



ANNUAL REPORT

2021-22



Supporting the community rail movement to flourish

FROM THE CHAIR AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Despite periods of continued COVID restrictions, 2021-22 was another solid year of achievement for the Community Rail Network and community rail across Britain.

I am always awestruck by the inventiveness, resourcefulness, and sheer determination of community rail partnerships and station friends and adoption groups in working to make their local station or line contribute as much as it can to the community it serves. This isn't just about making stations attractive gateways, it's the myriad of projects directly linking the local community with the railway, work to encourage people back to the railway, and activities to boost the local economies of places served through their rail link.

My journey in community rail began long before it was even called that. It is great to see how far it has come, and especially good to see how the Community Rail Network itself has grown and thrived, and continues to thrive. To see now 73 CRPs established around the country is great, and a long way from the small handful of very rural rail partnerships pulled together by Paul Salveson to form what was initially ACoRP nearly 25 years ago.

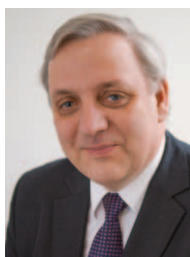
A big part of our progress and success to date is down to the government's Community Rail Development Strategy, launched in 2004 and signed up to by each government ever since. This made community rail 'official', and led to much more secure funding for CRPs, funding for new CRPs, help for station friends and adoption groups, and support for our organisation.

The small community rail team at the Department for Transport has always been invaluable, as is the grant funding they make possible. Many thanks to them and indeed the government as a whole for their continued support for community rail.

As always, my thanks on behalf of the board to you, the members, and to Jools and the team for their steadfast work over the year.

And to all involved in community rail across the country, all power to your elbows!

Richard Burningham MBE, chair



2021-22 was again a challenging year, with the ongoing effects of the pandemic.

Inevitably this continued to impact on community rail's ability to deliver face-to-face engagement and volunteering, and to proactively promote rail travel, but we never ceased to be impressed by the way our members adapted, responded, and kept striving for their local areas. And, towards the latter part of the year, it felt clearer than ever the importance of community rail in rebuilding, and building anew, positivity and confidence towards the railways.

Community Rail Network continued to support our members closely through these turbulent times, establishing hybrid ways of working, while starting to bring back face-to-face visits, training, and events. We had a strong focus on sharing good practice on leisure travel, sustainability projects and modal shift, as well as generally enabling our members to come together again, exchange ideas and feel part of a wider movement.

Across our communications, we worked to not only maintain morale, but to champion community rail's role in striving towards more sustainable, inclusive transport. We were proud to work with third sector partners to showcase community rail at the international climate talks COP26, and we fed in community rail's valuable insights on transport decarbonisation via a plethora of conferences, advisory groups, and meetings, showing how communities can be empowered and strengthened while advancing greener travel.

Work started to ramp up on rail transformation, following publication of the government's Plan for Rail in May 2021. We were thrilled with the recognition the Plan gave to community rail, and will continue to advise those leading the process of change on how our railways can put communities and their needs front and centre, drawing as always on our members' rich array of experiences and ideas.

Jools Townsend, chief executive



COMMUNITY RAIL NETWORK IN NUMBERS (AT END OF 2021-22 FINANCIAL YEAR)

- 73 community rail partnership members
- 291 station and community station group members
- 25 events and training courses, with 919 attendees
- 126 entries to our awards, with 13 winners and 317 guests
- 35 activities held as part of our first-ever Community Rail Week
- 5,351 friends/followers/subscribers @
- £863,978 annual turnover
- £410,320 provided in grants
- 17 staff members

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS IN PICTURES



Community Rail Awards returns in person



Series of sustainability-themed reports



Support for our growing membership



Running our first ever Community Rail Week



Liaison with GBR over rail reform



Boris Johnson hears all about community rail

OUR TEAM



Jools Townsend,
chief executive



Brian Barnsley,
deputy chief executive and head of support and development



Sarah Fatica,
head of people and funding



Sarah Chilton,
head of communications and policy



Dawn Bigland,
administration manager



Paul Webster,
community rail support manager



Martin Clarke,
community rail support and sustainability manager



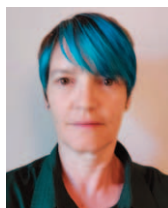
Ian Davis,
community rail support officer (North)



Daniel Wright,
community rail support officer (South West)



Rhiannon-Jane Raftery,
community rail development coordinator (Wales and Borders)



Alex Peel, training and development coordinator



Naomi Lilley,
training and development coordinator



Hazel Lavery,
events and fundraising manager



Alice Mannion,
Campaign and leisure promotions coordinator



Patrick Southern,
senior administration officer



Rob Lawson,
Policy, research, and resources officer



Hannah Cottrill,
events and partnerships officer



Erin Kelly,*
communications and marketing officer



Caroline Thompson-Noble,*
Sustainable travel engagement co-ordinator



David Littlefair,*
Youth engagement project coordinator

Our team reports in to our board, who are elected from our membership. Find out about our current board members [here](#).

*Joined in 2022-23

SUPPORTING OUR MEMBERS

Advising our members and staying in touch

Our support and development team recorded nearly 800 instances of direct support to members in 2021-22. As COVID-19 restrictions eased, the team resumed face-to-face visits as well as continuing to offer online and remote support. Members commented on the usefulness of our support on topics such as project funding, developing joint initiatives, promotions and communications, station buildings, and using our Impact reporting tool. To see the full support members can access, visit our [‘join us’](#) web page.



Pic credit - Friends of Buxton Station

Training programme continues online

Members were offered a wide range of opportunities to develop and enhance skills, knowledge, and confidence to deliver their goals in a planned, impactful way. Our team again drew on feedback from our members’ survey and insights gathered year-round about training needs to tailor courses. Feedback has consistently been excellent.

Workshops included:

- Volunteer recruitment;
- Planning your evaluation;
- Presentation skills;
- Project management and outcomes;
- Community engagement and consultation.

