

Community Rail Report 2022



London
Northwestern
Railway

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Introduction

The Annual Report is our opportunity to showcase in one document the wide-ranging community projects and economic and social outputs delivered over the past year.

Following the joint challenges of Covid and rail industry changes, both London Northwestern Railway and West Midlands Railway have been delighted to see volunteers retain their enthusiasm to support their own neighbourhoods with station and community projects.

The report covers the values of partnership working between industry and local communities and the results of these collaborations at stations and within communities across the network.

The West Midlands Trains 'Stakeholder & Community' division leads on developing local regeneration, community station project management, supporting station volunteers, strengthening relationships with industry stakeholders and launching and managing the annual CCIF programmes.




This past year we launched our new Community Rail Strategy which has been designed to help embed Community Rail across the business as we continue to shape plans for greater customer, community and stakeholder engagement. We have also expanded our network of partners, developing collaborative relationships with other TOCs, the public sector, rail user groups, communities, and local authorities.











Both WMR and LNR have had the opportunity to deliver events and projects, that have been developed from conversations with colleagues, customers and community groups and we are exceptionally proud of the partnership working that pervades in this division of the business and hope you enjoy reading the 2022 Annual Report.

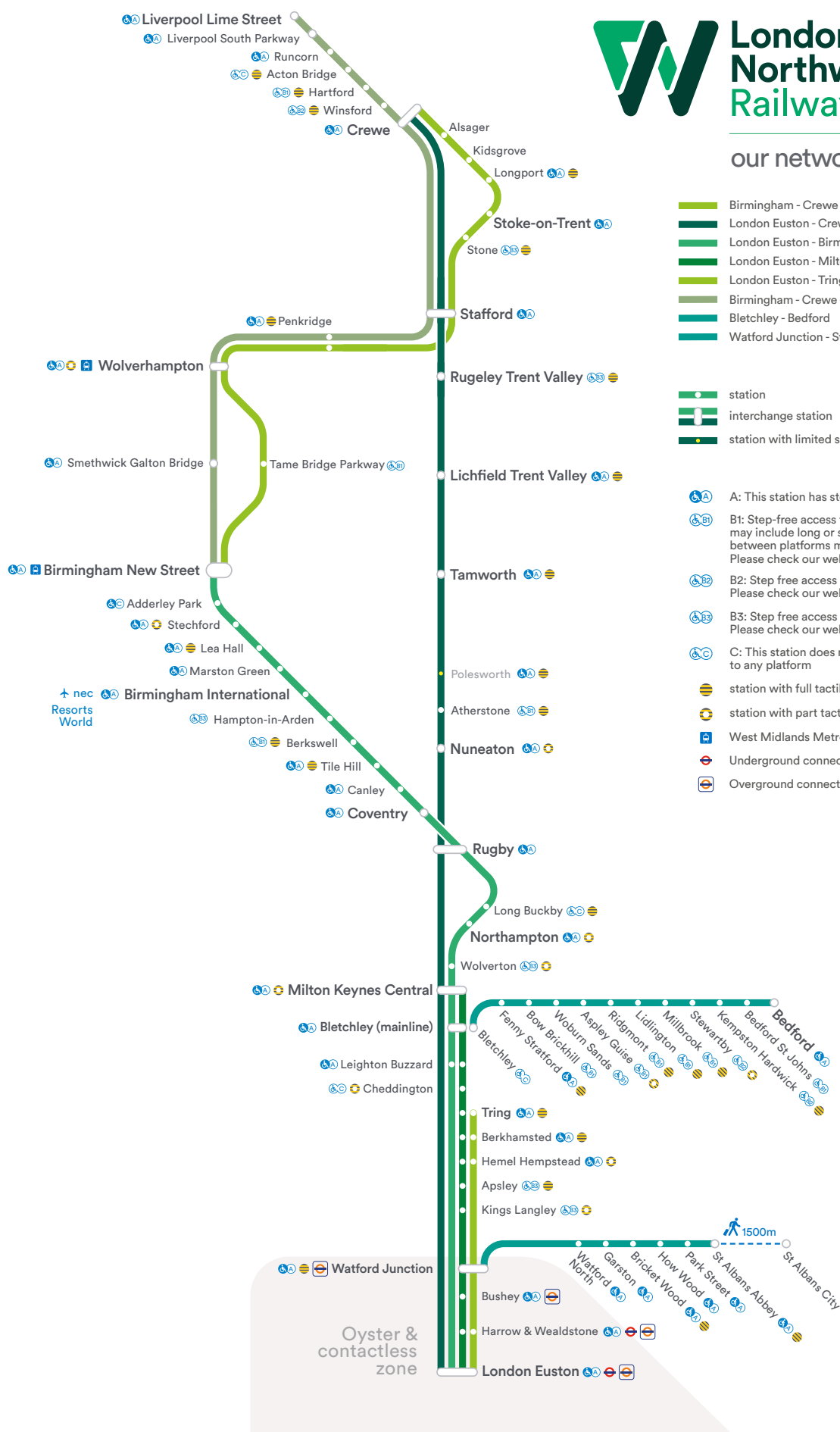


our network

-  Birmingham - Crewe
-  London Euston - Crewe
-  London Euston - Birmingham
-  London Euston - Milton Keynes
-  London Euston - Tring
-  Birmingham - Crewe - Liverpool
-  Bletchley - Bedford
-  Watford Junction - St Albans Abbey

-  station
-  interchange station
-  station with limited service

-  A: This station has step-free access to all platforms
-  B1: Step-free access to all platforms, but this may include long or steep ramps, and access between platforms may be via the street. Please check our website for details.
-  B2: Step free access to some platforms – Please check our website for details
-  B3: Step free access may be in one direction only – Please check our website for details
-  C: This station does not have step-free access to any platform
-  station with full tactile paving
-  station with part tactile paving
-  West Midlands Metro
-  Underground connections
-  Overground connections





1. Community Activity

