



**AC:RP**  
communityrail.org.uk

## Station adoption: a guide for the local community

Produced by the Association  
of Community Rail Partnerships

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# ACoRP

## MEMBERSHIP

**ACoRP is the membership body for community rail partnerships, station friends and other groups undertaking community rail activities. Join and be part of a friendly and supportive organisation.**

Joining as a station group member for just £25 +VAT per year (for station adoption groups) or £80 +VAT per year (for 'community stations' partnerships and social enterprises) is the best way to access ACoRP's support.

### This includes:

- Expert advice and signposting on projects and issues;
- Free places at ACoRP seminars and training;
- Access to (and the invitation to contribute to) our monthly news bulletin and a range of resources, reports, tools and templates;
- Access to relevant grant schemes managed by ACoRP and support accessing other funding opportunities;
- A say in ACoRP's work and development, for example through our annual members' survey.

**For further details, and an application form, visit [communityrail.org.uk/join-us/](http://communityrail.org.uk/join-us/)**

We welcome your thoughts on how to improve this and other ACoRP resources. Please send your feedback to [info@acorp.uk.com](mailto:info@acorp.uk.com).

## Introduction to community rail and station adoption

**Station adoption is when a group of volunteers, or an existing community group or organisation, 'adopts' a station, getting local people involved in the station and railway through volunteering. At least 1,000 of these station adoption or 'station friends' groups have been set up, covering well over a third of Britain's stations.**

Station adoption groups make a valuable contribution, helping communities get the most from their stations, and turning stations and their surroundings into welcoming, thriving and celebratory gateways and hubs. Their activities vary, but they often include:

- community gardening, food growing and biodiversity projects on station land;
- installing heritage boards or community artwork to help people learn about and take pride in their area;
- basic upkeep and litter-picking to create a welcoming, safe environment;
- working with the rail industry towards improvements, such as better shelters, signage or pedestrian and cyclist access, or sometimes spearheading larger-scale developments;
- running events, workshops or other activities to promote sustainable travel, bring people together, and celebrate the local community.

There are many benefits of station adoption to: the health and wellbeing of volunteers; the sustainability, development and cohesion of the wider community; and the success of the railway and how it serves its passengers. At a time when we want to encourage people to use public transport, and empower people to improve their local areas, station adoption is more important than ever – hence it's supported and encouraged by government, the rail industry and others.

Station adoption is part of community rail, a growing grassroots movement that spans Britain. It is made up of community rail partnerships, which work along railway lines or across regions, as well as station adoption groups and other local organisations, that work to connect communities with their railways.

The Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP), the organisation behind this guide, is the umbrella body for community rail partnerships and groups, providing support and advice, and championing their work. See left for information on the benefits of joining.



Station adopters at Cromford



**This handbook is designed to support and guide you as a station adopter – whether you're new to it or have been an adopter for years.**

There is no 'one size fits all' approach, and there are big differences between groups, given the need to respond to local needs and contexts. However, there are elements of good practice that can help your group to succeed in bringing your station into the heart of your community, and delivering benefits to do with social inclusion, sustainable travel, and health and wellbeing. Happy adopting!

## Who can adopt a station?

Any group of local volunteers, or an existing community group, can adopt a station, so long as you have the interest and enthusiasm to promote and enhance the station, and work safely, responsibly and cooperatively with rail industry partners.

**Some groups are created from scratch** specifically to adopt a station, generally using names such as 'Friends of 'X' Station', or 'X Station Adopters/Partnership'. If yours is a new group, you might want to consider calling it 'Friends of 'X' Station', bringing it in line with the wider family of station friends nationwide.

We also suggest forging links with existing local groups, such as In Bloom groups, Women's Institutes, Rotary Clubs, Lions, local schools, and others already involved in community or environmental work in the area, especially those that may have an interest in the railway station!

**Existing community and voluntary groups** can also take on the role of station adopters, and can benefit from the chance to undertake broader activities, for example gardening or artwork, or learning about sustainable and active travel, at a station location. For example, this could be:

- a school or college;
- a charity or support group;
- an environmental, wildlife or gardening group;
- a social enterprise or small business;
- a parish or town council;
- a faith or church group.

To become official station adopters, and join ACoRP, your group will need some form of official structure and constitution, however basic, with a commitment to being open and inclusive. You will also need to seek permission from the relevant train operator and/or Network Rail and comply with their safety rules and instructions. Beyond that, the main commitment is devoting time to deliver community involvement activity at or around the station. The average number of hours worked by volunteers within community rail is just under one hour per week,<sup>1</sup> although some give much more and others less, so people can give as much time as they are able to. The key ingredient for station adoption is a passion to make a positive difference.



