

Press release | For immediate release

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

Thousands encouraged to explore scenic Britain by rail as part of nationwide tourism event

Community rail groups used a national day of action to join forces and showcase some of Britain's most scenic train journeys and promote sustainable tourism by rail.

Now in its ninth year, 'Community Rail in the City' is an increasingly widespread celebration aimed at developing tourism and travel for recreation on Britain's community rail routes, encouraging thousands of passengers to explore epic landscapes, coastal scenes, and sites of historic interest.

This year's event [1] involved 36 community rail partnerships and groups – up from 24 groups last year – and their rail and tourism partners hosting activities at 20 mainline railway stations, including in London, Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow.

Groups spoke to an estimated 75,000 people throughout the day, promoting the tourism opportunities accessible via Britain's expanding community rail network.

Highlights of the event included a 'Highland Fling' at Kings Cross, a countryside scene celebrating the 70th anniversary of National Parks at Waterloo, an 18-foot replica of the Mayflower on display at London Liverpool Street, and a giant paint-by-numbers mural at Birmingham New Street.

Community rail partnerships work at grassroots level to engage local communities, help people to get the most from their railways, and promote rail as a key part of sustainable, healthy travel.

Community Rail in the City is organised by the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP), the umbrella body for community rail groups across Britain, which supports its members to work with partners to integrate rail travel into their area's local tourism offer.

As well as helping people access more of Britain through enjoyable, environmentally friendly means, tourism by rail makes a growing and vital contribution to local economies. Rail usage in this sector has increased by 30% over the last decade, with approximately three million annual visitors using the train as part of their trip, adding £510m to the UK economy [2]. Other national organisations have recently highlighted the importance of promoting sustainable travel, with the National Parks Association issuing a report stating the need to help more people access the countryside via public transport.

ACoRP's chief executive, Jools Townsend, said: "This campaign is all about promoting the exploration of historic, scenic Britain through our wonderful, often not-well-known, community railway lines. These lines take you off the beaten track, to some of our most amazing and fascinating destinations – and travel on them is especially rewarding, as these

railways played a crucial part in our heritage, and bring you into the heart of communities. Tourism by rail is great for families and holiday-makers, and for the places they visit, as it's more sustainable and healthier than driving, helping to reduce pollution, noise, and congestion, and providing a critical boost to local economies."

"This year we have more community rail partnerships and groups than ever before taking part in Community Rail in the City, working with rail industry and tourism partners to promote their lines to tens of thousands of people."

Planning is already underway for the 2020 event, with some community rail groups looking to promote links with Mayflower 400, a series of celebrations commemorating the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower's pioneering voyage.

For more information, visit communityrail.org.uk.

Notes to Editors:

[1] The event took place on Wednesday, May 15

[2] UK Tourism Statistics 2016 (Tourism Alliance) - www.tourismalliance.com

ACoRP – ACoRP's vision is of a flourishing community rail movement, connecting communities and their railways, and enhancing the wellbeing, sustainability and development of communities and railways across Britain.

As the umbrella body for community rail, it works to empower and support community rail partnerships and groups through membership services, resources and events, to: enhance the railways' contribution to local sustainable development and community wellbeing, including by maximising access to and use of the railways; ensure the community has a voice and plays a part in the development and improvement of our railways; and communicate the development and importance of our railways to communities, enhancing understanding and pride, and promoting rail as a key part of sustainable, healthy travel. All 61 community rail partnerships are members of ACoRP, alongside more than 160 station friends/adoption groups, with members continuing to grow.

See communityrail.org.uk, follow and tweet us @ACORPoffice, find us on Facebook, or sign up to our monthly e-news (<http://bit.ly/tol18>) to keep up to date.

Scenic Rail Britain (scenicrailbritain.com) is ACoRP's dedicated tourism website that aims to help domestic and foreign tourists access some of the country's hidden gems, while travelling sustainably and avoiding the stresses of driving. It highlights the huge range of landscapes, sights and attractions that can be enjoyed and accessed by train, including via the scores of lines that community rail partnerships work to promote and enhance.