

# London Northwestern Railway

## Community Rail Report

10 December 2018

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## 1. Executive summary

Community Rail is an important element to the West Midlands Trains franchise and is at the heart of the London Northwestern Railway Customer Experience Directorate. We have three extremely engaged and active award-winning Community Rail Partnerships, as well as 26 station adoption groups.

Partnerships with existing Community Rail Partnerships and Station Adoption Groups have enabled the business to engage with its wide-ranging communities, which have given us a vital insight into the challenges of the communities and neighbourhoods which our railway serves. We are determined to ensure that our community rail strategy develops new levels of 'localism', brokering new connections, breaking down barriers, providing tangible customer support and enhancing the experience of all rail travelers.

Our proposed CRP funding package takes account of the Department for Transport's 2007 published Community Rail Strategy. We have discussed it with the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP) who have lent their endorsement to our plans. We have also held detailed discussions with our CRPs covering their objectives and our expectations in return for enhanced funding.

We welcomed the Department for Transport's new Community Rail Strategy which was launched in November by the Rail Minister, he hailed community rail projects as life changing and a valuable tool to tackling loneliness. We are aware of the power community rail has on connecting communities, reaching out to some of our hard to reach communities and addressing social inclusion.

This report looks back on the first year of this franchise and documents the progress which has been made. As a business we have laid the foundations for a hugely successful franchise which will develop our existing partners and reach out to new communities who will act as the catalyst of growth and sustainability.

## 2. Introduction

This report covers the key community rail activities of the past year, outlines the strategic goals with committed obligations that have been delivered and provides summaries of projects for the year ahead.

At the start of the franchise, there was a high level of energy and interest in the various community groups and stakeholders across the London Northwestern Railway network, however the dedicated support started in earnest in late September when the Head of Stakeholder and Community joined the business.

This senior management post, is designed to work in collaboration with the three, already established Community Rail Partnerships - support them with the development and delivery of projects, embed the new Community Rail Strategy and support a growing army of station adoption volunteers.

We are in the very early stages of getting out into our communities and developing a greater understanding of what their issues are and what role the railway can play in addressing their needs and creating a positive social impact. We are using existing partners to promote the work we do and the opportunity to work on future projects with schools, colleges, universities, community groups and local businesses.

We have finalised the Service Level Agreement with ACoRP and the annual payment of £40,000 per annum will provide dedicated support within the business totaling 3 days per week and one day a week allocation for the London Northwestern Railway business unit.

West Midlands Trains have also agreed to host the 2019 ACoRP Community Rail Awards, this event is an excellent opportunity for the business to demonstrate its commitment and passion for community rail. It will also give our groups the platform to showcase their award-winning projects and share best practice.

### 3. Community Rail Funding

The following table indicates the core funding which will be allocated to the Community Rail Partnerships over the next three years;

	<b>2018/2019</b>	<b>2019/2020</b>	<b>2020/2021</b>
Marston Vale CRP	40,000	40,000	40,000
Abbey Line CRP	40,000	40,000	40,000
North Staffordshire CRP	10,000	10,000	10,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>90,000</b>	<b>90,000</b>	<b>90,000</b>

This year's funding and the proposed funding for the next three years has been discussed in collaboration with ACoRP and we have taken on board their feedback. Funding arrangements have been discussed with the Community Rail Partnerships as part of the annual line plan review, we are content that they are able to deliver their planned activities with the allocated funding available to them from the business.

We have allocated additional funding which will be available to support projects and activities delivered by the Community Rail Partnerships and station adopters. The

below table outlines the budget which has been created to support Stakeholder and Community activity in 2019.

In addition to the 'core funding' there are a number of other supporting initiatives and support mechanisms which aim to enrich and develop the capacity and capability of STPs.