## Why adopt a station?

Early examples of station groups tended to evolve from a desire to secure the future of a station and improve its physical condition.<sup>2</sup> However, the motivations of groups are increasingly varied, and the benefits wide-ranging. These include:

- for the community – making communities attractive, vibrant places where people want to live and visit, bringing local people together, promoting sustainable living, health and wellbeing, community pride and cohesion, helping local organisations to flourish, and empowering local people to make a visible, tangible difference to the area and its transport connections;
- for rail passengers – a welcoming and thriving station with aesthetics and facilities that improve their experience of the railway and impression of the area;
- for rail industry partners – improvements in the customer offer and appeal of stations, creating welcoming spaces that encourage rail travel and attract additional footfall, often reducing crime and anti-social behaviour.

Station adoption has been one of the outstanding successes of community rail. More than 1,000 adoption groups have been formed nationwide, equally at home in an inner-city environment or in a rural setting. As well as engaging thousands of people in volunteering, bringing people together and creating pride in their station and community, these groups play an important role in making their stations welcoming, pleasant and attractive places.<sup>4</sup>

Department for Transport, Community Rail Development Strategy



Friends of Wareham Station

Station adoption groups often become immersed within their local area and their railway, and so are well placed to work with the community and rail industry to ensure the railway is serving local people's needs. This might include feeding into consultations on service or timetable changes, or making suggestions about station accessibility or community use of redundant buildings.

The station adoption movement also plays a key role in bringing communities together and supporting social inclusion, in some cases having a life-changing effect. This includes improving confidence and skills among volunteers and providing opportunities for healthy, outdoor activities, helping to address health inequalities and social isolation.<sup>5,6</sup>

Simply having a human presence at stations has shown to be important to passengers, increasing their feelings of safety, comfort and wellbeing. Any station adoption project can help to bring the station into the heart of the community, increasing feelings of pride and ownership, leading to reduced levels of vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

These benefits have been recognised in ACoRP reports, drawing on our experience supporting community rail, as well as rail industry reviews, and in the government's *Community Rail Development Strategy*,<sup>3</sup> which suggests that station adoption groups are well-placed to turn local stations and railway lines into "focal points of the community". This strategy outlines how community rail activity can play an important role in four main ways:

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

### Community benefits:

- Improves community services
- You can gain a sense of local pride
- The station is at the heart of a community, a significant building and a valuable community asset
- Integrates rail services into the community, and community services into the railway

### Social benefits:

- Station-based projects provide a unique opportunity where there is support and resources to grow ideas and enable social change
- You can add value to the station and railways in ways that are beyond the remit of the rail industry
- You can create a community space where people can come together and volunteer
- You can brighten up and showcase a window into your community

## Why should you get involved with adopting your local railway station?

### Rail industry benefits:

- Saves a station from falling into disrepair, makes it loved
- You can be a critical friend to train operators
- You can improve the customer experience and brighten up journeys for passengers
- You can add colour and care to a station, which helps to discourage anti-social behaviour

### Individual benefits:

- You can have fun and be creative
- It contributes to your wellbeing, and that of others
- You can take action and make a difference
- You can meet people and make new friends
- You can demonstrate your community pride and share your passion

## Establishing a station adoption group

### First meeting

To start, you should call a 'kick-off' meeting to generate interest and involvement in your group. This could be done by bringing together people you already know – regular users of the station, people in a particular neighbourhood – and reaching out to existing groups who would welcome the opportunity to play a role in developing the station.

Make sure you publicise the meeting so you're open and inclusive from the outset, and get as many people as possible on board. Inform local media and ask the train operator or local shops for permission to display a notice at the station and around your town/village/neighbourhood. You could also hand out flyers and ask other local groups to put posts on their social media pages. It's a good idea to invite both your local authority and your local train operator to come along at this early stage, so they can advise.

At the meeting, keep it friendly and informal. Ask for ideas and suggestions, but don't force a particular line. Try to reach agreement on the basics, such as:

- the name of the group;
- key opportunities and issues at the station;
- what the group's initial focus and activities might be;
- how you'll keep everyone informed and who will do this – such as a monthly email bulletin or Facebook page, which everyone at the meeting can be asked to sign up to.

If your first meeting attracts a lot of people, it may be harder to make firm decisions. In this case, you could ask for a small group of attendees (five to seven) to volunteer to form a steering group, to work out practicalities at a subsequent meeting.

At the inaugural meeting, ensure you get a list of names of everyone who wants to be involved, plus relevant contact details, e.g. phone number and email, and their consent for you holding their details and keeping them informed. You will need to store these securely and keep them up to date.

Agree a list of actions of who will do what – especially to come up with more detailed proposals for getting started, and progress the practicalities in the next section – and fix a date for the next meeting (ideally within a month).

