



AC:RP
New life for local lines

ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18

Association of Community Rail Partnerships
Supporting the community rail movement to flourish

This is a draft, subject to agreement at ACoRP's December 2018 AGM.

From the chair and chief executive

Your association – like the community rail movement it represents – continues to grow. So much has been achieved since the early days when a few gathered in an old rail carriage at Huddersfield station.

Today's ACoRP is an expanded, outwards facing, vigorous organisation supporting members with a range of services and working on their behalf with industry and governments for the constant development of community rail.

None of this would be possible without the ongoing support of our funders, sponsors, hard working staff, volunteer board and you, our members. Thank you to all concerned, and special thanks to my colleagues on the ACoRP board for their unstinting support to me as chair over the past 15 years.

The reporting year under review, 2017-18, was successful with much achieved including working with government to develop the new community rail strategy. The annual awards ceremony in Derby highlighted and showcased the successes and achievements of our members. Always a great evening encompassing all that is best in the complementary worlds of rail and community in which partnerships and station adopters excel. I look forward to learning of even more such successes in the future – good luck to you all.



Peter Roberts MBE
Hon. Chair

Throughout 2017-18 I have been inspired by the range of wonderful work within community rail – and proud of the ACoRP team, passionately supporting these endeavours.

Community rail partnerships and groups continue to grow in number, with all 60 partnerships, and an increasing proportion of the 1,000+ station groups across Britain, members of ACoRP. We are here to support that growth, and we invest considerable time and energy helping new groups to get off the ground.

We are also here to help existing community rail partnerships and groups to realise new projects and opportunities, plan effectively, work collaboratively, and ultimately to enable local communities to get the most from their railways and stations.

Our members range from well-established organisations with small staff teams covering whole regions, to a handful of volunteers working on one station. Their work is diverse too, from community gardening, to engaging children in sustainable travel, to advising on infrastructure changes. We support community rail in all its guises.

This report gives a flavour of our members' important work, while showing how ACoRP is empowering, enabling and advocating for community rail. We have made great headway in 2017-18, further developing our team and services, introducing a training and development programme, reaching out to partners, and working with the Department for Transport to inform their new community rail strategy. We look forward to continuing to work with members in 2018-19 to help community rail go from strength to strength.



Jools Townsend
Chief executive

ACoRP in numbers



Key achievements in pictures:



Greater range of support offered to members



New website launched



Biggest, best community rail awards ever



Training & development programme developed



Scenic Rail Britain campaign kicks off

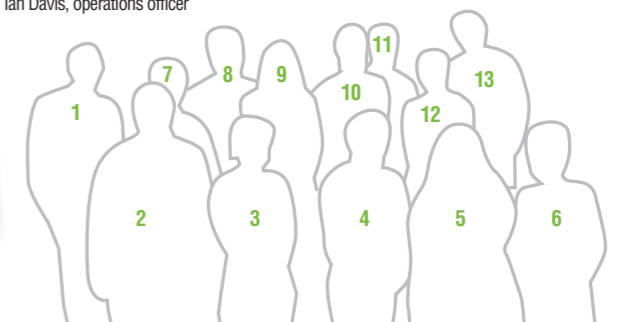


Advising government and rail franchise bidders

Our team:



- 1 Anders Hanson, senior commercial manager
- 2 Paul Webster, operations manager
- 3 Jools Townsend, chief executive
- 4 Martin Yallop, community stations manager
- 5 Alice Mannion, tourism and heritage officer
- 6 Dawn Bigland, admin manager
- 7 Alex Peel, training and development coordinator
- 8 Ian Davis, operations officer
- 9 Naomi Lilley, training and development coordinator
- 10 Nik Schofield, communications and marketing manager
- 11 Patrick Southern, senior admin officer
- 12 Hazel Bonner, events and fundraising manager
- 13 Brian Barnsley, senior operations manager



Supporting our members



Delegates at an ACoRP members' seminar.

Improved member offer

Following our reorganisation and growth spurt in late 2016, we wanted to ensure our members were benefitting from this, and clear about the support we can provide. We drew up an improved offer to our members, showing the standard benefits that community rail partnerships and station groups can access, including:

- Annual line planning meetings (for CRPs)
- Advice and guidance on set-up, projects and activities
- Free places on seminars and webinars
- Free resources, training and tools
- Access to grant schemes (where offered)

Read more at communityrail.org.uk/join-us.