At this year's annual Stakeholder Conference, we emphasised the importance community rail plays in our business and highlighted our community partners achievements throughout the year. We acknowledged three groups and awarded them our "Community Champion" award for their work which has addressed homelessness in Milton Keynes, tackled the anti-social behaviour at Bedford St Johns Station and promoted destinations and things to do on the Abbey Line.



Following safety concerns regarding overcrowding of college students at Stewartby Station on the Marston Vale line, we commissioned an independent company to make a safety film for Kimberley College students outlining the risks of not using the level crossing correctly and overcrowding the narrow platform at the station. The film was made with the cooperation of BTP, Network Rail and London Northwestern Railway Revenue Protection colleagues and was shown to all the college students during a dedicated "safety week".

WMT were approached to be the industry lead for White Ribbon Day, White Ribbon UK is a charity whose mission is to prevent violence against women and girls. We were given the opportunity to work very closely with Network Rail to raise awareness of the day and become a close partner with the charity. We wrapped one of our trains which was unveiled at London Euston during a photoshoot with some of the industries key figures. We also worked with the Heart of England CRP to host an event onboard the train between Leamington Spa and Nuneaton. Emily Pettitt a local artist was commissioned to sketch drawings on the train windows while volunteers from WMT, Community Rail Network and West Midlands Rail Executive handed out information to passengers about White Ribbon Day, how they can get involved and where people can find help and support.



Together with volunteers from Women in Community Rail we held a female safety awareness event at Liverpool Lime Street. We talked to over 100 passengers, predominately females about how to stay safe when traveling alone especially during the Christmas period. We handed out personal safety alarms, business cards with information on our Arrive Safe Campaign and a QR code to download the BTP Guardian App. We had some very encouraging conversations with passengers who thought this was a very positive campaign as well as Mitie, Avanti West Coast and Network Rail colleagues who took an alarm and said it would make them feel safer when working alone at the station.

More events are planned at various locations throughout 2023 and will be supported by several stakeholders including Network Rail, West Midlands Combined Authority, West Midlands Rail Executive, Heart of England CRP and TOC colleagues. Through our internal engagement groups, we are sending personal safety alarms out to locations across the WMT network and these will be available for colleagues who work alone, feel unsafe on their way to or from work or just in general life.



