



**London Northwestern
& West Midlands Railways**

Community Rail Report 2025

Introduction

Welcome to the 2025 London Northwestern and West Midlands Railways Community Rail Report.

It's a privilege to share our report, which highlights the incredible ways our teams and partners have worked together to create lasting benefits for the communities across our networks.

This year, we have embraced Railway 200 with our Visit 200 project and continued to elevate our activity to end violence against women and Girls. Alongside supporting our volunteers with their fantastic work, we have successfully implemented a process to ensure more effective and equitable use of Station Adoption Fund, working closely with adopters to design three-year plans aligned with strategic priorities,

Our monthly Community Rail Officer check ins have continued into 2025, providing a regular opportunity to discuss funding and review Activity Plans. These sessions have continued to strengthen our relationships as they offer maximum support to our CRPs outside of the format of the quarterly Steering Committee meeting.

This report reflects the dedication and collaboration across our entire business – from frontline colleagues and support teams to our volunteers and Community Rail Partnerships, which through the studies we have outlined illustrate our impact.

As we look to the future, we will continue working closely with our partners to create a railway that delivers even greater social value for the communities we serve.

London Northwestern and West Midlands Railways Overview

Funding

The nature of activity delivered by London Northwestern and West Midlands Railway in 2025 has shifted in response to the availability of funding streams.

As illustrated in the table below, Core Funding and Station Adoption Fund have both remained static since the 25% cost saving made in 23/34 when the actual budget was reduced by £41k in the forecasted ABP,

The second illustrates the distribution of Core Funding to the five CRPS across our network. Whilst we did not receive additional funding such as CCIF, the stability of core funding to support our five Community Rail Partnerships enabled us to continue to offer the same level of support.

We have continued to review the three-year financial/activity plans developed in conjunction with CRN at quarterly Steering Committee meetings. with consideration of the current Community Rail Strategy as outlined by the Secretary of State.

*As Core Funding for subsequent three years is subject to future ABP’s, it has not been possible to express in the above table.

	2023-24 (Actual)	2024-25	2025-26
Core Funding	£163,000.00	£163,000.00	£163,000.00
CCIF	£109,000.00	£109,000.00	£0.00
SAF	£80,000.00	£80,000.00	£80,000.00

	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26
Heart of England (WMR)	£35,000.00	£35,000.00	£35,000.00
Worcestershire (WMR)	£35,000.00	£35,000.00	£35,000.00
Abbey Line (LNR)	£40,000.00	£40,000.00	£40,000.00
Marston Vale (LNR)	£40,000.00	£40,000.00	£40,000.00
North Staffs (LNR)	£13,000.00	£13,000.00	£13,000.00

White Ribbon

2025 is the second year in our three-year programme of activity as a White Ribbon accredited organisation. This year we were provided the opportunity to become the of their We Speak Up campaign portrait exhibition featuring 16 men who are White Ribbon Ambassadors from all walks of life.

The public exhibition held in Milton Keynes was launched on November 25th White Ribbon Day and remained open until December 10th to important the UN's 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. Each Ambassadors portrait is accompanied by a video explaining why they speak up for women and girls and why they believe it's time more men should do the same.



Alongside the campaign sponsorship we continue to encourage our customers and colleagues to make the White Ribbon Promise- a personal commitment to never use, excuse or remain silent about men's violence against women and girls. Through pop up events at our stations, depots and offices across our networks. This year we have doubled the number of customer facing events through the kind support of our Community Rail Partnerships and Station Adopters.

Learn Live-Rail Safe Friendly

A total of 3 schools have engaged at bronze level to date with 8,730 students reached.

We remain committed to our partnership after the success of our first year and once again utilised intelligence from colleagues in our Safety and Security team to target a total of 10 senior schools for focused interventions.

Visit 200

Developed in partnership with students from West Coventry Academy, the project invites schools across Coventry and Warwickshire to try the train and experience a range of diverse days out and hands on activities across our network.



In celebration of Railway 200, the project aims to encourage visits to 200 stations across the UK, teachers sign up via the website using the interactive map to plan trips and identify which stations have already been visited or have a trip in the planning.

Launched in February, the first official trip saw pupils from Earlsdon Primary School in Coventry meet the station team and representatives from Abbey Line CRP at Watford Junction, as well as an insight into the work of the CRP and roles in the railway, the group were treated to a free tour and workshop at Warner Studios, not forgetting a wave from their driver.