Our offer continues to be developed – and we still aim to work with members individually, as they need.

Training and development underway

We recruited two new team members – Alex and Naomi – in September 2017 to design and deliver a training and development programme. They spent time understanding the needs of members and local and national contexts, through consultations, visits and discussions. Three themes emerged: organisational development, skill pathways and engaging communities. They then set about getting the programme underway, including designing our first training courses on inclusive volunteering, and connecting with other third sector organisations that could contribute to the programme. They also reviewed, improved and coordinated a well-received induction course for new community rail officers and designed a bursary scheme to enable members to access local training that meets their needs.

Signposting to others

We can't meet all our members' needs ourselves, so we have been reaching out to partners and suppliers so we can signpost and refer. Members have told us there are practical services they would like help to access, such as insurance, HR advice and building surveys, so we are looking at how we refer to affordable and quality providers. We have also been engaging third sector partners to explore how we can provide specialist information on topics like social enterprise and active travel.

Supporting growth in community rail

An important part of our work is supporting new community rail partnerships and groups to become established, get on a firm footing, and have the confidence to deliver effective projects. We tend to be advising around 10 start-up/embryonic partnerships at any one time, and are always happy to help anyone considering getting set up, or branching into community rail. We also run free two-day induction training for new community rail officers, which 10 attended in January 2018.

Planning support for Scottish CRPs

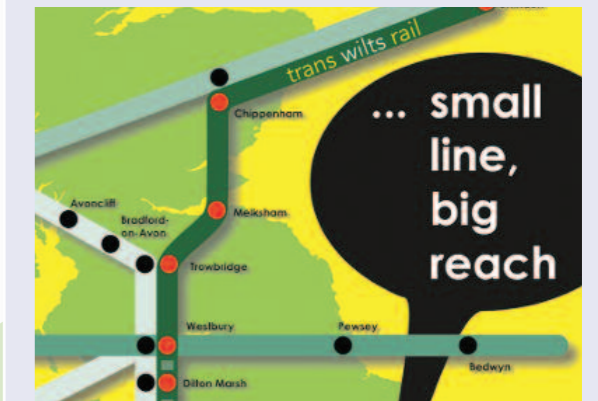
We organised a workshop for Scottish community rail partnerships in February, attended by all nine, to explore how we could support them more closely. Our senior operations manager Brian and chief executive Jools ensured the CRPs were clear about help they can access from ACoRP, and there was a constructive debate on developing community rail in Scotland. This led to Brian setting up planning meetings with each CRP, so we could advise on annual progress and plans, and provide more proactive support. Suzie from Rail 74 said of the draft line plan she worked on with Brian, "This looks great and will form a good basis for our development day with board and partners."

Advice for Friends of Crewkerne Station

Our community stations manager Martin provided assistance and advice on the re-use of a former water tower by the group for storage and community use. He advised on the process for applying to install traditional 'running-in boards' on the platforms, directed the group to possible funders, and ensured they were clear on ongoing advice ACoRP could offer.

A new TransWilts partnership

TransWilts CRP transformed from a rail user group into a 'designated' community rail line in 2015-16. When our operations manager Paul started supporting them, they didn't have a detailed programme of work, other than their initial focus: delivering a high-profile (successful!) campaign to increase the frequency and capacity of services on the line. In 2017-18 Paul worked with them through our line planning process, helping them to develop a range of complementary activities. Together, they reviewed progress at quarterly meetings, and both the CRP and GWR have commented on how this has helped activities to be more focussed and able to deliver demonstrable outcomes.



