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**Rail Delivery Group**



## The Value of Community Rail

**An exploration of how community rail delivers value to communities, individuals and society**

Produced by the Association  
of Community Rail Partnerships

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

**This report has been produced by the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP), the national umbrella body for community rail partnerships and groups, with sponsorship by the Rail Delivery Group, which exists to enable rail companies to succeed in delivering a successful railway.**

We aimed to engage those working in community rail, and rail industry partners, to advance understanding and thinking about how community rail – and, by extension, rail – delivers value to communities, individuals, and society.

The report finds that community rail activity is widespread across Britain, and is continuing to grow. There are now 61 community rail partnerships working along whole lines or across regions, plus at least 1,000 locally-focused, station-based groups.

Using data from ACoRP members and rail industry partners, the study shows that around 8,500 volunteers give more than 390,000 hours every year to delivering community rail activity, on initiatives including community gardening, station maintenance, events, schools' engagement, walking and cycling activities, and accessibility programmes. This activity is calculated to be worth £5.6m annually in terms of their labour contribution, plus anything up to £27.6m in social value to community rail volunteers themselves.

The study also finds that community rail lines – those with community rail partnerships – performed well in terms of passenger numbers, which might be attributed at least partly to work by community rail groups. A sample group of 36 lines showed a 42% increase in ridership between 2008/9 and 2017/18, higher than the total overall increase in passenger journeys of 35%.

In-depth research interviews with organisations active within the community rail movement – a mix of community rail partnerships and station-based groups – found that while enhancing use of our railways remains a key driver, there is widespread acknowledgement that community rail can deliver social value in a range of related areas, and evidence of this happening, linked to all four pillars of the Department for Transport's new *Community Rail Development Strategy*: providing a voice for the community; promoting sustainable, healthy and accessible travel; bringing communities together and supporting diversity and inclusion; and supporting social and economic development.

Groups spoke of the vital role they played in acting as an independent 'critical friend' to the rail industry, their ability to bring together community partners, and their work in promoting sustainable and healthy travel. Wide-ranging examples were given of community rail empowering local people to have a greater stake in their railways, and connecting local people with new opportunities that benefitted their health, wellbeing and prosperity, using sustainable and healthy means. The study's participants also highlighted, without exception, how community rail is facilitating more inclusive, cohesive and connected communities, including delivering a 'place-making' role, as well as engaging disadvantaged groups in their railways, exerting a positive influence on wider regeneration and community development, and offering a range of life-changing opportunities.

However, this report also acknowledges that further work is needed to assess and measure the social value accrued through specific community rail activities. It therefore presents an exploratory framework for assessing value in community rail, using common outcome indicators that broadly align with the identified types of community rail activity. It is hoped that this will form a basis for continued discussions and development in relation to how community rail can best evidence its value and continue to increase its impact at a local and strategic level, to maximise the value that communities can derive from their railways and stations.

## INTRODUCTION:

**Community rail is a grassroots movement spanning Britain that is growing in scope and influence. It is made up of community rail partnerships, which work along whole railway lines or in specific regions, and station friends/adoption groups and other local organisations, all aiming to connect communities with their railways.**

As community rail has grown, so has appreciation of the value of engaging communities in their local railways and stations. There is now widespread acknowledgement – among the community rail movement, rail industry, government and local authorities – that community rail activities do more than simply promote railways.

ACoRP, which acts as the umbrella body for community rail partnerships and groups, champions the wide-ranging benefits they bring about. For example, other recent ACoRP reports highlight the role played by community rail in promoting social inclusion, developing community uses of railway stations and land, and nurturing social enterprise opportunities.

Delivering maximum benefit for communities is a priority for community rail groups, which are driven by needs, aspirations and opportunities within their localities. Community rail adds value to communities in a range of ways – by enhancing health, wellbeing and togetherness through volunteering, or transforming neighbourhoods by creating a ‘community station’ – but the extent of this value has sometimes proved difficult to evaluate and demonstrate.

Groups can point to passenger numbers or volunteering hours to illustrate the benefits to train operators and the rail industry. But, many have found it harder to evidence the difference they make to individuals or whole communities, such as people feeling pride in and connection with their local area, or experiencing improved confidence, or being able to access new opportunities.

Case studies have shown the many and varied social, economic and environmental benefits that can be delivered to wider society by community rail. This has been recognised by the Department for Transport’s *Community Rail Development Strategy*, which promotes the themes of providing a voice for the community, promoting sustainable, healthy and accessible travel, bringing communities together and supporting diversity and inclusion, and supporting social and economic development.

Work has also been undertaken by the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) to assess the social value of railways, providing those in the industry with a platform to better assess and understand the social impacts of their work. One of their findings was that the rail industry’s ability to assess social value is under-developed compared to some other sectors: perhaps something that community rail can assist with, in its efforts to better understand impact locally. The aim of this report, produced with the support of the Rail Delivery Group, is to engage those working in community rail, and rail industry partners, to advance understanding and thinking about how community rail – and, by extension, rail – delivers value to communities, individuals and society.

By investigating how community rail groups are delivering value, and exploring their ambitions, outcomes and impacts, we hope to form the basis of an exploratory social value framework specifically for use within community rail, albeit linked to the wider railway network. We hope this will help community rail partnerships and groups to prioritise and focus their efforts in an intelligent, evidence-led way, and maximise the value they deliver within their communities, in connection with our railways.



## THE CONTEXT:

### i) What is social value?

An organisation can be seen to add social value when it makes a positive contribution to the long-term wellbeing and resilience of individuals, communities and society in general.<sup>1</sup>

The term has become more widely used since government introduced the Public Services (Social Value) Act in 2012. This requires public bodies to have regard to wider economic, social and environmental wellbeing when entering into service contracts, and thus to consider communities' needs in the design of services.<sup>2</sup>

This means that, often, organisations in the community and voluntary sector can no longer depend solely on narrative to demonstrate how they are delivering public benefits. To achieve funding and prove their effectiveness, they now need to demonstrate impact more robustly, via an evidence base.

Social value can be defined as a way of thinking about how scarce resources are allocated and used, asking questions such as "if £1 is spent on the delivery of services, can that same £1 be used to also produce a wider benefit to the community?"<sup>3</sup> It explores the additional benefits available to communities over and above the direct purchasing of goods, services and outcomes.<sup>4</sup> There is no pre-defined list of such benefits, with priorities led by local context and need.

Social value can also be considered as the value that people place on the changes they experience in their lives, and quantification of the relative importance of those changes.<sup>5</sup> The value of such changes, while acknowledged as positive and important, can be difficult to express and measure in a common and uniform way, unlike financial value. Hence qualitative evidence, acquired through interviews, focus groups, case studies, and reference to wider research, can be especially relevant in assessing and demonstrating social value. By using such methods to identify where activities have demonstrable impact, organisations and groups can make informed decisions as to where to invest time and resources to maximise results.



Primary school children with their artwork at Fimby Station

### ii) Measuring social value

Due to the inherently subjective nature of social value, there is no one standardised approach to measure it. However, organisations across varying sectors are working towards more consistent frameworks in an attempt to assess social value on a wider, more commonly-recognised scale.

Examples of some embedded and accepted models and theories used to assess social value are outlined below.

#### Social return on investment:

Used widely in the third and public sectors, social return on investment is an outcomes-based measurement tool that helps organisations understand and quantify the social, environmental and economic value they are creating.<sup>6</sup> It captures the value of a diverse range of outcomes in monetary form, whether they have a pre-determined financial value or not, giving a ratio to state how much social value is created for every £1 of investment, taking into account elements that may otherwise have been overlooked.

One tool that can be used to assist the social return approach is a 'Theory of Change' model, which helps to assess how interventions have impacted on people's lives. A Theory of Change is normally depicted as a map, or journey, linking the activities of a programme and organisation to the short, medium and long-term outcomes experienced by stakeholders.<sup>7</sup> So, engaging an individual in a programme that helps to develop social skills may have the short-term aim of decreasing their stress or anxiety levels. This may lead to a medium-term outcome of improved mental and physical health, which could in turn lead to improved employment or training prospects, a long-term goal.

By evidencing outcomes and giving them a value, an organisation can understand the social value a particular activity creates in a robust and rigorous way, allowing it to manage its activities and relationships to maximise that value and communicate its success.<sup>8</sup>

### **National themes, outcomes and measures (TOMs) framework:**

Launched in 2017, the aim of the National TOMs Framework is to provide a minimum reporting standard for measuring social value in private and public organisations. Its benefits are that it:

- provides a consistent approach to measuring and reporting social value;
- allows for continuous improvement;
- provides a robust, transparent and defensible solution for assessing and awarding tenders;
- allows organisations to compare their performance by sector and industry benchmarks and understand what good looks like;
- reduces the uncertainty surrounding social value measurement for businesses, allowing them to make informed decisions and embed social value into corporate strategies.<sup>9</sup>

The framework allows users to assign and assess financial impact in relation to five themes: promoting skills and employment; supporting the growth of responsible regional businesses; creating healthier, safer and more resilient communities; protecting and improving our environment; and promoting social innovation.

### **Social value banks:**

The social value bank model, developed by the research consultancy Simetrica, is used predominantly by organisations involved in social housing, although versions have now been developed for a number of different sectors, including charities and local authorities. The approach measures the success and impact of particular social interventions based on the extent to which they increase people's well-being.

The results of large national surveys are analysed to isolate the effect of a particular factor on a person's wellbeing, with analysis then identifying the equivalent amount of money needed to increase someone's wellbeing by the same amount.<sup>10</sup> The framework uses more than 60 metrics linked to areas such as health, employment and social activities, with financial values attributed in line with Green Book figures, used by HM Treasury.

For example, the Housing Associations' Charitable Trust (HACT) social value bank states that successfully relieving an adult from depression or anxiety is worth £36,766 annually, while volunteering on a regular basis is worth £3,249 per year.<sup>11</sup> By helping organisations understand and measure the impact of their activities, the framework can be used to make investment decisions designed so resources are allocated to areas and activities delivering the greatest social benefits.

### **RSSB's Common Social Impact Framework for rail:**

All of the above approaches were used, alongside other models, to inform the RSSB's social value measurement framework for rail, designed to provide a common system and guidance for understanding and measuring social value impacts across the UK rail industry.

The project was commissioned as it was felt that while the rail industry has robust means to measure the economic value of rail, its measurement of social value still relied largely on narrative and limited metrics, making it difficult to assess the social return on investment of different options when planning and delivering developments to the railway.<sup>12</sup>

The research resulted in the creation of a Common Social Impact Framework (CSIF) for rail using a common set of measures, monetised values and qualitative approaches, providing a platform to help the rail industry develop its understanding of social impacts, and start to assess these better. Sarah Borien, sustainability strategy manager at Network Rail, said: "The CSIF will, alongside other industry-led initiatives, help to develop a consistent approach to social value reporting and best practice in rail."<sup>13</sup>

Pilots of the framework on a number of rail-related projects, including one by a community rail partnership, found that, on the whole, stakeholders within the industry were "relatively immature" in their approach to measuring and reporting social impacts. Within the project brief, RSSB stated: "Research around certain rail benefits and dis-benefits has been inadequate, to date, to allow development of robust monetised values appropriate to rail and may require additional analysis and/or primary data collection to robustly capture these benefits." Included in this analysis were a number of areas directly linked to community rail activity, such as combatting loneliness, volunteering initiatives, work with schools and colleges, participation in heritage and art activities, and improving accessibility and community use of stations.

The framework provides a series of measures relating to 10 key social impacts of rail, alongside guidance on qualitative measurement and reporting.



Workington Station

Each of the themes within the framework are broken down into sub-impacts. For example, the social inclusion impact breaks down as:

Key social impact	Impact explanation	Sub-impacts	Detail of sub-impact
Social inclusion	The impacts of rail on the functioning and growth of communities, and the extent to which people live alongside each other with mutual understanding and respect	Philanthropic donations	<b>Charitable cash and in-kind donations</b>
		Community volunteering	<b>Community volunteers, station adoption groups and benefits to people of community volunteering</b>
		Community networks	<b>Collaboration with local authorities, planners and other developers. Contribution to public space and services</b>
		Empowered	<b>Sense of belonging, influence and positivity</b>
		Cohesive communities	<b>People's sense of connections and belonging to neighbourhood</b>
		Supporting the most vulnerable	<b>Activities to tackle homelessness and support vulnerable people</b>
		Engagement in culture and heritage	<b>Arts, heritage and cultural facilities and activities</b>

For each of the sub-impacts, the framework provides a series of intended goals, indicators, metrics, monetised values (where appropriate) and guidance on data collection to allow rail industry organisations to assess specific interventions.

Within the sub-impact for community volunteering – widely acknowledged as a cornerstone of the community rail movement – the goal is defined as “communities contribute to community rail as volunteers, and benefit themselves from doing so.”

The metrics for measuring the impact of such activities are:<sup>14</sup>

- change in the number of community volunteers;
- change in the number of community volunteer hours donated to the industry;

- change in the number of people volunteering on a repeated and regular basis (at least once a month);
- change in the number of people attending local voluntary groups on a regular basis (at least once a month);
- change in the number of people gaining work-related training through community volunteering and/or the community use of stations.

Impacts are assigned monetary values where there is an existing evidence basis for this, such as a calculation of the worth to the industry of volunteer hours using the minimum wage, or using the value of regular volunteering from the HACT Social Value Bank. Organisations are also encouraged to explore the outcomes of the volunteering, for the industry and the volunteers themselves, using qualitative evidence such as case studies, interviews and surveys to identify added value provided by volunteering activities.



### iii) Social value within community rail

It is widely acknowledged that community rail partnerships, station friends – or station adoption – groups, and other rail-related community groups are delivering wide-ranging social benefits, to do with improved mobility and sustainable travel, community engagement and wellbeing, and social and economic development.

In 2015, a report was commissioned by the National Community Rail Steering Group to investigate the value of community rail partnerships and community rail volunteering.<sup>15</sup> Its findings will be considered in greater detail later in this report, but the headlines were:

- 2.8% additional passenger growth per annum on community rail routes;
- 3,200 community rail volunteers giving 250,000 hours per year in support, equating to an annual financial value of £3.4m;
- A range of added economic, social and environmental value contributed via community rail partnerships;
- ‘Outstanding’ low-cost/high-benefit impacts by station adoption groups.

In 2017, ACoRP highlighted a number of key success areas for community rail within its short report, ‘What’s been achieved through community rail?’<sup>16</sup>, produced in support of the Department for Transport’s consultation on its *Community Rail Development Strategy*. These areas were: promoting understanding and use of local railways; helping communities engage in and have a voice in railway development; bringing disused station property and railway buildings/land back into use; and running a range of activities linked to the railway to bring people together to promote social inclusion.

This highlighted the movement’s journey from being historically focused on local engagement to promote rail use and save lesser-used lines thought to be under threat, to more wide-ranging activities delivering positive impacts on society.

However, ACoRP and the Department for Transport acknowledge that fully evidencing community rail’s impact, and the range of social and economic benefits the movement supports, remains a challenge.<sup>17</sup> Some standardised reporting mechanisms and metrics can be applied consistently across the sector, e.g. the recording of passenger journeys or the number of volunteer hours delivered, but there is no common value framework for groups within community rail to use as a base for reporting outcomes and impact. In ACoRP’s 2018 members’ survey, support in evidencing and demonstrating impact was the highest training need identified among community rail partnerships.

While RSSB’s Common Social Impact Framework incorporates aspects of community rail, many of its topics and metrics are not directly applicable, and some groups may find it difficult to apply practically in a community context. This report will explore if a community rail-specific framework and evaluation tool could be developed drawing on RSSB’s framework and community-orientated examples, and wider contexts, such as the government’s *Community Rail Development Strategy*.

One outcomes framework we have identified from a different part of the community and voluntary sector, which appears to be of relevance to community rail, is that of the Canal & River Trust. This is being used by the Trust to assess and showcase the impact of its local projects, while not relying on monetary value (see right).