- Funding towards the development and expansion of the adopters' network
- Funding towards the establishment of new CRPs across the network
- Development of a business coaching and SME enterprise support service to work with CRPs and enterprises on CRP lines
- Development and delivery of station travel plans specifically for CRP lines and stations which can be promoted by their local community

#### London Northwestern Railway Community Rail Funding Forecasts for 2019/20

Activity	Description	Budget
Community Arts Project	Community Art Scheme at Stations	8,438
Community Collateral	ID cards, handbooks, posters	3,000
Community Rail	Annual stakeholder & Community Rail Report	5,000
Events	Sponsorship of ACoRP 2019 Awards	5,000
Stakeholder	Conference and Publications	5,000
Station Adoption	Annual conference and Thank you event	5,500
Station Adoption	Adopters Small Grant Fund	30,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>61,938</b>

#### 4. Community Rail Partnerships

We have been working with the three Community Rail Partnerships and ACoRP to pull together their annual line plans, which can be found in Appendix 1. These ambitious plans link in with the four themes identified in the new Community Rail Development Strategy. Our work with the Community Rail Partnerships and other community groups will fully support the new strategy, and our plans are already in line with the themes included in the strategy.

In addition to the business as usual activities which have taken place this year, we have facilitated a meeting with London Northwestern Railway Marketing Manager and Digital Executive to identify opportunities when the business to support the

partnerships and promote Community Rail activity. The partnerships have been involved with the May 2019 timetable and have had the opportunity to feedback comments and observations to the train planning team. We are also working with the groups to identify locations for the 2019 community volunteer days which will be delivered in partnership with London Northwestern Railway and Network Rail colleagues.

## **5. Overview of this year's community rail activities and achievements**

### **Community Rail Conference and Station adopter day**

During the Summer we organised a day on the Severn Valley Railway for the station adoption groups, this was the first time we had brought everyone together since the start of the franchise. It was an excellent opportunity for us to thank them for their hard work and to allow them to network and share best practice.

We held the Community Rail conference on 21 September at the Bull Ring Conference Centre and the event was attended by over 65 guests, including Community Rail Partnerships, station adoption groups, ACoRP, West Midlands Rail Executive and West Midlands Trains colleagues. The agenda included information on funding opportunities, adopter's insurance, edible gardening projects, Pop Up Artisans, Small Free Library, the Permission to Smile Campaign and all delegates received a copy of the Station Adopters Handbook.

### **Station Adoption**

A considerable amount of activity has taken place over the past 12 months, with a large proportion of this happening at the adopted stations along the community rail lines. We have recruited new groups at Apsley, Berkhamstead and Acton Bridge and our focus for the year ahead will be to continue to reach out to the communities across the network and promote the benefits of station adoption. Meetings with local authorities, Business Improvement Districts and Rail User Groups have enabled us to engage with potential new groups and the funding streams, available both internally and externally, have proven to be very attractive.

### **Class 230**

We have been working very closely with artist Alisha Miller who is creating unique artwork for the class 230 trains which we will be introducing on the Marston Vale line in 2019. Alisha has spent a considerable amount of time with the CRP, the team at Ridgmont Station Heritage Centre and passengers travelling along the route. Her

artwork will depict the history of the line, iconic images and the landscape which can be seen from the train window.

### **Success at the ACoRP Awards**

Both Community Rail Partnerships had a strong year at the 2018 ACoRP community rail awards, with a total of six entries being shortlisted including; Stewartby Station art exhibition created by Kimberley College, the Abbey Line Community Fun day and Primary School Station Adoption and Watford North, How Wood and Park Street stations. Marston Vale CRP were awarded first and third place in the photo competition for their pictures which truly captured the essence of community rail.



### **Celebrating Christmas**

London Northwestern Railway colleagues have been supporting both the Marston Vale and Abbey Line Community Rail Partnerships with their plans for the Christmas events which will be taking place on their lines during December. The partnerships will be building on the success of previous years, which have been hugely popular with children and their families and have always been supported by a large number of volunteers from local businesses, local authorities and rail user groups.