Celebrating success, sharing good practice

The winners at our 2017 Community Rail Awards



Community rail awards **ACoRP** Community Rail Awards 2017

2017 saw the biggest ever Community Rail Awards, hosted in Derby by East Midlands Trains – a whole-team effort, but led by our events manager Hazel. A record 430 people attended, including community rail officers and volunteers, plus senior industry and government colleagues. It was a wonderful event where a range of community rail work was showcased and celebrated, from a fantastic 201 entries. **Read about the inspiring winners at communityrail.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/ACoRP-CRA17-Winners-Booklet.pdf.**

Seminars and conference

We held four members' seminars, two in the north and two in the south, altogether attended by 200 delegates. They were well received, with ideas and good practice shared on topics including: volunteers recruitment and retention; innovative uses for stations; developing links with the tourism sector; using social media; and engaging schools, scouts and youth groups. We once again organised the Department for Transport's Community Rail Conference, with 114 community rail and rail industry delegates. Industry and charity partners provided advice on topics from engaging with local businesses to linking up with community transport. **Presentations are available at communityrail.org.uk/crc18.**

Resources and case studies

We produced two major research reports, on Community Rail and Social Inclusion (see p8) and Communicating Community Rail, drawing on research to offer practical insights and recommendations. We also published three new easy-to-follow guidance sheets, on Basics of Marketing & Communications, Tourism Partnerships, and Complying with Data Protection Rules. The latter, produced by our senior commercial manager Anders, has been widely praised for de-mystifying data protection and providing practical tips on managing data and communications. **See communityrail.org.uk/resources-ideas/reports-resources-tools.**

An online hub for community rail

We were keen to revamp our website to better showcase community rail and provide a hub for members, in an accessible, engaging format. The site needed to be a source of information and inspiration for those working in community rail, and welcoming for those who may be interested in getting involved. Our communications & marketing manager Nik led the redevelopment, and the site was launched in March, including: a clear, positive explanation of community rail and its value; information on joining and partnering with ACoRP; a community-orientated, inclusive look and feel; an events calendar and resources for those working in community rail; a searchable, interactive map of community rail partnerships; and links to enable sharing on social media. Initial visitor numbers suggest the site is already helping us reach out to wider audiences. **Our new site can be found at communityrail.org.uk.**

Cubs in Bugland

2017 Winners of our Small Projects Award, Mytholmroyd Station Partnership worked with local Cubs, as part of ongoing youth engagement, in the construction of 'bug hotels' at the station. As well as making the boxes from locally-salvaged waste materials, the Cubs were engaged in gardening activities, siting the boxes and unveiling them at a launch event. As part of the project, the Cubs discussed the natural world and importance of protecting it. Posters were used to promote the project to passengers. The partnership commented: "Not only has the station acquired some excellent bug hotels, but it has helped the youngsters' awareness of the fragility of the natural world, and how they can help sustain it. The project also reinforced the important message of civic responsibility that the children have taken on by being Cubs, and helped them to feel that it is 'their' station."



Romsey Station memorial and path

Three Rivers CRP had been commemorating the 100 year anniversary of World War One through a regularly changing display in Romsey Station's waiting room, special events, and fundraising. They were then approached by a nationally recognised sculptor who had carved a 6ft monument for the 100 year anniversary for display at Chelsea Flower Show, with nowhere to permanently house it. They decided that a redundant area of land by Romsey Station would provide an ideal location, provoking interest in the station and providing a legacy landmark for the town, but it needed landscaping. At the same time, the Partnership had developed ideas to enhance a path to the station, which was in a poor state of repair. The partnership secured funding from GWR for both projects, and overcame numerous challenges to enable delivery of the work. A moving unveiling ceremony was held, bringing the community together around the new monument, and the path is being well used by pedestrians and cyclists. The project scooped first place in our Most Enhanced Station award.



Carbon Reduction Challenge

Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership ran an award-winning school engagement programme, promoting awareness of rail as a form of sustainable travel among primary school children. They aimed to empower the children to act as sustainable travel ambassadors at home and at school. Each school had a visit from Devon & Cornwall's development officer, explaining the project and showing a specially commissioned video (see www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8ehk-J9p9g), and a taster trip on the train. Eight schools signed up for the pilot, with children entering a range of projects into the competition, from posters warning of climate change, to video debates, to a rap. The winning school produced a book looking at fossil fuels, sustainable transport and train travel. They measured CO₂ savings made over a month of swapping car journeys for train and the total was 1.2 tonnes, equivalent to driving from Cornwall to Scotland and back three times.



