

Identifying your tourism offer

Advice for community rail partnerships and groups



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This guide is aimed at helping community rail partnerships identify their local tourism offer and how this can be used to effectively promote community rail lines to a visitor audience. It can be read in conjunction with other ACoRP guidance sheets on 'developing partnerships with the tourism sector' and 'marketing and communications', available free online at <http://bit.ly/ACoRPrrt18>. Further advice tailored to your needs is available to ACoRP members by contacting alice@acorp.uk.com.

The importance of tourism

Britain is one of the world's must-visit destinations with plenty to offer, from renowned cultural attractions and thriving cities, to charming towns and picturesque countryside, attracting millions of visitors every year. Tourism is a crucial part of the UK's economy and can play an important role in raising awareness of community railways as a means of leisure visitors exploring Britain's hidden gems.

The following figures give a small insight into the wider reach of tourism annually in Britain and the importance it has on our economy.

Overseas visitors

37.6 million visits made to the UK by overseas visitors who spent whilst they were here. **£22.5bn**

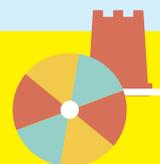


Domestic visitors

11.5m

trips around the UK by domestic travellers

totalling **38.9m** nights



Day trips

1,834 million UK residents took a day trip to destinations across England, Scotland and Wales



Domestic tourism accounts for **80%** of the UK visitor economy

Source | Visit Britain Research & Insights 2016

Community rail partnerships can benefit from new opportunities within this ever-growing market by identifying the local tourism offer, promoting it to leisure visitors and developing links with tourism partners. This guide will help you get started.

Your tourism offer

Everyone's tourism offer will be different. Some destinations include national tourism attractions or festivals that already attract a large volume of visitors. Smaller attractions can also be part of a tourism offer, such as a town museum, historic site, local theatre or park. In addition, a tourism offer could include established walking and cycling routes as well as scenic parts of the railway line itself, which visitors can enjoy from the train window.

When thinking about your tourism offer, don't restrict yourself to places that are only accessible within a reasonable walking distance. Think about onward travel options to widen the area. For example, a visitor may leave the train and catch a bus to get to a National Trust property, or cycle into an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which can be included in your tourism offer.



Understanding your tourism offer

By using the template overleaf, you can put together a list of tourism businesses, attractions and places of interest that can be accessed from your community rail line. You use this to consider who you are currently working with and future potential partnership opportunities.

Next, review the information you have included in the table overleaf and consider what to focus on. Think about where you are likely to have a greatest impact in terms of boosting visitors and benefiting your community, based on the resources you have available, and opportunities for partnership working and securing wider sponsorship. Consider how well these activities fit with your partnership or group's long-term aims and aspirations as well as current opportunities. This will enable you to prioritise and help decide where to begin your tourism promotion. It may be an idea to focus in heavily on one aspect or project to start with.

For ideas on how to promote your tourism offer, see the next page.

Tourism audit

Identify your key areas of opportunity by using the template below to complete an inventory of the current tourism offer in your area. Simply list all the attractions and tourism facilities in your area. Think about the questions in the last two columns to help you to easily recognise who you are currently working with and future potential partnership opportunities.

Natural environment

Type	Name	Nearest station	How are you currently working with them? If not, state why	What might be the potential for future work?
<i>Example: Park</i>	<i>Thornes Park</i>	<i>Wakefield</i>	<i>Promotional poster is included in notice board at the station. The park is quieter in winter months and other projects have higher priority this time of year</i>	<i>Promote new Secret Garden aspect of the park to families travelling along the line in summer. Potential to create a family friendly walking trail campaign from the station to the park</i>
Shoreline / beaches				
Lake / loch				
Parks				
Forest				
Riverside / waterfalls				
Unique / historic landscapes				
Other				

Cultural activities

Type	Name	Nearest station	How are you currently working with them? If not, state why	What might be the potential for future work?
<i>Example: Festival</i>	<i>St Annes Kite Festival</i>	<i>St Annes</i>	<i>Producing posters for joint promotion of railway service and festival</i>	<i>Stations along the line decorated with kites in the lead up to the festival, raising awareness of the festival, at stations further afield</i>
Events & festivals				
Galleries / museums / theatres				
Heritage sites / historic towns / heritage railways				
Music				
Golf				
Outdoor activities / sports				
Walking / cycling				
Markets & shopping				
Other				

Visitor facilities

Type	Name	Nearest station	How are you currently working with them? If not, state why	What might be the potential for future work?
<i>Example: Accommodation</i>	<i>Cambridge Hotel</i>	<i>Huddersfield</i>	<i>Not currently work with them due to time constraints. Interested in working with them in the future as part of next year's plans.</i>	<i>Promotional campaign, encouraging visitors to get to the hotel by train. Using hotel's promotional channels such as eNewsletter, social media, website and line leaflets for bedroom browsers.</i>
Accommodation				
Restaurants / cafes / pubs				
Tourist information points				
Other				

Promoting your tourism offer

Now you can see what your tourism offer is, it's time to think about how you can promote it to attract more visitors along your railway line.

Effective partnerships can play an important part in encouraging visitors to use your railway line. Many of the tourism attractions you have listed above will already be promoting their services to a visitor audience. Get in touch with these attractions and see how you can work together to jointly promote each other. Do your research before contacting an organisation, know who you are talking to, make specific suggestions and don't be afraid to promote the potential benefits that could come from a mutual partnership.

For further advice on partnerships, see guidance sheet on '[developing partnerships with the tourism sector](#)'.

