



## Southeast Communities Community Rail Partnership Business Plan

### PROLOGUE

In 2020 we reviewed our existing Business Plan as great progress has been made.

- Established the new Sussex Coast Line group,
- added SWR stations to the North Downs Line group
- launched the new Hastings to Tonbridge line group with a new TOC, SER.
- Station adoptions have continued to flourish (COVID-19 problems accepted).
- Our education work has increased dramatically, currently over 8,000 per annum.
- We have managed our extended line groups well, along with the ESCC Active Access contract with good feedback.
- “Try the Train” has been busy and welcomed. Line guides have been polished and the website drastically and powerfully refurbished.
- We have successfully adopted social media and particularly short videos as powerful communication tools.
- We have smoothly converted to a CIC and have revised our name with full partner approval and without any significant expenditure.
- We have maintained strong financial control with proper reserves and have continued a close watch on our range of policies, both public and internal. We have gained Accredited status from DfT for a second year.
- Already we are being asked to extend further with a new line group from Reading to Ashford (Middlesex).
- We have been responding to the massive grant potential offered by GWR in their new direct award franchise.
- We are poised to respond to SWR with their new CCIF grants.
- We will be ready to respond to SER if/when they introduce their own version of CCIF.
- We still have the last couple of years with the GTR franchise prior to a possible re-drawing of TOC boundaries.
- We have been asked to work with a new TOC, increasing our association to 5 TOCs.
- We await the long-expected reorganisation of the franchise system by DfT which will undoubtedly bring new challenges.
- We have developed a strong position in the region with Transport for the South East and with all the CRPs (ComSE).
- We have reviewed and strengthened our governance and our management of strategic risks.
- We have not only survived the pandemic implications so far but have expanded and our team has adapted brilliantly to the new way of working.

- With the hopeful control of COVID-19 and availability of vaccine, we must assume the nation will recover. There will be a return to rail travel but not as we have known it. Commuting will be different, more people working all or part-time from home, but the potential for local and further afield leisure travel will increase. We will have to rethink our priorities, our action plans and the projects we will be getting involved with.
- We have asked our major partners, as we have done in the past, to discuss with us how they see the development of SCRP progressing. How can their own objectives be built into a new business plan for SCRP as we move forward? While their individual responses are not referred to in the business plan itself, they will recognise their suggestions which have been the driving guide and foundation of the new business plan covering the next three years from Spring 2021.

### **SCRP Business Plan 2021-2024**

- Our vision for community rail is that we work with local communities so that they are more fully connected with their railway. We will provide a voice for the community, help to promote sustainable healthy and accessible travel. We will bring communities together, supporting diversity and inclusion and we will support social and economic development, enabling communities to achieve their aspirations. We will therefore continue to fully support the four Pillars of the DfT Community Rail Strategy.
- We will continue to work in partnership with many other organisations and join up their respective expertise to help achieve this.
- We will continue to be an exemplar of high quality, strong and efficient management in the Community Rail movement.

In returning to a “New Normal” SCRP will need to reappraise its balance of work to reflect how train travel changes as demand reawakens. As an expanded CRP we recognise the need to remain agile, flexible, and responsive to the needs of our communities and to be able to respond positively to requests from our partners or new opportunities.

The balance between commuting and leisure will alter, with the latter growing while the former will probably not return to earlier levels due to a longer-term increase in part-time or even full time working from home. To take account of this SCRP needs to enhance its objectives in order to support communities and grow passenger numbers again by:

- Encouraging greater promotion of leisure travel opportunities, as much short journeys as longer ones, thereby also bringing more travellers to smaller local stations.
- Keeping getting to work, training and education as an important part of ongoing action plans, so supporting local requirements.
- Encouraging significant changes in ticket offers including carnet and flexible seasons, weekend tickets and local/regional runabout tickets, jointly with bus, cycle and car



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club usage where possible. If peak demand re-emerges then off-peak ticketing should be reconsidered.

The need to continue the drive towards Modal Shift remains, which SCRCP will support strongly by:

- Putting considerable attention on the continuing safety of train travel particularly in the effort to return to “near normal”.
- Supporting Increased attention to this by local authorities and especially the adoption of a regional transport strategy through support of TfSE. This underlines the value of SCRCP’s new name.
- Looking for a significant increase in digital ticketing, and digital and intermodal provision of public transport information at stations, other town hubs and on mobile phones whilst being alert to the needs of inclusivity.
- Continuing to seek more bus/rail integrated timetables and ticketing and strongly supporting the inclusion of public transport partners.
- Strongly supporting decarbonisation programmes by Partners particularly by encouraging national and regional work to remove diesel power through electric/solar/hydrogen/ “trimode” operations, as appropriate.