The team also ran bespoke support workshops for members, plus networking sessions for community rail partnership chairs, including one to discuss the **Plan for Rail** with the Great British Railways Transition Team. There was a welcome return to in-person sessions after two years, in February 2022, when 18 new/nearly new community rail officers gathered in Birmingham for introductory training welcoming them into the community rail movement.

Our team delivered ten demonstrations on how our **Impact** reporting tool can be used for monitoring and evaluation, as well as to create bespoke **activity logs** and **surveys**. We now have around 130 Impact users from 40 different community rail partnerships and station groups, and **examples** of it being put to good use.

We also continued to encourage members to highlight and showcase the social value they provide to the communities they serve. We produced a **briefing on social value**, outlining the concept and detailing how it can be applied to the increasingly diverse range of activities that community rail partnerships and station groups undertake.

Community rail accreditation

Our support and development team continued to use their expertise to administer the Department for Transport (DfT) and Welsh Government's accreditation scheme, which recognises quality in areas such as governance, financial propriety, planning, and offering a representative community voice. Our team guided partnerships through the process online and in-person, with four achieving accreditation for the first time in 2021-22. As at the end of the year, 44 partnerships had achieved accreditation status, with others being supported to work their way towards it.

Growth in station adoption and community station projects

The number of community rail partnerships (CRPs) across England, Scotland, and Wales was 73 at the end of 2021-22 and much work took place during the year to help new partnerships get set up. This led to, in early 2022-23, us welcoming three new partnerships on board: Calder Valley Community Rail Partnership, Liverpool to Manchester Community Rail Partnership, and The Robin Hood Line. We supported other embryonic partnerships that we also hope to see established in the coming year, with progress ongoing on the Coalfields partnership in South Yorkshire and the Far North Line in Scotland.

The community rail movement as a whole, with continued support from ourselves, government, the rail industry, and wider partners, continued to grow. We saw our station friends and community stations membership numbers rise from 266 to 291, with new groups including parish councils, rotary clubs, community interest companies, art groups, schools, community travel organisations, and charities joining the increasingly diverse range of groups caring for and developing stations.

We saw numerous community station projects continue to develop and evolve. Our team provided expert advice and signposting on rejuvenating station spaces, especially disused buildings, to give them a new lease of life. In the past year, our team supported five new projects, and we saw more schemes either coming to fruition or going from strength to strength, with community uses as varied as hospital radio stations, free food shops, community bike hires, community meeting and events spaces, art galleries, community cafes and museums. These projects are based on local ideas and needs, often bringing many partners together, and founded on shared commitment to benefit local communities and maximise social value.

In Scotland, thanks to ongoing funding from Paths for All, our community engagement coordinator met regularly with community rail partnerships to support the development of local projects engaging communities and promoting sustainable travel by rail. We sought to build capacity and raise the profile of community rail, reaching out to wider partner organisations, and highlighting opportunities for strengthening community rail as ScotRail transferred into public ownership on 1 April 2022. Supporting Scotland's vision of a sustainable, inclusive, safe and accessible transport system, we produced a [video](#) highlighting the importance of train travel to tackling the climate emergency, and community rail's role. We continued to advise Transport Scotland, and submitted a detailed response to their consultation on reducing car kilometres by 20% by 2030.

Work to support both new and longer-established community rail partnerships and groups in Wales and the Borders also progressed this year. Our team played a key role in helping community rail partnerships going through periods of change and restructure, those moving to new host organisations, and those reshaping governance and activity plans. We continued to work proactively with the Welsh Government and Transport for Wales to expand community rail, including in the Valleys and North Wales areas, and supported collaborative projects such as the ['Wales on Rails'](#) sustainable tourism initiative.

Managing grants

We continue to work on behalf of government and industry partners to manage and promote grant schemes, ensuring a robust approach to awarding **funding**. These schemes included in 2021-22:

- Community rail development fund (for accredited community rail partnerships in England and Wales), on behalf of the DfT and Welsh Government (£200,616)
- Small Grants Fund and Integrated Sustainable Transport Funds (both for England), with funding from the DfT (£109,923)
- South Western Railway Small Grants Fund (£13,897)
- Transport for Greater Manchester Small Grants Fund (£14,316).

In total, £410,320 was awarded to community rail projects and developments in 2021/22.

Members' survey results:

In our 2021 members' survey:

- 71% said they received value for money for their membership;
- 88% said we communicate well with members;
- more than seven in ten members had received direct support during the year.

The most appreciated aspects of our support were helping our members to:

- access shared experiences and good practice, and feel part of the wider movement;
- identify the outcomes of their work and demonstrate their impact;
- develop new projects and engage with new partners/groups;
- become more confident and knowledgeable about topics or issues;
- feel encouraged and enabled to pursue new funding opportunities.



CASE STUDY: Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership

Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership was officially formed as a Community Interest Company in May 2020. Launching during the pandemic was challenging, but it strengthened the partnership's commitment to make a difference. Putting people and communities at the forefront of its thinking, the partnership has, with our support, delivered an impressive body of work in its first two years, leading on or supporting more than 30 different projects and programmes of activity, including:

- a survey to gain insights into key transport challenges facing young people in Gloucestershire, followed up with creating a partnership Youth Transport Forum;
- the 'Getaway' youth engagement programme, using outdoor activities and

day trips to encourage young people to expand their horizons, learn new skills, and gain confidence and independence through rail travel;

- a series of 'Taste for Travel' guides and maps linking rail, bus, and active travel to destinations across the county, supporting local economies and sustainable tourism by rail;
- a 'Connecting new communities' developer guide to ensure rail and transport integration is considered in the planning process, complemented by a series of access and active travel maps for areas across Gloucestershire;
- the 'Let's Talk Travel' project, providing information and training on overcoming travel barriers for local people seeking access to work, training, and placements.

Pic credit - Gloucestershire Community Rail Partnership



CASE STUDY: Solent Remade CIC

Solent Remade CIC, a new Community Rail Network community station member for 2021-22, runs projects in Havant Borough that help the local community cut consumption, keep things in use for longer, and live and travel more sustainably. Through South Western Railway's 'Community Use Spaces' scheme, and with support from our **Small Grants Fund**, they were able to lease a redundant space at Havant Station for a peppercorn rent. The CIC oversaw a major refurbishment, converting the run-down space into a valuable community asset.