2. Community Rail Partnerships and overview of this year's activities and achievements

Since June 2022, the Head of Stakeholder and Community for London Northwestern Railway now looks after all 5 Community Rail Partnerships and attends all the Steering Group meetings and AGMs. The past 12 months have been very busy, especially the Marston Vale and Abbey Line CRPs who have been particularly active promoting the return of the train service, after a two-year hiatus. Listed in this report are some of the highlights from each Community Rail Partnership, a full record of our group's activities can be found in the attached annual reports.

Marston Vale CRP

Delivery of a CCIF project to reduce the carbon footprint at the Heritage Centre and improve the visitor experience. The scheme included installation of: restored Littleton Lanterns converted to LED, a pathway around the building for disabled access, a new Welcome Sign outside the building, a hand dryer in the Ladies Toilet, hot water heater timer in the kitchen and an audio-visual screen in the Museum.

Alfie Whittaker, joined MVCRP on placement from the Bedford College Foundation Skills Programme in October 2021. Alfie has assisted with administration, events and cataloguing of the museum collection at Ridgmont Station Heritage Centre. The placement included a visit to Birmingham New Street and the London Northwestern Railway Headquarters in Birmingham in May 2022 as part of Community Rail Week. Alfie was part of the Engaging Young People in Community Rail Panel at the 2022 Community Rail Conference in Nottingham, he is keen to pursue a career in the rail industry and will be continuing his involvement as MVCRP Youth Ambassador.

Abbey Line CRP

The CRP held their annual fun day in September, the theme of the event was 'Reflection, Thanksgiving & Togetherness' and featured a live Jive music and dancing with local food and entertainment. The occasion started with a clap to honour our front-line workers, those we lost in the pandemic and the togetherness of the community.

Their Days Out by Rail campaign, launched in the summer and was developed in response to the increased interest in domestic travel and staycations identified through Visit Britain's Consumer Sentiment Tracker. In a move to help get local residents back on our train track, they launched an awareness campaign 'What's on at the end of the line' to support our local communities and train service through our Abbey Line Days Out programme.

Heart of England CRP

In November, the Heart of England CRP worked with industry partners to bring a week of rail-themed activities to Finham Park 2 Secondary School in Coventry. Over the course of the week, 120 Year 8 students participated in activities based around careers, sustainability, art, food, STEM education, debating, drama and rail safety. Colleagues from WMT supported and led sessions around careers and rail safety and the impact of the week could be seen by the fact that at the start of the week 5% of students said they would consider a career in the railways and 2% said they would maybe a career in the railways, by the end of the week, those numbers had risen to 35% and 20% respectively. Finham Park 2 have already asked if the CRP can run more rail weeks in 2023 and we are working together to plan trips out by train for students.

The Small Grants Fund is available to support the work of station adoption groups in the area covered by the Partnership. Amounts are awarded on a quarterly basis with the maximum amount that can be applied for over the whole year as £175. The Partnership has welcomed grant applications which have improved the environment at stations for passengers, or informed people about train services including,

- Planters and flowerbeds
- Tools and basic supplies
- Community Rail Network membership fees
- Artwork
- Leaflet and poster costs
- Photos, documents and booklets for exhibitions
- Events celebrating local history, either directly related to the railway or significantly promoting use of the train service to people attending

The Heart of England CRP have agreed to fund a wayfinding monolith and fingerpost at Kenilworth Station as part of Kenilworth Town Council's wider wayfinding scheme. The CRP, along with WMT, are working with the town council to finalise details of design and location of the posts.

Worcestershire CRP

Platform is a community rail education scheme developed by Worcestershire, Severnside, Transwilt and Gloucester Community Rail Partnerships, the scheme accessed funding to hire a team of fully qualified teachers to deliver rail education sessions for schools in the Worcestershire area and beyond. Platform was established at the beginning of the year and by June 2022, the team had delivered workshops and assemblies to 1,848 students, with 129 young people taking part in rail familiarisation visits. The project website had 1,110 registered users, with 227 lessons downloaded. The project was awarded the top prize for Influencing Positive Change and Sustainability at this year's Community Rail Awards.

