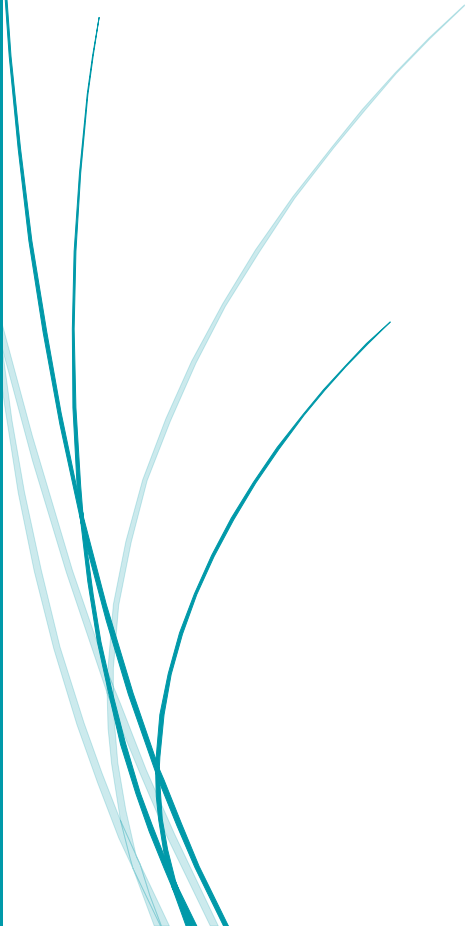




2019

Community Rail Accreditation Guidance



1. Objectives of Accreditation

1.1 Accreditation is formal recognition by the Department for Transport (DfT) and the Welsh Government that a community rail partnership (CRP) operates to a high standard and with objectives and activities that are supported by Government. The accreditation system is administered by the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP), and applies to those CRPs operating in England and Wales. The DfT shall be the accrediting body for those CRPs based in England with the Welsh Government having responsibility for those CRPs primarily operating within the Wales and Borders Franchise.

1.2 Accreditation aims to achieve the following:

Create a recognised mark of quality for a CRP that confirms that the organisation:

- Operates to high standards of governance and financial propriety. Adopts a collaborative approach and is worthy of trust by others and is a suitable entity for receiving public funds;
- Is a representative voice for their local community;
- Has a published annual plan setting out activities that aim to help their communities to get the most from their railways, reflecting (any of) the themes of the DfT's Community Rail Development Strategy.

Assist CRPs in:

- Approaching potential funders and partners, providing them with assurance on their professionalism, ethos of delivering social value in connection with the railways, and financial propriety.

Support continual improvement amongst CRPs by:

- Encouraging them to continue to think about the best ways to improve their capabilities and effectiveness through undertaking learning and development amongst their representatives and officers;
- Encouraging CRPs that are more developed, and those with specialist expertise, to help and support other CRPs, station adopters, and other community groups interested in engaging with rail, in their development;
- Encouraging CRPs to share ideas and best practice so that community rail develops as a whole, including working together where there are opportunities.

Enable delivery of the Community Rail Development Strategy:

The strategy sets out a framework for enabling community rail to continue to flourish through four themes, which accredited CRPs are expected to work towards:

- Providing a voice for the community;
- Promoting sustainable and healthy travel;
- Bringing communities together, and supporting diversity and inclusion;
- Supporting social and economic development.

2. Benefits of Accreditation

Trusted mark of quality

- 2.1 Accreditation gives formal recognition that a CRP operates to a high standard and that their objectives and activities are supported by Government. It provides assurance to others that Government considers it a good representative of the local community and that funding will be used responsibly.
- 2.2 The DfT and where relevant Welsh Government would expect other public bodies and transport providers to work in a collaborative manner with accredited CRPs. To support this, Government, ACoRP and the rail industry will work to promote awareness of accreditation so others understand what it means and how they can work with accredited CRPs to mutual benefit.
- 2.3 The DfT and the Welsh Government will provide information that accredited CRPs can share with potential partners and funders. This will provide recognition of the DfT's, and where relevant Welsh Government's, support for the CRP and information on how working with CRPs can be beneficial.

Securing funding

- 2.4 The recognised brand and quality standard associated with it should assist a CRP when engaging with new stakeholders thus supporting efforts to diversify funding.
- 2.5 An accredited CRP will gain access to the Community Rail Development Fund (CRDF). This fund will be administered by ACoRP on behalf of the DfT and shall be open to all accredited CRPs operating in England and Wales. Each grant requires a separate application to be made by the CRP and shall be judged on its own merits.