## Marston Vale's Ghost Train

Once more the Marston Vale Community Rail Partnership pulled out all the stops and organised a fabulously spooky ghost train for families to celebrate Halloween. The face painter, balloon modeller and refreshments on board the train were hugely popular with the children and the team at Ridgmont Station Heritage Centre organised craft making and served a themed menu. The event was well supported by volunteers from the community rail partnership, the Bedford to Bletchley Rail Users' Association, Network Rail and the London Northwestern Railway colleagues who were working the train got involved by making scary announcements over the tannoy and wearing fancy dress.



## Winsford Remembers

To mark Remembrance Day and to commemorate the end of WW1, the Friends of Winsford Station, who also run a community art gallery in the town centre, have created a wooden carved plaque which depicts two soldiers holding rifles with their heads bowed. The plaque has been placed in the waiting room at the station and will be a permanent memorial of the 100th anniversary of the armistice.



## Station Travel Plans

WMT has an ambitious plan for the development of around 90 Station Travel Plans (STP) across our network in the next two and a half years. These are designed to be 'living' documents and driven whenever possible from community level with shared ownership between the train operating company, other train and bus operators, community transport, local authorities and most importantly local community organisations ('formal' and 'informal').

We have a specific obligation to deliver at least 10 community level station travel plans by April 2020 and already a number of keen Town/Parish Council and CRPs have come forward to work with us.

We are working with ACoRP to develop a 'community level' station travel plan toolkit which will adapt the full STP toolkit into a 'lite' form for use with community organisations and this is due to be ready by April 2019, and piloted with existing CRPs

For London Northwestern Railway we are already working on the following STPs

- Marston Vale – all stations with be covered with us taking the lead on Bletchley as a key interchange station and working in partnership with Bedford Borough Council and Govia Thameslink Railway on Bedford station. The plan is to work with each cluster of stations by local authority area to support engagement of local development plans and key planning applications affecting the railway.
- The priority stations have been identified, including Bedford St Johns, Kempston Hardwick, Woburn Sands, Ridgmont, Bow Brickhill and Fenny

Stratford. STP inception work has already taken place and a work programme will be drawn up with detailed activity starting in January 2019 with full support from the CRP.

- Abbey Line – all stations will be included with us taking the lead at Watford Junction and through partnership working with GTR at St Albans City/Abbey stations. Development meetings have already taken place with the CRP and Hertfordshire County Council/Watford Borough Council and there is a commitment to run customer engagement/research after April 2019, once further volunteers have joined us.
- For 'stand-alone' community level STPs, we are already working with Parish and Town Councils to develop plans for Wolverton, Tring and Long Buckby

A copy of the Community STP presentation delivered at the Transport Integration Forum is provided at Appendix 2.

### **Station Neighbour Scheme**

A key element of our approach is to develop a 'station neighbour' scheme which is designed to support customers on the 'last mile' from the station - right across the franchise.

Station Neighbours will be businesses, pubs, cafes, community organisations, petrol stations, shops close to station that will pledge to supporting people in the case of an 'emergency' (eg waiting in bad weather, phone is dead, lift doesn't turn up, train is cancelled) and will also help to bring those businesses closer to the railway in terms of ownership and community spirit.

We are developing this scheme in close collaboration with ACoRP and plan to test the scheme concept with CRPs during Spring 2019, with a view to a more widespread rollout.

### **Working with ACoRP**

Close collaborative working with ACoRP is an important part of our approach to community rail, and a strategic partnership has been agreed operating at 3 levels:

- Being a thought partner to WMT, advising us on strategic opportunities and projects that could have more universal application across the UK community rail sector;

- Delivering specific projects (eg Station Neighbour, STP toolkit, community planning guidance, turning and development etc) in partnership with WMT;
- Providing day to day practical help to WMT, working with the stakeholder engagement and relationship management team members

We have developed a Service Level Agreement to cover these 3 pillars of cooperation, and this provides a useful model not only for working with ACoRP, but for ongoing development and set up of new CRP organisations.

A copy of the current SLA is set out at Appendix 3.