

Press release | **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

From the Association of Community Rail Partnerships | news@acorp.uk.com

Prestigious national awards for community rail to be held in Shropshire

The venue and headline sponsor for a national community awards have been announced today.

The Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP) 'Community Rail Awards' gala dinner will be hosted at The International Centre, Telford, on 3 October 2019. The headline sponsor for this year's event is West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway.

Now in its 15th year, the Community Rail Awards celebrates the important and often unsung work carried out by community rail volunteers, partnerships, station friends, and community groups, in bringing local people together, running community engagement and rail accessibility initiatives, and helping communities get the most from their local railway lines and stations.

Last year's gala dinner was hosted in Glasgow, attracting nearly 500 guests and 180 award entries. The inspiring winners included:

- Severnside community rail partnership won 'Outstanding contribution to community rail' for its work putting local lines back into the heart of communities, ranging from street art projects to a scheme helping vulnerable groups have the confidence to travel by rail;
- Neil Williams won 'Volunteer of the year' for his work transforming Glossop Station into a hub for the community, including running engagement events and community gardening.

Awards entries open 15 April 2019 and can be made online at the ACoRP website (communityrail.org.uk/events-training/community-rail-awards).

Richard Brooks, customer experience director for West Midlands Railway and London

Northwestern Railway, said: "Community rail activities make a huge difference to communities across our networks, and the Community Rail Awards are a fantastic opportunity to recognise the work that goes on. We currently have three very active community rail partnerships within our franchise area, with more set to start up over the coming months. There are also over 150 station adopters at our stations, with that number growing rapidly towards our target of over 300. We have also set ourselves an ambitious target of seeing community activity at every one of our 114 station in the West Midlands. All this work makes such a difference to our customers, staff and most importantly the communities and volunteers themselves, which is why we delighted to be headline sponsor for this year's event."

ACoRP chief executive, Jools Townsend said: "Many people aren't aware of community rail, but it involves thousands of volunteers, and hundreds of groups, across Britain, striving to make a difference. Their vital work helps to make rail travel more accessible and user-friendly, promotes sustainable travel and tourism, and encourages people to take pride in their area and heritage. The inspiring entries we receive each year for the Community Rail Awards show the impact this work has on communities and people's lives. The Awards are our flagship event, recognising the hard work and passion so many people put in to community rail. We're excited to be taking the event to Shropshire this year with support of West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway."

Ends

Notes for editors

About community rail and ACoRP

Community rail is all about ensuring communities get the most from their railways, and promoting rail as a key part of sustainable, healthy travel. There are more than 60 community rail partnerships around Britain, working at a grassroots level along railway routes to connect the community with the train operator and other local partners. They deliver a range of activities to engage and benefit local people and support the development of the railway. More than 1,300 smaller community rail groups, such as station friends, work locally, often involving volunteers in ensuring the station is a welcoming and productive hub for the community. Read about the value of community rail.

The Association of Community Rail Partnerships is the membership body for community rail partnerships, representing over 80 community rail lines, and more than 1,300 local groups. ACoRP works 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 the railways
- Ensure the community has a voice and plays a part in the development and improvement of our railways, so this 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 key part of sustainable, healthy travel.

See communityrail.org.uk, follow and tweet us [@ACORPoffice](https://twitter.com/ACORPoffice), or find us on [facebook](https://www.facebook.com/ACORP).

West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway

West Midlands Trains operates both West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway services.

- **West Midlands Railway** services operate to destinations across the West Midlands via Birmingham New Street.
- **London Northwestern Railway** services operate between Liverpool and Birmingham, and on the West Coast mainline to and from London Euston.

For more information on these services visit westmidlandsrailway.co.uk or londonnorthwesternrailway.co.uk

The West Midlands Trains franchise started on 10 December 2017 and will run until 2025/26.

West Midlands Trains operates 1,300 services a day, manages 150 stations and provides over 70 million passenger journeys a year. Over the course of the franchise, West Midlands Trains will be investing £1 billion into the rail network to deliver new trains, improved routes and station upgrades. This will include 400 new train carriages across the network and space for an extra 85,000 passengers into Birmingham and London at peak times.

For further details, images and comments, contact Nik Schofield (Communications & Marketing Manager) on news@acorp.uk.com or **01484 548926**.