Suggestions for partnership working



Offer to include a link to an attraction or tourism site on your website in exchange for a mention of your railway line on the partner's site



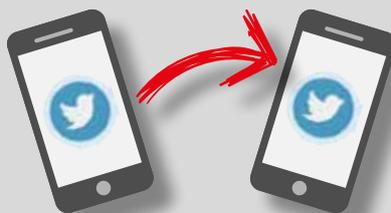
Provide advice on getting to an attraction or area by rail for use on partners' promotional literature and websites



Encourage and help partners to run a social media campaign on getting to their attraction/area using the railway



Attend partners' events (e.g. craft market, family day, festival) with a promotional stand highlighting the benefits of coming to the attraction by rail



Follow and engage with partners on social media and encourage them to do the same



Run a joint marketing campaign using incentives from your local train operating company (for example a complimentary day ticket for two)



Encourage front of house staff to travel along your railway line for themselves (hosted by you) so they can easily promote it to their visitors



Provide attractions with copies of your leaflets and other printed literature



Help local attractions and tourist facilities to work with the local train operating company to offer a discounted entry if a combined travel and entry ticket is purchased

Other ideas for promoting your line to visitors

Include a tourism section on your community rail partnership website. This can be an additional page on your website that will provide the opportunity to showcase your tourism offer. It can also include links to local attractions as part of partnership working, as above. Alternatively, a separate visitor focused website can be developed that is specifically aimed at a leisure audience. A good example of this is the dedicated tourism website developed by Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership: www.greatscenicrailways.co.uk



Distribute promotional literature further afield than railway stations along your line. Use your partnerships for free distribution to a specific visitor audience or work with a distribution company such as **Info Direct** or **Take One Media** for a more targeted approach with the potential of reaching visitors right across Britain.



Attend local events/festivals that attract leisure visitors. Think about how you can make a big impact at these events and engage with more visitors: showcase your line with a large eye-catching banner, encourage social media followers or sign ups to your eNewsletter with a prize draw incentive or give away promotional products that include your line's website (pens, ticket wallets, postcards etc.).



Contact your local heritage railway and see what opportunities are available to work together. For ideas see the previous section on partnership working.

Inform your train operating company of your tourism marketing plans; they may be able to help with additional promotion, for example through social media and keep you informed of any existing tourism marketing they have in the pipeline.

Follow local tourism attractions on social media sites, so you can monitor their tourism promotions and engage with these; this help you connect with projects that would also benefit your community rail line.



Attend tourism shows. This can be quite expensive to do individually. However, you could help to spread the cost (and create a bigger impact) by working with your tourism partners, other community rail partnerships or your train operating company.

Funding options

Make a bigger impact with your tourism promotion by expanding your financial resources. This can be done through additional tourism funding or corporate sponsorship. There are several national organisations that, if a project meets the criteria, offer funding for tourism-related projects. Corporate sponsorship is another funding option to consider. This would consist of approaching a business, organisation or train operating company and asking for a specific amount of funding. You will need to provide details of what you aim to deliver and achieve from your project and be clear on what benefits the sponsor will get in return for their investment. This might include their logo alongside yours on promotional materials, a logo and link on your webpage, a prominent mention and quote in a press release, and the opportunity to engage with the campaign on social media.

Organisations providing potential funding for tourism projects

- Arts Council England: www.artscouncil.org.uk
- Arts Council of Wales: www.arts.wales
- Creative Scotland: www.creativescotland.com
- Heritage Lottery Fund: www.hlf.org.uk
- National Lottery Awards for All (Scotland, Wales & England): www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/funding
- National Parks grant schemes: www.nationalparks.gov.uk

How can ACoRP help your tourism promotions?

Keep ACoRP informed of tourism and heritage projects that can be promoted on our social media sites, and used as good practice case studies

Be part of ACoRP's annual Community Rail in the City event, held each May

Make sure your line has an entry on ACoRP's dedicated tourism website, [Scenic Rail Britain](http://ScenicRailBritain)

Keep your page on ScenicRailBritain.com up to date with new content and photographs

Write a blog post about your community rail line and what visitors can experience, to post on scenicrailbritain.com and other tourism websites

To take advantages of these opportunities contact Alice Mannion, Tourism & Heritage Officer ACoRP, alice@acorp.uk.com, 01484 481059

Follow Scenic Rail Britain



Facebook: [@ScenicRailBritain](https://www.facebook.com/ScenicRailBritain)



Twitter: [@ScenicRailBrit](https://twitter.com/ScenicRailBrit)



Instagram: [@ScenicRailBritain](https://www.instagram.com/ScenicRailBritain)

Further help and information

More information and advice for those working in community rail and industry, public sector and third sector partners, can be found at communityrail.org.uk. This includes further reports and resources, information on forthcoming events and signposting to our partners. This is where you're able to download the '[developing partnerships with the tourism sector guidance](#),' handy for community rail partnerships who are looking to start working closer with the local tourism sector.

ACoRP offers all members additional support and information specific to your needs and circumstances. If you're a member, please let us know how we can help on **01484 481053** or info@acorp.uk.com. If you're not a member, find out about joining us at communityrail.org.uk/join-us.

This guidance sheet was produced by the Association of Community Rail Partnerships, thanks to funding from Northern. It is part of a range of resources produced for community rail partnerships and groups, helping them to engage and benefit their communities. If you have suggestions of how we can further develop our resources and support, let us know at info@acorp.uk.com.