Promoting social inclusion and diversity

Benefitting social inclusion

We produced a major report on 'Community Rail and Social Inclusion', drawing on case studies and research to illustrate how community rail is helping to build inclusive, healthy, happy communities in a spectrum of important ways. Funded by Rail Delivery Group, the report explores how community rail is enabling accessible journeys, connecting people to opportunities, engaging communities in volunteering, arts and heritage, and transforming stations into spaces for social growth.

Written by our training and development coordinator Naomi, the report provides a resource for ACoRP and its partners and members to champion community rail with a stronger evidence base. The recommendations provide inspiration for community rail practitioners, and their partners and funders, to continue finding creative ways to engage with diverse groups and deliver maximum social value – and these insights are informing ACoRP's training and development programme. **Read the report at communityrail.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2018/03**

Assessing social impact

A key focus for us, continuing into 2018-19, is helping community rail groups to better assess, evidence and communicate the impact they have within communities. If groups know how and where they are delivering positive outcomes, it helps them to grow and develop their impact. We therefore played a key role in helping partners RSSB to develop a 'social impact framework' for the railways, ensuring that community rail activity was accounted for. We are now considering how we can make use of the framework and best practice guidance to support our members on planning and evaluating their work to achieve maximum social value.



Students and partners unveil their 'Love Thy Neighbour' mural at Smethwick Rolfe Street Station

Working with Women in Community Rail

Women in Community Rail (WiCR) is a membership group established in 2016 to support colleagues in the community rail family to work towards more inclusive and tolerant practices. Two ACoRP team members, Hazel and Dawn, sit on the steering group, working with members from community rail partnerships, station groups, local authorities, and train companies. In 2017-18, we explored how ACoRP can work with WiCR, such as by consulting the group on inclusion and diversity issues, and promoting its code of conduct once this is developed in the coming months.

Reaching out to young people

In 2017-18 we started to think about how we can help community rail to reach out to more young people. Our members tell us they are enthusiastic about working with young people, and there are many great opportunities for community rail to help young people access employment, education and leisure opportunities, through sustainable and healthy means, while also drawing on their ideas. In March our senior commercial manager Anders supported a Community Rail and Education seminar, sharing good practice in engaging schools. In 2018-19 we'll be moving this forward by developing a strategy for stepping up engagement of young people.

Amazing Women by Rail

Amazing Women by Rail was launched in March by the Mid Cheshire Line, Friends of Littleborough Stations and Community Rail Lancashire. A booklet and website, amazingwomenbyrail.org.uk, show how visitors can explore the area and walk in the footsteps of amazing women with fascinating stories. Throughout the project's development our tourism officer Alice advised on writing for a tourism audience, measuring success and working with tourism partners. Our communications & marketing manager Nik advised on PR around the launch, which received positive coverage.



Sussex's young station adopters

Sussex CRP has a long-running partnership with the Aldingbourne Trust, which supports young people with learning disabilities. Young people at the Trust have adopted no fewer than 30 stations across Sussex. They engage in horticulture, carpentry and other activities that develop their skills while providing planters – and a warm, cheery welcome – for those using the stations to enjoy. The scheme offers benefits to rail passengers, local communities, and the young people, who gain confidence, work experience, and clearly take great pride in their work. After visiting the group, our CE Jools has been sharing this great example of community rail in action.

Rail Journey to Recovery

This innovative project by Community Rail Cumbria is a first for community rail (recognised at our 2017 Awards) so ACoRP is especially keen to support and promote its progress. It links to Turning Point's residential programme for people who have experienced substance abuse. Working in small groups, residents undertake station volunteering, such as maintenance jobs and feeding into local projects. This promotes collective responsibility, aiding empowerment and confidence, and the visibility of the work and contact with the community seems to have a profound, positive effect (**watch the video at communityrail.org.uk/resources-ideas/case-studies/rail-journey-recovery**). Our operations officer Ian has supported the project and ensured lessons are shared with our members and partners. Ian is now assisting a roll-out of a similar project in the East Midlands.



