, enabling them to offer days out and new experiences to their service users.

2. Connecting people to opportunities and services

Community rail partnerships and groups may be able to:

- Set up partnerships with national parks, AONBs and nature reserves to promote safe and sustainable access to the countryside. This could include working with organisations that are working to inspire independent travel confidence, nature engagement and access to the countryside, and linking with sustainable transport organisations and services.
- Work with local tourism attractions and bodies to create affordable packages for families and individuals to enjoy a day out. Cross-promotion across community rail groups may be useful too.
- Consider ways to deliver walking activities, such as led by volunteers or by partnering with a local voluntary group to help them combine train travel and healthy and accessible walking activities. Seeking funding to develop walking materials in audio, braille or through apps could widen engagement.
- Use ACoRP's annual Community Rail in the City to promote sustainable access to leisure and travel. Consider involving local recreational bodies and community organisations to help generate new ideas, perspectives and share resources.
- Explore linkages with participation initiatives and outreach programmes in universities and with organisations that empower disadvantaged young people into employment, education and training (e.g. IntoUniversity, The Princes Trust, Propel, Chance4Change, UKYouth, SuttonTrust). There may be opportunities to access funding for activities and/or scope for joint initiatives.
- Tap into local walking and cycling initiatives such as cycling safety training and bike share projects that can help people to connect to train services equitably. There may be scope to embed these initiatives into existing railway confidence and outreach programmes and help to promote sustainable and connected end-to-end journeys.

Rail industry partners can:

- Support and collaborate with community rail on any of the above initiatives, especially by helping to make connections and introductions, and promoting and championing new initiatives and successes.
- Consider creating/extending schemes that help people experiencing hardship to enter or re-enter the labour market, such as free or reduced tickets, working with community rail groups to link this to railway confidence programmes.
- Produce accessible materials and resources on employment pathways into the sector so that community rail groups can help to promote employment opportunities and promote diversity.

3. Stations as spaces for social growth and enterprise

See ACoRP's 2017 Community Stations report for recommendations, ideas and insights, particularly the guidance on p17-25 and recommendations on p26-28, at <http://bit.ly/2qHGM40>

4. Community rail volunteering

Community rail groups and organisations may be able to:

- Broaden volunteer recruitment mechanisms to attract a more diverse volunteer demographic, and ensure recruitment materials are inclusive, welcoming and accessible, seeking advice from ACoRP and local networks such as CVS as needed.
- Ensure you are easy to contact, responsive and approachable for those wanting to get involved.
- Make use of volunteering bureaux, including websites such as 'Do-it', and local volunteer centres, to broaden engagement. Consider tapping into existing schemes that may help to target a particular demographic, such as Duke of Edinburgh, National Citizenship Service, Community Payback Schemes, University of the Third Age, Scouts and Guides, University of the Third Age, Union Learn and Age UK.
- Consider working with organisations that can support community/voluntary groups to engage with young people in community life, local-decision making and improving services, such as 'Young Advisors'.
- Advertise the benefits of volunteering in a way that is appealing and meaningful to different individuals. Consider what skills and experiences your volunteers gain and if this is clear in your materials, and if you can offer roles that would allow for different levels of time commitment and suit varying levels of ability.
- Consider whether and how you could recruit a more diverse range of individuals to your board or management committee.
- Consider offering certificates and references to help volunteers gain employment and access further education. This could help with applications to universities and those entering or transitioning into new employment.
- Celebrate the successes and achievements of volunteers in a way that is visible to your community (e.g. press releases, posters, social media). You could collect and record good news stories about the difference that volunteering has made to individuals' confidence, skills, health and wellbeing.
- Consider if there are any existing voluntary organisations in your community that could adopt a station or part of it, helping them to achieve their aims and objectives.
- Look into opportunities to work with businesses and organisations to explore corporate volunteering. This might be practical, skill based and/or with a community interaction focus, and might help to generate corporate sponsorship too.
- Consider running a community action day with your train operating company to rapidly improve a station, including diverse members of community in the challenge.

