

Community rail *in the city*

Wednesday 13 May 2020



Advice for community rail
partnerships and groups

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Introduction

Community Rail in the City is a flagship annual community rail event, coordinated nationally by the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP) to promote sustainable travel for recreation. The event welcomes all ACoRP members including community rail partnerships, stations friends and groups, to promote their activities and visitor attractions along their lines at a number of mainline railway stations across the country. It helps to open up recreational rail travel by showcasing healthy, sustainable, cultural and enjoyable days out and longer trips for people living or working in major cities.

This guidance has been produced by ACoRP and is aimed at providing advice to community rail partnerships, station friends and other groups that want to get the most out of participating in this national event.

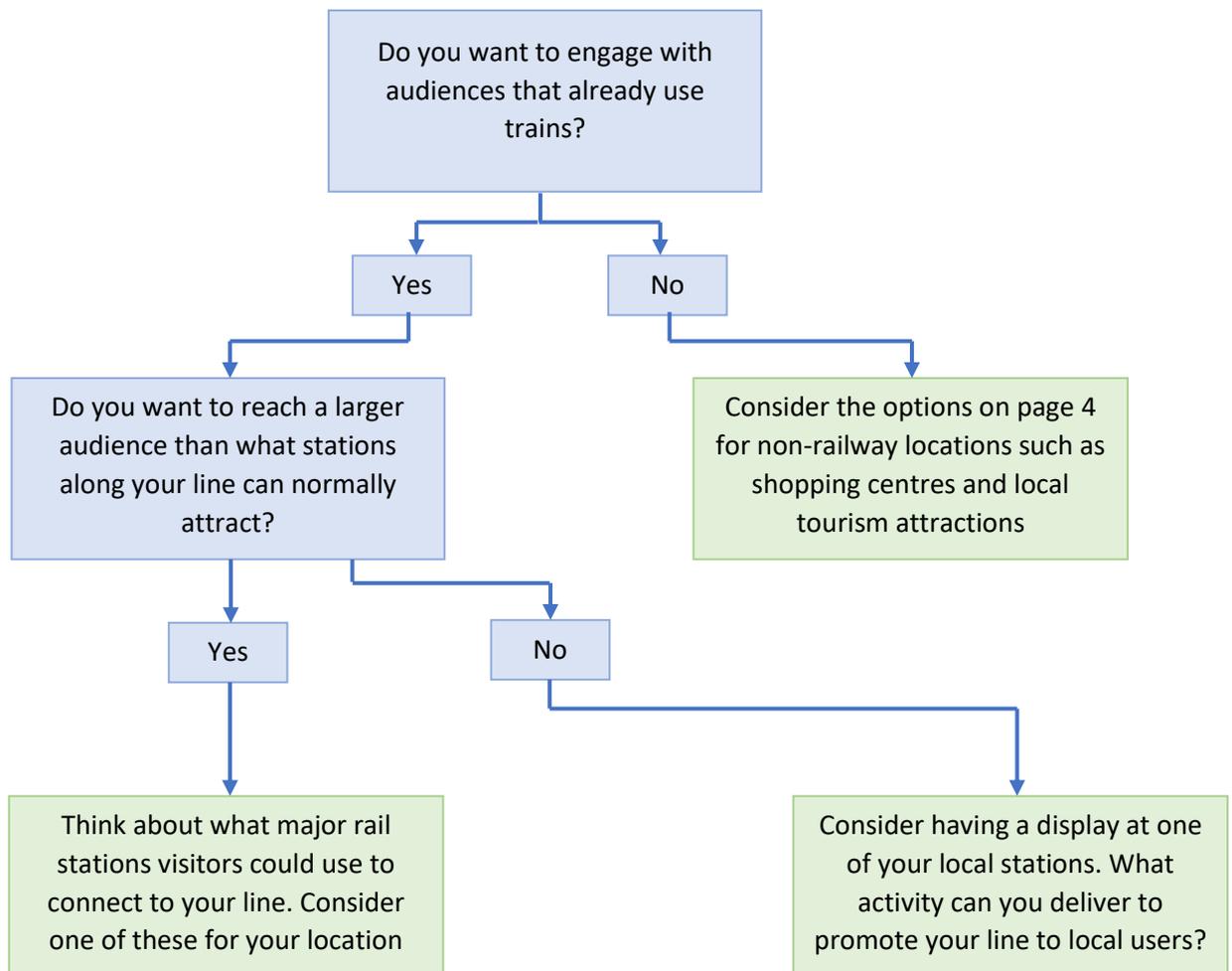
Discover how you can deliver impressive themed displays, attract more visitors to your stand, manage staff and volunteers, what to expect on the day and how to effectively evaluate your activity post-event.