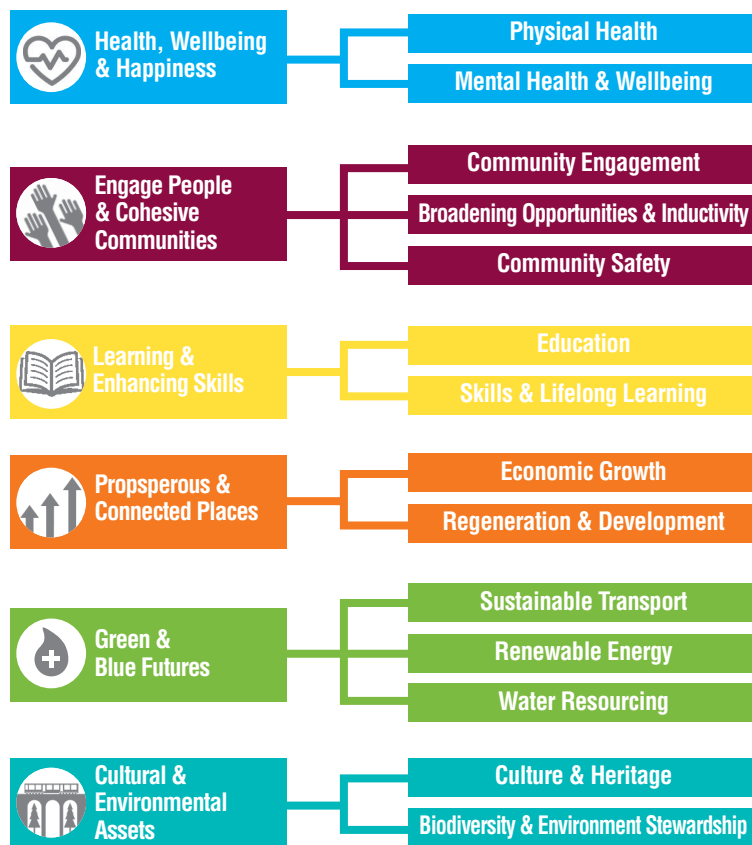
Station adopters at London Road Station in Brighton

## Canal & River Trust

To show that its activities were ‘transforming places and enriching lives’, the Trust recognised the need to set out the different ways its waterways add social value. It wanted to demonstrate:

- how waterways are being used as platforms for a wide range of activity;
- the difference its activities and interventions make to local people’s lives;
- contributions it makes to the economic, social, environmental and cultural wellbeing of the nation.

The Trust developed an outcomes measurement framework organised into six key domains that reflected the range of ways waterways contribute to social value.



Each sub-domain has at least one outcome ambition, with associated impact broken down into primary indicators and secondary self-reported/perception indicators.

For example, within the ‘Cultural & Environmental Assets – Culture & Heritage’ sub-domain, the outcome ambition is “optimising the value to local economies, communities and identity derived from cultural and heritage assets”.

Impact in this area is measured by the percentage of people who believe the Trust’s waterways and/or activities contribute to the heritage and cultural richness of the local area, and the number of historic buildings, structures and areas within waterway corridors brought back into beneficial use or enhanced through regeneration, repair or maintenance.

For further information, visit [canalrivertrust.org.uk/refresh/media/thumbnail/33802-canal-and-river-trust-outcomes-report-waterways-and-wellbeing-full-report.pdf](https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/refresh/media/thumbnail/33802-canal-and-river-trust-outcomes-report-waterways-and-wellbeing-full-report.pdf), pp33

## iv) A national strategy for community rail

‘Connecting Communities with the Railways’,<sup>18</sup> the Department for Transport’s new strategy for community rail, launched in November 2018, recognises that while increasing passenger numbers remains a key focus for community rail groups, their activities have evolved beyond that single metric to delivering wide-ranging impacts in the communities they serve.

The strategy aims to support community rail organisations to “flourish as inclusive, independent and sustainable” groups so that they are well-placed to deliver its four ‘key pillars’:

- providing a voice for the community;
- promoting sustainable, healthy and accessible travel;
- bringing communities together and supporting diversity and inclusion;
- supporting social and economic development.



A key point the strategy makes is about the need to help community rail groups evidence their value, to promote the movement's continued development and increase awareness and support. It states:

"It is important for community rail organisations to continue to develop sound evidence bases about the impact they are having and the value they can bring, focusing on outcomes – the change that occurs as a result of their actions – if they are to continue developing their work and successfully attract additional funding, particularly from non-rail sources."<sup>19</sup>

Use of tools such as RSSB's Common Social Impact Framework is encouraged, alongside, with ACoRP's support, the interpretation of other frameworks applicable to community rail that may help to develop plans and business cases.

Under the new strategy, community rail partnerships can apply for accredited status, designed to act as a "trusted mark of quality" and provide benefits to partnerships that demonstrate they meet certain standards. Part of the accreditation criteria will be to have an annual plan featuring activity that reflects any or all of the pillars of the new community strategy, and some partnerships are already starting to write their workplans based on these themes.

Groups are encouraged to be clear about their longer-term aims, and the desired outcomes of their activities and how these will be measured, to help maximise the benefits and value to local communities. In this way, the strategy encourages an approach that is more focused on social value, which demands a suitable level of understanding of how social value is accrued and assessed. The potential for community rail groups to deliver social value in connection with the railway is also being increasingly recognised and embraced by train operators and other industry partners, with the benefits of a potential increase in passenger numbers

complementing the 'added value' of supplementing local economies, promoting tourism, celebrating art and culture, and tackling social isolation.

There is also now a wider acknowledgment of the role community rail can play in multiple policy areas.

The movement featured prominently in the government's first cross-departmental strategy to tackle loneliness, with a case study highlighting work by Community Rail Lancashire in engaging young people, including those with special needs and disabilities, to become confident in rail travel.<sup>20</sup>

Such programmes not only promote social inclusion, but can also increase opportunities in areas such as education and employment, with effective use of rail travel expanding the travel to work area, enabling people to be connected to study and job opportunities further afield than would be the case without a rail link.

#### Department for Transport:

**Community rail can be at the vanguard of supporting the government and rail industry to unlock the social value of the railways, and be bold in doing that.**



A craft session at Kilmarnock Station



## RESEARCHING THE VALUE OF COMMUNITY RAIL:

### i. The growing spread of community rail groups

As of mid-February 2019, evidence shows there are 61 community rail partnerships and at least 1,000 station groups across the UK, based on ACoRP's membership, and data collected from train operators.

All 61 community rail partnerships – 46 in England, 10 in Scotland, and five in Wales – are ACoRP members, alongside 164 station adoption or community station members, as shown on the map below.

ACoRP members as  
of mid-February 2019



There is clear, ongoing growth across the community rail movement, evidenced through ACoRP's membership and work supporting community rail.

ACoRP tends to be supporting about 10 groups at any one time that are considering or starting to set up as a community rail partnership; our station adoption group members increased by 25% last year; and we have recently introduced a new 'community stations' membership category in response to demand.

At the time of the 2015 report into the *Value of Community Rail Partnerships and the Value of Community Rail Volunteering* by Transport Regeneration, there were 42 community rail partnerships, 36 in England, five in Wales and one in Scotland. We have therefore seen nearly a 50% rise in four years. There were also 111 station adoption groups registered with ACoRP, and a further "400 or so local volunteer groups known to but not members of ACoRP",<sup>21</sup> suggesting a possible 100% growth rate in station adoption.

### ii. The value of community rail volunteering

In the 2015 report described above, information about the number of volunteers and the time they contributed to community rail activities was captured via an email survey to ACoRP members, with a representative sample responding. This indicated that each volunteer typically worked between 2-2.25 hours per week, with a figure of two hours per week subsequently used for volunteers across ACoRP member groups. In cases where no specific information was available, researchers assumed that groups consisted of just two members volunteering one hour each per week.

Using those figures, it was concluded that more than 250,000 hours per year were worked by around 3,200 rail volunteers across the UK. By multiplying the number of hours by the then average (median) hourly wage, £13.03,<sup>22</sup> the value of community rail volunteer time was estimated to be approximately £3.4m annually.

The figures were deemed by Transport Regeneration to be "reasonable", but there was an acceptance that these were conservative approximations. The report stated: "Based on the interviews with individuals and groups of volunteers we suggest that this figure should be treated as a conservative number. This is partly because our method has erred on the cautious side. Also, because volunteers consistently initially underestimated the time they give. During discussions we found that a more accurate and realistic figure was obtained. Clearly, if the email survey responses are similarly understated, the true value will be considerably greater."

In addition, it is important to note that this method of calculating the value of volunteering provides only a narrow picture, focused on the economic value to the

rail industry. It does not factor in the social value that we know is accrued through volunteering generally, for example relating to volunteers' health and wellbeing, and the particular social impacts of community rail volunteering, such as helping more people to access opportunities through sustainable travel.<sup>23</sup>

For this report, we have collated data from multiple sources to build on previous analysis and create a fuller picture of the scope and reach of community rail groups and volunteering. This included:

- Questions in the 2018 ACoRP members survey on:
  - number of volunteers working within community rail, completed by community rail partnerships and station groups (37% response rate)
  - number of hours worked by volunteers within community rail, completed by community rail partnerships and station groups (30% response rate);
- Figures and feedback from a range of train operating companies;
- Figures and feedback from other members of the Department for Transport-administered National Community Rail Steering Group.

Aside from the 225 groups registered as members of ACoRP, we used data from train operators to estimate the total number of groups active within community rail across the UK. Using data encompassing almost two-thirds (62%) of the total UK station network, the percentage of stations found to benefit from some form of station adoption or station friends' activity was 59%. This is considered to be a representative sample, particularly as it contained comparative figures at both ends of the percentage scale: one train operator had 77% of its stations adopted, another had 4%.

Using an adoption figure of 59% for the total UK station network equates to an approximate figure of 1,500 stations being adopted. However, based on our experience, we suspect that train operators' data may include stations that have been adopted in the past, but where groups are no longer active, or that were adopted by single individuals rather than community groups. Given these potential factors, we are using a conservative figure of 1,000 station adoption/friends' groups likely to be in existence, of which around 16% are now registered as ACoRP members.

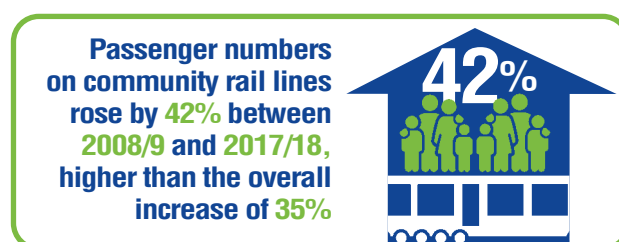
Collating the data from all parties found that the average number of volunteers across station groups and community rail partnerships was eight, giving an estimated 8,488 volunteers working in community rail

in some capacity across the UK, a 165% increase from 2015. The average number of hours worked by each volunteer was estimated at 46 hours per year. This equates to less than one hour per week, and as such, is considered to be realistic.

This suggests that every year, almost **8,500** volunteers give more than **390,000** hours to community rail. Using the same calculation as the 2015 report, by multiplying that figure by the current average (median) hourly wage rate, £14.31,<sup>24</sup> the estimated total value of community rail volunteer time is approximately **£5.6m** per year.

However, this calculation provides a financial value to the rail industry, but does not take into account the social value of volunteering. By incorporating the appropriate metric from the RSSB Common Social Impact Framework, which uses figures from the HACT<sup>25</sup> Social Value Bank, it is possible to estimate a monetary value for the social benefits accrued by 'regular' volunteers, defined as those who volunteer at least once per month for at least two months. The monetised value is set by HACT as £3,249 per adult volunteer per year.

Our data indicates that community rail volunteers, on average, work 46 hours per year, which would suggest that they give their time at least once a month, therefore satisfying the 'regular' volunteer criteria. If all 8,488 community rail volunteers are classified as such, the social value figure using the model in the RSSB framework would be **£27.6m** per year. If more conservative figures of 75% or 50% of community rail volunteers giving their time on a regular basis were used, that figure would be £20.7m or £13.8m, on top of the monetary value to the rail industry.



### iii. The impact on rail use

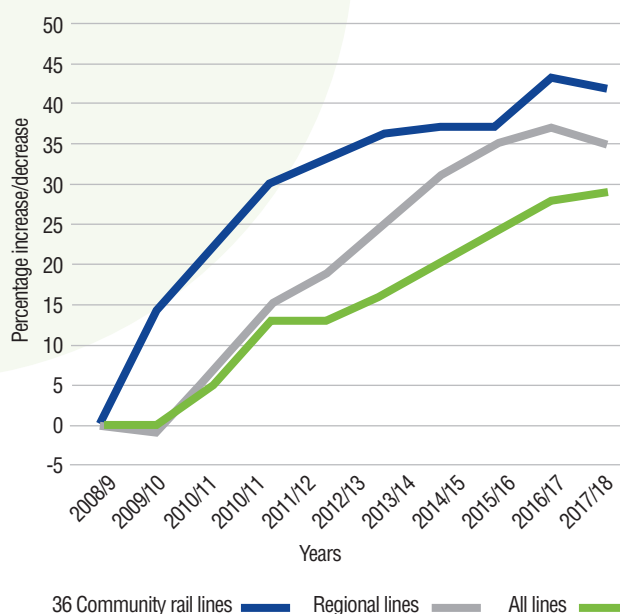
Overall, the data shows that community rail lines perform well in terms of passenger numbers, which might be at least partly attributed to activities by community rail groups. The overall trend in recent years shows that adding social value and engaging communities in their railways through community rail partnerships appears to deliver positive results in terms of ridership, meaning more people benefitting from rail travel, the wider social and environmental benefits of sustainable travel, and benefits to train operators and the rail industry.

The 2015 report investigating the value of community rail found that 11 community rail partnerships, selected as being representative, saw a higher percentage growth in rail use on their lines than overall on regional operators' lines, which were deemed to be the closest and fairest comparison. Over six years, from 2006/7 to 2012/13, these community railway lines achieved an additional 18% growth in rail use above perceived expectations, equating to an approximate 2.8% additional compound growth\* per year over the stated time period when compared to non-community railway lines run by regional operators.<sup>26</sup>

The source of the data in the 2015 report was the national rail industry database of passenger journeys (known as LENNON), with the figures made available by the Office for Rail Regulation.<sup>27</sup> With help from the Rail Delivery Group, we have again used this data source to compile figures for this report, looking at a greater number of community rail lines over a longer time period, with data relating to 36 designated community rail lines analysed over a 10-year period, from 2008/9 to 2017/18.<sup>28</sup> The 36 lines are diverse in terms of geography, expected typical journey type and demographics, and cover seven different train operators.

Over the 10-year period, passenger journeys across the 36 community rail lines increased by an average of 42%, as seen in the table and graph below and right. As indicated, the percentage increase is significantly higher than both the overall and regional averages.

Indexed comparative passenger journey growth



By using the same compounding equation as the 2015 report, a comparative figure can be produced as follows.

2015 report	Increase in use of 11 community rail lines over regional operator journeys, 2006/7 to 2012/13	45% compared to 23% (1.45/1.23)	Exceeding expected growth by 18%	Annually exceeding expected growth by 2.8%
2019 report	Increase in use of 36 community rail lines over regional operator journeys, 2008/9 to 2017/18	42% compared to 29% (1.42/1.29)	Exceeding expected growth by 10%	Annually exceeding expected growth by 1%

\* - Compound growth rate is described as growth that is over and above the expected level. So, in the table above, the action of compounding creates a difference of 18% (i.e. the difference between 45% growth and 23% growth is  $1.45 \div 1.23 = 1.18$ , or 18%).

Rail journey category	2008/9	2017/18	% increase
Total franchised journeys	1,266.5 billion	1,705.5 billion	35%
Regional sector journeys	302.8 million	389.6 million	29%
Journeys on 36 designated community rail lines	20.6 million	29.3 million	42%

Pitlochry Station





While the compound growth rate figure in this report is lower, this can partly be attributed to a larger data sample collected over a longer period of time. This time frame also includes 2017/18, which is only annual period where the number of passenger journeys on community rail lines showed an average decrease, by 1%, while regional operators retained a slight increase of 0.3%. Despite the fall in journeys, the decrease on community rail lines was less than that seen across the entire passenger network, where the figure for 2017/18 was down by 1.9%. In addition, of the 36 lines analysed for data, 50% managed to reverse the downward trend by maintaining or increasing ridership.

The graph shows that while passenger journeys, particularly on community rail lines, increased dramatically in the period up to around 2011/12, there has since been a plateau, and even the slight decrease seen last year. However, the wider trend remains that over a decade, community rail lines have enjoyed greater growth than other comparable lines. Where there has been a slow-down in growth or slight decrease in journey figures, this may be related to factors such as engineering work, timetable changes or industrial action in some areas, linked to developmental work and changes taking place across our railways. These factors may have affected the data in a way that masks continuing latent demand for rail travel and an underlying potential for further growth.



Art on the train within the Severnside Community Rail Partnership

## iv. Methodology

In assessing the value delivered by community rail groups, we have drawn on previous reports and research, as well as speaking to a range of professionals and volunteers working to deliver and support community rail activities both strategically and at a local level.