Underlying this is the basic understanding that community rail is not promoting *rail development* but **community development**, helping to bring communities together. The two major objectives will be the “return to rail” and “modal shift” so as to “bring/build back better”. Specific action plans of the line groups therefore will include:

- Promoting further active access programmes.
- Promoting station travel plans, their implementation and monitoring.
- Provision of car share spaces at station car parks.
- Supporting Local Authorities efforts to reduce pollution and increase sustainable access to stations.
- Promoting more walking and cycling both to and from stations especially existing published guides from partners and supporting their “health” objectives.
- Identify stations which have redundant buildings capable of development for and by communities.
- Developing small hubs, especially at rural stations with the encouragement and promotion of cafes and other services. Promoting other local station attributes and facilities.
- Continuing and expanding education programmes including Go Learn.
- Supporting our TOCs to implement Try the Train or similar programmes extensively.
- Making the first/last mile improvement projects a key objective.



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The work of SCRP and particularly the line groups will combine to create outstanding experiences by:

- Working closely with TOCs to increase station adoptions using available grants.
- Taking Community Rail in the City into local towns to make it more effective.
- Continuing to initiate and support innovative events reached by train like “One night under the stars” or “Blue light” events.
- Developing strong locally driven digital line guides, and with printed versions available too.
- Using our talent and experience to develop You-Tube and video material to promote issues, locations and events.
- Considering introducing visual media techniques (e.g., Zoom) into digital events and festivals.
- Use schools, colleges and universities as access to local communities, governors, parents, teachers.
- Involve under-represented groups in the work of the SCRP.
- Use available data and research to inform priorities e.g., Youth Parliament, special interest groups.
- Continuing art on the station including art shelters.
- Taking advantage of TOC marketing departments to enhance projects designed to encourage rail usage.
- Looking to the potential for more involvement with local and regional freight opportunities, the changes in passenger demand which could provide more ideas and options.

To achieve this, the governance and management of the SCRP, its CIC and the SAB will need to remain under review to ensure they remain fit for purpose. The SCRP has achieved second year approval of its DfT Accredited status, one of the first CRPs to achieve that. There is great value in further widening of community and Partner involvement, in particular by charity and volunteer bodies, parish councils, business organisations and youth. There is a need to introduce at least one young person on each line group and on the SAB, using college, university and youth parliament contacts as a source.

Secondly, using visual media technology in the future for some meetings will be a distinct advantage, eliminating travelling time and helping to concentrate discussion. As to the latter, moving the focus to discussion of potential projects and issues especially where mutual priorities are identified, rather than reporting historical actions, will be a valuable improvement. After all, the communication processes already include regular reports to TOCs, newsletters, social media and the much-improved website to keep all the Partners up to date. The line groups will continue to be a crucial window on the needs of the communities for SCRP and Its Partners.

Thirdly, while the CIC is now well established, it will be important to continue to develop good links with the DfT, Network Rail, existing TOCs and any potential new ones that might



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emerge, as well as CRN. SCRCP must be able and ready to respond to any changes in the community rail environment, brought about by national, regional or Partners initiatives. Fourthly, and only when resources are available, and positive business plans are constructed, the potential for expansion remains and the following potential line groups have been suggested:

- Horsham to Dorking and Clapham Junction.
- Brighton mainline.
- Reading to Ashford (Middlesex) and on to Clapham Junction.
- Lewes to Eastbourne and Hastings.
- Lewes to Gatwick.
- Suburban lines in south west London and Surrey.
- TFL and Inner London lines, especially station adoptions.
- SCRCP will continue to support Partners aims to introduce through services from Gatwick to the Midlands and from Kent to both Gatwick and Reading (for onward links to the West and Midlands).

### CONCLUSION

**Steady forward progress is the clear requirement.** Major changes are not required. Developing work programmes to accommodate the changes in demand as COVID-19 concern recedes and the need to concentrate on return to progress with modal shift will drive the work. Close attention to the changing environment, particularly DfT announcements about future “franchise” systems will be essential. The strong support SCRCP already receives from its partners will be central to this. Making full use of Partners’ time, through focussed meetings often using modern virtual systems, continued high levels of financial and general management by the CIC and its team will ensure SCRCP’s ability to continue to support the communities it serves. This will support re-accreditation year on year.

SCRCP will aim to provide its Partners, Line Groups and communities with a positive and enjoyable approach to engaging with their local station, seek continued investment in those local stations and to continue its work to improve the overall travel environment in a sustainable way. Its staff will continue to work closely with the local communities located in the SCRCP area and be responsive to projects and opportunities that arise.