

# London Northwestern Railway

## 2019 Community Rail Report



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## Executive Summary

Community Rail continues to be a vital component of the West Midlands Trains franchise and is at the heart of the London Northwestern Railway Customer Experience Directorate. As we celebrate the second anniversary of the franchise, it's a great time reflect on what an exciting year it has been so far.

The dedicated focus and resource for community rail that this franchise provides, allows us to engage with our wide-ranging communities who provide us with vital insight into the challenges and opportunities that our communities face. Over the life of this franchise we will;

- Engage with schools, colleges, universities, community groups and local businesses to deliver projects which will have a positive social impact on the communities we serve and gain a greater understanding of our harder to reach and diverse communities.
- Where possible, we will bring disused and underutilised buildings back into use for the benefit of SME's, social enterprises or community organisations and support with matched funding opportunities.
- Invest at least £1.7m per year on community led projects through our Customer and Communities Improvement Fund
- Increase the number of Community Rail Partnerships and develop an urban community rail agenda for the WMR region
- Grow the portfolio of Station Adoption groups and encourage a devolved accountability approach for our colleagues and members of the community.
- Built the local skills and talent in the community and utilise groups not just in terms of physical environmental improvements, but also to harness their ideas and skills in wider activities (e.g. promotion, events, marketing, travel planning).
- Work closely with the CRPs on the development of station travel plans, as part of their Stations as Places programme, including the Marston Vale and Abbey Lines.

There is a lot to deliver by 2026, but a substantial amount of activity has already taken place and this report highlights some of the progress which has been made for the past 12 months.

### 1. Community Rail Funding

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

	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022
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>



Our proposed funding 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 their Accreditation and 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.

From 2020 and for every year of the franchise, £100,000 will be made available for London Northwestern Railway and West Midlands Railway to invest in Community Rail initiatives which encourage additional community rail partnerships and station adopters.

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 along CRP routes and at 'community' stations

Development and delivery of station travel plans specifically for CRP lines and stations which can be promoted by their local community. As part of our *Stations as Places* programme we will be helping CRPs to develop their own travel plans, drawing on local knowledge and expertise. We've already started this with the Marston Vale and Abbey Lines through comprehensive passenger surveys. We have started working on the North Staffs route and as the new CRPs for Worcestershire and Heart of England develop we'll adopt a similar approach for community.

## **2. Community Rail Partnerships**

Over the past 12 months we have been working very closely with our three Community Rail Partnerships and have supported them through the Department for Transport's Accreditation process. As part of this process, the partnerships have produced an annual report and line plans which can be found Appendices 1 and 2. Their plans clearly demonstrate how current and upcoming projects link into the four themes where were identified in the 2018 Community Rail Development Strategy.

In addition to this year's business as usual activities, which can be found in section 3 of this document, we have facilitated meetings between the partnerships and London Northwestern Railway's Marketing, Fares and Timetable teams. These meetings have enabled our internal teams to identify opportunities to support and promote the partnerships, listen to feedback, make recommended changes to timetables and introduce new products which will encourage patronage on the community rail lines.

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

#### The Abbey Line Community Rail Partnership

At the beginning of the year, the partnership welcomed Peter Taylor, the elected Mayor of Watford to the Abbey Line. During his visit, one of the lead adopters led a tour of the station to demonstrate the projects which had been delivered in collaboration with London Northwestern Railway, such as installation of CCTV equipment and community artwork created by one of the local primary school.



Following his visit to the Abbey Line the Mayor hosted an open day for potential new board members and volunteers, which had great success and was well attended by local businesses located in Watford and St Albans. St Albans Cathedral, St Albans BID and Communities First all signed up as new members of the steering group and have been great support to the partnership through sponsorship of events and providing volunteers who have supported events and projects along the line.

The CRP held their annual Family Fun Day on 30 May, they used this event to promote the partnership and engage with the wider community. The stands included Rail Safety sessions for kids by Network Rail, competitions, handmade games and puzzles from Oaklands College, surveys, live band, Mini railway by North London Society of Model Engineers, face painting, balloon modelling, St Albans Cathedral Roman puppet making, information stalls for the CRP, British Transport Police Van, the train operator was on hand for queries, information on the new Education season ticket and 'Back to Work Scheme' and more.

