



# Community rail in Wales



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**Rail Delivery Group**





**Community rail is a unique and growing movement comprising more than 70 community rail partnerships (CRPs) and 1,000 volunteer groups across Britain that help communities get the most from their railways.**

It is about engaging local people at grassroots level to promote social inclusion, sustainable and healthy travel, wellbeing, economic development, and tourism. This involves working with train operators, local authorities, and other partners to highlight local needs and opportunities, ensuring communities have a voice in rail and transport development.

Community rail is evidenced to contribute high levels of social, environmental, and economic value to local areas, and countless stations have been transformed into hubs at the heart of the communities they serve. Evidence also shows community rail delivering life-changing benefits for individuals and families, helping people access new opportunities through sustainable travel by rail.

The movement is currently looking to play a key role in the recovery of our communities post-COVID, helping them build back better and greener.



“We are passionate about supporting local people who aim to improve their communities in innovative ways, making interventions that help create pride of place and promote well-being.”

Jennifer Barfoot, South West Wales Connected

## Wales in numbers:

**Six  
community  
rail  
partnerships**

Working along railway lines, with industry partners, to engage local communities. Partnerships stretch from the English / Welsh border in the North to Pembrokeshire and Carmarthenshire in the South.

**140  
station  
groups**

Voluntary groups bringing stations into the heart of communities. In Wales, more than 50% of the network is 'adopted' by local volunteers.

**Each Year**

**1,100**  
**Volunteers**

**Giving**

**50,000  
Hours**

**Worth  
£4.3m**

## Community rail partnerships in Wales:

### Conwy Valley CRP - covers 12

stations from Llandudno to Blaenau Ffestiniog, with a recent expansion adding a further ten stations from Conwy to Holyhead on Anglesey. Key priorities include developing and promoting sustainable and accessible travel by rail, both for local people and tourists visiting North Wales and Snowdonia, and supporting local communities and businesses along the line. The CRP now enjoys a base at the new community enterprise hub at Llandudno Station, where the partnership is looking to establish a digital skills training programme for volunteers and working to help local people access employment opportunities.



### Borderlands CRP -

covers stations between Wrexham and Bidston on the Wirral Peninsula. Key priorities for the CRP include enabling and promoting sustainable and accessible transport for local communities, and delivering marketing campaigns to raise awareness of the line and its potential contribution to employment, education, tourism, health, and leisure.



### Cambrian Rail Partnership -

covers 34 stations from Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth and Pwllheli. The CRP uses the Cambrian Line to advocate sustainable tourism, highlight the region's strong links with Welsh history and culture, and promote attractions include World Heritage Sites, scenic walks, and a host of heritage railways. The CRP also engages with communities along the line, keeping them informed of major rail infrastructure projects, such as the £25m upgrade of the 19th century Barmouth Viaduct.



### Heart of Wales Development Company -

covers 34 stations between Shrewsbury and Swansea. The CRP's core business is to support, promote, and develop the rural Heart of Wales Line for the benefit of communities, businesses, and passengers, with the partnership based at The Station Hub in Llandeilo, a sustainable building built as an accessible community space. Stations along the line are ideally situated to access walking, cycling, and other outdoor pursuits, and the CRP promotes active travel and sustainable tourism via The Heart of Wales Line Trail, a long-distance walk that weaves along the line, bringing economic benefit to local businesses and communities.



### Chester-Shrewsbury Rail Partnership -

covers stations from Chester to Wrexham and onto Shrewsbury. Priorities include raising awareness of the rail service among local communities, businesses, and wider partners, and realising the full potential of the line for passenger and freight traffic. The partnership is working with CRP members Cambrian Heritage Railways on a long-term project to introduce a community rail service from Gobowen to Oswestry, reopening the line under the Department for Transport's Restoring Your Railways fund.



### South West Wales Connected -

this newly-established CRP covers stations and lines between Port Talbot, Swansea, and Carmarthen, onto Fishguard Harbour, Milford Haven, and Pembroke Dock. Its primary aims include unlocking the potential of the rail network to support the well-being of people and the planet, developing station infrastructure and placemaking around stations, encouraging sustainable tourism and active travel, and using rail to strengthen business, employment, social, cultural and leisure connections between people, businesses and communities across the four counties of Neath Port Talbot, Swansea, Carmarthenshire and Pembrokeshire.