Spreading community rail awareness

Community Rail in the City

This annual event coordinated by our tourism officer Alice, provides a valuable opportunity for community rail partnerships to showcase their lines at busy city stations. This year's event, on 17 May 2017, involved 16 partnerships at 10 stations. Highlights included the Poacher Line and Visit Lincolnshire taking five colourful knight statues to Kings Cross, proving a popular selfie spot. London Paddington welcomed Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership, donning fancy dress to encourage passengers to explore locations from TV drama Poldark. Kent Community Rail Partnership invited passengers to make smoothies with pedal power as they brought the popular Smoothie Bike to St Pancras to promote healthy, sustainable travel. Following positive feedback from participants, at the end of 2017-18 we were gearing up for an even bigger and more exciting Community Rail in the City in May 2018!

Scenic Rail Britain

This major new ACoRP campaign – based around a visually-exciting, slick website that showcases Britain's wonderful community railways – was launched at London Kings Cross as part of Community Rail in the City in May 2017. ACoRP worked alongside project partners Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership, drawing on their extensive experience in scenic rail marketing to develop the site and promote it to international tourists and domestic day-trippers. To get the site in front of worldwide audiences, we have made use of social media and video adverts to inspire and motivate potential visitors – with a big push in January-March 2018 targeting visitors from Australia, USA, France, Germany and Ireland. At the end of the year, we saw a boost in traffic, with many site users moving through to individual community rail partnerships' sites. **See the site at scenicrailbritain.com. Watch the video at www.youtube.com/watch?v=GhhXL1bxHi0.**



The Poacher Line with a Lincolnshire knight, and ACoRP team members Jools and Alice, at King's Cross for Community Rail and the City

Supporting local communications

One of the best ways to get the community rail message out is for community rail partnerships and groups to deliver effective communications and marketing at a local level. This can be a powerful way to promote the use of rail as part of sustainable and healthy transport and travel, and to encourage more people to get involved in community rail activities. In 2017-18 we further stepped up our support for members in this area, with various members of the team providing tailored advice on communications planning, PR and digital methods, plus workshops, webinars and guidance sheets on social media, tourism promotion, and adopting a good communications and marketing mix.

External events

Part of ACoRP's role is raising the profile of the community rail movement, amongst the public, government, and rail industry, third sector and public sector professionals. During 2017-18 we spoke at five external industry and policy conferences and seminars, including Rural Services Network's event on Rural Vulnerability in the Houses of Parliament, and three train operator conferences.

Young people promote the Abbey Line

The Abbey Line CRP engaged local college students in finding new ways to promote the Abbey Line, tasking students with creating and delivering presentations on attracting new passengers. Their ideas ranged from date nights to cycling events, to completely rebranding the line, and using social media, websites and apps. Three concepts stood out, which the students presented to the partnership's steering group and then train operator London Midland at their headquarters. One idea is now being taken forward, under the heading 'Abbey Days Out'. The Abbey Line says: "The project gave the students the experience of researching an idea and being creative, while learning about travel and how to work to a brief that considers local needs. It also provided students with a realistic prospect of their work being implemented, helping to develop self-esteem. Also, by getting students involved, we drew on their perspectives on how modern methods can be used to appeal to wider audiences."



150th celebrations on the Heart of Wales Line

The Heart of Wales Line's 150th year is providing a great chance to celebrate the importance of the line and promote it to wider tourist audiences. The commemorations kicked off with a mobile reception on a train, complete with entertainment and a commemorative booklet. A major focus throughout the summer will be arts along the line, giving visitors the chance to enjoy at local artists' work at stations and nearby art galleries. Events will also tie in with efforts to promote local walking. Our tourism officer Alice has provided guidance on funding opportunities, promotion at tourism shows, local partnerships, and promoting the year-long events to a visitor audience.



Tyne Valley gets serious with social media

Tyne Valley CRP has recently started to use social media more frequently to promote their own and partners' activities. As they were also increasing local students coming into the partnership for work placements, they decided to put together a social media policy that could be used for both placement students and TVCRP staff. Our communications & marketing manager Nik provided a template for the partnership to adapt, which now forms the basis of TVCRP's social media policy.



Engaging partners and government

Working with government

We continue to work closely with our biggest funder and crucial partner the Department for Transport. The stations and community rail team takes a close interest in our work supporting the further development of community rail, and how this aligns with wider government goals, including its new Vision for Rail. We also liaise regularly with our funders at the Welsh Government on activities in Wales and the Borders – particularly moving towards the introduction of the new Wales and Borders franchise in late 2018 – and engage with and advise Transport Scotland, Transport for Greater Manchester, West Midlands Railway Executive, and East Midlands Councils.