In addition to considering case studies and best practice from community rail groups across the UK, the study aimed to investigate perceptions of 'value' in greater detail with a small sample of groups. As a result, research visits were made to eight groups within the community rail movement, with face-to-face meetings and semi-structured interviews taking place with a number of colleagues in each group. The groups involved in this in-depth research were:

- The Friends of Glossop Station (Glossop, High Peak, Derbyshire) [www.friends-of-glossop-station.co.uk](http://www.friends-of-glossop-station.co.uk);
- The Highland Mainline Community Rail Partnership (Dunkeld & Birnam to Carrbridge, Scotland) [www.highlandmainlinecrp.co.uk](http://www.highlandmainlinecrp.co.uk);
- Kilmarnock Station Railway Heritage Trust (Kilmarnock, Ayrshire, Scotland) [www.ksrht.org](http://www.ksrht.org);
- First Impressions (Elstree & Borehamwood, Hertfordshire);
- Sussex Community Rail Partnership (seven lines covering East Sussex, West Sussex, and Brighton & Hove) [www.sussexcrp.org](http://www.sussexcrp.org);
- Community Rail Cumbria (The Cumbrian Coast Line – Carlisle to Barrow) [www.communityrailcumbria.co.uk/lines/cumbrian-coast-line](http://www.communityrailcumbria.co.uk/lines/cumbrian-coast-line);
- Severnside Community Rail Partnership (The Severn Beach Line – Bristol Temple Meads to Severn Beach) [www.severnside-rail.org.uk](http://www.severnside-rail.org.uk);
- Conwy Valley Railway (Llandudno to Blaenau Ffestiniog, North Wales) [www.conwyvalleyrailway.co.uk](http://www.conwyvalleyrailway.co.uk).

The above groups were chosen for inclusion in the study due to their willingness to engage with the research, their differences in terms of geography and stages of development, and their experience of delivering a diverse range of projects that provide, or have the potential to provide, social value to individuals and communities.

Prior to the research visit, the main contact at the community rail partnership or station group was asked to complete a brief questionnaire to capture key data about the organisation, including its make-up and stage of development, its main partners and stakeholders, and any ongoing projects.

The structure of each visit was influenced by staff availability and practicalities, with some involving trips on the lines where projects were highlighted and discussed, and field notes taken. All visits involved semi-structured interviews with up to three key personnel, such as community rail officers, other paid staff, chairs and volunteers.

Questions centred on the four pillars of the Department for Transport's *Community Rail Development Strategy*, within a wider discussion on value and social value in a community rail environment, with opportunities to explore related issues as they arose. Participants were asked to give their thoughts on areas including:

- the definition and meaning of value in a community rail context;
- areas where value was delivered, and the subsequent difference this made to individuals and communities;
- ways of measuring the value and impact of projects;
- how value could and should be seen and evaluated within the community rail movement.

Interview responses were 'coded' using thematic analysis, a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within a particular dataset. Acknowledged advantages of the approach are its flexibility, its ability to allow for a social interpretation of data, and its usefulness for producing qualitative analysis suited to informing policy development.<sup>29</sup>

The findings are presented in four sections, complementing the four pillars of the Department for Transport's *Community Rail Development Strategy*: providing a voice for the community; promoting sustainable, healthy and accessible travel; bringing communities together and supporting diversity and inclusion; and supporting social and economic development.

As alluded to earlier, the study was also informed by data from the 2018 ACoRP members' survey, input from the National Community Rail Steering Group and other community rail practitioners, passenger data from the Office for Rail Regulation, and the desk-based research explained earlier.

## Theme A: Providing a voice for the community

One of the successes of the community rail movement has been the ability of groups immersed within their local areas to use their knowledge and expertise to promote rail improvements that benefit local people.

This can have a range of positive benefits, by making rail more accessible and appealing as a travel option, and creating a sense of local empowerment and 'ownership' in relation to the railway.

In its *Community Rail Development Strategy*, the Department for Transport talks of the "respect" the community rail movement has earned from local communities and the rail industry, with groups such as community rail partnerships seen as "strong advocates" in promoting ways the railway can play a more active role in engaging and supporting local areas.

By demonstrating an understanding of local people's needs and aspirations, and providing a mechanism for local feedback to be presented in a constructive manner, community rail groups have become 'critical friends' to the rail industry, helping to facilitate positive change.

They have helped bring about improvements ranging from major capital infrastructure projects to open up new travel markets – such as the £30m Todmorden Curve and Darwen Passing Loop schemes in Lancashire, in which the local community rail partnership, Community Rail Lancashire, played a key role in developing business cases for new direct services to Manchester on the rebuilt line<sup>30</sup> – to timetable changes aimed at removing barriers to rail usage locally.

As recognised in the Department for Transport's strategy, community rail partnerships and groups are well-placed to provide community-based evidence for change, with their input and insight potentially adding value to the development of rail services at all points of what can be an extensive process. This type of community influence within rail may be especially valuable, with research suggesting that community-led development can enable local people to have a greater say in transforming the fortunes of their communities, providing a means of empowerment<sup>31</sup>, creating partnerships, and moving towards a more sustainable form of community development.<sup>32</sup>

## i. A link between communities and the rail industry:

The importance of community rail groups acting as an important and appropriate channel of communication between local communities and the rail industry was a sentiment echoed by many community rail representatives involved in the research. Representatives of the Highland Mainline Community Rail Partnership described their role as a “trusted intermediary”, aided by the majority of their members being station adopters on the line, giving them added insight into very localised issues within station environments.

Sally Spaven, chair of the group, said: “I think the major thing is communication. People can raise issues with us, and communities know what is going on. It’s also communication with partners like ScotRail and Network Rail, so if we have problems we know the right people to speak to. We can be the buffer between those organisations and the local community. We can put out a positive message, and people in our communities have confidence in us that we are fighting their corner.”

The value of a community rail partnership being a visible point of contact for communities was also cited by Tim Barkley, chair of Sussex Community Rail Partnership, who spoke of the unique ability of community rail groups to bring an eclectic mix of partners to the table to “open the doors to dialogue” and find the most innovative, locally-tailored solutions to problems and challenges.

He said: “I’ve always been impressed by the strength and diversity of the groups community rail is able to bring together. Each of our lines has a very diverse set of members, which reflects our local communities and their interest in their local stations. I don’t know that there are many other organisations that would bring together representatives like Gatwick Airport, parish councils, the train operating company, staff, local authorities; it’s that diversity that brings the strength and opportunities. I think it would be challenging for another group to bring all those parties together. I think our structure, the diverse range of steering groups, is a good way for our communities to have a voice.”

Groups cited examples of where they had relayed concerns from passengers and been met with a positive response from train companies to overcome issues in areas such as timetable changes, connections with local bus networks, potential changes to train rolling stock, and station facilities.

**I’ve always been impressed by the strength and diversity of the groups community rail is able to bring together.**

By acting as a voice for communities, in a non-confrontational way, groups said they felt more likely to become a trusted partner of the rail industry, with a greater chance of achieving changes and maintaining a positive working relationship.

## ii. Acting as a ‘critical friend’:

Various groups felt that by acting as a critical friend to the rail industry – offering critique but always giving an informed, constructive perspective on ideas or projects – they could successfully balance broad support of the industry and the maintenance of an independent public voice. In some cases, being a trusted but critical ally had led groups to become partners on major infrastructure schemes, such as the Highland Mainline Community Rail Partnership’s role in consultation on a £57m upgrade of the line.

Larry Heyman, former local development manager for Govia Thameslink Railway, said it was the mutually beneficial nature of the train operator’s partnership with the First Impressions group, which has adopted Elstree & Borehamwood Station, that led to them playing a meaningful part in the re-development of the station as a transport interchange. He said working with the group had improved links between rail users and the train operator and station staff, provided a sense of empathy, and helped to reshape attitudes towards the railway, with many seeing the station staff as part of the community.

He said: “There’s no them and us: it’s all us. When you have a dialogue between staff and passengers it’s much easier to do a consultation, because people aren’t taken aback; you can ask questions. You don’t have the situation where getting feedback, getting the community’s opinion, is an unusual situation. It can be what I call constructive criticism, or a critical friend.”

A number of community rail partnerships spoke of the need to maintain a clear distinction between their voice and that of rail user groups, recognising community rail’s approach was not to campaign against the rail industry, but work with it. By acting in this manner, community needs could be successfully addressed, such as the long-awaited introduction of Sunday services south of Whitehaven on the Cumbrian Coast Line. By Community Rail Cumbria patiently building and championing the case for change, and collecting evidence on its potential impact, Sunday services were re-introduced in 2018 and appear to already be having a marked effect on local tourism and leisure opportunities.

**There’s no them and us: it’s all us.**



Laurence Hilland, chair of the Cumbrian Coast Line, part of Community Rail Cumbria, explained: "Not having trains south of Whitehaven on a Sunday was having a huge economic impact. No trains, no tourism. We had evidence like guest houses having bookings cancelled because people realised that no trains were running. We kept hammering home that we wanted Sunday trains, and it worked. It's now opened up a whole new market. We can now promote places like Maryport and Ravenglass as destination stations, perfect for weekends."

### iii. Responding to local needs and contexts:

A common theme highlighted by many community rail practitioners was that while ideas could, and should, be gleaned from good practice elsewhere, there was no 'one size fits all' approach to community rail, and the primary focus of projects and activities had to be geared towards the needs of local communities. Some defined the essence of value within community rail as an ability to embrace diversity and flexibility, with groups able to adapt and perform a number of different roles to exert a positive influence.

Participants also stressed the importance of the "richness" of the wider community rail movement, advocating an approach that focused on local need, but retained an open mind and drew on support and lessons learned from other groups across the network, which comes together under ACoRP's national umbrella.

Neil Williams, chair of the Friends of Glossop Station group, said: "Every station and every community is different: you can't do a blueprint. There aren't set things that you can say for everyone to do. You can say, well these things happen, can you adapt, can you learn from them. But there's stimulus in interaction, especially with people outside of your own train operator area. That is of real value."

Describing the value of community rail, Sally Spaven said: "It's like a box of chocolates. Different community rail partnerships doing totally different things for their communities, whatever it is their community needs at that time."

Kate Howie, treasurer of the Highland Mainline Community Rail Partnership, added: "And they're all different because of the different communities they're serving. That's the richness of community rail partnerships, the fact that they're not doing the same things. You can learn from each other."

Groups also spoke of playing different strategic roles to create the most effective partnerships to drive schemes forward. Colleagues at Sussex Community Rail Partnership said that

**That's the richness of community rail partnerships, the fact that they're not doing the same things. You can learn from each other.**

due to the vast and varied nature of their area – more than 90 stations over seven lines – it was vital for the organisation to be able to support local groups with different needs. It was said that while some older and more-established station adoption groups tended to

focus on more traditional activity such as station gardening and maintenance, newer groups tended to be linked to existing community or civic groups, using stations as sites to deliver and extend their activities, focusing more on social inclusion and community development.

Tim Barkley said a measure of value and success for the partnership was being able to coordinate support for such a diverse range of groups, stating: "We've sustained and supported a wide range of groups that have stayed with us, and that's one of the tests for me: groups sustaining their interest for many, many years. We see the value of the publicity that some groups get, and that certainly enhances people's knowledge about what is taking place at stations. The sustainability of that community buy-in is part of that evaluation of value."

Flexibility in approach was also highlighted by Bob Redman, chair of the First Impressions group, a multi-agency partnership that developed from Elstree Screen Heritage, an organisation that records, preserves and shares the film and TV heritage of the area. By creating what he described as a "loose federation" and "safe space" with a range of partners, including different tiers of local government and the train operator, they were able to maximise resources and expertise in making use of the station as part of the group's wider work.

He said: "We had no bricks and mortar. We could do things, but we needed to establish a presence. So, we thought, why don't we just take over the outside of public places. We've got film and TV images that are unique to this place, so why don't we put pictures down the high street, put pictures on the gateways, the key roads and of course the railway station. To make it more attractive, more welcoming, and to raise the profile."

In Cumbria, colleagues on the Cumbrian Coast Line spoke of the differing role the community rail partnership plays in an array of projects at different strategic levels. This included working at a high-level of influence as a key stakeholder in the area's nuclear industry, the region's biggest employer, and as part of a major mining project, with possible plans for a new coal mine being established at St Bees. Staff have been supporting the project and business case for around a decade, working with agencies including the Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership to try and secure what they see to be major benefits to the area in terms of employment and an associated major upgrade to railway infrastructure.

While it no longer receives direct financial support from Cumbria County Council, the group retains a formal link with the authority as its accountable body as this extends its community voice, particularly when reaching out to other potential funders and partners. Explaining the rationale behind the projects the community rail partnership gets involved with, Laurence Hilland said the primary focus was always improving the social and economic prosperity of the area.

He said: "It comes back to community value. At its heart, everything the community rail partnership does is based upon that word community. We say the two most important words are community and partnership. Rail links the two together."

## Theme B: Promoting sustainable, healthy and accessible travel

It is widely recognised that rail travel offers a greener, healthier and more sustainable mode of transport than road use. It has a lower impact on climate change,<sup>33</sup> and presents far less detriment in terms of air pollution, energy, noise, congestion and public health and safety.<sup>34</sup> Also, while rail's green credentials already compare favourably with other alternatives, there is an ongoing commitment within the rail industry to operate in a way that further reduces any negative impacts and maximises the benefits of the railway to the environment.<sup>35</sup>

Community rail has a key part to play, both in encouraging and enabling wider use of rail as a part of more sustainable travel and lifestyles, and in helping people to access the railway using other sustainable and healthy travel modes – namely, by walking, cycling or taking a bus to and from the station, rather than driving.

Within the *Community Rail Development Strategy*, one aim highlighted by the Department for Transport is for community rail groups to bring travel partners together to promote and facilitate sustainable and healthy journeys. Using their distinct knowledge of local people and place, community rail groups can "act as the conduit"<sup>36</sup> to bring together complementary providers and help to forge truly integrated sustainable transport systems, particularly incorporating the 'last mile', the journey from station to final destination.

### i. Promoting walking and cycling:

Many community rail groups are already working to improve connectivity between rail and other modes of transport, with a range of success seen in walking and cycling schemes. Groups have worked to provide improved facilities and infrastructure at and around stations, such as applying for funding for bicycle racks and lockers, or overseeing projects to improve paths connecting stations to residential areas and town centres.<sup>37</sup> Working with local cycling and walking groups, and bringing them together with train operators, they often provide and share information about cycling and walking routes to and from stations and embed bi-modal transport awareness into their outreach and confidence initiatives.

For example, Kent Community Rail Partnership runs a schools programme called Smarter Journeys, which enables and encourages children in key stage two to make more journeys by walking, cycling and public transport as they prepare for the transition to secondary school. Part of the project involves the government-recognised Bikeability cycle training programme. This scheme is also used by the Poacher Line Community Rail Partnership, who work with local schools and the cycling charity Sustrans to promote active, bi-modal travel among pupils, helping them to combine rail and cycling to create a personal travel plan of routes to school.<sup>38</sup> By successfully embedding sustainable travel into schemes of work, one academy saw a 1,800% increase in the number of students regularly cycling to school between 2016 and 2017, while another primary school – which has also adopted its local station and garden – has found that 40% of its 130 pupils now regularly cycle to school.<sup>39</sup>

In Glasgow, South West Community Cycles has become an established social enterprise based in Pollokshaws West Railway Station, working with ScotRail. Having adopted the station, the group provides local people with cycling services including low-cost bike hire and sales, commuter confidence-building programmes, and secure cycle park and ride facilities. It also hosts the South West Glasgow Community Rail Partnership, to promote 'joined-up journeys' to work and healthy travel.<sup>40</sup>



Sussex Community Rail Partnership is part of a sustainable travel change programme called 'Active Access for Growth', funded by the Department for Transport. It aims to grow and integrate cycling and walking initiatives across the region to promote longer-term behaviour change towards active and sustainable modes of travel. It has an emphasis on boosting the local economy and improving health by widening access to employment, education and training and encouraging healthy lifestyles and community development.

This work is ongoing, and Kirsten Firth, Sussex Community Rail Partnership's community development manager, said the project also involved travel planning work with young people experiencing barriers to travelling independently, including those with special educational needs.

Speaking of the value of the scheme, which supported more than 70 young people in 2017/18, she said: "That has been quite a journey of discovery to understand what it is that these groups need, working with schools to build up that programme. It doesn't tend to be huge in terms of numbers because it is intensive work, but it is something that schools couldn't do on their own."