Together with the partnership and Hertfordshire County Council, London Northwestern Railway visited Knutsford Primary Academy to talk to over 40 year 6 pupils about rail safety, careers on the railway, new trains and we ran an interactive lesson around using timetables to plan a rail journey. The following week, pupils were given a real-life experience and travelled along the Abbey Line to Watford Junction, they met front line colleagues, made announcements and have a tour of the station before travelling back to school on the train.



Colleagues from Network Rail and London Northwestern Railway spent the day at Watford Junction removing the weeds and overgrown vegetation from the flower beds located on Platform 9 of the station. We are now working with the Bee friendly on a project to introduce low maintenance, native plants which are sustainable and attract local wildlife, build bug hotels, bird houses and information boards. The second phase of this project will include children's artwork and pop up gardening days, which the Bee Friendly Trust will host.

The partnership also had huge success with their Halloween Train with tickets for the event selling out in just three days and many more families putting their name down on the cancellation list. Children were provided trick or treat goodie bags and activity packs, there was onboard entertainment for the passengers which included two hours of live music, face painting and spooky story telling.

### **Marston Vale Community Rail Partnership**

In April we introduced the three Class 230 trains into service on the Marston Vale line, these upcycled trains have been well received by the partnership, customer and wider community. They have provided a smarter and more comfortable environment for our passengers and the roomy interior gave local artist Alisha Miller a blank canvas to display her bespoke artwork.

Alisha created three separate pieces of artwork, based on memories and feedback from passengers and colleagues and will be displayed around the accessible toilet on each train. Below is an example of the artwork which took its inspiration from the landscape at the Bedford end of the line.



As part of the timetable change in May this year, we reintroduced a bank holiday service along the Marston Vale line, which hasn't operated since 1967. To mark this milestone, we worked closely with the partnership to put on activities for passengers and communities along the line to take part in. This included a guided word and music history train ride between Bedford and Woburn Sands, an interactive BTP police vehicle and afternoon tea at the Ridgmont Station tea rooms.



The partnership worked with the Bedford – St Albans City CRP and a Community Well Being Champion from Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity to arrange a ‘try the train journey’ on Marston Vale Line for 15 ladies from the Khush Haal group in Bedford - a group set up to support vulnerable, predominantly Asian women and improve their wellbeing. Many of the ladies have challenging caring responsibilities and as a result feel socially isolated and suffer from depression, anxiety, low confidence and poor self-esteem.

For some, this was their first visit to the line, many of whom have family connections with the Bedfordshire brickworks, which were once served by the Marston Vale Line. A follow-up journey and visit to Ridgmont Station Heritage Centre took place in November and some members of the group have expressed an interest in getting involved with station adoption and creating artwork or poetry.



Over the summer, the Friends of Woburn Sands station won the ‘best community garden’ prize in the Woburn Sands Garden Competition. The group have been busy brightening up the station platforms with floral displays making beautiful displays of colour as passengers wait for trains or arrive at the station. They have also been

working with Genesis Youth Group from St Michaels Church to create a new mural depicting life in Woburn Sands.

Genesis is a small group aged between 11 and 18 who meet every Tuesday. Several members of the group have learning difficulties. The children decided that they wanted to depict the 'best bits' of the village, so they started off by taking photos of almost every tree, road and building ,then we decided on four panels, to depict the Churches, the High Street and memorial, the woods and a local farm and the Station with the two nearby schools.

The Friends latest project has featured the installation of local history panels in each of the station shelters researched and designed by the local community.



### **North Staffordshire Community Rail Partnership**

At the end of January, the partnership unveiled artwork created by pupils from Abbey Hill School in the waiting shelter at Stone Station to celebrate the 170<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Stone Station.

This was closely followed by an afternoon of storytelling for children and their parents to celebrate St George's Day. The stories started on board a train from Crewe to Stone and continued in the Community Centre at Stone station, where the story tellers really captured the children's attention and entertained them with stories of dragons and giants.

There was also a community action day with the Stone Scout group and their parents, they planted up two large wooden planters with decorative and edible plants which were donated by Boultons, a local garden nursery and the group have adopted the station and have incorporated rail safety and the maintenance of the planters into their weekly activities.