Consultation and collaboration

- 2.6 As accredited CRPs act as a voice for their community, we ask that train operators consult and discuss with them in advance, and consider and respond to their suggestions, regarding changes to local fares, timetables, stations development work and any other activities likely to significantly affect their line and local communities.
- 2.7 There should be regular dialogue between an accredited CRP and train operator. As such, we would expect train operators and Network Rail, and the CRPs, to take a communicative approach, provide a key point of contact and attend annual planning meetings as much as is practical.

3. Five Key Principles of Accreditation

3.1 The Department for Transport and Welsh Government expects accredited CRPs to adhere to the following five principles:

1) Effective, beneficial engagement of the community

The CRP is committed to strong links and engagement with the communities they serve. They work with those communities (and partners like local authorities) to understand and respond to their needs, perceptions, concerns and aspirations.

2) Transparency, openness, and ease of contact

The CRP is open about their objectives and ways of working. It's easy for people to understand what they are trying to achieve and make contact.

3) Working in a safe, responsible, ethical manner

The CRP holds themselves to high standards in their organisation, governance, and their activities, and are compliant with relevant rules and regulations.

4) Collaborating constructively with the rail industry and local partners

The CRP works to build positive relationships within the rail industry and beyond, to achieve their objectives and deliver benefits to communities and railways.

5) Equality, diversity and inclusion

The CRP is welcoming and open to involvement, gives consideration to diversity within local communities, and strives to contribute to more inclusive, cohesive communities.

4. Accreditation Requirements

4.1 The DfT and Welsh Government recognise and respect the independence of CRPs. We do not seek to determine what a CRP's priorities or objectives should be. We instead wish to confirm that the CRP is going about its objectives in a way we can support.

4.2 **To ensure that accredited groups are operating in a way we can support, a CRP seeking accreditation must fulfil the following criteria:**

- Consider and uphold the **five key principles** in all activities, evidenced through their annual plan, and/or by having in place (or working towards) appropriate policies and procedures covering relevant aspects of the 5 key principles;
- Have an **appropriate, transparent governance structure** (with an up-to-date Terms of Reference or Memoranda & Articles lodged with ACoRP) and aim to ensure their governance is effective, fair and representative;
- Have satisfactory **policies** in place including, as a minimum:
 - Health and safety;
 - Equality and diversity;
 - Data protection and privacy;
 - A code of conduct, covering staff, volunteers, board/steering group/partnership representatives.

Policies must also include, if appropriate, given the CRPs' activities and plans:

- Safeguarding;
- Volunteering;
- Risk management.
- Have appropriate **financial controls**, in accordance with their status and set-up, and be fully compliant with regulations. This includes being able to provide:
 - Either (a) a profit and loss and balance sheet and last year's annual accounts or (b) for local authorities, an up-to-date cashbook showing money in and out;
 - Budget sheet for the coming year, accompanying the annual plan.

Where accounts are not fully audited annually, the Department reserves the right to request an audit;

- Use an effective **review and planning cycle**, using ACoRP's support and advice through its annual planning process, holding an annual meeting to review progress and priorities and discuss the next year's plan, and engaging and consulting rail industry and other local partners. These meetings provide a chance for Network Rail and relevant train operating companies to comment on the CRP's plans. The DfT and Welsh Government are interested in ensuring that plans are in line with the requirements set out here and do not conflict with the

Community Rail Development Strategy. They should be developed in line with 4.4 below and ACoRP's annual planning guide;

- Be a **member of ACoRP** and display its membership on its website;
- Demonstrate transparency and that it consults and engages the community in an open, inclusive way, including, as a minimum:
 - Displaying contact information on its website;
 - Running meetings/events/communications that enable the community's voices and views to be heard and drawn on.

4.3 Once accredited, a CRP must:

- **Display the accreditation mark** on its website and any annual reports/major publications, and **include in contact us information** on their website: 'We encourage any feedback, concerns or complaints about our work, by contacting us at XXXX, or if you are still unsatisfied, contact our chair at XXXX.';
- Show willingness to working with ACoRP, DfT, Welsh Government and other partners as relevant to **resolve any issues or concerns** with these requirements;
- Work with ACoRP to **share lessons, ideas and good practice** across community rail. This includes, through annual planning, identifying major undertakings, lessons or successes (from the past or coming year) that might be used as case studies, news stories or examples.