Location, location, location

Who is your target audience?

Consider this to be the first question you ask during the planning of your event. The answer will help you to decide the type of location that may prove to be more successful for your activity.

Use the flow chart below to help you consider your location.



Engaging with a non-railway audience

Are you wanting to reach visitors who are not necessarily already using the train? Consider taking some promotional space on a city centre precinct, inside a shopping centre or at a local attraction.

Initial prices are given below as a guide. If you'd like advice on how to approach an external space provider, please get in touch alice@acorp.uk.com:

Leeds City Centre

Outdoor spaces located around the city in 8 different areas = £250 per day (discounted rate for community groups. Normal rates from £250 - £1500, depending on location)

Manchester Arndale

Prominent indoor space = £2500 per day

Intu Braehead, Glasgow

Indoor or outdoor space = from £750 per day

Intu Derby

Prominent indoor space = £1500 per day

Intu Eldon Square, Newcastle

Prominent indoor space = £2500 per day

Intu Watford

Prominent indoor space = £1000 per day

Bullring, Birmingham

Prominent indoor spaces = from £1000 per day

Grand Central Birmingham

Commercial space above Birmingham New Street = from £1000 per day

Local Attractions

For an alternative location, why not utilise your partnership with a local attraction. Ask if you could take some space in their entrance to promote community rail travel. At this type of location, you can expect to reach a specific tourism audience, and those visitors who may not have previously considered using rail travel for leisure.

Activity ideas

Think about what makes your railway line unique. How can you use this as a promotional tool to attract visitors to find out more? Below you will find some ideas on how this could be achieved.

Contact: alice@acorp.uk.com if you'd like to discuss activity ideas in more detail.

Everyone loves a freebie! Branded freebies & goody bags (consider **sustainable** options) are very successful at events such as these. They can draw visitors to your stand but also work well given out to visitors who don't have time to chat.

Do you have access to interesting railway memorabilia? Why not stage a mini exhibition at the station? Ask your local museum, library or archive service to join you in your activities

Create a fun quiz. Answers to your questions can be found on your stand or in your literature. Provide small incentives for visitors taking part & gather valuable visitor insights (such as postcodes etc.)

Step back in time and theme your stand around a significant moment in your area or line's history, such as when your line opened or a historic moment. Ask staff/volunteers to dress up in period costume relating to your chosen year

Encourage visitors to engage with you on the day by offering a prize draw. Use this as an incentive to get visitors to sign up to your eNewsletter, visit your website or post on social media channels

Hire a TV screen that can be used to showcase photographs of your line on a loop throughout the day. Alternatively, the TV screen can show video footage, if you have access to it. Make sure you check your location has access to electricity

Create a unique photo spot that invites visitors to take a photograph, such as a cardboard cut-out or prop. Encourage visitors to share their photographs on social media by providing a prize incentive

Invite a local attraction, destination marketing team or train operating company to join you in promotions. This will give your stand a bigger impact, jointly promote sustainable travel for leisure and could also help with financing your activity

Deliver a small workshop. This can be aimed at children, adults or both. An activity can help to engage with audiences for longer. Ask local partners such as artists to get involved and run the workshop alongside your display



For more activity inspiration, take a look at highlights from previous events:

2018 Community Rail in the City

2019 Community Rail in the City highlights (coming soon)

Making your activity sustainable

Using one-off displays can increase waste. Consider creative ideas that enable you to recycle displays and upcycle resources to create props.