A Wheels2Rails event took place during the February half term at Droitwich Spa, together with Wychavon District Council and Community Rail Network the CRP encouraged local residents to build their cycling confidence on local roads. The event featured a 2-hour family cycle training session led by a qualified instructor, a bike safety check and an opportunity to mark the bike so it can be tracked if lost or stolen.

North Staffs CRP

Students from Wolgarston High School visited Penkridge Station for their Community Day in July. They litter-picked at the station before taking an accompanied Rails2Trail walk around Penkridge in the summer sunshine, learning about the history of the village. They were also fortunate to have an impromptu lesson on how locks work whilst walking along the canal! They then created some excellent poems about the history of the village which are currently displayed in the Exhibition Cases at the station.

Fourteen illustrated panels telling the story of pollination have been installed at Stone Station. The panels, from The Little Book of Pollinators by Luke Dixon from the Bee Friendly Trust are a lovely read for children and adults while waiting at the station.

Your COMMUNITY, YOUR FUND



3. Your Community, Your Fund

In late Spring we launched another round of the Customer and Communities Improvement Fund, which we renamed Your Community, Your Fund. Below is a brief description of each project;

Get Connected by Peak Empower

Peak Empower serves home educated school age children and children deemed not to be in education or training, connected with mental health and well-being. The project delivers travel training from Northampton and Bedford with a series of accompanied trips to and from London and Birmingham amongst other places

Project delivery date: **31 March 2023**

Fishery Passage Rejuvenation Project by Boho Boxmoor

A large number of Boxmoor residents are commuters who travel daily into London; in order to access the train station they use an alleyway called Fishery Passage which runs from the central road in Boxmoor right down to the train station. Boho Boxmoor will rejuvenate Fishery Passage with the use of solar lighting, mosaic artwork as well as weeding and litter-picking sessions.

Project delivery date: **31 March 2023**

All Aboard – Ticket to Ride by Escape Arts

All Aboard – Ticket to Ride will deliver a powerful, 12-month cross-demographic Artist in Residence programme from the Station Gallery, Nuneaton Station and linking to wider rail connections across the country linking travel destinations, coastal attractions and centre of industrial heritage and significance.

Project delivery date: **31 March 2023**

Off the Tracks and on the Reins by Nuneaton and North Warwickshire Equestrian Centre

This bid is from the Nuneaton and North Warwickshire Equestrian Centre and is aimed at bringing inner city children from minority and disadvantaged communities in Birmingham and Coventry to their centre by rail and experience horse and pony care as well as riding. The centre will also clear scrubland owned by them adjacent to the railway of rubbish and install bee friendly planters and an art installation facing the railway.

Project delivery date: **31 March 2023**

Mid Cheshire Community Shed

Mid Cheshire Community Shed is a charity aimed at reducing loneliness and social isolation in the community, improving mental health and welfare amongst its participants, whilst also serving the community through the production and/or refurbishment at cost of objects of value to the community such as planters, seats. This grant is specifically to re-establish the facility close to Hartford train station.

Project delivery date: **31 March 2023**

Milton Keynes Winter Night Shelter

The organisation has previously been supported by West Midlands Trains and has been a crucial partner in reducing anti-social behaviour and rough sleeping at Milton Keynes Central station.

This project is to provide a triage service for people facing homelessness (and associated issues with mental health and wellbeing, employment, domestic violence etc.) at the Unity Park site adjacent to Milton Keynes Central station. The bid is to cover the cost of additional materials and resources to allow the project to extend their activities to a larger client group. They would also produce a guide and online resources for railway industry staff encountering homeless persons in the course of their duties. This would allow staff on any part of our network (and other railway operators and BTP) to refer such persons to their triage service and also for clients to also access information directly themselves if they have access to the internet.

Project delivery date: **31 March 2023**

Sensory Garden by Staffordshire Girl Guides Association

Installation of a sensory garden at Kibblestone campsite close to Stone station during an International Girl Guide camp in August 2022. The garden taught the Girl Guides skills in engineering, environmental awareness and science topics and during the Summer event colleagues from West Midlands Railway promoted safe use of the railway, highlighted the environmental benefits of using rail and discussed future careers on the railway.