Opening in 2022, the new facility has secured the future of several Solent Remade projects, including its repair café and 'Library of Things', by providing a secure storage space and thriving drop-in centre for community cycle projects. As well as rejuvenating an unloved part of Havant Station, the CIC has achieved its goal to provide a smart and practical space bringing substantial community benefits.



Pic credit - Solent Remade

CASE STUDY: The Friends of Goostrey Station

The Friends of Goostrey Station have been Community Rail Network station adoption members since 2017, but were busier than ever during 2021-22. Having saved and restored the station's Victorian building, now successfully converted into Goostrey Art Studio, the group have expanded their reach with different projects, including making the station into a wildlife-friendly site that enhances biodiversity. Highlights in 2021-22 included:

- Working with new tenant artist Debbie Goldsmith to develop Goostrey Art Studio, running a host of workshops, exhibitions and educational activities with schools and community groups;
- Adding bird and bat boxes, bug hotels, and plants and shrubs that offer year-round food and shelter for wildlife;
- Continuing to develop their Geographical Information Service (GIS) mapping to record different species of wildlife at the station, and monitor use of the new habitats they create;
- Installing a bicycle shelter and storage loops, to encourage active travel to and from the station;
- Running interactive art workshops at Crewe Heritage Centre as part of Community Rail Week 2022.

The group received support from our **Small Grants Fund** to help maintain the blossoming station environment, and their efforts were recognised at the 2022 Community Rail Awards, where they were named joint-winners of the Outstanding Contribution to Community Rail Award.



Pic credit - The Friends of Goostrey Station

CELEBRATING SUCCESS AND SHARING GOOD PRACTICE

Awards and events

Our Community Rail Awards returned as an in-person event in 2021, but to ensure as wide an audience as possible, we also live streamed the celebrations from Southampton's O2 Guildhall. Coordinated by our people and funding team, more than 300 guests joined physically or online, including community rail officers and volunteers, and industry and government colleagues.

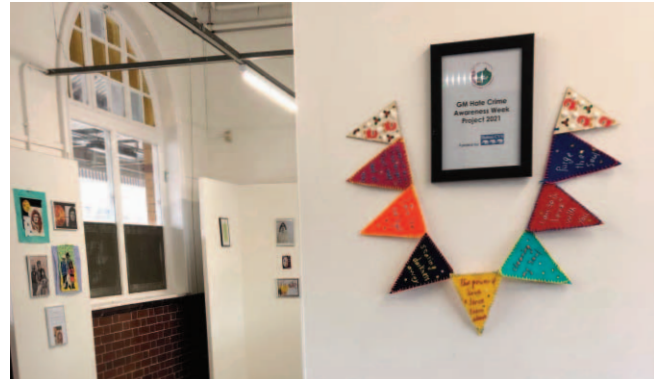
Speakers and video messages underlined the value of engaging communities with local railways and stations, including from: Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris MP; Vaughan Gething MS, Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales; Graeme Dey, Minister for Transport at the Scottish Government; Michelle Handforth, regional director for Wales and Western at Network Rail; Jaqueline Starr, chief executive of Rail Delivery Group; Malcolm Brown, chief executive of platinum sponsor Angel Trains, and TV personality and rail enthusiast Chris Tarrant.

An array of inspiring projects were celebrated from 126 entries; see the winners' booklet [here](#).

Our events programme included organising the DfT's annual Community Rail Conference, which returned as an in-person event in Nottingham in March 2022. More than 120 delegates attended, with 17 speakers sharing good practice and expertise on topics including youth engagement, diversifying community rail boards, integrated leisure travel, Great British Railways, planning in uncertain times, and safe and secure stations.

We held a further 23 events and courses with 475 attendees in 2021-22, including our training and development programme and a series of webinars. As COVID restrictions eased, the team focused on efforts to encourage people back to rail and promote the importance of sustainable travel, with sessions on enabling modal shift and demonstrating rail's green credentials. There were also webinars on biodiversity, and storytelling and creative projects, plus a joint session with the Great British Railways Transition Team to keep members informed and engaged during the process of rail transformation.

Pic credit - South East Lancashire Community Rail Partnership



CASE STUDY: South East Lancashire Community Rail Partnership – Hate Crime Awareness Project

As a community rail partnership which works with people from a range of backgrounds and communities, South East Lancashire Community Rail Partnership felt it was important to tackle hate crime, pledging to raise public awareness and make it easier for victims to report any incidents and access support.

The partnership developed a social media campaign, launched at the start of Greater Manchester's Hate Crime Awareness Week, highlighting statistics and information about how to report hate crime. The partnership created an online survey using Community Rail Network's Impact platform, which was used to collect evidence on the issue. This evidence informed online artist-led workshops, where attendees produced poetry and arts and crafts exhibits.

The project engaged around 60,000 people on social media, with 80 survey responses and six well-attended workshops. In addition to the [project exhibition](#), a report was distributed to stakeholders including Network Rail, rail operators, Community Rail Network, Women in Community Rail, Bolton CVS, and other community organisations, on practical ways to prevent hate crime at stations and on trains.

Resources and case studies

The focus of our 2021-22 resources, sponsored by Rail Delivery Group, was community rail and sustainability, highlighting how the movement offers social, environmental, and economic value via varied activities. The series of reports included:

- **Community rail: encouraging and enabling modal shift** highlighting how empowering communities to travel through sustainable and healthy means offers benefits for local people, places, and our climate;
- **Community rail and sustainable development** exploring how community rail can stimulate local sustainable development;
- **Community rail and biodiversity** showcasing the increasing role the movement is playing in supporting biodiversity and enhancing wildlife habitats.

The resources featured a host of examples from members across England, Scotland, and Wales, and were received positively by rail industry partners and rail media, as well as informing and stimulating discussion in our webinars.