Limit the use of disposable packaging

Bring your own water bottle, many locations now provide water refill points

Choose branded products that are made sustainably, can be recycled or are biodegradable

Consider using services that are provided locally to reduce the impact of long-distance delivery and to support local businesses

Partnership working

As you consider your activity plans, think about relevant tourism attractions and businesses that could join in with your promotions. This will help to create a bigger impact on the station and will provide a larger network of resources.

You may find these tourism organisations are keen to get involved. They would normally have to pay a lot of money from their marketing budget to organise something similar on their own. For more information about partnership working, download the [Developing partnerships with the tourism sector](#) guidance from the ACoRP website.

Case study

The Poacher Line worked closely with Visit Lincolnshire to celebrate 100 years of the RAF. The extra resources enabled the partnership to deliver an impressive display including a replica Red Arrow plane parked at the concourse at Birmingham New Street during Community Rail in the City 2018.

Case study

North Staffordshire Community Rail Partnership utilised the local heritage of the Potteries to offer a unique clay crafting activity at Crewe Station. Working alongside the British Ceramics Biennial team, visitors were invited to make clay passengers for an upcoming exhibition, the Cast of Thousands. A good example of how partnership working can be beneficial to everyone involved.

Funding

Additional funding may help you develop activities that will have a big impact on the day. Funding can come from several sources including partners (see [partnership working](#) above), your local train operating company and tourism grants. You can find an up to date [funders list here](#) and you can read [advice on grant funding here](#).

Funding available through ACoRP

ACoRP administers a number of grant schemes, on behalf of national and regional government and sometimes industry partners. Each is only open to certain ACoRP members, according to specific criteria applying to each fund.

Community Rail Development Fund (CRDF)

- Open to all accredited community rail partnerships (or designated lines until 31 March 2020)
- Maximum grant for projects = £25,000 (match funding criteria applies)
- Administered on behalf of Department for Transport
- In the case of a general election, activities paid for using this fund may be affected by purdah
- Applications with the following specifications will be favoured:
 - Longevity of materials, showing how the group will use the materials again in the future
 - Sustainability, showing how the group are making sustainable choices (see [making your activity sustainable](#))

Small Grants Fund (England)

- Open to ACoRP members in England
- Maximum grant for applications from April 2019 - March 2020 =
£2,500 for community rail partnerships and community station members
£1,000 for station friends, adopters and small groups
- Administered on behalf of Department for Transport
- Applications with the following specifications will be favoured:
 - Longevity of materials, showing how the group will use the materials again in the future
 - Sustainability, showing how the group are making sustainable choices (see [making your activity sustainable](#))

Put your application in as soon as possible. The funds are popular and will only remain open while there is still money available.

Examples of costs covered:	Examples of costs not covered:
Flyers, brochures and displays that have longevity beyond the event and are produced using sustainable materials/methods	Any services/products already paid for including community rail officer time Event running costs of your group such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Overnight accommodation○ Refreshments○ Travel

Please note, although guidance is provided above, this does not guarantee application approval. Each application is considered on an individual basis and the maximum funding limits are subject to change. If you'd like support in writing your application or advice on if your project will be considered for funding, please contact ACoRP's Senior Administration Assistant, Patrick Southern on patrick@acorp.uk.com

Media

Community Rail in the City is not just about promotion at big city locations. Why not get the most out of your activity and let your local media outlets know of your plans?

ACoRP will be issuing a national press release, highlighting Community Rail in the City activities across the country. This press release will be sent to the rail industry, national and regional news outlets, and the travel and transport media.

ACoRP will be sending you a pre-event and post-event press release template prior to the event, see [Timetable](#) for details. This press release will only require you to insert your individual activity plan. Once complete, you can send it to your local media contacts. If you don't have any contacts yet, send the release to the news desk of your local newspaper/radio station. You can find details of these contacts on their website. Follow up with a phone call to check they have received the press release and ask if they need any more information.