We are proud to have enabled 37 school groups try the train, equalling over 500 children, over half of whom were experiencing rail travel for the first time.

Community Summer Social

Our inaugural July event brought together station adopters from across the country, joined by representatives from the Community Rail Network, our Community Rail Partnerships and members of our stations and property teams.



As well as showcasing the updated Station Adopter Toolkit (page X), the event allowed adopters and community groups to network, share best practice and present top tips and lessons learned from the delivery of several successful projects including initiatives in Worcester, St Albans - and the amazing project at Sutton Coldfield station of which attendee's received a guided tour.

The event was a great success, which we hope to replicate next year.

Annual Stakeholder Conference

As community remains in the heart of West Midlands trains, we took the opportunity to celebrate success at conference once again.

In the second year of inviting schools to participate in the day, pupils from West Coventry Academy returned to provide a progress update on the Visit 200 project, joining them on the stage was the schools' careers lead who illustrated the schemes wider benefits, which included STEM career development, work experience placements and the development of workplace skills.



The day ended with the annual Community Champion Awards. This year's winner for the WMR routes went to the Spaghetti Line adopters for the Sutton Coldfield station improvement project, which included landscaping and artwork in conjunction with Network Rail and a host of local artists which celebrated the town.

Abbey Line Community Partnership took the title for LNR in recognition of their hard work and perseverance developing the community garden at Garston Station.

Community Rail Week

Community Rail Week 25 provided a great opportunity to celebrate success. Our Community Engagement Manager presented the ceremonial water can to our new adopters at Shifnal Station, had her first adopter meet ups with groups from Bedford St Johns and Wylde Green stations. All of which were promoted via on social channels, which are a great platform to raise awareness of the community rail movement and promote rail travel. Two key activities from the week are detailed below:

Marston Vale Train Naming

The event took place in May following a competition which saw residents asked to suggest names which celebrate local people or places along the Marston Vale line between Bedford and Bletchley. The winning entry "Bletchley Codebreakers" chosen by an expert panel from LNR and the Marston Vale Community Rail Partnership can be seen on the one of three Class 150 units which operate on the line.



Stations in Bloom

This year we asked groups to submit before and after photo's to really shine a light on the impact that their work makes to station environments.

Two finalists were shortlisted from each of our networks with voting cast via our social media channels the winning stations were Stone (LNR) and Tyseley (WMR). The winners were presented with goody bags and certificates to display at their stations.



Station Adoption and Volunteering

Improvement Projects

We have continued to offer a maximum grant of up to £1,000 per station, which as in previous years has enabled us to guarantee funding to each of our registered adopter groups if required. To date, we have supported sixteen adopter lead projects through the SAF, ranging from interpretation panels to accompany artwork in the Stour Valley and low-level planting on the Snow Hill Line. This vital funding provides groups the opportunity to progress projects which will have a real impact on their stations and local community.

Strong financial management and adopter relationships have allowed the opportunity to provide increased funding to several projects which are outlined in our plans for 2025/26 and are on schedule to be delivered before the end of the financial year. The ability to offer larger funding awards in the latter half of the year has been vital in the delivery of larger scale projects with the absence of Community and Customer Improvement schemes.

Social Value

Since the start of the financial year we have onboarded 10 new station adopter groups, taking our total number of adopted station to 76. Thanks to a total of 401 registered volunteers completing a minimum of one visit per month at their chosen location our adopters have completed 2597 hrs of volunteering, generating c £1.4 million in social value.



Adopter toolkit

This year saw the launch of our Station Adopter Toolkit, which was developed because of a review of our sign-up processes and incorporated feedback received from West Midlands Stations Alliance.

As well as a handbook illustrating best practice, health and safety guidelines and funding streams which has been made available to all adopters both electronically and in paper format. The toolkit contains all the paperwork required to get stated as a new groups or adopter.



3 Year Station Plans

Launched alongside and contained in the Adopter Toolkit, this one-page document provides the framework for conversations with our station's adopters. This new process has been particularly beneficial since the introduction of adopter DBS checks in April 25. It allows us the flexibility to meet with new groups, discuss the deliverability of potential projects and obtain any necessary permissions before going through the onboarding process and completing DBS

checks, leading to a reduction in both time and cost should we be unable to support the groups proposals.