We also added to our range of online **case studies** and guidance resources, including **Community rail artistic projects: advice on creative rights**, a guide to ensuring community rail partnerships and station groups secure the appropriate agreements for use of creative/artistic works.

Pic credit - The Friends of Buxton Station

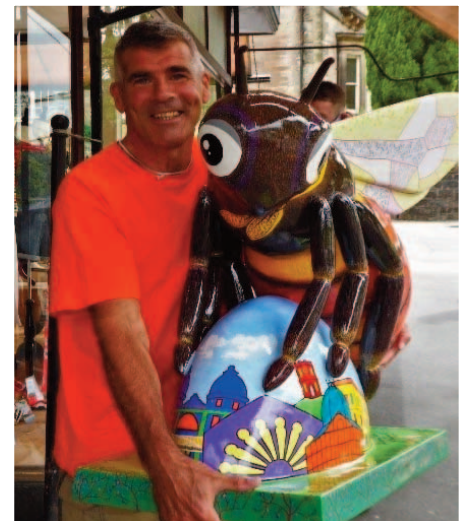


CASE STUDY: Buzzing Stations

Coordinated by the High Peak and Hope Valley Community Rail Partnership, 'Buzzing Stations' aims to ensure that station gardens are bee-friendly habitats. It involves station groups including Buxton, Glossop, and Hadfield working with the Bumblebee Conservation Trust and Northern, with a focus on a rare and endangered bumblebee native to the High Peak, the Bilberry Bumblebee.

At Buxton, the Friends of Buxton Station have built the 'Bumblebee Express,' a planter made from recycled railway sleepers filled with moorland plants designed to nurture and feed the bees year-round. The planter is accompanied by artwork and information explaining the project and the importance of bees.

Station groups have also started to lead bumblebee safaris in their areas, encouraging people to appreciate the wildlife on their doorstep, learn about the habitats that bees and other species need to survive, and get involved in protecting local bee populations.



CASE STUDIES: Petersfield and Swaythling ‘free shops’

A priority for both the East Hampshire and Three Rivers community rail partnerships is working with South Western Railway and Community Rail Network to develop disused rooms and buildings at stations for community use, providing social value and promoting sustainable development.

In what was the old parcels office at Petersfield Station, East Hampshire Community Rail Partnership has created a regular ‘free shop’ that redistributes food that would otherwise have been wasted, including to local charities during the COVID-19 lockdown. The scheme has proved a success and has begun operating on Saturdays too in response to demand. It has evolved to offer second-hand school uniforms, supporting local families.

Three Rivers Community Rail Partnership also established a ‘free shop’ at Swaythling Station, to reduce waste and support those in need. Groceries are provided to people without any means testing, as well as useful items for families such as children’s clothes and books. If any food remains unused, it is passed on to a local Sunday lunch club. The partnership is exploring other potential uses for the space, including a weekly surgery on debt advice.

Both projects, primarily staffed by volunteers, have made a clear difference to families and individuals, and demonstrate how community rail can offer vital support to those in need and bring communities together.

Pic credit - Three Rivers Community Rail Partnership



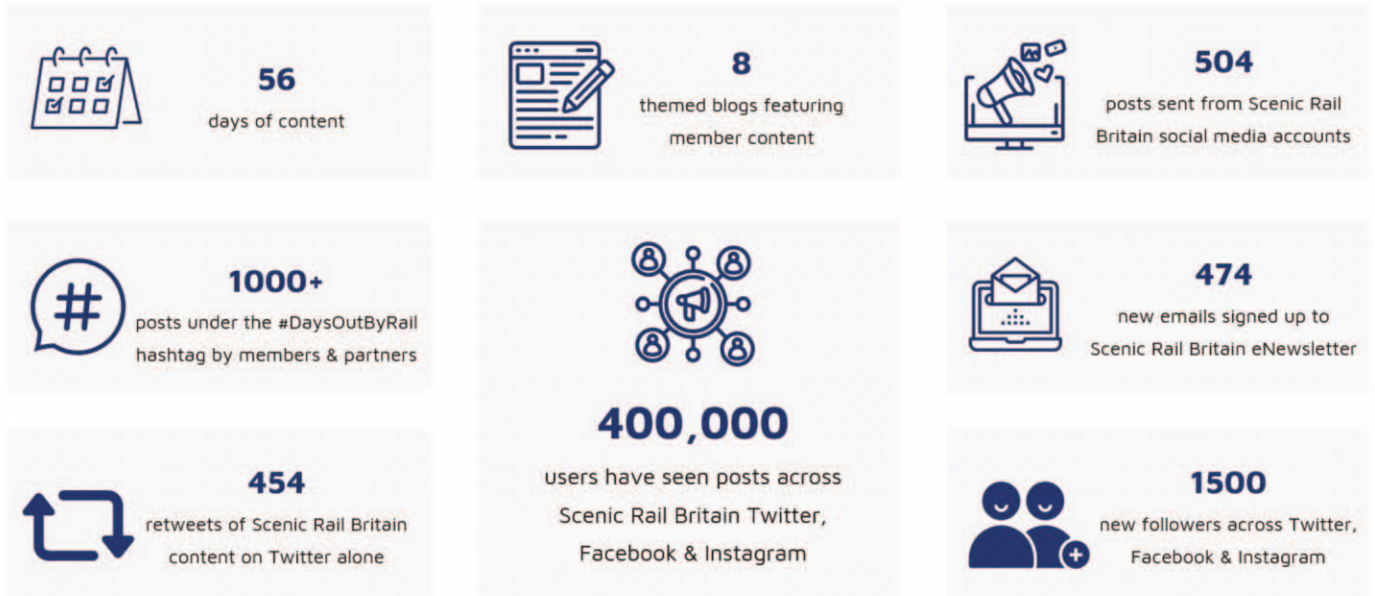
A focus on leisure travel

As the pandemic had prevented us from delivering our annual Community Rail in the City event, involving our members promoting their lines for leisure and tourism, our communications and policy team devised for 2021 a new Days Out by Rail campaign. This focused on promoting fun and sustainable days out on lesser-known community rail lines and hidden gems. The eight-week campaign had different themes each week: off the beaten track, spectacular views, reconnecting with family, doorstep discovery, rediscovering days out with friends, purse-friendly days out, scenic walks and cycle rides, and days out for grown-ups.