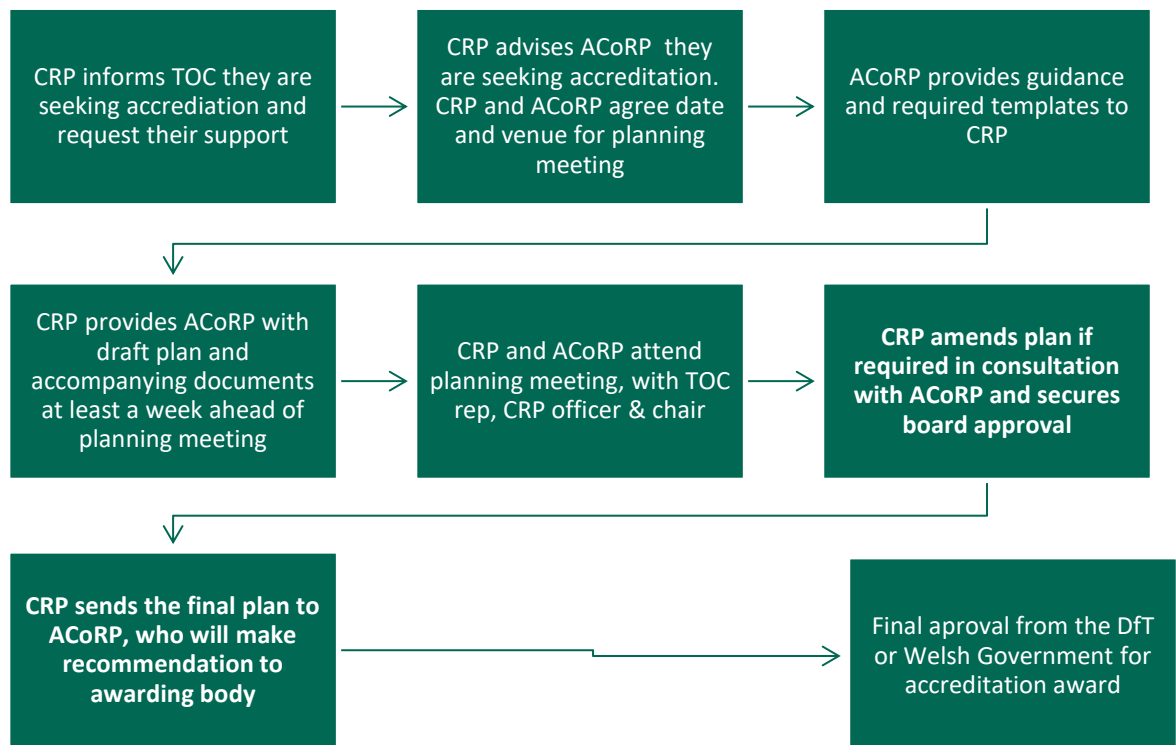
4.4 An accredited CRP's plan should provide a foundation for all work carried out by that CRP, helping them to work in a focused and organised way, and to coordinate with partners. It will be used as a guide not just by the CRP but by ACoRP, DfT, Welsh Government and, stakeholders in the rail industry and local community to coordinate providing support. Any accredited CRP must develop and maintain a plan in line with ACoRP's annual planning guidance and with ACoRP's support.

All accredited CRPs' plans should contain:

- Strategic, longer-term aims of the CRP for their area, which align with (any of) the themes of the DfT's strategy;
- Activities to be undertaken in the following year to support the strategic aims, including: desired outcomes of the activity, and how this will be assessed; how the activity will be delivered and resourced to maximise the benefits for the community; timescales for delivery;
- How the CRP will develop itself in the coming year, including relevant: staff/board training and professional development; new/improved policies and procedures; volunteer recruitment; promoting involvement to wider audiences, consultation with the community; and/or fundraising from new sources;
- Agreement from the board to the finalised plan, and any notes on governance arrangements and development needed to support and oversee its delivery.