### Follow-up work and meetings

To follow-up from your initial meeting, you should try to:

- make sure the relevant person at your train operator, e.g. a regional community and sustainability manager or other nominated community rail lead, is aware of the group and happy for you to progress your station adoption application. If the operator has an application form, complete and return this to start the process of getting approved;
- contact ACoRP for advice on local community rail partnerships or other groups or partners who may be able to support you, as well as our own services. **Also see [communityrail.org.uk](http://communityrail.org.uk);**
- obtain forms to set up a bank account;
- start drafting a simple constitution. You will need one to open your bank account. Feel free to adapt the draft guidelines produced by ACoRP at **[communityrail.org.uk/resources-ideas/resources-for-station-groups/](http://communityrail.org.uk/resources-ideas/resources-for-station-groups/)**
- once you have train operator approval, send a short press release to local media saying that the group has been formed, and inviting more people to join;
- arrange a visit to a local 'friends' station – try to liaise with an already well-established group, so they can pass on the key lessons they learnt in getting their group off the ground. ACoRP can provide advice on who to visit in your area.

In preparation for the follow-up meeting, you could try to get an appropriate and inspiring guest speaker, and again publicise the event well. You should also ensure your train operator contact is invited, and work around dates convenient for them to attend.

During the meeting, you should:

- welcome everyone, but especially new faces;
- report on any progress made;
- agree the group constitution;
- elect members to key positions, e.g. chair, secretary, treasurer;
- discuss practicalities: what are you going to do, when, how, and who;
- try to identify a realistic and achievable initial project that can engage your volunteers;
- fix a programme of dates for meetings and other activities;
- ask your train operator about arranging a safety briefing, which must happen before work can start (see later section).

## Bank accounts

It's important to set up a bank account in advance of your group starting to handle money, even small amounts. As your group develops, you may be able to access grants to help with projects, so keeping your finances in order is extremely important.

Setting up a bank account for a community group can be complicated, but several banks offer accounts with minimal or no charges. Voluntary groups can sometimes be grouped together under 'clubs and societies'. If you need guidance on this, contact ACoRP, or ask to see an adviser who knows what they're talking about. Stress that you're a voluntary group with charitable objectives, but not a registered charity.

Not all banks offer the same services and support, so research which provider and type of account(s) will best meet your needs. You should decide what banking facilities will be most important to your group, e.g. how you will pay money in and out, how you will want/need to access your account, and how regularly you will need banking advice. Try to use a bank with a branch in your local area for ease of access if you can.

Information on banks offering community accounts suitable for station adoption groups can be found on the ACoRP website.

Before opening any account, the bank will ask for:

- proof of identity and addresses of officers;
- evidence that the group exists – as a voluntary, non-profit-making organisation and not a private business – and has a constitution;
- an initial deposit.

You will need two signatures to authorise cheques, and the normal arrangement is to have three or four 'named' signatories which the bank or building society recognises.

You will need to present your accounts to an annual general meeting. It's a good idea, if possible, to get a supportive accountant, or someone with the equivalent qualifications or experience, to inspect each year's accounts beforehand. This meeting is also when you re-elect the officers of the group. Try to keep this meeting friendly, but don't forget to complete the basics.

Adopters at Dorridge Station

## Your legal structure

The decision on your legal structure should be influenced by factors including the type of activities you plan to undertake, the way in which these activities will be funded, how you want your group to be managed and governed, who your potential partners or stakeholders may be, and if you are entering into any form of commercial activity, how any profits might be used.

If you are setting up a station adoption group from scratch, you are likely to be classed legally as an unincorporated association, as is the case for the majority of small voluntary and community groups. This means that by law, your group has no official existence, aside from its individual members. Your group needs to set its own rules – the constitution – and will be governed by those. Key advantages of this structure are its informal nature, the ease at which a group can be set up and run, and its flexibility, ideal if your group's activities are relatively small-scale and do not involve entering into any contracts.

Should your group develop its activities to take on larger-scale projects, e.g. the use or renovation of station buildings involving contracts or leases, or employing staff, you may decide to alter your structure to become a public or private limited company.

More established groups that take on station adoption responsibilities to add to their existing activity may already be governed by such structures, for example as a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee or a community interest company.

For more information, visit

**[www.resourcecentre.org.uk/information/legal-structures-for-community-and-voluntary-groups/](http://www.resourcecentre.org.uk/information/legal-structures-for-community-and-voluntary-groups/)**

**The needs of each group will be different, so if you plan to develop beyond an unincorporated association, you should seek legal advice from a suitable expert on the best way forward.**



## Planning your activities

So, what can you do as a station adopter? In reality, the answer is as much or as little as you like, as long as you work in an inclusive, safe, responsible way, in partnership with the rail industry.

