

Community Rail Network – Support & Development update for CRP meetings



This is a summary of our Community Rail Network news, for the very latest news relevant to community rail visit <https://communityrail.org.uk/category/community-rail-news/> or subscribe to our fortnightly bulletin at <http://eepurl.com/gAKbKH>

January 5th 2026

- The shortlist for the **2026 Community Rail Awards** was announced on 10th December and can be viewed on our awards hub <https://communityrail.org.uk/events-and-campaigns/community-rail-awards/awardsentry/>. Bookings are open to attend the awards ceremony at Derby Arena on **19th March 2026** with East Midlands Railway our headline sponsors. Plans for the evening entertainment and various fringe events are underway - also listed on the awards hub.
- The **Railways Bill** - a long-awaited major step towards establishing Great British Railways (GBR) is currently making progress through parliamentary review stages. This is a significant milestone to create a more integrated, accountable and community-responsive rail system, one that better serves people and places. Alongside the Bill, the DfT published its **Accessibility Roadmap**, setting out commitments to make rail more inclusive and accessible for all. We have published briefings on both of these important documents - <https://communityrail.org.uk/railways-bill-consultation-response-and-accessibility-roadmap-welcomed-by-community-rail-network/> and are working with GBR, DfT Operator, Network Rail and others to ensure community rail is understood, respected, supported and embedded in the new rail landscape.
- The Bill highlights the importance of Mayoral Strategic Authorities in GBR, so we ran a very informative webinar to look at how community rail can engage with regional leaders, influence transport planning and ensure community voices are heard to shape rail and integrated mobility. Resources and the recording - <https://communityrail.org.uk/past-event-materials/devolution-and-opportunities-for-community-rail-webinar/>
- Our latest resource, '**Community Rail: placemaking and local identity**' highlights community rail's local knowledge and relationships with community groups and partners is crucial in enabling rail to enrich lives and strengthen communities through thoughtful, collaborative placemaking. **Download the report here** or from the resources section of our website <https://communityrail.org.uk/resources/reports-and-research/> which also includes our [2024-25 Impact Report](#).
- Our Small Grants Fund (England) and Community Rail Development Fund (for DfT accredited CRPs only) are open for applications. CRDF can support applications up to **£25,000** (subject to match funding). See - <https://communityrail.org.uk/member-services/grants-funding-and-bursaries/funding-available-through-crn/> There have been changes to the amounts, forms and processes this year based on feedback from members so please check the latest guidance. Local funding is also available for members in the SWR and TfGM areas.
- The **training & events** section of the website contains many learning opportunities for **our members** (<https://communityrail.org.uk/events-and-campaigns/training-networking-webinars/>). These include:
 - Gender-based barriers to travel and White Ribbon Day showcase – **22nd January (on-line)**
 - A range of specialist on-line networks with their next meeting dates shown, including:
 - Integrated Sustainable Transport – **No sessions currently scheduled**
 - Education – **21st January (the third Thursday of the month)**
 - Tourism – **No sessions currently scheduled**

If you missed any public webinars, these can be watched by following the links from our website.

- At our summer 2025 Parliamentary Reception, we launched a 'Policy Asks' post card covering Integrated transport, Station buildings, Accessibility & inclusion and Rail reform & devolution. Download a copy from

<https://communityrail.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/CRN-policy-asks.pdf>. Also see our other consultation responses <https://communityrail.org.uk/resources/policy-papers-and-consultation-responses/>

- Many of our members have visited or co-hosted the **Railway 200** exhibition train 'Inspiration' over the last six months so we created a visual archive of members involvement in 2025 which can be watched were - <https://youtu.be/uVdneIRBJAg?si=wJsfl42o6z5ndd1n>. Further 'Inspiration' have been announced for 2026 too (<https://railway200.co.uk/inspiration/>) so if you still have local events planned, they can be uploaded to <https://railway200.co.uk/get-involved/share-activity-or-event/>.
- Our regional **Support and Development** team led by Sam Agnew (Director of support and development) continues to provide support to members through Colin Burcombe (East, South-East and South Midlands), Jenni Jones (SWR & GWR), Ian Davis (Northern) and Rhiannon-Jane Raftery (Wales). Paul Webster leads the regions team and provides support for members in the East and West Midlands. Specialist member support is provided by Gary Shipp (Projects development and Integrated sustainable transport), Karen Bennet (Education & youth engagement) and Alex Peel (Training & Development).
- We have two projects supported with grants from Motability Foundation. **Travelling with Confidence** led by **Ellen Cameron** works with four CRPs (CR Lancashire, GO CRP, Severnside CRP & Southeast Communities RP) engaging and empowering disabled people, promoting independent mobility to use rail and connecting modes. **On Track** is working with RNIB and two of our members to explore the effectiveness of disability training received by rail staff across the UK and develop innovative new models of raising disability awareness. A second dedicated grants pot will be available in 2026 for other members to access, and resources will be developed to raise awareness of this important topic.
- **Bespoke training** for *members* is available – recent sessions have helped CRPs think about their governance structure, overall aims and visions and their marketing & communications messages. Members can also apply for **Training Bursaries** of up to £200 for courses of their own choosing that will help CRP Officers in their role. Contact Alex Peel first for more details.
- As part of our Tourism Strategy we support each CRP to have a space on <https://scenicrailbritain.com/>, so please check your pages and contact us with any revised inks, pictures or text you'd like including. We also have tourism related resources here <https://communityrail.org.uk/member-services/tourism-network/>.
- To help your work visit our **Member Resources** webpage offering a collection of guides and toolkits or consider the offer from our rail industry **Corporate Partners** who can support and help your activities here - <https://communityrail.org.uk/member-services/how-our-corporate-partners-support-our-members/>.
- Our **Value & impact of Community Rail** report and summary fact sheet shows through research and case studies the social value of community rail activities. <https://communityrail.org.uk/community-rail-movement-delivering-social-return-on-investment-of-nearly-18-for-every-1/>. Headline figures include:
 - A social return of **£17.89 for every £1.00 invested**
 - An annual social value of **£129 million from funding of £7.2 million**
 - Directly engages with over **125,000 people** per year
 - Each year **8.250 volunteers give 380,000 hours** of time with a social value of **£30.9 million**
- Please continue to send Erin (news@communityrail.org.uk) your **good news** stories to share with the wider community rail family through our social media channels or twice monthly e-bulletin '**Community Rail News**' which now reaches over 1000 subscribers. We are always looking for interesting examples of what you do across the country and to amplify to a national audience. [Sign-up if you don't already receive it](#)