The campaign was well-received by members, and more than 30 took the opportunity to promote their lines and inform and inspire people to choose rail travel for leisure trips, supporting the recovery of rail patronage and local economies by showcasing things to do and see by rail.



Campaign in numbers



The campaign was hosted on our ‘**Scenic Rail Britain**’ website, which continued to increase in popularity. The site promotes Britain’s most picturesque and fascinating rail journeys along more than 80 lines. It now also links to ‘**Window Seater**’, a series of immersive audio travel guides, inspiring people to travel by train. In 2021-22, we supported community rail partnerships and volunteers to work with start-up tech company Window Seater to develop the guides as part of an Innovate UK funded project. They bring together local voices, stories and histories related to nine of the South West and South East’s stunning railway lines, inspiring people to try the train for green, enjoyable, and community-minded leisure trips.

RAISING AWARENESS OF COMMUNITY RAIL

Our first Community Rail Week

October 2021 saw us organise and deliver our first-ever ‘Community Rail Week’, sponsored by Rail Delivery Group. The week's focus was encouraging and enabling more sustainable travel, in the run up to COP26 in Glasgow, and highlighting the positive role community rail plays. Community rail partnerships and groups across Britain encouraged people to ‘Go Green by Train’ with activities to promote their local railways and give communities and young people a voice on green transport. Events included sustainable travel workshops, creative competitions, exhibitions, using ‘Go Green by Train’ pledge cards, engagement with schools and youth groups, and ‘try the train’ trips. The then Prime Minister Boris Johnson got involved, posing with a ‘Go Green by Train’ pledge card during a visit to Huddersfield Station shortly afterwards.

We conducted research with more than 1,000 young people looking at their views on transport and the environment, with seven in ten (70%) stating they were keen to see more people using trains, and the vast majority (90%) stating that the climate emergency was an important issue for them.

Towards the end of the year, preparation was already in full swing for our second Community Rail Week, to be held in May 2022. With the tag line of ‘Give the Train a Try,’ we were set to support community rail partnerships and groups in highlighting the benefits of travelling by train for leisure, tourism, or day to day activities, and how rail can enhance the health and wellbeing of communities.

Going forward, Community Rail Week will become a key part of our events calendar, as we continue to raise awareness of community rail outside of the rail sector and showcase the diverse work that our members deliver to new audiences.



Community Rail Week 2021 in numbers





Pic credit - Abbey Line Community Rail Partnership

Supporting member communications

In 2021-22 we worked hard to amplify and elevate members’ experiences, examples, and voices, providing them with the tools to reach wider audiences with their messages and promotions.

Digital toolkits were developed to support members with major events and campaigns, including Community Rail Week, Days Out by Rail, and the Community Rail Awards. The toolkits contained infographics, posters, logos, press release templates, and PR and social media guidance, supporting members to maximise local media coverage and align with the wider messaging. The toolkits have been positively received, with members stating they offered a comprehensive array of materials and tools to help them make national campaigns locally relevant to them.

We continued with our fortnightly ‘Community Rail News’ bulletin, which now has more than 650 subscribers. We also increased our activity on social media, resulting in a 21% increase in users and followers, and we will be further reviewing and refining our social media presence in 2022-23.

A new approach to sharing community rail’s insights

In 2021-22 we undertook a review of our communications, policy, and research functions, aiming for a more structured and strategic programme of proactive and reactive external affairs. With a greater focus on profile-raising and external PR and policy work, our aim was to reach wider audiences across the media, influencers, and government at national, devolved, and regional level, using community rail’s unique insights to support government strategies, develop stories and influence debate.

This has led to increased interest in community rail, and in the early part of 2022-23, our chief executive was due to give evidence to the Lords Built Environment Committee session on Public Transport in Towns and Cities, and a cross-party parliamentary committee on heritage railways. We also had meetings planned with West Yorkshire Mayor Tracy Brabin to discuss the role of community rail in regional transport, and with sub-national transport bodies such as Transport for the North to ensure the work of the movement is recognised and considered. These opportunities will allow us to talk about the importance and benefits of involving communities with transport and its development, including to inclusion, accessibility, and sustainability.



Pic credit - 6VT Youth Community Rail Partnership

LEADING THE WAY ON SUSTAINABLE, INCLUSIVE TRAVEL

Community rail at COP26

Community rail was represented at the COP26 UN climate change conference in Glasgow in November 2021 with an event led by the **Sustainable Transport Alliance**, a group of NGOs which is chaired by our chief executive. The interactive panel session, **'People make transport: communities enabling greener travel'**, explored the importance of involving and empowering communities in creating a cleaner, greener transport future, and included community rail examples.

Supporting members on sustainability

We are committed to sharing ideas and advice on sustainability, empowering members to work with partners locally to achieve change. We further stepped up this support during 2021-22, offering:

- Continued funding support through our Integrated Sustainable Transport Fund, which supported seven community rail projects that aim to improve integrated sustainable transport locally;
- A digital toolkit and other materials to support the 'Go Green by Train' messaging of Community Rail Week;
- Webinars on promoting rail's green credentials and encouraging and enabling modal shift;
- A series of sustainability-themed reports and case studies on modal shift, sustainable development, and biodiversity.

CASE STUDY: Community Rail Network and 6VT Youth Community Rail Partnership HydroFLEX trip

Members of Britain's only youth community rail partnership were given a taste of revolutionary greener travel as they rode a hydrogen-fuelled train to and from Glasgow at COP26.

Young people involved with the 6VT Community Rail Partnership, based in Edinburgh, joined Jools Townsend, chief executive of Community Rail Network, aboard HydroFLEX, created by rail leasing firm Porterbrook and the University of Birmingham. Britain's first mainline-approved hydrogen-train, HydroFLEX was on display during the climate summit as part of the UK government's plans to decarbonise rail travel by 2050.