You are encouraged to send your own press release to support the event and promote the activities your partnership. Please do remember to include the national event name (Community Rail in the City) and the Association of Community Rail Partnerships as the organising body. This will highlight

your partnership being part of a national event and will also help ACoRP keep a track on what media outlets take an interest in the story.

Presentation of your stand

It is important that your display stand makes a good first impression. Most venues have specific locations for promotional activity, often in large spacious areas. With this in mind, you will need to use eye-catching visuals to attract visitors to your stand. Even if you have a large stand you still may be at risk of blending in when you're situated in a wide, open concourse.

Consider ways you could do things differently to help create a visual representation that will draw the interest of passers-by. You may choose to have singers, entertainers, giant props etc. all linked to a specific theme. If you are relying on a backdrop or pop-up banners, make sure they are eye-catching and represent exactly what makes your line or CRP unique without covering the banner completely in text.

Keep your stand clutter free. If you need a table to provide space for promotional literature, ensure it is organised and looks inviting to potential visitors. Utilise grant schemes available to your CRP or group, to help finance eye-catching displays, see [Funding](#).

Take a photograph of your stand when you've finished setting up. By reviewing the photograph, you should easily be able to identify anything that doesn't look right and can fix it straight away. This is the best way to see your stall as a visitor would.

Health and safety

As with any event, health and safety practices must be followed. If your stand is at a railway station you will need to complete a risk assessment. The length and detail-level of each risk assessment will vary from station to station. Most require specific measurements of your display equipment and brief activity details as a minimum. The risk assessments need to be approved by the station managers a few weeks in advance of the event. At railway stations you are also required to gain a permit to work badge. This is issued from the station managers office on the day of the event and is proof that you have permission to be working on the station concourse.

Risk assessments may also be required if you are displaying at other locations such as shopping centres and local attractions.

Public liability insurance is essential. Venues will often ask to see a certificate to prove your group has the necessary insurance to cover your activities. If you are working with an external company such as an artist, singers or performers, etc they should already have public liability insurance. If not, event insurance can be purchased online. However, ACoRP can advise on this so please get in touch.

ACoRP can give advice and help with health and safety requirements for any venue you choose to attend. Please get in touch via alice@acorp.uk.com

For an idea of when you should be looking at health and safety policies and paperwork please refer to the separate [Community Rail in the City Timetable](#).

Staff and volunteers

No matter what your activity plans are, large or small, the actual event is guaranteed to be a long day. Most larger city stations require stands to be set up before the morning commuter rush starts

(approx. 6.00am) and won't allow any stands to be packed away until after the evening rush finishes (7.00pm at the earliest). This may also be the standard at non-railway venues as well.

Make sure you invite fellow colleagues and recruit volunteers to help. If you are promoting a local attraction on the day, ask them in advance if they can send a representative to attend for a few hours. This will enable the attraction to actively promote the area and how to get there by train as well as providing additional resources.

Use the event as an opportunity for students or unemployed people to gain work experience by volunteering.

The more volunteers you can get, the easier the day will be. Organise a rota so that everyone has enough breaks to re-charge before their next shift. Don't forget to communicate this rota to staff and volunteers in advance of the day.

Once you have a confirmed team in place, communicate your key messages and what you want to get out of the day. For example, your main aim may be to increase sign ups to your eNewsletter, give out all your promotional goody bags or use the event to carry out visitor research. Whatever your aims are make sure everyone on your team are fully aware of what is expected in advance. Preparing a brief information sheet for all your staff/volunteers to read in advance may be helpful.



When a visitor approaches your stand, start a conversation. Ensure you and your team have a good, well-crafted opening line, perhaps leading with a question such as: have you travelled on our railway line before or are you looking for ideas for a day out? Depending on the response you receive you will get an indication as to where to take the conversation next and how you can achieve your main aim.

Ensure you and your team are prepared for the conditions. Comfortable shoes and warm clothes are always a good idea when standing all day on hard floors and in potentially draughty stations.

Storage and transport

All locations will expect your stand to be self-sufficient and will not be able to provide overnight storage in advance or during the day. You may want to think about alternative options if you are planning to bring a lot of equipment and materials with you.