5. Process of Accreditation

- 5.1 A CRP considering applying for accreditation should first inform their main sponsoring train operator and seek their support.
- 5.2 They advise ACoRP via their main contact and agree a meeting date (from those available from ACoRP's calendar) and venue. ACoRP will provide its annual planning guide, any templates needed and advice on documents required. Any issues or concerns a CRP may have should be discussed with ACoRP at this point.
- 5.3 The CRP must then hold a planning meeting with ACoRP on the scheduled date. This must be attended by: ACoRP; the CRP officer(s) and whoever they are accountable to, for example, the chair of the board; and the relevant train operator's community rail manager (or other key contact). Network Rail's route community rail lead will also be invited. These individuals are expected to attend wherever they are able. The DfT and Welsh Government also reserve the right to attend.
- 5.4 All those invited should be sent a copy of the draft plan not less than one week before the meeting (or sooner if agreed with ACoRP), plus the previous year's plan annotated with work completed, successes, lessons and follow-up needed. This should be accompanied by supporting documents, including those required to demonstrate that the CRP meets accreditation requirements, such as accounts.
- 5.5 The meetings provide an opportunity for ACoRP, train operators and Network Rail to feed into, discuss and reach some agreement on the plans of the CRP, considering progress in the previous year and wider evidence and factors. They also act as check-in sessions for everyone present to ensure that the CRP is upholding the principles of accreditation.
- 5.6 After the meeting the CRP should take any feedback into account and review the plan as necessary, gain approval from their board, liaising further with ACoRP for advice as needed. They then provide the final document to ACoRP, with any further documentation required.
- 5.7 ACoRP shall provide written feedback to the CRP advise them on their recommendation with regard to the accreditation application, including advising if any further work or support may be needed to help achieve accreditation. If no further work is required, ACoRP makes recommendation to DfT or Welsh Government.
- 5.8 If a CRP is unhappy with the recommendations of the ACoRP team they may provide additional evidence to the DfT or Welsh Government in support of their application. If the DfT or Welsh Government do not believe that there are sufficient grounds for a review they may choose to accept the recommendation put forward by ACoRP.
- 5.9 Following a successful accreditation application, the DfT or Welsh Government shall issue a letter of confirmation awarding accreditation to a CRP and ACoRP will provide an accreditation logo to the CRP.



- 5.10 The DfT and where relevant Welsh Government will use random checks through its contact with CRPs, ACoRP and rail partners to ensure requirements are upheld.
- 5.11 A standing item will be included on the agenda at National Community Rail Steering Group meetings as a prompt to raise any queries or concerns about accreditation.
- 5.12 DfT and Welsh Government require ACoRP to inform them if they have concerns, or receive any comments or complaints that suggest that, the above requirements are not being upheld. This will trigger a further inquiry by DfT if required. ACoRP will also inform the DfT and where relevant Welsh Government when annual planning meetings are set up (or if problems are arising with setting them up).
- 5.13 DfT and where relevant Welsh Government will continue to support and assist ACoRP to provide guidance, tools and templates to help deliver on the above.
- 5.14 DfT and where relevant Welsh Government will continue to be sent CRPs' annual plans by ACoRP following planning meetings, including confirmation of meeting attendance, and review as needed, particularly to consider whether the key principles and other requirements are being upheld, asking additional questions if needed;
- 5.15 DfT and where relevant Welsh Government are the awarders of accreditation. As such the final decision on who receives accreditation rests with them.

Converting from designation

- 5.16 CRPs with at least one designated line will simply need to confirm the date of their next planning meeting with ACoRP, from ACoRP's available slots, and then pick up on the process above, or they can apply for a change of date. Until that meeting they will retain the benefits of designation, including access to DfT funding, up to 31 March 2020. If approved, this funding may be used for any project that the CRP wishes to undertake, and need not be applied to the designated line.

Renewal

Renewal of accreditation should take place every 12 months. Therefore, ACoRP and the CRP will seek to schedule the following year's planning meeting at the time when accreditation is awarded, from a slot in ACoRP's planning calendar. The remainder of the process will be the same as outlined above.

6. Removal of Accreditation

- 6.1 Accreditation is at the discretion of the DfT and Welsh Government. As such it can be removed at any time.
- 6.2 Accreditation will usually be removed in one of three cases:
 - During the renewal process the CRP demonstrates a failure to comply with any of the requirements listed here, which is not rectified with ACoRP's assistance during a reasonable timeframe;
 - At any time, it becomes clear to the DfT or Welsh Government that the CRP is not following the five principles or meeting the requirements of accreditation.
- 6.3 In these cases, the DfT or Welsh Government will ask ACoRP to work with the CRP to see if the problem with their accreditation can be resolved. Based on the feedback of the ACoRP team about the scale of the problems and willingness of the CRP to resolve them, the DfT or Welsh Government may choose to: immediately remove accreditation; allow the CRP to remain accredited whilst resolving the problem; or suspend the group's accredited status until the problem is resolved.
- 6.4 A CRP who has their accreditation suspended will lose access to the Community Rail Development Fund until all issues have been resolved. If issues become more severe, or there is insufficient progress towards resolving them, accreditation will be removed.
- 6.5 If accreditation of a CRP is removed or if their first reapplication is rejected by the DfT or the Welsh Government, then they must wait six months before they can reapply.