6VT members enjoyed a demonstration on how the hydrogen technology works and took part in discussions around the importance of sustainable travel to combatting the climate emergency. They also experienced a train-driving simulator at the Rail Delivery Group's We Mean Green stand at Glasgow Central Station.

The previous month, 6VT members had marked Community Rail Week by taking a journey from Edinburgh to Glasgow. During their trip, they pledged to 'Go Green by Train,' writing letters to themselves containing personal changes they could make to become more environmentally friendly.



Working with partners to stimulate change

In Summer 2021, the DfT published its **Transport Decarbonisation Plan**, setting out commitments to decarbonise transport, including accelerating modal shift and making public transport and active travel the natural way to get around. Alongside this, the DfT published its **Rail Environment Policy Statement**, with a range of steps towards an even greener railway, including recognising the role of community rail in modal shift and modal integration. These documents followed Community Rail Network and its members feeding into consultations and providing expert advice, including our chief executive sitting on the DfT’s Net Zero Transport Board, and we continue to advise DfT and other partners on the insights that emerge from community rail on this crucial area of work.

We also worked with rail partners to highlight and promote the work of community rail in developing a greener transport system with rail at its heart. We fed into the development of Rail Delivery Group’s **Sustainable Stations** best practice guide, and are now a member of its Stations Strategy Group. We also fed in to RSSB over the past year on the development of a whole-industry Sustainable Rail Strategy, which will sit under the Whole Industry Strategic Plan, the **prototype** for which incorporates strong recognition of the part community rail plays.

Pic credit - East Suffolk Lines Community Rail Partnership

CASE STUDY: East Suffolk Lines Community Rail Partnership – ‘Katch’

To improve transport integration for people in rural Suffolk, the East Suffolk Lines Community Rail Partnership supported the development of ‘Katch,’ a new on-demand electric taxi-bus service that links communities from Framlingham and Wickham Market with rail services at Wickham Market Station in Campsea Ashe.

The partnership helped to fund the installation of electric vehicle charging points to allow Katch buses to serve the station, enabling multi-modal journeys. The vehicles are electric and use renewable energy sources, helping to cut carbon emissions and align with Suffolk County Council’s target of being carbon neutral by 2030.

Led by the county council, the project involves East Suffolk Council, the community rail partnership, Community Rail Network, Greater Anglia, CarsSmart, and local town and parish councils, all committed to growing the region’s passenger transport for more sustainable journeys. The now popular service, which passengers book in advance via app or phone, launched in May 2021, and the route was extended to include another local attraction, Snape Maltings, in January 2022.



CASE STUDY: Conwy Valley and North West Wales Coast Community Rail Partnership – Walking for Wellbeing

Conwy Valley and North West Wales Coast Community Rail Partnership recognised that the pandemic exacerbated personal challenges felt by many, including those facing social isolation, loneliness, or anxiety. They wanted to help address these issues, so as restrictions eased and more people were allowed to meet outdoors, they partnered with the Carneddau Landscape partnership and Conwy MIND to offer a series of guided recreational wellbeing walks.

More than 80 people took part, including clients of local housing associations, many with learning difficulties, people being supported by

MIND for mental health issues, and individuals involved with the military veterans' charity, Boots on The Ground. All walks started and finished at either a railway station or bus stop, and participants used public transport to attend, many for the first time during COVID-19.

The project successfully raised awareness of the mental health challenges people face, and 90% of walkers said taking part made them feel more connected with people and better able to get things done. They also reported an increase in confidence in using public transport independently.



ADVISING ON RAIL TRANSFORMATION, LEVELLING UP AND LONELINESS

Rail transformation

In May 2021, the DfT published the findings of the Williams Rail Review, resulting in the **Plan for Rail**, and work towards the formation of Great British Railways, a new public body to run and plan the rail network, bringing the system under single, national leadership.

We were delighted to see community rail prominently recognised in the plan, alongside commitments to make the railways more responsive to communities, and to “empower” the community rail movement to “strengthen rail’s social and economic impact.”

Since the plan was published, we have been liaising with the DfT, Great British Railways Transition Team, and other partners helping to shape rail transformation, offering community rail’s insights on a broad range of topics and opportunities for the movement to make an enhanced contribution.

Our work in this area, including our detailed response to the DfT consultation on Great British Railways legislation and the process of rail reform in July 2022, is summarised [here](#).



Pic credit: The Poacher Line Community Rail Partnership and The Friends of Radcliffe Station

Building back better and levelling up

We continue to meet and discuss regularly with DfT, Welsh Government, Transport Scotland, and industry partners Network Rail, RSSB and Rail Delivery Group, the role of community rail in (re)building trust and positivity about rail. As restrictions associated with the pandemic eased, we proactively supported and encouraged members to play the fullest role in their communities’ and railways’ recovery.

When the government’s Levelling Up white paper was published in February 2022, we highlighted the many links with community rail, especially in developing integrated public transport that promotes fair access to opportunity, and creating pride in place – leading to, later in the year, us feeding in directly to the Levelling Up team on realising the white paper’s ambitions.

Tackling loneliness through transport

In the latter part of 2021-22 we worked with a small group of our members and wider partners to submit a bid to the DfT’s **Tackling Loneliness with Transport Fund**. We wanted to explore how community rail activities with young people, building their travel confidence and providing positive experiences, could empower them, broadening horizons, opening up new opportunities, creating social connections and reducing risk of loneliness. We were thrilled to be among 12 organisations successful in achieving a grant, which will see us in 2022-23 coordinate the project with research partner the University of the West of England, with three pilots run in Bristol and Gloucester, Blackburn with Darwen, and Newcastle and County Durham.

The project will involve young people from diverse backgrounds, including those commonly facing mobility barriers, seeking to promote independent mobility and create a sense of connectedness using rail-based excursions, travel skills, creative activities, and youth-led projects.