- Does your train operating company have a base nearby that can store items for you?
- Is there a storage unit you can rent overnight that is nearby?

Planning to bring more equipment than you can carry? At busy locations it may not be possible to temporarily park outside to unload. If a delivery area is available, it may not be near to your stand. Consider these factors when scheduling your setting up and dismantling times.

Would it be more cost effective to hire a courier service that will delivery your equipment to an agreed location?

During past events, ACoRP used a courier service to transport a large Scenic Rail Britain display stand and boxes of promotional literature in advance of the day.

As some of the team were staying overnight it was arranged for the hotel reception to accept delivery of this equipment and they stored it in their luggage room until it was needed the following day. The team only needed to transport the equipment and materials a short and manageable distance to Kings Cross.



On the day

On the day you need to get noticed. A key part of this is to engage with people who are passing. Even with a large, impressive stand people may still be concentrating on where they're going. Although some people will be in a rush to catch a train or on their lunch break, others will be happy to spend time looking at your stand and having a brief chat. Those who are rushing by may be happy to take a leaflet or some sort of giveaway from you. However, be considerate to those who don't want to stop and chat and don't obstruct them as they pass through.

Chatting to members of the public provides a great opportunity to do some market research. Using [ACoRP's visitor engagement template](#) will help you record how many visitors you have actively spoken to.

There is also space for you to record the first half of a visitor's postcode or alternatively you can ask what town/city they live in. this will be useful when evaluating the event, see [Evaluation](#).

This can be added to the end of a conversation and you can explain it's just to understand where people are from for evaluation purposes. The template will also provide a space to record email addresses for those who want to hear more about the work you do.

When asking for a visitor's personal details you need to make it clear what you will be using it for and that it will not be passed onto third parties. For example, if you are taking details just to enter the prize draw and will only be used to contact the winner, or if they are signing up to an eNewsletter that is only sent out on a monthly basis. For further advice download [ACoRP's guidance on data protection](#).

Don't forget to take some great photographs. This is a good opportunity to make sure you have lots of photographs that you can use in other publications and websites throughout the year. To give you flexibility make sure they're at least 300dpi and, as well as taking pictures of the team at the stand, try and get plenty of 'action shots' of your team engaging with passers-by, as these always make more interesting images. Send these photographs to alice@acorp.uk.com after the event as they may be used in post-event press releases alongside future event promotions.



ACoRP will be monitoring social media, keeping an eye out for all your exciting, on the day tweets. Please use the hashtag [#CommunityRail](#) so we can retweet and don't forget to include a photo of your activities.

Please remember in all press releases to quote the Association of Community Rail Partnerships and the name of the national event you are part of, Community Rail in the City. This helps us keep a track on what media outlets take an interest in the story.

Evaluation

It is good practice to complete an evaluation post-event. This will enable you to provide valuable feedback to partners as well as helping you to shape your plans for future events.

If you have used the [visitor engagement template](#), you should have a list of postcodes. These postcodes can be mapped out on websites such as [postcode-mapper.co.uk](#) and will provide you with a visual representation of the events reach. This can help you determine if the event was a success and can be used to influence your location choice for future events.

In your evaluation include the above postcode mapping, how many materials were given out, the amount of competition entries you had (if necessary) and the participation of any activities you held.

Tell us all about it

We'd love to hear about what worked well or advice you would give to others. A questionnaire will be sent out shortly after the event to gather your thoughts. This feedback is incredibly important to help us develop future Community Rail in the City events to ensure they provide a valuable tool in marketing our members to potential visitors.

If you have collated visitor figures or specific data from the event, send the details through to alice@acorp.uk.com so it can be added to the overall event evaluation. Alternatively send a copy of your [evaluation](#).

Further resources

Find additional information to help you plan a successful event:

- Use the [Timeline](#) to familiarise yourself with key dates prior to the event
- [Download](#) a template for recording visitor engagement

If you have any questions, or would like specific support during your activity planning, please contact:

Alice Mannion

Tourism & Heritage Officer

Association of Community Rail Partnerships

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