The partnership took part in the national Community Rail in the City event at Crewe, where they had a stand with information about the partnership, what community rail is and how people can get involved in volunteering. They were joined by two artists from Spode pottery museum and passengers were invited to create their own pottery figurines, which were included in an exhibition at the British Ceramics Biennial festival throughout Autumn.



## Station Adoption

During the year we have signed up an additional 10 new station adoption groups at stations including Acton Bridge, Berkhamsted, Nuneaton, St Albans Abbey, Hartford and Stone. All of our groups have been very active in creating new and vibrant artwork for station entrances and waiting shelters. There has also been a huge amount of dedication from the gardening groups who have been working incredibly hard to transform overgrown car parks, platform planters and abandoned flowerbeds at their stations. Below are pictures of some of the groups in action.



We have established a close working relationship with Petty Pool, a vocational college near Hartford which specialises in providing education for students with learning difficulties. As well as adopting Hartford Station, one of their students spent three-months with the Customer Experience team on a work experience placement. Josh shadowed the stations team at Winsford, Hartford and Tamworth, before working with the Train Presentation Team in Liverpool and conducting passenger surveys and pop up Ways to Work events with the Integration and Inclusion Apprentices. Josh is now a valued member of our Stakeholder Equality Group offering real insight as a young person using the London Northwestern network and he will also be contributing to our major Access conference in April 2020.

## Women in Community Rail

Women in Community Rail launched two short films which were created using best practice examples from across the country to demonstrate projects, volunteering and career opportunities available in community rail and in the rail industry. Partners have

been encouraged to use these films to demonstrate the wide variety of projects, volunteering opportunities and careers in the rail industry.

### **Community Rail Conference**

The WMT community rail conference took place in July at St George's Hall in Liverpool. The conference was attended by over 100 delegates, who represented station volunteers, community rail partners, industry colleagues, rail user groups and key stakeholders groups including the DfT and WMRE.



Attendees had the opportunity to hear from our Managing Director, Transport Focus and individuals who have delivered some of this year's community projects. Following the conference and as a token of our appreciation for our volunteers, we arranged a river cruise across the Mersey followed by a tour of the Royal Liver Building and the Museum of Liverpool.

### **Customer and Communities Improvement Fund (CCIF)**

In Autumn we launched our Customer and Communities Improvement Fund. This new and exciting scheme will be available every year of our current franchise and is designed to improve facilities, station areas and local neighbourhoods across the LNR network. We invited stakeholders, customers, communities and community groups to apply for funding which would kick start initiatives or projects in their local areas.

We have received over 80 applications which had a combined value of over £3m. There was a real diverse range of the applications, including projects to tackle homelessness and social isolation, creating new and exciting social enterprises at our station, improving passenger facilities on the platforms and enhancing sustainable travel to and from our stations. The 18 shortlisted projects will be reviewed and



approved by the DfT in January 2020 before the projects start on 1 April, partners will have 12 months to complete their projects.

### Rail Safety Live

Network Rail invited LNR and the BTP to co-host their Rail Safety Live broadcast, an event which took place at Lord Grey Academy in Milton Keynes and was viewed live by over 94,000 students from across the UK. The theme of the show was the dangers of trespassing on the railway and the consequences of not using level crossings correctly. Carol Burns, a Driver Instructor from Bletchley also took part and gave her account of the level crossing incident she was involved in, three years ago. The broadcast has been turned into a 30 minute film and can be viewed online and we are encouraging community rail partnerships and community groups to use the film as an aid when they go into schools to talk about rail safety.



### ACoRP Community Rail Awards

We were delighted to welcome this year's ACoRP Community Rail Awards to our network and to co-host the awards at the International Centre in Telford. The awards ceremony was attended by over 450 guests from across the country including Wales, Scotland and the Netherlands.

As hosts, we put on events and activities either side of the awards. These included a welcome to the West Midlands with a visit to the Black Country Living Museum. A



community rail seminar, informing guests what WMT have been working on over the last 12 months, guest speakers talked about projects they have been involved in, including community art, work experience and crowdfunding for community projects. A visit to the Marston Vale Line to see the Class 230's in action and the Ridgmont Station Heritage Centre and Tea Room.