Of the cohorts that took part – which included primary and secondary school pupils, further education students, and unemployed groups – 100% said they were both satisfied with the training and felt more confident to travel alone independently as a result.

## ii. Integrated travel planning:

Several community rail groups spoke of the need for effective integrated travel planning as a key enabler in the drive to increase use of public transport, with some stating it was a priority in their short-term plans. Sussex Community Rail Partnership said it was planning to revisit its station travel plans and promote them with line groups, as well as encouraging partners to introduce bus/rail ticket compatibility across the region. The Conwy Valley Railway said they were exploring ideas with other transport bodies about creating a transport hub at Betws-y-Coed, linking up train and bus services to encourage use of public transport along the A5 corridor.

In Cumbria, staff highlighted the crucial role the partnership had played in two major transport interchange schemes at Workington and Maryport, with significant expansion to car parks and joined-up connections with bus services providing a multi-modal public transport option. They also spoke of ongoing discussions with the region's major employer, Sellafield, about creating modal shift among staff commuting to the site from car to train. It is estimated that 14,000 people travel to the plant every day, and as existing car parks are needed for future developments, the organisation wants to

promote use of the Cumbrian Coast Line. If community rail efforts such as these are successful in promoting more sustainable commuting, it delivers benefits to the employers, their staff, and wider communities, through improving employee health and wellbeing – with physical activity levels increased by active modes of travel<sup>41</sup> – and reducing pollution and congestion.<sup>42</sup> Community Rail Cumbria is working with Sellafield on an innovative joint station adoption, which would involve a renovation of the buildings and a partnership with a local homeless charity, who would engage its service users to run a mobile coffee van, thus improving facilities for commuters, as well as aiding the charity and its beneficiaries.

As stated by Community Rail Cumbria, train operators have reason to be keen participants in such schemes due to the benefits of additional ridership. In Elstree & Borehamwood, a major employer there, the BBC, is also said to be exploring work around group travel plans and travel passes for staff working at its Elstree studios to encourage commuting by train. As noted, this can deliver value to the employer and employees, as well as the wider environment, community, and railway.

There are also suggestions that, as well as working with employers on sustainable travel, there may be a role for community rail groups to play in promoting and advising on rail travel in relation to new housing and business developments, such as acting as a consultee to developers to ensure that rail is given prominence in transport discussions around such schemes. There may be opportunities to better connect new housing developments with sustainable transport,<sup>43</sup> and community rail groups may be able to have an influence in addressing this.

As Dawn McGough, community rail manager at Community Rail Cumbria, said: "It goes back to modal shift, and travel planning, making sure rail is at the heart of that process. Being part of the County Council, we do see some of the planning applications and we try to say, even if you're not investing in community rail, can you at least ensure rail is included in your travel plan, that people have access to a timetable as part of any information pack, so we try to promote rail through those strategic opportunities. It's sustainable and environmentally friendly."

It goes back to modal shift, and travel planning, making sure rail is at the heart of that process.





### iii. Modal shift from car to train:

Many of those who participated in the research said a key area in which they felt they were delivering value to society was promoting the railway as an environmentally-friendly alternative to car use, reminding people identifying as car-dependent that rail was a viable everyday travel choice. They saw part of the role of the community rail movement to be that of breaking down barriers to rail travel, whether perceived or physical, and highlighting the importance of greener travel. This was particularly the case in more rural areas, where over-reliance on the car was especially prevalent.

Roy Brown, vice-chair of the Highland Main Line Community Rail Partnership and member of the Carrbridge station adoption group, said: "My underlying desire went beyond making the station look nice; it was actually to get more trains to stop, to promote the station, and get people using the train more. I see sustainable transport as something important, integrated with other forms, like walking and cycling. We're involved with Sustrans, and it's all part of trying to get away from the car culture, which is so strong up here."

**Railways are sustainable, so community rail is part of that, trying to erode boundaries and bring people in.**

Commenting on how community rail groups could add value in this area of work, John LeGrove, treasurer of the Friends of Glossop Station group, said: "By making trains part of the everyday agenda. For a lot of people, still, trains are another world, completely away from their everyday experience. It's a car-dominated world, but it can't go on like that if we are going to survive as a species. It really isn't sustainable. Railways are sustainable, so community rail is part of that, trying to erode boundaries and bring people in."

This idea of normalising sustainable transport, and making it more 'everyday' and accessible at a grassroots level, chimes with academic research indicating the importance of relating to local realities and identities, and overcoming practical barriers, in order to 'recruit' people into more sustainable social practices.<sup>44</sup>

Journeys on the Manchester to Glossop and Hadfield line, where the Friends of Glossop Station group are based, have increased by more than 20% in the 10 years to 2018, from 1.7million to almost 2.1million. As examined earlier in this report, overall community railways have seen consistently higher growth in passengers than comparable lines, over a 10-year period. We cannot make assumptions about how much of this growth is directly attributable to community rail

activity, nor how much rail passenger growth represents a shift away from driving. However, the evidence points to a significant contribution by community rail in promoting rail and therefore enabling value to be accrued in terms of:

- increased mobility and therefore access to employment, education, training, leisure and social opportunities;<sup>45</sup>
- reduced pollution from motor vehicles, meaning a reduced impact in terms of climate change, and in terms of the health conditions and premature deaths caused;<sup>46</sup>
- reduced traffic, congestion and noise on local roads, positively benefitting the local environment and people's physical and mental health;<sup>47</sup>
- improved public health from the exercise of walking or cycling at least part of the journey;<sup>48</sup>
- increased social contact and interaction.<sup>49</sup>

### iv. First-time rail use:

Some participants spoke of the value of community rail activities creating 'passengers of the future' by offering the opportunity, particularly to young people, of experiencing train travel for the first time. Despite rail passenger journeys more than doubling in the 20 years up to 2016 to around 1.7billion, rail accounted for just 2% of trips in England that year,<sup>50</sup> although that figure does include very short journeys where walking or cycling may be the only realistic alternative to car use.

The Department for Transport states in its *Community Rail Development Strategy* that there is scope for community rail to extend its reach in engaging young people, offering the potential to "build long-term healthy and sustainable mobility with significant implications for individuals' and communities' prosperity, health and wellbeing."<sup>51</sup> The importance of this has also recently been acknowledged by ACoRP via the creation of its strategic framework for developing engagement of young people in community rail, which highlights the fact that young people form travel habits and mobility horizons that can affect their entire lives.<sup>52</sup>

Interviewees involved in this study, from groups including Glossop, Cumbria, and Elstree & Borehamwood, said that they regularly received feedback at events, especially those involving schools, that children had enjoyed the trip as it had been their first exposure to train travel. Aside from the natural excitement of a positive first experience, organisers said that it also generated a tendency for such interest and enthusiasm to be passed onto whole families.

Neil Williams said that was particularly the case for events where the train operator allowed children to travel for free, such as the Friends of Glossop Station's Teddy Bear's Picnic event, where a child brings a teddy bear that is used as their ticket for the day.

He said: "If we didn't do that, they might still have never been on a train as for many families, the car is dominant. To see the delight of them travelling on the train is fantastic. It is a big ask for the train operator, but we say well, we can give you proof that these are the numbers who travelled, and these are the numbers of people who had never been on the train before, and they are their future customers."

Larry Heyman said that 'Try the Train' events supported by Govia Thameslink, such as subsidised family trips into London facilitated in-part by First Impressions, had led to behavioural changes in families, planting the seed with parents of the children involved that trains were more than vehicles to be used solely for commuting.

He said: "In many cases I know about kids who have insisted to parents that they've got to have a trip to Brighton or somewhere on the train not in the car, and those parents may not have been on the train themselves for years, if at all, or they are commuters who thought the train is just for getting to and from work, not for recreation or a family event together. That certainly does generate more train usage."

The positivity and fun of these activities may in itself be important in not only promoting good relations between communities and railways, but also encouraging rail use as a part of sustainable lifestyles.<sup>53</sup> We might also link this argument with recent research by Transport Focus into what is important to young people in relation to buses, showing that a welcoming and supportive environment matters.<sup>54</sup> By extension, it could be supposed that offering friendly, fun opportunities for children and young people to 'try the train', and build their confidence and familiarity, could have a

major effect on their willingness and appetite for using trains in the future.

ACoRP is now working nationally with youth engagement partners such as Prince's Trust and Groundwork to help more

community rail partnerships and groups reach out to and involve the 11-25 age group.<sup>55</sup> The involvement of these major organisations, focused respectively on helping young people to access opportunities and influence their localities, reinforces the idea of community rail's potential to deliver heightened, and very significant, value in this area of work.

To see the delight of them travelling on the train is fantastic.



A wartime-themed event at Glossop Station

## Theme C: Bringing communities together and supporting diversity and inclusion

In its *Community Rail Development Strategy*, the Department for Transport talks of the crucial role played by community rail partnerships and station adoption groups in "personalising" the rail network, making it relevant to individuals, organisations and communities. It states that connecting people is the essence of community rail, and that social cohesion and inclusion is a common thread running through its activities.

The work of community rail groups in championing and progressing the social inclusion agenda was highlighted by ACoRP in a comprehensive and wide-ranging report in 2018.<sup>56</sup> The key themes explored in this, for example accessibility, community rail volunteering, and engaging communities in art and heritage, were talked of by the participants in this study as key ways their groups delivered value.

As alluded to earlier, community rail also features in the government's loneliness strategy – *A connected society. A strategy for tackling loneliness – laying the foundations for change*<sup>57</sup> – as a key way that transport can be delivered and utilised to build more inclusive, cohesive communities. The strategy states that good transport links are important for people to access work, stay healthy, and remain linked to their communities, with community rail cited as a means of ensuring local communities are given a voice in influencing provision that promotes connectivity and inclusion. It highlights that this is key to reducing the huge economic costs, stress and strain that social isolation places on Britain – estimated to cost private sector employers alone £2.5 billion per year due to absence and productivity losses.<sup>58</sup>



## i. Stations as community assets:

Station adoption has been one of the undoubted successes of the community rail movement, with at least 1,000 groups – likely a conservative figure – now working to make stations and their surroundings more welcoming, interesting, safe and fitting gateways for their communities.

The movement has brought people together under a common cause, provided volunteering opportunities, and created pride in stations across Britain. Developing from simple upkeep and the reporting of problems, many groups now hold events, engage with schools and young people, create community artwork, and run social enterprise schemes, often alongside more traditional community gardening activities.

Some participants in the study said their activities provided value by making stations an integral part of their communities, and a real ‘asset’ to their locations, with a sense of pride felt and generated by community rail groups subsequently emanating through to people in the area they served.

Neil Williams said: “You try to make your local station as welcoming a place as possible. You’ve got a lot of people coming through for whom it’s their first time here, and you want it to be a welcoming gateway to the town. Glossop is a strong community, and you want to say, we care about this town, this is our station, and we want to give you a warm welcome and provide information. People are proud of what we are doing, and the feedback is fantastic. Because we do a lot of our work unseen, at 6 o’clock on a Sunday morning, people don’t often see us at the station, but I’m always astonished at what people notice and are aware of, and so when people ask why we do what we do, I say because it

“People can tell that this is a place where people really care about things, instead of just a piece of platform and track.”

makes the station more of an asset. It’s very motivating, and it’s a reward. You can see tangible results from the hours you put in.”

John LeGrove, of the same group, added: “People can tell that this is a place where people really care about things, instead of just a piece of platform and track.”

Groups spoke of added value – such as improved perceptions by visitors and potential passengers, a greater sense of pride, and wider community benefits – if the station was transformed from a site that was run-down or unappealing to one that was safe, attractive, and in-tune with its surroundings. The idea of creating a ‘sense of place’ was repeatedly mentioned, drawing on the particular heritage and character of different areas, and stations as part of the unique selling points of their communities.

In Cumbria, community rail partnership colleagues described thinking beyond the physical improvements of the new transport interchanges at Workington and Maryport, and spoke of using the projects and the resulting increased footfall

to promote the proud histories of the two towns.

At Workington, work is ongoing to restore the station to its Victorian colours and traditions, with an aim for the site to become an exhibition centre for the town’s historic ironworks. Maryport is receiving a ‘Roman overhaul’ featuring storyboards and station improvements to highlight its significant Roman history. Both schemes are examples of campaigns bound up with the local identity of the towns, using a sense of local place as a resource for both mobilisation and sustainability.<sup>59</sup>

In Elstree & Borehamwood, the First Impressions group spoke of the importance of developing a previously unkempt station into an attractive access point into the area’s key source of civic pride, its film and TV heritage, which remains a vital local industry, generating upwards of £30,000 a day to the regional economy. Revamping the station, which occupies a crucial town centre location, and linking it to activities promoting the studios, such as the plaques and information boards throughout the town, has had a revitalising effect on the area. This is indicated by increased community engagement, a rise in footfall and a decrease in the number of empty high street shops.

Bob Redman said: “Being able to do work at the station has been key as it’s a genuine gateway, a proper hub. It is highly visible and it was in our favour that it was so grotty in the beginning. Because it was so grim, and clearly unloved, it meant that we could transform it. It created a reason for people to want to help. It just became a better-looking, better-feeling place.”



Being able to do work at the station has been key as it’s a genuine gateway, a proper hub.



Councillor Hilary Shade, First Impressions member and head of partnerships and community engagement at Hertsmere Borough Council, added: “The station is important as it’s a critical focal point at one end of the high street, and you’ve got the two studios at the other end. To create that sense of place around the heritage of film and TV, it grows the community. Something like the film heritage, and the film industry being as active and flourishing as it is, can be that thing that provides that cohesion and common interest. The film heritage is so close, if we’d themed the station around anything else, it wouldn’t have worked and struck a chord with the community.”

The value of linking to local identity and pride to promote engagement and influence behaviour is reinforced by social psychologists’ assertions that the desire to belong is a powerful force in governing the way people act,<sup>60</sup> and this notion was hinted at by Councillor Sandra Parnell, of First Impressions and Elstree & Borehamwood Town Council, who said of the group’s efforts: “They’re very proud of the film industry in Borehamwood and this (group) has brought it even closer. It’s made the community more aware, and inclusive. People want to be involved with it, because it’s a connection. People feel connected, and it wouldn’t have happened without this. It’s made people feel like they belong. The station has made a very big difference with this project.”

A key part of the First Impressions group’s activity has been artwork at Elstree & Borehamwood Station celebrating the famous film franchises made at its local studios, including Star Wars and Indiana Jones. The centrepiece was a huge mural erected on a wall at the entrance/exit to the station, which is set next to a previously overgrown grassed area that was cleared with the help of the town’s youth council, who also now help maintain the garden area. The group state that the artwork has not only stimulated interest in developers actively looking to promote the area – with the image used in marketing literature – but has led to a reduction in graffiti and vandalism.

Asked to explain the success of the project, and its value, Larry Heyman said: “It was the enthusiasm of the group. They had identified dilapidated parts of the station, and at that time there was a problem with graffiti, and they came up with the idea of the sculpture wall. Initially the thought was ‘wow, that sounds amazing’ but we have this graffiti problem, what’s it going to look like when it’s been up for a week. People don’t believe it, but actually it’s done so much to generate pride in the community and station users, and I can honestly say there’s never been graffiti in that area since.

“Everyone can see that investment, not so much of money, but of time and thought into creating something that is very much part of the community. It’s not something generic or the Govia Thameslink brand rolled out across the network; it’s

something that can only belong to this station, and that’s created a sense of, it’s our station, it’s for us, and that makes people care about it. It has changed people’s attitude to the whole station environment.”

## ii. Volunteering:

Volunteers have previously been described as the life-blood of community rail, responsible for supporting and delivering much of the work that goes on in railway environments across the UK. Indeed, as stated earlier, it is estimated that the movement has now grown to around 8,500 volunteers giving more than 390,000 hours to community rail every year, worth £5.6m to the rail industry and potentially anything up to £27.6m in social value to volunteers themselves.

Given the propensity for groups to be guided by the needs of the communities they serve, volunteering activities within community rail are diverse, but can include community gardening, station maintenance, running events, engaging with schools and community groups, facilitating or promoting walking and cycling activities and working to improve accessibility.

The benefits to the rail industry from having a human presence at stations are many, with stations feeling more welcoming and secure under the sense of community ownership. Many train operators are seeking to expand the station adoption schemes across their networks due to the undoubted value of having groups bring stations into the heart of the communities they serve.