OUR PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

Throughout 2021-22, we worked closely with our biggest funder, the DfT, coordinating with the stations and community rail team, and its National Community Rail Steering Group of rail partners, to continue to support members in delivering on the **Community Rail Development Strategy**. We stepped up our partnership work with Network Rail too, engaging regularly and closely with their regions' community rail leads, and providing strategic advice via their national sustainability and social performance team. We also further developed our relationships with the Welsh Government and Transport for Wales, as funders of our work in Wales, and with Transport Scotland, and strengthened links with a growing number of sub-national transport bodies.

As a not-for-profit organisation, Community Rail Network is dependent on sponsors and supporters. We are hugely grateful to our growing list of funding partners, including train operators and transport bodies that provide valuable funding for us to provide enhanced support on their parts of the network. We are also grateful to national rail organisations such as Rail Delivery Group, our grant providers in Scotland Paths for All, and our growing range of corporate partners.

Find out more about partnership opportunities via our website or by emailing sarahf@communityrail.org.uk



Pic credit - Severnside Community Rail Partnership

OUR GOVERNMENT AND NOT-FOR-PROFIT FUNDERS:



Rail Delivery Group



OUR CORPORATE PARTNERS:



SIEMENS



Pic credit - Beds & Herts Community Rail Partnership

CASE STUDY: Platform Rail Community Education Scheme

Platform is a rail education scheme that invests in future generations and raises climate awareness, developed collaboratively between Severnside, Gloucestershire, Worcestershire, and Transwilt community rail partnerships.

The partnerships had a shared vision of developing an education offer across their areas that would successfully support schools in their engagement with the rail industry. They had a collective goal of creating a team who could deliver in-school workshops, encourage schools to use the railway, and create bespoke, rail-related resources that linked to the curriculum.

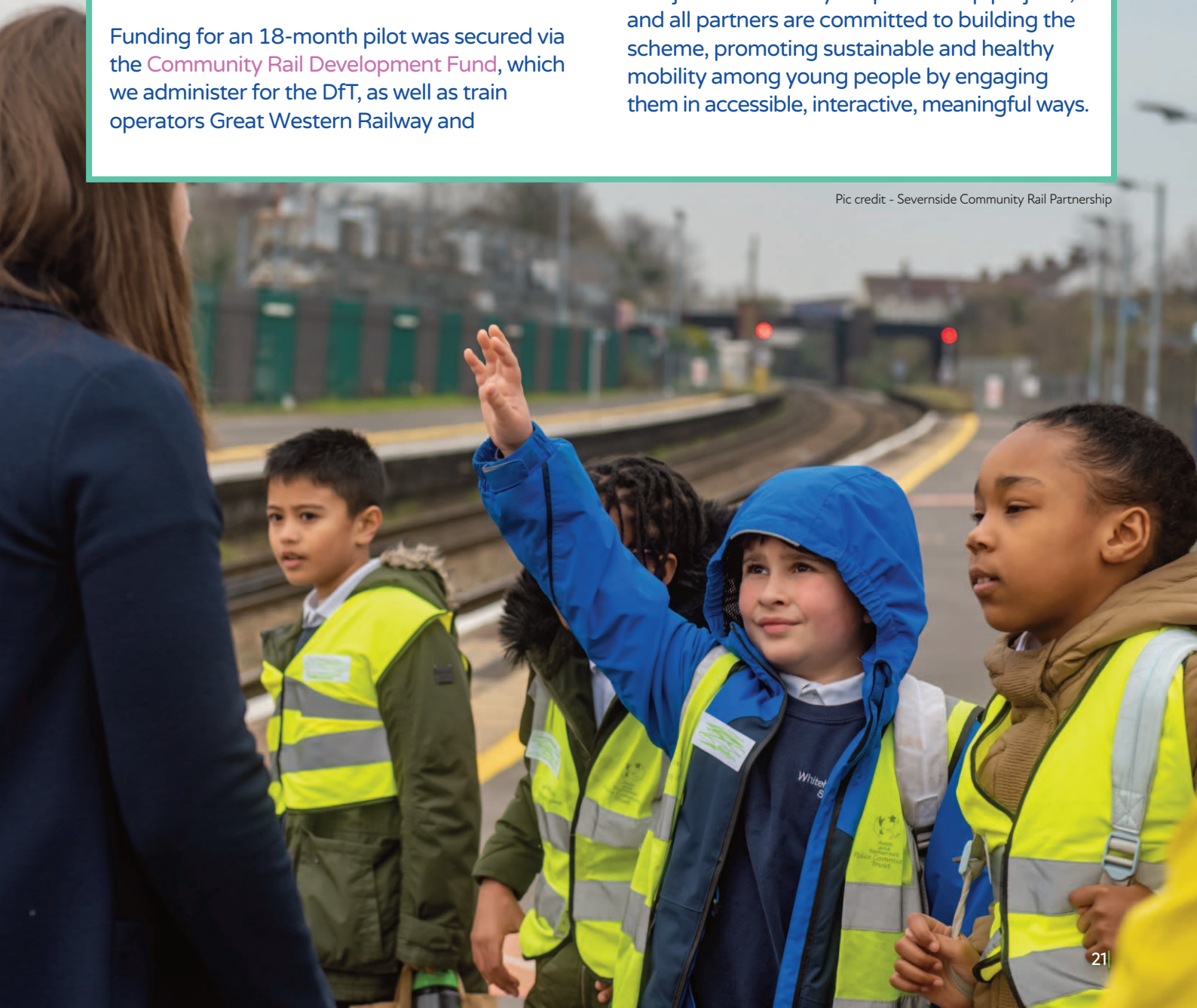
Funding for an 18-month pilot was secured via the [Community Rail Development Fund](#), which we administer for the DfT, as well as train operators Great Western Railway and

CrossCountry. The Platform team contacted more than 200 schools within walking distance of stations, presented at network meetings, and offered CPD sessions for teachers. They liaised with local authorities in all seven of the counties covered by the scheme, and forged partnerships with other education providers.

By summer 2022, the team had delivered workshops and assemblies to 1,848 students, with 129 young people taking part in rail familiarisation visits. The project [website](#) had 1,110 registered users, with 227 lessons downloaded.