This process has been introduced to existing groups and has allowed for focused budget planning and supported expectation management by supporting the delivery of a maximum of three projects per station per year.

Adopter Survey

Our annual adopter survey is in its 2nd year, the purpose of the survey is to ensure that we are supporting our groups in relation to their individual needs, alongside meeting our requirements in relation to Health & Safety and record keeping.

We saw a 71% increase in our response rate with positive feedback on our Summer Social event and positive engagement with both Station Adopter Toolkit/3-year plans.

Informative. Useful ideas. Good to see other adopter groups and contacts from Community Rail (Friends of Shakespeare Line)

I thought it was a brilliant way to see what other adoption groups had done and celebrate their successes. Also great to network, meet likeminded people and "put faces to names" (Friends of Shenstone)

Invaluable. Great ideas and networking opportunities. Thanks for organising. (Friends of Abbey Line)

Community Rail Partnerships

Projects

The following section highlights the breadth of projects delivered by our Community Rail Partners in the past year. Those chosen for this year's report have once again benefited from the passion and dedication of their local Station Adopters and stakeholders, core funding or wider support from WMT and are presented to demonstrate how the five CRPs on our network bring the Community Rail Development Strategy to life.

Abbey Line CRP- Walkway Galleries

Over the past year, the partnership has transformed a tired corridors at Watford Junction and St Albans Abbey into interchangeable walkway gallery's with regularly updated exhibitions that celebrate the local area and its people. Highlights include the visually engaging Abbey Line Days Out posters, the nostalgic Abbey Line Tales project - showcasing personal memories and reflections from passengers and residents - and an upcoming display for White Ribbon Day, which will spotlight themes of safety and solidarity.



Marston Vale CRP (LNR)- Rails to Roots

Rails to Roots are a social prescribing gardening group who meet fortnightly at Ridgmont Station, proving a wonderful way for local people to build a sense of community, learn how to grow food and develop their gardening skills. The groups work has encouraged travel along the line and continues to create a welcoming and colourful environment for visitors to the station and heritage centre gardens,



North Staffs CRP (LNR) - Heritage Days

Visitors were welcomed to Stone Station in September to celebrate Railway 200 with a Heritage Day Walk and talk exploring history of the Stone including the railway and the canal. The day culminated at the heritage centre for refreshments and a chance to view the railway themed exhibition. This was one of seven events hosted by the CRP which attracted over 200 people in total.



Heart of England CRP (WMR) - Wild Rails



Wild Rails school project in partnership with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust aims to increase biodiversity at stations through a variety of curriculum-based activities and trips. The CRP are currently working alongside our Station Adopters at Olton Station with plans for a second project at the Lakes in 2026.

After an initial session including a wildlife survey to understand the local eco-system. The students research and create an intervention (such as a planter/ bug hotel/ vertical garden) to improve biodiversity at their station. The project ends with the creation of nature inspired artwork.

Worcestershire CRP (WMR) - Try the Train



July saw students from Abbey Park Middle School take a special Try the Train Trip to board the inspiration Train on its stop at the Severn Valley Railway. The group of Year 7s were not only able to experience the wealth of activities available onboard but were also able to put their recent rail safety

Looking Ahead 2025/26

We will continue to connect local communities with the railway and support our Community Rail Partners and Volunteers to support and promote their events throughout the coming year, as we recognise the value that Community Rail plays in improving our passengers' experiences and the communities, they are part of.

Below are some headlines highlighting our key projects for 25/26.

Shrub Hill 175 Station Open Day

To celebrate the stations long history and showcase our new art installations we will be inviting the public to join us on the platform, learn about the work of the Worcestershire Community Rail Partnership, Cotswold Line Promotion Group and learn how they can get involved through our Station Adoption Programme

Camp Hill Community

In readiness for the opening of the Camp Hill Line and its three new stations, we will be engaging the local community through a series of drop-in sessions to introduce them to the world of Community Rail.

Witton Shutters Project Phase 2

After the installation of shutters on the waiting shelters to address ongoing anti-social behaviour at the station, phase two of the project will see us engage with the local community to turn the black shutters into exciting art installations.

Bletchley High Platform Project

Working in partnership with Chilton Railways, Friends of Bletchley station adoption group and a local artist, this art project will add colour to the new platforms serving East West Rail.

180 years of Bedford to Bletchley

Competitions to name the final two units have been launched at Kimberly and Bedford College, with train naming events to take place in the Spring.