Research suggests that volunteering, and perhaps particularly in an environment such as community rail, can also have profound positive effects on the individuals involved. There is evidence that volunteering provides social relationships that help people feel connected to their communities, with these links also encouraging people to get involved in other local activities, further increasing levels of social interaction and active citizenship.<sup>61, 62</sup>

A recent report by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations<sup>63</sup>, which explored the views of 10,000 volunteers, found that 90% of respondents felt they made a difference by their volunteering, with 89% meeting new people as a result of their activities. A further 85% said they felt a sense of belonging to the organisation they were involved with, with 68% agreeing that their volunteering helped them feel less isolated. This matches the idea, expressed in the Department for Transport’s strategy, that community rail provides an opportunity for people to give something back to their community, a sense of purpose, a chance to meet with others, and an environment in which to develop their confidence and skills.<sup>64</sup>

Speaking of her role as a station adopter at London Road Station within the Sussex Community Rail Partnership, Elspeth Broady said: "It was a bit of an unloved station when we started in 2011. We realised we were making a difference, and that people cared a lot about the station. The group has been a reason for, or a basis for, very strong friendships. Even at times when there is not much we can do, we continue to meet every week. I know if there is a problem, I can contact any one of a number of people for help. We're not just gardening and a station partnership, we're cat-sitting, a flower group, a book group. It's been an opportunity for people to bring the skills they already had from work. Different people bring different skills."

Asked about the value of the group's activities to the individuals involved, she said that feeling an acknowledgement that their skills were valued had improved the psychological wellbeing of some members, with others feeling positive effects linked to conditions such as depression and anxiety, and some citing improvements in general physical health.

She said: "Quite a lot of people have got that sense of overcoming some sort of health problem that is associated a little bit with isolation, and that issue is so real. It can be very moving. One member of the group was suffering from ME. She lives at the bottom of the road and in 2009 she couldn't walk up. The only way she could get up was in a wheelchair. She joined the group in 2011, and by 2012/13, she was managing to get up the hill and come along. She might have said 'I don't know if I've got the strength to do any digging,' but we said, 'just sit and have a natter.' We realised that just getting up the hill was a major thing for her. For her, Tuesday afternoon is wow, I'm okay, I can get up the hill and do stuff, and it's about improvement in mood."

Describing the impact of the group's activities on the wider community, she added: "It was absolutely a sense of people having a focus in the local community, that was really clear and a surprise to all of us. People would say 'oh it's lovely to see you at the station and have people there.' It's value in terms of intensifying peoples' relationship with that place, which historically has been very important."

Melanie Lawton, railway officer for the Conwy Valley Railway in North Wales, said the community rail partnership was trying to grow its station adoption programme due to the recognition of the social value it offered to those taking part, and for the opportunity the railway offered as an environment for inter-generational work, with some adoption groups now working with local schools and the brownies and guides.

### National Council for Voluntary Organisations report – views of 10,000 volunteers

- **90%** felt they made a difference by their volunteering
- **89%** met new people as a result of their volunteering
- **85%** felt a sense of belonging to the organisation they volunteered with
- **68%** said volunteering helped them feel less isolated

She said: "I recognised the value of the station adopters, but I also recognised that they were groups of people who came together because they had retired, they were looking for friendship, and something to do on a regular basis.

There's an expectation that they look after the stations, do planting, and report any issues, but actually it goes beyond that, and working with the rail operator, we encourage regular meet ups where they can exchange what they're doing on stations. There's a flower nursery for example, where they'll go to get their spring bulbs, but it's a social event for them as well.

"It's about encouraging that inter-generational relationship. It is somewhere different. Yes, you can go to a community centre or youth club and there is great work already going on, but the railway is something different, something special, and something that is accessible to all. We need to consistently keep saying that."

Speaking of the impact of station adoption projects on individuals in Cumbria, Dawn McGough said: "I think the value that individuals get out of doing what they do is absolutely amazing. These are people who could potentially be sat at home doing nothing, and that all fits with the loneliness agenda, health and well-being, and I think sometimes that gets forgotten. It gives people a sense of purpose."

The railway is something different, something special, and something that is accessible to all.

### iii. Facilitating inclusion and access to a social railway:

Supporting the railway to be more accessible, and supporting communities to access rail, is a critical part of community rail's role. Much community rail work is geared at helping people to feel able and confident to use our railways, particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable groups who may otherwise feel excluded, thus opening up a range of opportunities for increased social mobility.

An example of such work is the flagship project of the Leeds-Morecambe Community Rail Partnership, which is leading a ground-breaking project to make the Bentham Line the first 'dementia-friendly' community rail line in the UK.<sup>65</sup>

**I think being on a journey makes talking easier.**

Colleagues at the Severnside Community Rail Partnership, which operates in and around Bristol, spoke of how they had switched their focus towards making the Severn Beach Line, and others, more accessible and inclusive, after making progress on improving the safety and physical environments in and around stations.

Keith Walton, chair of the group, said: "The stations on the Severn Beach Line were considered unsafe. They were in such a deplorable condition, vandalised, graffiti everywhere, and muggings going on at the stations themselves. People wouldn't go there even during the day, let alone on an evening. So, the aim of the partnership was to make the stations safe and welcoming, and that has taken years to do, but they're now much better. Now we've got a different focus, we've branched out more into the social railway."

Heather Cullimore, the group's partnerships and social inclusion manager, explained: "What we have got are very diverse communities. Particularly around the inner-city Bristol stations are very deprived communities, so there's lots of work to do to introduce them to the railways and the benefits of rail travel, and to try to create a more cohesive neighbourhood around stations."

She added that, to aid rail accessibility, the community rail partnership now holds regular events focusing on social inclusion, partnering with organisations such as Link Age and the Alzheimer's Society, and engages in national initiatives such as Fun Palaces, a campaign promoting community and culture. During events and activities, participants are often encouraged to speak to members of the community they may not normally engage with, aiming to tackle division and erode social stereotypes.

On the impact and value of such activities, she said: "We've had some very positive feedback; one lady said it has been almost life-changing. She was new to the area, had tried a few things, and this is the one where she felt the most comfortable. The whole kind of cup of tea and a chat thing is huge for people. Chatty trains, as we call it, are an opportunity to have a change of scene, sit next to someone and talk about the journey; it's not intense. I think being on a journey makes talking easier. We've got very diverse communities along our

branch line, so it's an opportunity for people to hop on at different stations, and suddenly they might find themselves sitting next to someone from a very different community and there is an opportunity to engage with one another when they might never have done so otherwise.

"Sometimes we are giving people a reason to come out of the house, when they might not otherwise have done so, to meet people, I think that's huge. Essentially, it's a lot about meeting up and getting out, and that's through all sorts of activities."

The freedom of the community rail environment allowing people to open up and converse freely was a notion also expressed by staff from Community Rail Cumbria in connection with their 'Rail Journey to Recovery' project, which is discussed in detail later in this report. It also links to ideas within the government's loneliness strategy, which talks of the importance of creating environments where individuals and groups find it natural and easy to chat and spend time together in a relaxed environment.

Children enjoying planting with the Severnside Community Rail Partnership





#### iv. Railway confidence schemes:

The majority of community rail partnerships, and an increasing number of station adoption and other community rail partners, now work with particular groups to increase confidence using the railways. This appears to be a major area where community rail can add value to individuals, communities and the railways by breaking down barriers – physical, perceptual, social, or cultural<sup>66</sup> – for those disenfranchised from rail use. This work commonly engages young people, but can also exert a positive influence in relation to other groups or individuals who may be marginalised from society and transport, including those with physical or learning disabilities or mental health problems. The work often focuses on the practicalities of rail travel and safety, although there is the potential for activities to contribute to positive behavioural and attitudinal change too (and signs that this may already be happening), opening the door to new opportunities in leisure, education and employment.

Community Rail Lancashire has a strong focus on engaging young people in railway-based education programmes, with thousands of children from more than 100 local schools benefitting from their

‘Railway Confidence’ and ‘Passport to Safe Travel’ schemes.<sup>67</sup> Elements of the programme have been adopted by others as a template for good practice, and this is also happening elsewhere on the network, with projects developed by community rail partnership now available as resources for others to learn from and replicate.

An example discussed in the study was the Conwy Valley Railway’s Rail Safety Video project, an interactive film centred on a YouTube vlogger presenting a video on the do’s and don’ts of rail safety. An innovative collaboration between the community rail partnership, train operator, local authority, and a local community arts charity, the safety programme is now delivered to all schools along the Conwy Valley Railway on a 12-month rolling programme.

Melanie Lawton said: “We know we’re speaking to ‘x’ amount of children every year and then where we can, we take those children on the train to see what they’ve learnt. It’s great to see their confidence on the railway. We’re now at the point where that video is not just a resource tool for our community rail partnership, but for other partnerships across the UK.”

**I’d say the amount of vandalism has reduced since we’ve had these initiatives with schools.**

Commenting on the added value of schools engagement work, and its positive impacts in terms of a reduction of anti-social behaviour on the railway and the promotion of sustainable travel, Councillor Philip Evans, the chair of the Conwy Valley Railway, said: “I’d say the amount of vandalism has reduced since we’ve had these initiatives with schools. There may be other factors at play, but I’m sure this is a significant one. All in all, it’s been very beneficial as these young people will be the mums and dads of the future, and if you can get them into a frame of mind of using the train, in 10-15 years’ time they’ll be the ones bringing their children on the train, as opposed to using cars.”

At Sussex Community Rail Partnership, officers work with the train operator to deliver the ‘Go Learn’ project, which aims to promote safety awareness and understanding of rail travel amongst key stage 2 primary school pupils. In 2018/19, 8,616 children from 180 schools accessed the programme, taking part in a mixture of safety in action sessions, classroom modules, and station visits and trips on the train.

The partnership is now looking at potentially extending the scheme to encompass secondary school children, again focusing on independent travel and rail safety, but adding topics such as reducing anti-social behaviour and trespass on the railway.

The partnership also delivers ‘Try the Train’ events designed to improve confidence and facilitate independent travel, working with schools and groups supporting people with learning disabilities. Aside from increasing confidence within rail travel, the programme has added value by boosting confidence in a wider sense, allowing those involved to play a greater part in community life. One of its partners, County Care – a charity supporting young people with autism – has progressed from taking part in ‘Try the Train’ events to station adoption, and is now involved in maintaining stations across the Redhill and Reigate areas of the rail network, developing the skills, pride, confidence and mobility of those involved.

A lesson in the Rail Room at Millom Station



## Theme D: Supporting social and economic development

Aside from having the capacity to enhance social and economic value for individuals, community rail activities have the potential for profound positive effects on whole communities and their economies and development. Projects can stimulate and support regeneration in towns, villages and across entire areas, add value to tourism, leisure and recreation economies, and aid access to training, employment and education.

In some cases, community rail is also helping to better establish and enhance the social value delivered by the railway as a whole. A study commissioned by the Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership, 'Valuing the Tamar Valley Line', found the line acted as a "lifeline" to the communities it served, connecting people from rural areas to the city of Plymouth.<sup>68</sup> The research concluded that the railway had an overall value of more than £13m a year, broken down into value for passengers and the social, economic and environmental vitality of the area.

### i. Tourism promotion:

A total of 37.6million people, spending £22.5bn, visited Britain in 2016, and it is estimated those figures topped 41.7million and £26.9bn respectively by the end of 2018.<sup>69</sup> This does not include trips made in the UK by domestic travellers, which were recorded at 11.5million in 2016.

Community rail encourages people to travel by train to access different parts of the UK, with a particular and growing focus, in some areas, on leisure and tourism travel. ACoRP has been encouraging community rail groups to benefit from new opportunities linked to this growing market by identifying their local tourism offer and working with partners to promote it to leisure visitors. As with many community rail partnership activities, the local knowledge of such groups, and the links they are able to maintain and forge, gives community rail an advantage in building positivity and interest in their line and attracting visitors who contribute to local economies.

Many community rail groups produce line guides to promote attractions in their area, and develop mutually-beneficial relationships with tourist attractions to encourage visits by rail users, such as discount ticket offers and shared website links. Line guides encourage visitors to explore local culture, heritage, and landscape, by sustainable means, boosting the economic vitality of communities along line routes without the detriment that road traffic brings. Community rail groups often work in close partnership with wider tourism

**Giving people confidence to travel on the railway has enabled those groups to become much more active within their local communities.**

Commenting on the value of the programme, Tim Barkley said: "We do feel that try the train events and giving people confidence to travel on the railway has enabled those groups to become much more active within their local communities." A similar effect has been seen in Cumbria, where a new project

between the community rail partnership and Flimby Primary School has led to the school adopting the village station, a first for the county. Pupils have enjoyed trips on the train and contributed artwork to the station, stimulating interest from the wider community. It is hoped that the partnership will evolve into a project whereby the school is used as a venue for rail awareness training and other educational activities linked to the line.

By engaging groups that may otherwise face difficulty or lack confidence in accessing rail, community rail can open up access to opportunities, promote inclusion, fairness and equality, and reduce social isolation. By promoting rail as a sociable and attractive means of travel, groups can play a positive role in enhancing the prosperity and well-being of individuals and communities, helping to build long-term access to, and understanding of, healthy and sustainable mobility.

A 'Try the Train' event in Sussex



organisations, such as 'Visit' bodies and national parks, sometimes including them on their partnership boards, to add value to an integrated tourism offer. There is also growing use of social media to push areas and attractions accessible by rail, using Facebook and Twitter posts, blogs, and YouTube promotional videos and channels.

Colleagues at the Highland Mainline Community Rail Partnership recognise and acknowledge that tourism is the key driver for their line, and have developed a line guide focused on promoting the unique historic attractions of each station and the community it serves.

Sally Spaven said:

"The heritage aspect of this railway line is very important to our communities. That is uppermost in our minds, that we celebrate this great Victorian engineering feat and all the lovely buildings we have. Each of the communities along the line has a story, and that's what they want to protect. We've always had good growth numbers on this line."

**Each of the communities along the line has a story.**

Colleagues on the Conwy Valley Railway said the partnership had changed its focus in recent years to prioritise tourism, due to the positive effects on local communities and businesses of marketing the railway as a scenic line and tourist destination. The partnership said it had become "much more outward-facing" in terms of promotion, using passenger data to identify the demographics of visitors and creating a presence at key gateway stations for people travelling into the area, such as Manchester, Liverpool and Chester.

Melanie Lawton said: "There are two elements to the line. We know it is really important to the communities and businesses along the line, but we also recognise it's one of the most scenic railways in the UK. It's absolutely stunning. And because Llandudno has a significant number of tourist-based customers, one of the things we encourage them to do is come on a day trip on the Conwy Valley line. Tourism is huge for us, it's burns on seats and it's what generates the income. It keeps the town alive as well, so it's really important.

"We can't take it for granted that people will just come here. Tourism is very, very competitive. We know that people who come to conferences here, it's a very significant figure, something like 75%, will come back as a leisure tourists, so it's about putting an offer in place, about when they're here, what they can do. We really do showcase our line at every given opportunity."

The value of such community rail work can be seen in the positive economic and social benefits for local businesses and

attractions, in terms of visitor numbers, of tourism-related jobs, and in increased passenger numbers on the line, with businesses distributing promotional material in return.

Developing tourism has also strengthened the Conwy Valley Railway's links with its local heritage lines, with partnership work ongoing with the Ffestiniog and Welsh Highland Railways. A 2013 study found that the two lines were worth an annual £4.2m to the local economy,<sup>70</sup> part of a national heritage railway network valued at £250m a year.

**Tourism is huge for us, it's burns on seats and it's what generates the income.**

## ii. Stations as community hubs:

ACoRP has highlighted in a previous report examples of community rail groups playing a vital role in unused railway buildings being brought back to life, making stations more welcoming and hospitable and delivering a wealth of economic, social, and health benefits to local communities.<sup>71</sup> Groups behind such projects have prioritised the needs of local people to deliver both social value and benefits to the railway. Many stations have been successfully developed into thriving multi-use sites that provide a range of services and benefits, and while the profits generated by community use are often not huge, there can be a range of commercial advantages to the railway as well as social value for local people.

In some cases, community station groups have been set up to address a particular social need within a certain area, such as supporting those at risk of exclusion from local labour markets. This is the case for cafes, run as social enterprises, in stations including Gobowen, Yatton, and Hexham, which provide work experience and training opportunities for young people and adults with learning disabilities.<sup>72</sup> In other cases, existing community rail partnerships and station friends have taken on projects to bring disused station buildings back into community use. In all cases, these projects turn buildings and spaces going to waste, resulting in a drain on railway resources for no return, into a community asset, delivering value in different ways.