The collaborative approach has fostered several new joint community rail partnership projects, and all partners are committed to building the scheme, promoting sustainable and healthy mobility among young people by engaging them in accessible, interactive, meaningful ways.

Pic credit - Severnside Community Rail Partnership



CASE STUDY: St Germans & Area Public Transport Survey

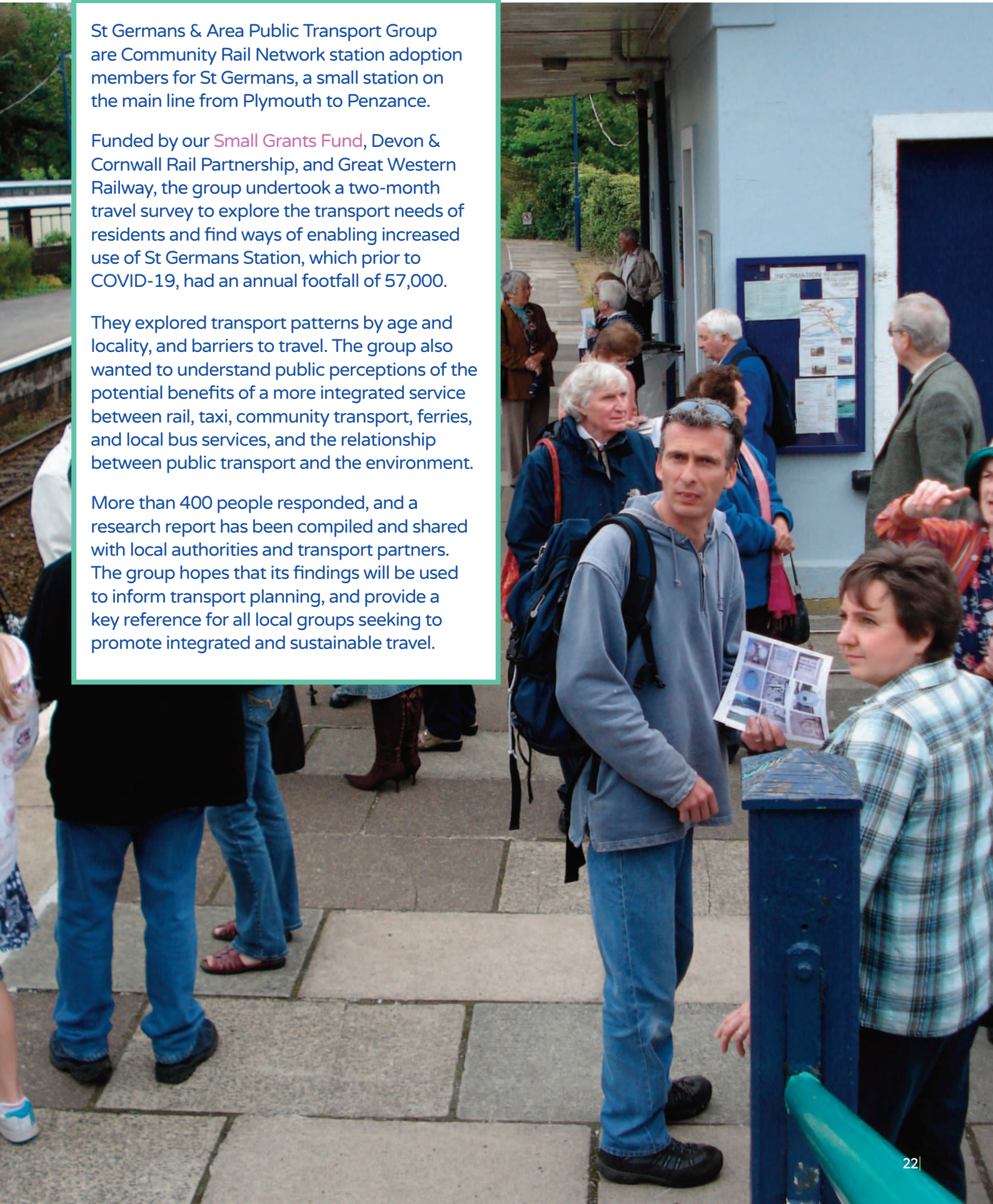
Pic credit - St Germans & Area Public Transport Group

St Germans & Area Public Transport Group are Community Rail Network station adoption members for St Germans, a small station on the main line from Plymouth to Penzance.

Funded by our **Small Grants Fund**, Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership, and Great Western Railway, the group undertook a two-month travel survey to explore the transport needs of residents and find ways of enabling increased use of St Germans Station, which prior to COVID-19, had an annual footfall of 57,000.

They explored transport patterns by age and locality, and barriers to travel. The group also wanted to understand public perceptions of the potential benefits of a more integrated service between rail, taxi, community transport, ferries, and local bus services, and the relationship between public transport and the environment.

More than 400 people responded, and a research report has been compiled and shared with local authorities and transport partners. The group hopes that its findings will be used to inform transport planning, and provide a key reference for all local groups seeking to promote integrated and sustainable travel.



OUR VISION

A flourishing community rail movement connecting people and their railways, contributing to inclusive, empowered, sustainable and healthy communities.

* Community rail is made up of community-based partnerships, groups, enterprises, and volunteers seeking to benefit their community and railway, through connecting people with, and engaging them in, the railway.

Our mission

Community Rail Network's mission is to **empower, support and champion** the community rail movement, helping community rail partnerships and groups to:

Enhance the railways' contribution to social inclusion, sustainable development and health and 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, so this meets community needs and aspirations and delivers maximum social value

Communicate the development and importance of railways to local communities, enhancing understanding and pride, and promoting rail as a key part of sustainable, healthy travel

This Community Rail Network Annual Report 2021-22 is a draft, subject to agreement by our members at our November 2022 AGM.

Find out more about community rail and our work supporting community rail partnerships and groups at communityrail.org.uk, where you can also meet the team.

Find out more about becoming a member or partner at communityrail.org.uk/join-us.



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