Towards a new national strategy

A major area of work for us in 2017-18 was supporting and feeding into the Department for Transport's consultation on its community rail development strategy. As well as advising on relevant themes and questions to cover in the consultation, creating a background briefing on community rail, and putting in our own comprehensive response, we proactively encouraged and supported members and partners to respond. This included regular communications, tips for members on responding to consultations, consultation sessions hosted at our members' seminars, and proactively contacting more than 30 partner organisations. We were delighted that the DfT received 180 responses, and have since provided further input towards the strategy's drafting, likely to be published in late 2018.

See www.gov.uk/government/consultations/future-of-community-rail-strategy.

Feeding into franchising

ACoRP advises national and devolved governments and the rail industry on rail refranchising from a community rail perspective. This enables us to get across to both bidders into franchises and key decision-makers how community rail can be best supported to play its part in community and railway development. This work includes responding to every rail franchise consultation, and our operations team meeting and advising bidders to give an overview of community rail in each region and how it can be nurtured and developed.

Reaching out to third sector

We believe we can better support community rail to flourish by working with other networks and charities in related fields. This will help us to provide guidance on specialist topics – from social enterprise, to active travel, to biodiversity – and help to facilitate great partnership working between groups at a local level. We reached out to numerous organisations in 2017-18, to share information and ideas, and lay the groundwork for mutually-productive relationships, such as the Campaign for Better Transport, Community Transport Association, Campaign for National Parks, SFEDI, Sustrans and Transport Focus.

Our supporters and corporate partners

As a not-for-profit organisation working towards charitable objectives, ACoRP is dependent on its supporters and partners – so we extend our thanks to all our funders in 2017-18, listed below. As well as continuing to receive crucial funding from national and devolved governments (see below), ACoRP has a growing number of corporate partners, enabling us to deliver enhanced support and project work, and who we work with proactively to develop community rail. **Find out about partnership opportunities at communityrail.org.uk/join-us/partners-and-supporters or email hazel@acorp.uk.com.**



Rail Delivery Group



Our government and not-for-profit funders:



Our corporate partners:



From the Department for Transport's community rail consultation

Our vision and aims



Our vision is of...
a flourishing
community rail movement*,
connecting communities and
their railways, and enhancing
the wellbeing, sustainability and
development of communities
across Britain.

*Community-based partnerships, groups, organisations, social enterprises and volunteers seeking to benefit their local community and railway, through connecting people with, and engaging them in, the railway, and vice versa.

Our mission is to empower, support and champion the community rail movement, helping community rail partnerships and groups to:

Enhance the railways' contribution to local sustainable development and community wellbeing, including by maximising access to and use of rail

Ensure the community has a voice and plays a part in the development of our railways, so it meets community needs and aspirations and delivers maximum social benefit

Communicate the development and importance of our railways to local communities, enhancing understanding and pride, and promoting rail as a part of sustainable, healthy travel

Our strategic aims:

Support, advise, connect and empower our members to effectively engage and benefit their communities and local railways

Communicate and champion the community rail movement, to enhance its development and influence

Achieve a strong policy and funding environment, to support the movement's impact and sustainability

Develop and maintain beneficial partnerships, to grow and diversify our income and increase our effectiveness

Develop and maintain a happy, successful team utilising effective working practices

Positive and empowering –

we listen to members and partners, are responsive to the community rail movement's needs, and work in a supportive, positive way

Organised and professional –

we work as a team, in an organised, efficient way to make our resources go as far as possible for our beneficiaries

Our principles:

Communicative and collaborative –

we champion community rail, communicating its importance and sharing across the movement; we believe in collaboration

Community and people focused –

we value the commitment and creativity of the people who make up the community rail movement; we are here to help them to support their communities, through engagement with the railways

This ACoRP Annual Report 2017-18 is a draft,
subject to agreement by our members at our
December 2018 AGM.

Find out more about community rail and our work
supporting community rail partnerships and groups at

communityrail.org.uk

Find out more about becoming a member or partner at

communityrail.org.uk/join-us

or call

01484 481052

Follow us:



@ACORPOffice



facebook.com/ACoRP.uk



bit.ly/tol17