Aside from the increased social value, community facilities on stations add to the economy of the town or village in which they are based, and can fulfil a range of purposes that may replace dwindling services elsewhere, particularly in more rural areas. They can become true focal points for the community, and in some cases, tourism attractions in their own right, as has become the case with the bookshop at Pitlochry Station.

The shop processes around 45,000 books a year, selling each one for just £1. All proceeds go directly to a range of local and



national charities, and since its inception, the shop has raised more than £250,000 for good causes. It is said that one local charity helping residents with mobility issues would not be able to function without regular donations from the shop. The group has a pool of 35 volunteers – with more on a waiting list – and the model is now being replicated elsewhere in the country, for example at Wemyss Bay.

Bookshop manager Bobbie McLoughlin said: “The shop is almost like a second library in the town. And we also act as a mini-information centre and tourist office. So, from that point of view, I think we serve the community. It provides a focus, a meeting point. There’s no-one in Pitlochry doesn’t know where the bookshop is. And we have people come from all around the world.”

On the wider value of the shop to the area, Kate Howie said: “The value to the town, if it wasn’t there, it would diminish the station itself, but also reading in the town, because we have limited access to a library now because of cuts. The economy of a station is important. No matter what you’re doing, any activity, whether actually on the station or around about it, must improve the economy of an area, it can’t take away from it.”

Developing station-based projects potentially provides commercial value for train operating companies, as they can result in major improvements in the customer offer of stations, creating attractive and welcoming spaces that encourage rail travel and attract additional footfall and use. The use of redundant buildings by social enterprises can also make good use of physical assets with little commercial value. For Network Rail, the fabric of the station is renewed and improved, helping to meet sustainability-related objectives of caring for local communities and improving the passenger experience.

### iii. Stations as bases for social change:

A theme repeatedly mentioned by interview participants was the unique opportunities that operating within a community rail setting, and stations specifically, provided in facilitating positive social change. Due to their visibility, guaranteed footfall, and perceived sense of neutrality, safety and familiarity, stations could offer particular opportunities for outreach, influencing regeneration and maximising social and economic value.

In Cumbria, community rail partnership colleagues spoke of the development of the ‘Rail Room’ at Millom, housed in the town’s museum, which relocated to the station as part of a major redevelopment scheme. The educational heritage centre, which highlights the major impact the railway had on Millom’s industrial past, has helped the station develop as a tourist destination, providing significant social and economic value to the town.



Fundraising at Pitlochry Station bookshop

Laurence Hilland said the project, costing at around £400,000, owed its success to its station location and the drive and vision of the community rail partnership, explaining: “When we started here, this station was as grim and as inhospitable as you could possibly imagine. Now, in terms of population, the ticket office is booming, the gift shop is booming, and the café. There wasn’t really a café in Millom so you’re satisfying a need. You’re creating something that is really appreciated. Every funding source for the museum had been exhausted. So, I said well, let’s create a social enterprise with the ticket office, that then helped generate another source of income, it created jobs, and it created confidence from other funders to put more money in, and it now goes on and on.”

Community Rail Cumbria said staff were now looking to establish a rail marketing centre at the site, which is said to have already spurred wider regeneration projects in the town, with the café also expanding to take up more of the old station buildings. Added value is provided by the station’s new role as an educational facility for local schools, with more than 1,200 pupils having already visited. Programmes are taught based around themes that complement the curriculum of primary schools, for example safety and respect, and the partnership is also looking to develop specific projects focusing on working with children with autism, after discovering the number of autistic children in West Cumbria was comparably high.

Similarly, the Kilmarnock Station Railway Heritage Trust brought a number of redundant spaces at Kilmarnock Station back into community use, and now works with groups and individuals to tackle problems such as low-level mental health issues, addiction and loneliness. The Trust receives referrals from a range of different agencies, such as the NHS and addiction services, which helps to shape its whole-community recovery approach.

Explaining the importance of the Trust’s location, trustee Allan Brown said: “It’s a central location within the town, it brings back into use what in previous years would have been the hub of the town.”



Station maintenance in the Severnside Community Rail Partnership

“By providing what we describe as a social prescribing model, helping people dealing with adversity, it might be low-level mental health issues, people recovering from addiction, people dealing with loneliness and social isolation, it’s about providing that social benefit to people, based in a central location and hub that is well-known in the town. It’s also about reinvigorating something that had been lying empty for years. The locations of stations as a transport hub makes it so much easier to reach and engage with people.”

Lauren Cooke, who coordinates health projects at the Trust, added: “We’re doing something that isn’t being done in the community, and we’re very open. People can just walk in. There isn’t strict criteria for being involved, so a big part of our value is that we’re accessible, and people know that we are. People feel valued when they come here, and I think that increases the value of what we do.”

**People feel valued when they come here, and I think that increases the value of what we do.**

including encouraging the use of redundant space at Dumfries Station and creating a support facility for veterans at the remote Garelochhead Station.

**The locations of stations as a transport hub makes it so much easier to reach and engage with people.**

The Trust is a key partner in the overall regeneration plan for Kilmarnock town centre, and is now expanding into other areas in Scotland to replicate its model with local community groups,

#### iv. Community rail aiding rehabilitation:

Aligned with interviewees talking about station and rail buildings as ideal settings for creating positive social change, participants in the study also spoke of community rail providing the ideal environment for such changes to occur. Its open, flexible, and community-facing nature was said to provide the perfect platform for rehabilitation, and a unique reason behind the success of projects including Community Rail Cumbria’s collaboration with the charity Turning Point, ‘The Rail Journey to Recovery’.

Working with residents with substance and alcohol misuse issues at Stanfield House in Workington, the organisation developed a partnership which led to the adoption of the remote Green Road Station on the Duddon Estuary. By integrating rail-based activity within established programmes of rehabilitation – focusing on enhancing participant’s self-esteem, social interaction and confidence – the project has seen some spectacular results, which community rail partnership staff said would not have been possible had the project taken place in a different, more traditional setting.

Community rail officer Warren Birch said: “I thought, how is rail going to work with rehab, and it took a while for me to get my head around it. At the time Turning Point were really into the mindfulness aspect of the here and now, embracing nature and the things around you, and all of a sudden the penny dropped. It started with painting a couple of fences at Harrington Station, people giving something back, and astonishingly they found that they could open up about their problems to members of the public.

“It stimulated interest in the general community, and it wasn’t me volunteering these guys’ life stories, they found that they could open up and be accepted in the community again. For years and years they hadn’t been able to talk to anybody, but they felt free. There was no more invisible barrier, everybody was as one. People just release their emotions and talk. Just being accepted back into whatever normal life is, was huge. We couldn’t ever have anticipated that it was ever going to happen. At Green Road, the residents have taken these guys to heart because of the fantastic work they are doing at their local station.”

On the importance of the railway setting, he added: “I think the actual train journey itself, it’s escapism through a train window. It’s getting away from life’s troubles and chaos, so don’t underestimate the journey, which is why Green Road was chosen as a venue, as it was over an hour away from Stanfield House. It wasn’t about how quick you can get there, it was about what the journey does for people.”



Explaining the success of the project, which Turning Point now uses as a major selling point to local authorities, Laurence Hilland said:

“Addiction often ends up in social isolation. People lock themselves away until they reach such a low ebb they seek professional help. What this project does, it gives them confidence, self-worth, the residents feel like they’re doing something voluntarily, it’s not compulsory. It’s that feeling of giving something back, doing something valuable that other people recognise. The whole rail environment is conducive to the rehabilitation process, and that comes out very strongly.”

**It’s that feeling of giving something back, doing something valuable that other people recognise.**

Evidence shows that there can often be poor integration of mental health services with other services locally, making the patient’s experience of care more difficult, and causing some patients to ‘fall through the gaps’ in the system.<sup>73</sup> Staff at Kilmarnock Station Railway Heritage Trust point to the fact that their location and social prescribing model offers an opportunity for the provision of joined-up services as a support or alternative to mainstream services, adding value to the community in which they operate.

Project coordinator Laura Yetton said: “Some people come here who don’t have contact with any services, so for them it’s a real lifeline. Some people who are tapping into other services will use this as an additional support. We don’t claim to be absolutely everything to everyone, but it certainly has a big impact in people’s recovery and their wellbeing, getting them back on track.”

Allan Brown added: “You wouldn’t tend to find that approach anywhere else, people tend to work in silos, so an addiction team will work on the addiction aspect, a mental health team will focus on mental health. What we have is a more holistic approach to strike a balance between the whole thing. I’d say we’re unique in that way. What’s difficult for people is although it’s easy to say you might have different services available, physically they might be far apart, and logistically they might not link up that well, there isn’t that joined up approach to a person’s care. Coming here, it’s all under one roof, so it’s a fairly consolidated offer.”

Staff at the Trust also spoke of community rail and the station environment providing a safe haven for participants, somewhere where barriers to access were easier to overcome and people could interact without feeling pressure or the worry of being pre-judged.

Lauren Cooke said: “For some people accessing the support it can be quite daunting to think I’m going to walk into a group,

or a course, or a class, it takes a lot of courage. We find from a lot of people that coming to a train station is an easier barrier to overcome, it’s something that they’re very familiar with, rather than going to an office somewhere in the town. There’s lots of people here for mixed purposes, so it’s seen as a safe place for them to come.”

Allan Brown added: “It removes the stigma, there’s no signage or labelling, you can come here for a variety of reasons and feel comfortable. Room space at railway stations offers a unique opportunity for traditional services to be delivered in a different way, and to engage with people in a different way, with a variety of services delivered under one roof, rather than being separate or segregated.”

**Room space at railway stations offers a unique opportunity for traditional services to be delivered in a different way.**

## Theme E: Understanding and assessing value in community rail

As stated earlier, one of the difficulties in measuring social value is its subjective nature, meaning that different groups may place different levels of importance on areas they feel matter the most. To tell the full story of social value, metrics should assess the complete range of impacts, not just what can be easily measured.<sup>74</sup> But, aside from the lack of a standardised approach, one of the practical difficulties faced by those engaged in trying to measure social value is that the information required can often be surprisingly difficult to find.<sup>75</sup> Even if appropriate data is identified, being able to attribute impacts to certain interventions can also be problematic.

### i. Evaluating impact on individuals:

One theme talked about by a number of participants in the study was the ability for community rail activities to have profound positive effects on individuals, in a multitude of ways. It was suggested that this made a standardised measurement approach, such as assessing the importance of a person’s increased confidence or self-esteem, extremely difficult for community rail partnerships and groups.

Where the main intended impact was affecting a positive change in people’s physical and mental wellbeing, colleagues spoke of the importance of tailored approaches geared to the particular individual in question.



At Kilmarnock, the Trust is developing a range of measurement tools to assess the impact of its programmes, some of which fall in line with more traditional methods used in primary care and the NHS. This can include individual observations, interventions at various different stages of the structured programmes, and self-reporting mechanisms, such as scaled questionnaires and video clips.

Laura Yetton explains: "It's very person-centred, and done based on the starting point of where they came from. Each individual has a different story and a different issue. Primarily, we're looking to find out if its confidence, or resilience, or coping strategies, and we'll have a tool based on that and we'll measure at the beginning and end, and at mid-points. For some people the end journey could be volunteering, for others it could be getting back to work, for some it's about making new friends and relationships, particularly people who have been socially isolated and have closed themselves off. So, it's very person-centred and changes with each individual."

The group said that they were working with Evaluation Support Scotland to try and capture the difference made by their projects on a wider community level, and Allan Brown spoke of the potential value their interventions could have in multidimensional ways.

He said: "We're not set up in particular to hit any employability targets, but a spin-off of what we do because of the volunteering, and people getting real experience of dealing with customers and passengers in the coffee shop, we've got quite a high percentage of people who either go on to further education or employment, and through that have gained new confidence."

Discussing the impact of the Turning Point project in Cumbria, community rail partnership staff said the programme had been of huge value to those involved, with a reduction in relapses by those undergoing rehabilitation leading to tangible benefits such as a decrease in reliance on NHS support and less pressure on the criminal justice system. Talking about one former prolific repeat offender, who has since re-located to Cumbria, gained employment, and become drug-free, Warren Birch spoke of how the experience of a trip to a local scenic heritage railway had given the man a real sense of perspective and new lease of life.

He said: "That freedom of being out on the train, it was like a child at Christmas watching him, the freedom that rail was providing. It's moments like that, if he's ever had an epiphany, thinking should I go back to the life I used to lead, well no, because this is what it's about now. You take moments like that, when you're looking at the devil and the angel on your shoulders, and it might just tip things in the right direction. Just being able to get on a train might be the difference

between someone re-lapsing, or running away because they don't feel like they can cope."

A number of other groups highlighted links with agencies such as social services and community payback schemes as having positive effects, with individuals involved in art and station maintenance projects, and in one case, one community payback volunteer being given the opportunity for some paid work experience within the Severnside Community Rail Partnership.

Some staff did suggest, however, that measuring the impacts of such interventions, however significant, was only possible due to the limited number of individuals involved and the fact success and progress could be tracked and analysed on a longitudinal scale. For larger-scale projects, such as the promotion of walking and cycling schemes, or the delivery of railway confidence programmes, while it was possible to quantify the number of individuals or organisations engaged, it was difficult to measure changes in behaviour and/or activity levels as a result of the projects over a longer time period due to practicalities and resource limitations.

## **ii. The challenges of attributing causality:**

Certain community rail groups said that while they had strong anecdotal evidence of the value and impact of their activities, being able to attribute and measure the degree of change caused by specific activities was difficult to demonstrate. Groups often worked on projects involving multiple partners conducting complementary activities, so identifying the exact impact, or value, of specific interventions was made more complex.

Within Sussex Community Rail Partnership, staff spoke of the extensive promotional work they had done to boost tourism and local economic development, with line guides, promotional videos, walking leaflets, and partnerships with key organisations such as 1066 Tourism, the South Downs National Park and Gatwick Airport. The partnership held roadshows at stations and hosted mini 'Community Rail in the City' events as a spin-off of ACoRP's national event to promote tourism on community rail lines.

While the partnership recorded the number of people it engaged with at events, Tim Barkley described detailed evaluation as "difficult." He said: "Saying we have encouraged 'x' number more people to go to somewhere as a result of our activities, I'm not sure we've got that sort of data. But what we can point to is the energy and enthusiasm of those local groups to see those activities taking place and the fact they are perceived to be successful."

The Conwy Valley Railway spoke of discussions with Transport for Wales about measuring impact via the recording of the number of tickets sold with particular discount codes, to assess the success of different marketing methods. As part of its relationship with the Welsh Government, the partnership also has to speak to at least 100 passengers a year about the service, completing questionnaires about why people are travelling, their journey details, and their levels of confidence in using the line. Further surveys by the partnership try to ascertain how best to promote and market the line.

Assessing the impact of the partnership's marketing approaches, Melanie Lawton said: "On the website, I look at all my Google analytics, I know what people are looking at and what their interests are, and I do more of what they like. Walks from the Train is huge, but for me to say that person who looked at that blog then came down here and went on the train, it's really difficult. I'm not sure if I will ever be able to get that. I travel up and down on the train myself speaking to loads of people, asking where they come from and how they heard about us, because it is important we get that right. But to record it, and to say that this is a direct impact of what we do, is really difficult to measure."

In Elstree & Borehamwood, councillors spoke of the success of First Impressions and the group's impact in improving the physical appearance of the station and surrounding area as part of the wider regeneration of the town centre, indicated by metrics including footfall counts, data on the number of empty shops, and residents' surveys, measuring satisfaction levels in community safety and health and wellbeing. But, they admitted there was no direct "cause and effect link" with the specific project, with the station development taken "as part of a bigger picture."

Within the Severnside Community Rail Partnership, staff said while they received feedback on the value of their activities, including on-train social activities and walking for health groups, in terms of promoting social inclusion – providing opportunities for social interactions and giving those involved a renewed self of purpose and self-esteem – the key metric to assess impact was simply based on the sustained engagement of those involved in the projects.

Heather Cullimore explained: "The only solid data I've got is that people are coming back. You know, we're seeing people incredibly committed to the incredible edible parties, the same faces on games on a train, and we can see the organisations we've engaged with all coming back and saying can we do this again. But it's really difficult to measure, because how do you put a value on someone feeling better because they have attended something we facilitated?"



Volunteers at Green Road Station

"One of my long-term goals for the walking for health project is that it becomes a GP-recommended activity, and then we might be able to say it contributed to a person's overall well-being, or weight loss, or the number of times they needed to see a doctor. This might all be happening, but we're not at the stage yet where we're asking people how this has benefitted their mental or physical health, we haven't quite got the expertise to collect that data yet. We would need a very solid programme, and we're still in the very early stages of that, but it's certainly something moving forward that we will start asking those questions of people."