Rail industry partners can:

- Support and advise on the recommendations above, such as by offering help from in-house diversity, community engagement or communications specialists, or setting up links with local partners.
- Promote corporate volunteering and organise community action days, as per the last two recommendations above, ensuring this is in line with the needs and priorities of community rail partners. To build enduring relationships, ensure corporate volunteering opportunities are sustainable and permit ongoing involvement.

5. Engaging communities in art and heritage

Community rail groups and organisations may be able to:

- Work with groups with local knowledge and networks on arts and heritage projects, to ensure these achieve maximum social impact.
- Involve a diverse range of community groups in decision-making and creation when considering, planning and undertaking any art work, heritage projects, memorials or commemorative literature to ensure people feel that it reflects their community and have a sense of ownership.
- Work with schools and colleges to increase engagement with 'live' projects, encouraging inter-generational involvement and engaging the next generation in rail, and offering valuable work experience and community awareness that can contribute to social inclusion. These activities could be mapped to national curriculum goals to show schools and colleges how they can be involved. Consider using schools' existing evaluative and monitoring procedures to demonstrate the impact of projects.
- Consider the Arts Council Accreditation Scheme when developing exhibits and museums. This is based on nationally-agreed standards and could help access to funding and support around developing inclusive services.¹²³
- Seek funding to employ a creative specialist, or explore opportunities to link with arts practitioners through local councils, arts bodies and local community groups.
- Bear in mind the social value of connecting people with local history, and the important role that railways have played in communities' culture, heritage and collective memory.

Rail industry partners can:

- Consider sponsoring more projects that enable community rail groups to work with other community stakeholders on art and heritage activities at and around stations. This could be through a community investment fund.
- Help to publicise the impact of such schemes through corporate communication channels (while making clear the community's ownership of the scheme) to raise awareness of projects and inspire further industry and public involvement.
- Consider working with other train operating companies that may serve the same station or line, and with Network Rail, to pool expertise and resourcing for arts and heritage projects.
- Ensure such projects are designed and led by the community (supported by the rail industry), to empower local people and deliver maximum benefit to social inclusion.

End notes

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- ¹² Proposed by Professor Paul Salveson, Group Advisor (Society and Communities) Arriva UK Trains in personal capacity, December 2017
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- ²³ See: ACoRP's 2017 Community Rail Awards Winners' Booklet: <https://acorp.uk.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/ACoRP-CRA17-Winners-Brochure.pdf>
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About ACoRP

The Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP) is dedicated to supporting community-based groups and partnerships that connect their community with their railway and deliver social benefit.

ACoRP supports and assists community rail partnerships and groups to:

- Enhance the railways' contribution to local sustainable development and community wellbeing, including by maximising access to and use of the railways
- Ensure the community has a voice and plays a part in the development and improvement of our railways, so this meets community needs and aspirations and delivers maximum social benefit
- Communicate the development and importance of our railways to local communities, enhancing understanding and pride, and promoting rail as a key part of sustainable, healthy travel.

While ACoRP remains a small organisation, its recent growth means it is further developing its support work, providing a greater range of training opportunities and written materials, and better facilitating sharing and networking across its members and partners.

For further advice and support please contact
Tel: 01484 548926
Email: info@acorp.uk.com
www.communityrail.org.uk

Rail Delivery Group



About Rail Delivery Group

The Rail Delivery Group (RDG) brings together the companies that run Britain's railway into a single team with one goal - to deliver a better railway for you and your community.

All the passenger and freight rail companies are members of the RDG, as well as Network Rail and HS2. RDG provides services and support to enable members to succeed in transforming and delivering a successful railway.

Rail is fundamental to the country's prosperity. After enormous growth, Britain's railway is increasingly important in connecting workers to jobs, businesses to markets, and people to their families and friends. RDG continues to work with ACoRP to further the case for community rail activity and support for it, as well as improving train operators' knowledge of how the community role can help them and the communities they serve through practical examples.

See: www.raildeliverygroup.com