Project delivery date: **Delivered**



Wellbeing sessions by Impact 4life Wellbeing

Impact 4life is a charity that provides child care without charge during school holiday periods and is located close to Northampton station and depot. This project will provide meals, activities, rail safety education and supervised day trips by rail from Northampton to Birmingham, Bletchley Park and London, as well as workshops on healthy nutritional meals, arts and crafts, dance, acting, jewellery making, drawing, language learning and social skills such as making friends outside of their normal social contacts.

Project delivery date: **31 March 2023**

Doddridge signage and outreach programme by Doddridge Centre Limited

This community centre is a short walk from Northampton station, this bid is to improve the signage to the Doddridge centre and work with the Northampton Transport Heritage charity to reach out to local communities in Northamptonshire promoting railway safety and the benefits of rail travel.

Project delivery date: **31 March 2023**

Amazing Women by Rail part 2 by Women in Community Rail

The first Amazing Women by Rail booklet was created for the Mid Cheshire and the Calder Valley lines in 2018. Women in Community Rail would now like to publish a 40 page booklet based on the amazing women associated with the London Northwestern Railway network, all of whom have shaped our history. The booklet will also be an informative marketing tool which will promote destinations along the West Coast main line, encourage leisure travel, get people out of their cars and on to train to visit the heritage attractions which are mentioned in the booklet, spend their money locally and support the local economies.

Project delivery date: **31 March 2023**

Aldbury Station Path by the Friends of Tring Station

Funding for this project is for an initial assessment to connect Aldbury to the Tring Station and connecting to Tring cycle path to reduce traffic on the road, improve safety for cyclists and walkers and reduce the pressure on Tring Station car park. Funds will be used to hire an external consultant to liaise with all relevant parties and conduct a feasibility study for the path in collaboration with residents, community bodies, local and county councils and local landowners.

Project delivery date: **31 March 2023**

Lidlington Youth Engagement & Artwork by Marston Vale CRP

Lidlington station has suffered from an increasing level of anti-social behaviour. The station has become a regular gathering point for young people on weekday evenings during term time and during the school holidays and there has also been a corresponding increase in anti-social behaviour around Lidlington. The project will be managed by Marston Vale CRP in conjunction with the Friends of Lidlington Station & Lidlington Church and will deliver;

- weekly workshops for young people aged 13 – 17 would be held at Lidlington Church Hall run by a qualified facilitator with the support of volunteers from Lidlington Church.
- Monthly visits to nearby activity & sports centres would be arranged for activities chosen by the young people.
- Artwork for the station

Project delivery date: **31 March 2023**

Urban orchard and wildlife project for Milton Keynes Central

Working with the Green Gym volunteers, Milton Keynes Council will replant trees and incorporate several different species to provide wildlife interest, seasonal colour and food for free. Under the trees will be a mixture of gravel and sedum plants which will provide habitat for vital pollinating insects. The effect will create a softer and more inviting space – a place to stop and enjoy. The fruit and nuts for the trees will be available and promoted to commuters to demonstrate even in the heart of the city wildlife, culture and food production can coexist. The trees will bring seasonal interest and soften the hard fabric of the surrounding buildings, making the surrounds more intimate and aesthetically pleasing. In the heat of the summer they will provide dappled shade and somewhere to linger. In the late summer and autumn, they will provide fruit and nuts for free.

Project delivery date: **31 March 2023**

7. Conclusion

This year has been a challenging time for both the rail industry and the communities we serve and the projects and works described in this report have been designed to support neighbourhoods, enhance stations, improve the rail experience for passengers and invest in our local communities.

Given the feedback from surveys, and the general response from communities to our work programmes, the efforts are well-received and appreciated by our stakeholders.

We look forward to seeing the completion and outcomes of the 'Your Community, Your Fund' projects and are confident that our relationships with these community groups will continue to flourish as will the legacy-value of the projects.

We are positive about the year ahead and look forward to the remainder of our National Rail Contract and the delivery of schemes in collaboration with community partners and with the guiding focus of the WMT Community Rail Strategy.

"The future of the railways depends on the creation of a new system centred around passengers, delivering social economic and environmental benefits"

Peter Wilkinson (2020)