### iii. Perceived success areas:

While acknowledging the issues in demonstrating the wider value of the community rail movement, those participating in the study did talk of areas where community rail has had a definite impact, and has the potential to continue to do so.

These areas will all be considered in the final part of this report, but one example that was frequently cited by interviewees was community rail's influence in reducing crime, anti-social behaviour and vandalism on stations and along community rail lines. Groups spoke of the direct, tangible benefits seen thanks to community rail and station adoption activities, resulting in a reduction of the number of incidents and an overall feeling of increased safety for station and rail users.



In Elstree & Borehamwood, First Impressions group members described how perceptions of fear and crime had reduced thanks to a “brighter, more engaging” station environment, and commenting on local transport forum meetings, said: “We don’t get British Transport Police to come anymore because there is nothing to report at the station.”

In the Sussex Community Rail Partnership, station adopters described how their activities had led to a reduction of graffiti and vandalism at stations, and in Cumbria, staff spoke of how school engagement programmes had led to a decrease in anti-social behaviour at stations up and down the Cumbrian Coast Line.

In the Severnside Community Rail Partnership, Keith Walton said that its primary focus on improving the physical environment and atmosphere of stations on the Severn Beach Line had paid off, with the stations now seen as welcoming and safe spaces attractive to passengers, illustrated by a 350% increase in journeys made on the line.

He said: “One of the easiest ways of looking at how successful you are is actually the condition of stations and people’s attitude towards them. Do they feel safe? If we’re going to encourage people to travel by train, the last thing we want them to do is feel unsafe when they go to their local station. By and large now, the stations are safe, they are relatively vandal-free, they have all got community artwork, they’ve all got communities tending flower beds, and they just look more welcoming. That wasn’t the case five, 10, 15 years ago, and you can see the difference that has made.”

A similar point was made by Cllr Philip Evans, who emphasised the value of successfully engaging with young people in the Conwy Valley on lowering the number of incidents of crime and vandalism on stations. He said: “One thing that links to a feel-good factor could be comparing reported crimes affecting the line year-on-year. Realistically, on a line like ours, 99% of crime is committed by people under the age of 18, so if we’re getting a community message over, and people are regarding the railway as theirs, particularly the younger cohort, then you would hope that, either by a degree of respect or by peer pressure, that incidents of vandalism would decline, particularly if you’ve got young people involved as adopters, which we have at some stations.”

The community rail movement emerged from a backdrop of communities fighting to save what were deemed to be under-used lines, and that focus on promoting and enhancing lines and stations remains to this day. Boosting passenger numbers – an indication to government of value for money to the taxpayer – remains a key metric, and as the figures earlier in this report show, community rail lines have a

**It’s feedback from communities that is really important.**



New signage at Elstree & Borehamwood Station

tendency to perform better in terms of ridership than regional lines outside the community rail network. Asked about the impact of their activities, many groups within this study outlined increased passenger use as a key indicator of value, with strong numbers leading to wider benefits such as improvements and upgrades to railway infrastructure, increased tourism, a modal shift from car to train, and the notion of ensuring communities remained connected via the railway.

The feeling was summed up by Melanie Lawton, who discussing the value of the Conwy Valley Railway said: “It’s feedback from communities that is really important. I know we make a difference, because there’s bums on seats, and that’s a big indicator. If the train was running empty, I’d be really worried, but it’s not. There were fears at some point that because of the reduction in service and the continued bus replacement service that this line would just close. The value to me is that people have the confidence that this branch line will remain open.”

While increased ridership, and the diverse benefits that brings to individuals and communities, remains a key driver, current thinking, and the evidence collected in this study, suggests that community rail can provide far broader value to wider society across a number of policy areas.

Taking the social value of volunteering alone as a standalone metric, the research suggests that not only are thousands of people contributing the equivalent of more than £5m to the rail industry each year, they may also be accruing upwards of £27m in social value, with volunteering leading to positive effects on the physical and mental wellbeing of individuals and communities.

While the monetary benefits to society may run to millions, the ability of community rail activities to influence positive behavioural change has also been described as a “lifeline” to individuals, with interviewees highlighting projects where community rail has aided rehabilitation, such as the ‘Rail Journey to Recovery’ in Cumbria and various initiatives, for example in Severnside and Glossop, involving community payback volunteers. Station adoption groups, such as those discussed in the Sussex Community Rail Partnership and on the Conwy Valley Railway, were also said to provide value via similar positive interventions, creating friendships around a shared area of interest that has the potential to open the door to vital inter-generational engagement.



## CONCLUSIONS:

Community rail is widespread across Britain, and continues to grow. ACoRP's increasing membership forms a substantial part of a movement conservatively estimated to be more than 1,000 groups-strong. This includes 61 community rail partnerships working along whole lines or across regions, plus at least 1,000 locally-focused, station-based groups. Within this network, we have calculated, again conservatively, that around 8,500 volunteers give more than 390,000 hours every year to delivering community rail activity, with a combined annual value of anything up to around £32m: £5.6m in terms of the value of their labour, plus a potential £27.6m in social value to those volunteering on a regular basis. Value in community rail can also be seen in the enhanced ridership on community railway lines – those with community rail partnerships – with a sample group of 36 lines showing a 42% increase in passenger numbers between 2008/9 and 2017/18, higher than the total overall increase of 35%. In addition, our qualitative analysis of interviews and case studies showing community rail in action attests to the value being delivered under each of the four pillars of the Department for Transport's *Community Rail Development Strategy*, albeit with challenges involved in quantifying this.

Our research reinforces the idea that community rail partnerships and groups are ideally placed to provide a voice for the communities they serve in relation to rail's development and delivery, with their influence ranging from hyper-local issues to major strategic development. They act as a 'critical friend' to the rail industry, using their knowledge to provide informed advice on changes and projects, from timetable or service alterations to significant infrastructure improvements. They not only respond to rail proposals and activities, but also proactively draw industry attention to local needs and opportunities, including, sometimes, building a case for larger-scale changes that have been implemented to positive effect. Community rail can also link the railways to other key partners, such as local authorities, businesses, and third sector groups, encouraging the sharing of resources and expertise and a joined-up approach to development. It appears that community rail delivers particular value through drawing on specific local characteristics, contexts and partnerships, while also sharing with others across the community rail world, drawing on the richness and inspiration that the movement offers nationally.

By promoting the importance of sustainable and active travel, community rail organisations are also exerting a positive influence on the travel choices of individuals and communities, although the extent to which their promotion of rail has resulted in modal shift cannot be ascertained. There are, nevertheless, many examples of their educational and promotional work being well-received and appearing to generate greater interest and positivity about rail. At the same

time, by bringing together partners in the field of integrated travel, community rail activities are making it easier for rail to be combined with walking, cycling and other forms of public transport for work and leisure purposes. We can also see, from our analysis, how grassroots work to increase awareness, confidence and familiarity with rail among children, young people, families and other groups, is playing a part in eroding the overriding culture of car dependency. This resonates with wider research showing that connecting with local identities and realities, and positive, interactive forms of engagement, may be key to promoting sustainable behaviours. Working with disadvantaged or marginalised groups who may experience barriers to rail travel, community rail can also help to build confidence and trust, and in the case of young people being given their first exposure to rail, create a sense of positivity and enjoyment that can have a profound long-term effect on their future travel habits, lifestyles, and health and wellbeing. This work engaging young people and encouraging more sustainable travel habits appears to be an important development area where community rail's impact could be magnified.

Our analysis further demonstrates how community rail can facilitate more inclusive, cohesive, connected communities by placing railways and stations at the heart of the communities they serve, acting as sites that create local pride and pleasure and help to boost wider regeneration. Our research participants all clearly demonstrated how they are building important connections with not just the railway but their locality and history, creating a sense of belonging that wider research suggests is important in encouraging civic engagement and aiding sustainable community development. Using standard metrics, we have shown how community rail volunteering accrues great value both to the rail industry and to the volunteers and wider society.

There are also suggestions in our qualitative analysis that community rail volunteering offers particular advantages. Its visibility, tangibility and centrality within communities, and its unique relationship to transport opportunities, means it can act as an ideal vehicle for building connections and opportunities within communities that tackle social isolation, provide a sense of purpose and belief (in oneself and one's community) and therefore lead to many social and health-related benefits. At the same time, other community rail initiatives to create a more inclusive, accessible, 'social' railway, are providing potentially life-changing experiences to some of the most vulnerable and disenfranchised people in society, opening up new opportunities for individuals, creating renewed optimism, and also creating value among charity and community sector partners that support these groups.

The growing recognition that community rail is able to impact upon a range of policy agendas and create positive social and economic change has also been reinforced by the interviews and examples in this report. Many community rail partnerships and groups are contributing significantly to sustainable, community-orientated tourism, promoting local businesses to a visitor market and aiding access through greener, less detrimental means. We also have burgeoning evidence of community-led projects at stations providing hubs that encourage and enable social enterprise and community development, often turning disused spaces that are going to waste and acting as a burden on the railway, into something of both social and commercial value. In some cases, these community stations are spurring and supporting wider regeneration that adds social and economic value to entire communities. Our research also hints that community rail can generally act as an ideal place for meaningful social change, providing a positive, safe and non-judgemental environment for people to come together and make change collectively for their own benefit and that of their local environment, neighbours, locality, and wider area.

But while our research further builds the evidence base of the value delivered through community rail, and shows the conviction and passion of those working in the field, it also points to the further work needed to assess and measure the value accrued through specific community rail activities. As community rail continues to develop, groups working within it are eager to establish better ways of demonstrating their impact and the difference they make. This will help them to focus their efforts, bring in more funding, collaborate, promote their work, and, ultimately, develop their impact further. It is recognised and agreed that there cannot, and should not, be a 'one-size fits all' approach to community rail, given its need to be led by local needs and aspirations. However, a value framework built upon the most common indicators of impact and success, and continually developed and refined in partnership with those working in the field, could have a powerful effect in unleashing community rail's greater potential to positively impact on community empowerment, sustainability, health, social inclusion and social and economic development both at a grassroots and more strategic level.



Station adopters within the Sussex Community Rail Partnership



## TOWARDS A VALUE FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITY RAIL:

### An exploratory framework for identifying and assessing social value in community rail:

The following exploratory framework draws on the contexts described at the start of this report, particularly ACoRP's experience supporting community rail, the Department for Transport's *Community Rail Development Strategy*, and RSSB's Common Social Impact Framework for Rail. It also makes use of the analysis we have undertaken to better understand how value is accrued through different community rail activities, and the challenges involved in assessing this at a local level.

A flexible approach is needed, and it should be seen as a suggested guide only, which will need adapting to different activities and situations. **Our hope is that community rail partnerships and groups will be able to use this as a tool to further advance their approach to identifying and assessing value, by selecting parts of the table relevant to their work, and use this to aid planning, review, monitoring and evaluation.**

While we have split the framework into the four pillars of the *Community Rail Development Strategy*, to provide some structure, there is inevitable overlap, and many activities by community rail partnerships and groups will relate to multiple themes, impacts and outcomes. There are also many different ways of measuring outputs and assessing outcomes, and while by no means an exhaustive list, we suggest below some metrics and methods that we believe will be practical within a community rail context. We have repeated similar types of measures across most of the impacts, showing how similar monitoring methodologies can potentially be applied across different activities.

ACoRP's member support services, and training and development programme, aims to help community rail partnerships and groups make use of this framework in a way that works for them. For further advice and support, ACoRP members can contact their main operations team contact – see [communityrail.org.uk/about-us/meet-the-team](https://communityrail.org.uk/about-us/meet-the-team).

We hope to continue to develop and refine this framework with input from those working in community rail, drawing on experience as it is put into practice. In addition, ACoRP will be undertaking further work to align this with wider rail industry work to investigate and evidence social value, particularly work by RSSB and Network Rail, which we hope will help to further establish the monetary value of community rail activity.



The Looe Valley Line in Cornwall



## Theme: Providing a voice for the community

Activities (What community rail does)	Measures (Output and outcome indicators that can be measured to assess progress and success and shape plans)	Outcomes (Changes that can result from community rail activities)	Impact (Longer-term effects that community rail strives for)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting community rail activities and messages to wider audiences, e.g. via events, communications, marketing and partnerships</li> <li>Working with partners or through targeted channels to engage particular groups in community rail, such as those who face barriers to rail travel or who feel disenfranchised</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number and type of communications / marketing / promotional / partnership activities run linked to this impact, e.g. number of press releases / bulletins/materials issued, posts on social media, campaigns run</li> <li>Amount of media coverage achieved, materials successfully distributed, website visitors, social media followers / engagement levels, event attendees, or otherwise the number of people reached</li> <li>Number of individuals, groups and partners engaged in different projects / activities</li> <li>Number of individuals, groups and partners within particular target groups/demographics engaged in different projects/activities</li> <li>Feedback from those involved / the community showing intended impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local people, groups and partners have greater awareness of and familiarity with community rail and the railway, with an understanding of development, plans and opportunities for engagement</li> <li>More local people, groups and partners get actively involved in community rail, and so can benefit from its initiatives and directly engage with rail</li> <li>More local people, groups and partners otherwise disengaged from community rail, and rail, become aware and involved, building new, positive connections between rail and the community</li> <li>Reduced negativity, cynicism and anti-social behaviour related to the railway</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community rail engages widely with local communities, so that people feel aware of and connected with community rail and the railway, and so more able to have a stake and a voice in its delivery and development</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Running meetings, discussions, events and interactive communications that enable people to discuss and put forward ideas and views about rail and community rail</li> <li>Carrying out surveys, research projects or consultations with local people, groups or partners to collect views and ideas on particular projects, plans or proposals</li> <li>Learning about and sharing good practice (rail / community rail / other) examples from other places, to help develop ideas and lessons that might be applied locally</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number and nature of meetings / discussions / consultations / other initiatives that enable views to be heard and discussed, and feedback / opinions on their success</li> <li>Number of people / groups / partners attending and contributing to meetings, online discussions, feedback forms, surveys and consultations, or feeding in views through other means</li> <li>Examples of drawing on good practice from elsewhere</li> <li>Feedback from those involved / the community showing intended impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local people, groups and partners can express their views and ideas about rail and community rail, feeling that they are empowered to have a voice and a stake in transport and their community</li> <li>Local people, groups and partners can discuss, exchange ideas and collaborate on how they can improve rail and the local area for the benefit of the community</li> <li>Opportunities are identified for improving rail and stations, and better connecting rail with other sustainable and active transport facilities and wider local/regional development</li> <li>People feel less distrust, cynicism or apathy towards rail</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community rail brings people, groups and partners together, builds understanding of what the community needs and wants from their railways, and identifies key opportunities for development, so local people are empowered, their needs met, and aspirations realised on an ongoing basis</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responding to rail industry / local authority / other consultations (formal and informal) on (potential) changes, in line with local needs, views and opportunities</li> <li>Producing reports and briefings, building business cases, and proactively communicating and advocating for local needs, views and opportunities to rail industry / local authority / other partners, and supporting such changes to be made</li> <li>Communicating back to local people, groups and partners how their views and needs are being heard and met by the rail industry, local authority or others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number and nature of responses to formal and information consultation by rail industry / local authority / other partners, and how this aligned with local needs, views and opportunities</li> <li>Number and nature of reports, briefings, business cases and other instances of proactively communicating and advocating for local needs, views and opportunities to rail industry / local authority / other partners, and supporting such changes to be made</li> <li>Number and nature of communications back to local people, groups and partners on how their views and needs are being heard and met, and number of people reached through this</li> <li>Examples of communities' views and ideas being acted upon by the rail industry/local authority / others, and measurable impact of this</li> <li>Feedback from those involved / the community showing the intended impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Rail development and changes are undertaken with a greater appreciation of local needs, views and opportunities, thus better serving communities</li> <li>Local needs, views and opportunities are brought to the attention of rail industry / local authorities / other partners and are acted upon</li> <li>Community groups interact with, and are drawn on and utilised by the rail industry / local authority / other partners on a more regular basis, developing a relationship as a trusted partner and consultee</li> <li>Specific improvements to rail are achieved for community benefit and influenced by the community, e.g. service or station upgrades</li> <li>Fewer instances of poor interaction / understanding between rail industry and local communities, e.g. inadequate consultation, complaints from lineside neighbours</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community rail influences and encourages rail improvements that benefit local people and are in tune with local needs, so the community can derive maximum benefit from the railways, and the railways are customer and future-focused</b></p>