“By connecting and encouraging collaboration among businesses and organisations in local communities, we can empower those communities to work better together on a whole range of social, economic, cultural and environmental issues.”

Karen Williams, Conwy Valley CRP

Community rail supports the four main aims of the Department for Transport's **Community Rail Development Strategy** via a wide range of projects, such as:

### Providing a voice for the community

- The Heart of Wales Development Company has helped to advocate for an improved and more frequent service on the line, opening up opportunities for communities along the route;
- South West Wales Connected has held a series of 'visioning meetings', engaging communities to ascertain what local people want from their local railway stations, and empowering them to deliver change;
- Conwy Valley CRP has worked with local school children to develop rail safety skills and increase their confidence travelling by rail, also encouraging young people to become station adopters;
- Various CRPs have engaged communities during major infrastructure projects and COVID-19 disruption, representing the views of local people and acting as a 'critical friend' to the rail industry.

### Promoting sustainable, healthy, accessible travel

- Borderlands CRP has produced marketing materials promoting days out by rail, highlighting local attractions and accessible walking routes;
- All Welsh CRPs are promoting sustainable tourism via the 'Wales on Rails' project, linking rail with other forms of public transport to encourage leisure travel and scenic adventures by rail;
- The Heart of Wales Line Trail promotes walking and active travel along the line, encouraging visitors to use the train as opposed to cars, with access via many 'station link' paths;
- The Conwy Valley CRP has a section of its website dedicated to 'walks from the train' and cycling, and has been involved in consultations on sustainable travel and transport plans for Snowdonia National Park.

## Community Rail Development Strategy

### Bringing communities together and supporting diversity and inclusion

- CRPs produce business cases for improvements at stations, helping them to better serve local communities and provide community space;
- Various CRPs have assisted in reaching out to communities to seek tenants for transformed disused station spaces for community, local enterprise, skills development and social inclusion projects;
- The Chester-Shrewsbury Partnership helps to run Severn Dee Travel at Gobowen Station, and a cafe which offers work experience opportunities to students with special educational needs;
- The Heart of Wales, Cambrian, and South Wales CRPs have set up community grant funds to support local community groups and encourage regeneration from the effects of COVID-19.

### Supporting social and economic development

- The Chester-Shrewsbury Rail Partnership is supporting the planned rail link between Gobowen and Ostwestry to help boost sustainable travel and local economies;
- The Cambrian Rail Partnership was involved in public/stakeholder consultations linked to the new station at Bow Street, reviving a rail link for the local community for the first time in more than 50 years;
  - South West Wales Connected is involved with Milford Haven Working Together, an innovative police-led participatory budget project that lets communities decide on improvement initiatives that get funded in their area;
- Various CRPs work with businesses/attractions along their lines on joint promotions and special rates/offers for rail passenger, designed to boost tourism and local economies.

### All Welsh CRPs – Wales on Rails

This project promotes tourism by using rail and other forms of public transport throughout Wales, encouraging safe, sustainable, and scenic adventures. It involves all the Welsh community rail partnerships, and Great Little Trains Limited, whose members include many of Wales' heritage and narrow-gauge railways. A website offers images and storytelling to attract travellers to each line/route, with information provided on areas including awesome adventure, fantastic food, gorgeous gardens, heroic heritage, and obtainable outdoors. The project is expected to be officially launched this summer, helping to promote leisure travel and 'staycations' by train and bring people back to rail.





## South West Wales Connected – ‘Visioning meetings’

South West Wales Connected was established in mid-2020, and is hosted by 4theRegion, a membership alliance working to bring about positive change across South Wales. To overcome COVID-19 restrictions, the partnership held a series of online ‘shared vision’ meetings, bringing interested parties together to co-create shared visions and action plans for stations and their surrounding communities, businesses, and organisations. The community engagement meetings were hugely successful in generating themes and ideas that could be translated into key priorities and community action plans, seeking to maximise the role the railway can play in fulfilling the aims of the Welsh Government’s Well-Being of Future Generations Act. Having developed many potential project ideas, the partnership’s goal is to support the community in turning those ideas into workable initiatives, led by local people.