## Theme: Promoting sustainable, healthy and accessible travel

Activities (What community rail does)	Measures (Output and outcome indicators that can be measured to assess progress and success and shape plans)	Outcomes (Changes that can result from community rail activities)	Impact (Longer-term effects that community rail strives for)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Running schemes and activities to expose local people or certain target groups to rail travel and build familiarity, interest and confidence, e.g. Try the Train or rail confidence programmes, or one-off visits and workshops</li> <li>Working with groups or individuals facing barriers to rail travel, to help them overcome these, and/or working with partners to improve accessibility (<i>see also theme below</i>)</li> <li>Running campaigns / communications to promote awareness and positivity about rail travel and encourage its use, within and/or with the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number and nature of activities run, and feedback / opinions on their success</li> <li>Number of people engaged in such schemes and activities, including demographics, and proportion experiencing train travel for the first time</li> <li>Examples / case studies of barriers overcome, for individuals, or more widely</li> <li>Number reached through campaigns / communications, and examples of interaction, engagement and responses</li> <li>Feedback from those involved / the community showing the intended impact, especially numbers indicating a change in travel habits as a result</li> <li>Passenger journey and station footfall figures may be partly related to activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local people / specific groups are exposed to, confident about and enthused by, rail as an accessible travel option</li> <li>Common barriers to rail travel are removed or broken down</li> <li>More local people / specific groups feel that they are able to access rail travel and the opportunities it brings</li> <li>Local people understand the benefits of rail and improvements being made on the network, and are more encouraged to use it</li> <li>Increased numbers (generally or specific demographics) local travel by rail, for the first time or by an increased amount, creating passengers of the future</li> <li>Rail embedded in (more) local people's travel habits, benefiting mobility, sustainability and health</li> <li>Fewer people feel isolated, restricted, or unable to access opportunities</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community rail maximises access to rail travel and the opportunities it brings, and mobility generally, so everyone can get around and access the employment, education, leisure and social opportunities they want and need to</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting rail as a sustainable travel choice, and the importance of sustainable travel, through events, communications, materials, or education programmes</li> <li>Bringing together complementary sustainable travel providers / groups to better integrate rail and improve sustainable local transport networks – including through station travel plans</li> <li>Developing and implementing station travel plans</li> <li>Supporting and encouraging work within the rail industry to improve and demonstrate its sustainability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number and nature of activities run, and feedback / opinions on their success</li> <li>Number of people engaged in such schemes and activities, including demographics</li> <li>Examples and case studies of improvements made towards more integrated sustainable transport as a result of these activities, e.g. improved signage, bus timetabling and stops, connections with community transport</li> <li>Examples and case studies of improvements to rail's sustainability as a result of these activities</li> <li>Feedback from those involved / the community showing the intended impact, such as indicating increased awareness of sustainable travel and a change in travel habits</li> <li>Passenger journey and station footfall, plus data on modes of travel to and from stations, and levels of traffic in the surrounding area, may be partly related to activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local people understand the importance of sustainable travel and problems of car use, and recognise rail as part of the solution</li> <li>Increase in people using and embedding rail and other sustainable travel for their journeys and driving less in the area, meaning increased ridership, and less harm to environment and health from driving</li> <li>Rail is better integrated with other sustainable modes of travel, and (more) local people use sustainable travel to access rail stations, with the benefits listed above, increasing rail's accessibility to those on low incomes</li> <li>Rail becomes a more sustainable industry and form of travel, and more supportive of passengers acting sustainably</li> <li>Reduced congestion, noise, air pollution, danger and disruption caused by car travel, including to and from stations</li> <li>Local people understand the importance of healthy travel and problems of sedentary lifestyles, and see community rail and rail as part of the solution</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community rail supports a shift to sustainable travel and lifestyles, so that people get around via means that are not polluting, harmful to health and wellbeing, damaging to the environment, or detrimental for future generations</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promoting rail as a part of healthier travel, and the importance of healthy travel (for yourself and others), through events, communications, materials, or education programmes</li> <li>Bringing together partners such as walking/cycling groups, transport authorities and providers, and local employers, to better integrate rail with walking and cycling and improve active travel networks – including through station travel plans</li> <li>Running activities that directly enable and support active travel, outdoor exercise and healthy lifestyles, such as guided walks and bicycle hire schemes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number and nature of activities run, and feedback / opinions on their success</li> <li>Number reached and engaged in such schemes and activities, including demographics, and regularity and time spent by individuals on activities that improve health and wellbeing</li> <li>Examples and case studies of improvements to better link rail with walking and cycling routes and improve active travel networks, e.g. signage, improved walking and cycling paths, facilities at stations</li> <li>Feedback from those involved / the community showing the intended impact, especially citing improvements in physical or mental health due to their involvement or changes made</li> <li>Referrals from partner organisations or GPs aiming to benefit individuals' health / wellbeing through their involvement, and their feedback on the results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in people using and embedding a combination of rail and active travel for their journeys, and driving less in the area, meaning more healthy and active lifestyles, improved wellbeing, and reduced ill-health effects from traffic</li> <li>Rail is better integrated with active travel, and (more) people walk and cycle to local stations, with the benefits listed above, increasing rail's accessibility to those on low incomes</li> <li>Common barriers to walking and cycling (generally, and to access rail) are overcome</li> <li>More local people can access and engage in walking, cycling and other healthy, outdoor exercise, and derive the health, wellbeing and social benefits from this</li> <li>Local health services and support providers benefit by referring and signposting individuals towards community rail activity to improve physical and mental health</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community rail encourages a shift to healthy travel and lifestyles, so people's journeys promote and enable good health for them and those around them, and so everyone can enjoy healthy, active leisure and lifestyles</b></p>

## Theme: Bringing communities together and supporting diversity and inclusion

Activities (What community rail does)	Measures (Output and outcome indicators that can be measured to assess progress and success and shape plans)	Outcomes (Changes that can result from community rail activities)	Impact (Longer-term effects that community rail strives for)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating spaces and facilities at stations, such as in disused station buildings, that can be used by local groups and individuals for interaction, support, learning or other community-led activities</li> <li>Running community events, celebrations and other activities that bring people together in a positive, enjoyable environment and enable interaction across diverse groups</li> <li>Community-led arts, heritage or environmental projects that enable people to converse, create, learn about and make a difference to their locality and local railway / station</li> <li>Improvements to stations and their surroundings that ensure they are linked to local identity and become celebratory gateways and hubs that people can enjoy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number and nature of activities run, and feedback / opinions on their success</li> <li>Number reached and engaged in such schemes and activities, including demographics, and regularity and time spent by individuals on activities that improve health and wellbeing</li> <li>Examples and case studies of improvements / transformations to stations and surrounding areas, showing the difference made for rail passengers, neighbours, local groups, the rail industry, businesses, or others</li> <li>Feedback from those involved / the community showing the intended impact, especially citing feelings of pride, positivity and connection with their locality and other people created by activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local people can access support services, community and social activities provided at their local station</li> <li>Increased local opportunities for people to come together, interact and make social connections, including across diverse groups, creating a sense of togetherness and tackling social isolation</li> <li>Stations are rejuvenated for community use, turning wasted space into positive community assets that people can use, take pride in and enjoy</li> <li>Stations become community hubs and celebratory gateways, generating local pride/interest and a positive 'sense of place', and providing greater connection and positivity about rail</li> <li>Local people feel empowered to make a difference to their local area, engage creatively and socially, and create positive change together</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community rail creates spaces and opportunities for community interaction, place-making, learning and enjoyment, so people feel a greater sense of pride and belonging towards their local area, and greater connection and cohesion with each other</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinating and supporting volunteering at stations, community rail events or other activities, within a safe, positive, welcoming environment where volunteers can contribute their time, skills and ideas to make a recognised difference to their locality and community</li> <li>Promoting volunteering opportunities to encourage as many people as possible to get involved, and appeal to a range of people</li> <li>Recognising and championing the endeavours of volunteers and the positive effects this has, at the station, for the community, and for the volunteers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of people actively volunteering within community rail, hours they contribute, regularity of their volunteering, and demographics (this can be converted into a monetary value using current hourly median wage, plus calculated hourly value to volunteers)</li> <li>Number and nature of specific volunteering sessions / days / events, what was achieved, and feedback / opinions on their success</li> <li>Examples and case studies of improvements / initiatives delivered through volunteering showing the difference made for rail passengers, neighbours, local groups, the rail industry, businesses, and the volunteers</li> <li>Feedback from those involved / the community showing the intended impact, especially volunteers citing changes to their quality of life as a result of their volunteering</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More local people regularly play an active role in their community through community rail volunteering, deriving the associated health, wellbeing, self-esteem and social benefits and improving their quality of life</li> <li>Local people can use their skills and contribute their ideas and views to their station / railway / locality, increasing self-efficacy and belonging and building a greater connection between railway and community</li> <li>Volunteers' efforts create tangible benefits for the station and / or wider locality, such as community gardens, artwork or history boards, that others can enjoy and create a sense of place and belonging</li> <li>Reductions in anti-social behaviour and other problems at stations</li> <li>Fewer people suffering from social isolation, and its consequences for health, wellbeing and community cohesion</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community rail engages local people in constructive community volunteering, so people can use and develop skills, develop a sense of purpose, forge friendships and social connections, and give back to their communities and railways</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinating initiatives that aim to help marginalised and vulnerable people to access and benefit from rail travel</li> <li>Promoting engagement in community rail activities to marginalised and vulnerable groups who may particularly benefit from involvement</li> <li>Initiatives that develop skills, employability, confidence, and/or access to training, education and employment (including in rail and the community sector) for young people, or marginalised groups</li> <li>Running campaigns or projects that celebrate diversity and promote more inclusive thinking within the community and/or railways</li> <li>Helping partner organisations that support disadvantaged and vulnerable people to achieve their goals and benefit their service users</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number and nature of activities run, and feedback / opinions on their success</li> <li>Number of people reached and engaged in such schemes and activities, including demographics, and regularity and time spent by individuals on activities that improve health and wellbeing</li> <li>Number of people who have entered employment, education or training related to involvement in activities, and case studies on the difference made for these individuals and their families</li> <li>Examples and case studies of initiatives run, showing the difference made for different stakeholder groups, but especially in empowering marginalised and excluded individuals and families</li> <li>Feedback from those involved / the community showing the intended impact, especially citing new opportunities, increased self-esteem and efficacy, reduced isolation, and health and quality of life benefits that have resulted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vulnerable, marginalised and excluded people are able to access the increased opportunities that rail travel offers, and fewer lose their mobility as a result of vulnerabilities</li> <li>Vulnerable, marginalised and excluded people get involved in their community, local volunteering and activities, and feel able to make a difference locally, increasing feelings of self-esteem, efficacy, cohesion and belonging</li> <li>Increased awareness about diversity and social inclusion, and a more inclusive, supportive environment within the local community and railways</li> <li>Local charities and support groups can better achieve their aims and support vulnerable and marginalised people, in connection with the railways</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community rail engages people who are vulnerable, marginalised or excluded from society, promotes opportunities, and brings people together across differences, benefitting social inclusion and helping to tackle loneliness and isolation</b></p>



## Theme: Supporting social and economic development

Activities (What community rail does)	Measures (Output and outcome indicators that can be measured to assess progress and success and shape plans)	Outcomes (Changes that can result from community rail activities)	Impact (Longer-term effects that community rail strives for)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with partners to identify and develop the area's (sustainable) tourism offer, e.g. making links between rail and local attractions, creating discounted travel packages and itineraries</li> <li>Developing and disseminating marketing materials, e.g. line guides, videos, online content, blogs, walking / cycling trail maps, to showcase community rail lines and their surrounding area and activities to a leisure / visitor audience</li> <li>Running / attending events, roadshows, and other campaigns and activities to promote the line and area to a leisure / visitor audience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number and nature of activities run, and feedback / opinions on their success</li> <li>Number of people reached and engaged through marketing and communications, including any data on demographics and levels of interaction</li> <li>Number of visitors who have heard about or are responding to marketing / promotional campaigns, e.g. by monitoring use of ticket codes or discounts, or surveys of visitors</li> <li>Passenger journey and station footfall figures, and visitor numbers to the area and its attractions, may be partly related to activities</li> <li>Examples and case studies of mutually-beneficial partnerships with local tourism partners, attractions or events, and any changes that have resulted</li> <li>Feedback from those involved / the community showing the intended impact, especially demonstrating new visitors, and modal shift from car to train, responding to community rail activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More people use community rail lines to visit the local area</li> <li>Higher leisure visitor numbers and spending in the local area</li> <li>Travel on community rail lines recognised and included as a part of a widened tourism offer</li> <li>Reduced damage to the environment and communities' health and wellbeing caused by road vehicle traffic</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community rail contributes to sustainable tourism, stimulating local economies, creating interest for visitors, celebrating the identity of communities, and reducing harm caused by car-based tourism</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with industry partners to identify and redevelop redundant / under-used station sites to provide social and economic value</li> <li>Establishing, supporting or running rail-based social enterprise initiatives</li> <li>Collaborating with local businesses and business partnerships in ways that benefit them, their workforce and their profile, such as advising on sustainable commuting and business development opportunities, and workforce diversity efforts</li> <li>Feeding into and supporting wider social and economic development, such as urban regeneration, house building, high street revival and access to work programmes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Examples and case studies of redundant station sites brought back into use, social enterprise initiatives, business partnerships, and influencing wider development, and changes that have resulted from these</li> <li>Number of individuals, groups and partners involved in and benefitting from these initiatives, and feedback / opinions / examples / other evidence of the changes that have resulted for them</li> <li>Wider evidence of social and economic development across the locality (such as local authority measures) might also be used to show potential influence on wider change</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Station spaces are redeveloped for community use, producing benefit for the railway and its passengers, generating social and economic value from the new uses, and possibly influencing and supporting wider regeneration</li> <li>New and increased social enterprise and business opportunities for the local area, providing employment, trading, training, employee wellbeing, sustainable transport and other benefits that strengthen the local economy</li> <li>Wider social and economic development is better joined up with and supported by the railway, so this development is more sustainable and delivers greater benefit for local people</li> <li>Fewer station buildings / spaces going to waste and falling into disrepair, posing a drain on the railway</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community rail spearheads the rejuvenation of railway stations and land, creating improved local environments, opportunities for enterprise and local business, and supporting wider regeneration</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with partners to identify and take forward opportunities to empower the community to drive and create positive change, such as supporting marginalised groups or young people to build their own business case</li> <li>Sharing community rail expertise and capitalising on our position and partnerships to lead on and encourage wider changes, such as to do with social inclusion and sustainability, extending beyond the railway</li> <li>Contributing to work to develop the profile and reputation of community rail, and therefore its ability to influence and drive change, such as by working with ACoRP on national communications campaigns, sharing case studies with others across the network, and helping to build the evidence base for its value</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number and nature of initiatives that put local communities in control, and examples and case studies of the impact these have had</li> <li>Examples and case studies of partnerships and activities that are delivering a wider, strategic level influence such as to do with social inclusion and sustainability</li> <li>Examples of the community rail partnership or group working beyond its locality to develop the profile, reputation and influence of community rail, and build the evidence base for its value</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local communities are empowered to influence positive change not only on the railway but across their locality, creating a sense of efficacy and producing wider opportunities for community-led development</li> <li>Social and economic development in the area is more sustainable and inclusive, through the involvement and leadership of community rail</li> <li>The community rail movement is better understood, appreciated and respected, and therefore is increasingly able to influence sustainable social and economic development at a local, regional and national level</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community rail acts as a focal point for communities driving forward sustainable social and economic development, identifying and creating opportunities for community-led change, delivering transformation within the locality and more widely</b></p>

## End notes

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- <sup>10</sup> Social Value Bank, What is the Social Value Bank? (2019) [www.socialvaluebank.org/](http://www.socialvaluebank.org/)
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## About ACoRP

ACoRP is dedicated to supporting community-based groups and partnerships that connect their community with their railway and deliver social benefit. Members can access operational support, training and development, written resources, networking opportunities, and advice on good practice within all aspects of community rail. For further information, visit [communityrail.org.uk](http://communityrail.org.uk).

## About the Rail Delivery Group

The Rail Delivery Group (RDG) brings together the companies that run Britain's railway into a single team with one goal - to deliver a better railway for you and your community. RDG continues to work with ACoRP to further the case for community rail activity and support for it, as well as improving train operators' knowledge of how the community role can help them and the communities they serve through practical examples. See [raildeliverygroup.com](http://raildeliverygroup.com).



## Rail Delivery Group



National Rail