**LLANELLI TRAIN STATION  
SHARED VISION MEETING**

JOIN THE ONLINE CONVERSATION ON 15th DECEMBER

We're inviting interested parties to join us to co-create a shared vision for the station and the surrounding communities, businesses and organisations.

What would you like to see there, what's possible and how can we make it happen?

**THURSDAY 3RD DECEMBER 2020  
12:00PM - 2:00PM VIA ZOOM**

4theRegion | SOUTH WEST WALES DE ORLEWIN CYMRU | TRAFNIDIAETH CYMRU TRANSPORT FOR WALES | BIODIVERSITY FOR THE VALLEYS | Sir Gâr | Carmarthenshire



## Station groups:

More than 140 stations across the Wales & Borders network have been ‘adopted’ by their local communities, with more than 1,100 volunteers helping to turn stations and their surroundings into welcoming, thriving, and celebratory gateways and hubs.

On the Heart of Wales Line, Llandovery station hosts an award-winning community-run café, and the station gardens are cared for by children from the local primary school. At Llanwrtyd Wells, the old station building at has been re-opened by Llanwrtyd Community Transport as a community activities and meeting space. In Llanelli, the station friends group are planning a new station garden, and supporting the redevelopment of a former goods shed as a community hub featuring arts, business support, a cafe, and an exhibition showcasing the industrial heritage of the area.

At Borth on the Cambrian Line, station adopters converted disused station buildings into a museum, which is now used as both an educational and social resource. Gardening projects can be found at stations across the country, including at Lamphey in Pembrokeshire, where the station is cared for by the local Women’s Institute. Biodiversity is also driving a major new project based at Treherbert Station, where a community growing scheme, led by the Welcome To Our Woods Partnership, is being developed alongside a new community rail partnership for the Valleys area.

## Gobowen Station – Severn Dee Travel

Based at Gobowen Station, Severn Dee Travel is a not-for-profit organisation run by volunteers and the Chester-Shrewsbury Community Rail Partnership. As well as providing ticketing services across the entire rail network, it also runs a station café that offers work experience opportunities to students with special educational needs from a local college. Working in a safe and supportive environment, students from Derwen College undertake a high-quality placement where they learn basic catering and customer service skills, directly linked to their vocational studies.

## ‘Building back better’ post-COVID-19:

Since the pandemic hit, community rail has adapted, supporting local resilience, continuing to engage communities, volunteers, and partners, maintaining togetherness, and looking to the future. Community rail partnerships and groups are now eager to do all they can to support a green and inclusive recovery from the pandemic, helping communities to deal with ongoing challenges, and putting rail at the centre of a sustainable transport future.

In their local areas, individual community rail partnerships and station groups have supported:

- Local understanding, insights, and dialogue, focusing on local people and places and how the railways can best serve their needs;
- Community resilience, wellbeing, and inclusion, bringing people and partners together;
- Building positivity and promoting rail and sustainable travel.

During the pandemic, the Heart of Wales Development Company worked with local voluntary associations to set up a ‘community resilience’ small grants fund for community groups within 10km of stations on their line. The fund helped the partnership to build links with groups in various communities, promoting inclusion and wellbeing, and supported good causes including charities, community centres, Scout groups, sports clubs, and youth groups. The success of the scheme led to a similar fund being established to support communities along the Cambrian Line.



To support regeneration post-COVID, South West Wales Connected launched a new Community Changemakers fund to support communities along its lines. Potential projects included initiatives promoting creative and cultural ideas, e.g. art/film, COVID-safe community events, community growing or green space schemes, projects supporting local businesses and economies, ideas to improve inclusion and accessibility, schemes engaging young people or other marginalised groups, or projects to promote sustainability, climate action, or active travel.

All community rail partnerships have been supported by rail partners throughout the pandemic, and community rail groups will be working to promote rail as a safe, inclusive, and sustainable form of travel, particularly for leisure and tourism, when restrictions allow.