Our first piece of advice would be to join ACoRP! Community rail is a big and friendly movement and you can access many benefits, ideas and inspiration from joining in with the wider network, which will help you to plan and ensure your success. Joining ACoRP means you get:

- access to a national network of station friends and community rail groups;
- regular information, case studies and news;
- copies of specialist resources and guidance;
- invitations to seminars and workshops;
- access to a range of funding sources.

**What resources do you need?** When you are starting out, be positive but realistic in terms of your aims and aspirations. You shouldn't need lots of money to get going, but you will need: people, enthusiasm, creativity, positivity and good will.

You might find that some start-up funding is needed, to pay for things like hanging baskets, planters, signage, and artwork, but you'll find you can get a lot of help in-kind. Sometimes, local businesses such as garden centres will donate plants and equipment, and they may even contribute volunteers as part of a volunteering day, or provide in-kind support such as setting up a website. Don't be frightened to ask. It is good to have a 'sponsors panel' as part of any community information board at the station, and be sure to ask group members if they have any business or community contacts you could bring on board.

## Developing an activity plan

This may sound a bit daunting for some people, particularly for volunteers with limited time and resources. But, don't worry, essentially it is just about being organised, clear about your aims, and applying common sense to what you want to get done. Having a plan should help you to achieve more, however basic and informal the document.

It's a good idea to start with a group discussion about your main motivations, and the end goals you are trying to achieve. For example, are you mainly interested in brightening up the station for the enjoyment of passengers and local people? Or is your main driver to help local people to enjoy some healthy, outdoor exercise using the station as a base? There are likely to be a few key end goals that your group has in mind. Consider your local needs and contexts: if your group is to develop and prosper, it's important to offer something that helps to meet local needs and offers value, benefit and interest to local people.

Once you've set out the outcomes you're trying to achieve in the long-term, think about what you might do over the coming year towards these. Think realistically about what's achievable, and set yourselves some clear objectives, such as having a fortnightly gardening session, planting up a particular area for spring, and then again for autumn, securing some equipment, and/or getting more volunteers involved. Consider assigning particular jobs and responsibilities to different members of the group, according to their skills and interests.

Remember that getting things done with the rail industry can be complicated and take time, so consult your train operator on your plans at the earliest opportunity and be sensible with your timescales. As part of their



An event at Penmere Station



guidance for station adopters, some train operators provide a basic template for groups to complete in relation to their initial projects, outlining elements including areas of the station they wish to focus on, material, equipment and access requirements, and assistance with safety and risk assessments.

When composing your own simple plan, which can be brief to begin with, you might want to include elements such as:

- your vision – why does your group exist? What value will you provide?
- your proposed structure and governance
- your main aims and objectives – how do you plan to achieve these?
- background information, consultation or research – what have you learnt from your local community (e.g. at your first meetings, or from observation or local statistics)? What do people want and expect from your group?
- your activities – what do you plan to do, and who will do it?
- operational requirements – how will your group work in terms of volunteers, equipment, premises? What expertise and physical resources do you have?
- funding requirements – what are your set-up costs or initial funding needs?
- key tasks and timescales – how will you bring your plan to life?

Once you get started, you will naturally want to expand your activities. Your activity plan should be a flexible tool, capable of being revised on a regular basis, say every six months. By reviewing the plan regularly, you can monitor progress against any objectives and consider how best to overcome any challenges, and assess the impact you are having.

Such a plan is essential for attracting funding and should demonstrate that your activities are well thought-through, realistic and sustainable.

## Funding and finances

It may be that your group is not planning any significant expenditure. However, if you are, then it is important that you clearly set out a budget. This is a financial plan of how you are going to spend any money, allowing you to make sure that your income covers your expenditure, and plan how you will fundraise enough to cover your costs.



Artwork at Elstree & Borehamwood

Many station adopters have cited the need for initial start-up or 'seed corn' funding to enable them to get started with their work. For this, you could explore the following options:

- speak to your train operator: some have community rail funding pots available that you can apply to, to help you get started;
- speak to ACoRP to see whether your group could apply for small grants funding;
- contact your local authority. Pots of money may still be available for voluntary and community initiatives, or schemes that deliver transport or regeneration benefits;
- contact your town or parish council: they may still have a small grants budget to support local causes;
- contact local employers who may have corporate sponsorship schemes for community-based projects;
- if you have one, get in touch with your local Business Improvement District (BID), who are keen to support station adopters to develop local stations as attractive gateways to communities;
- check out local charitable foundations and trusts, and major supporters of voluntary groups such as The Big Lottery.

ACoRP offers guidance on the types of funding available for community rail projects, including a regularly updated list of potential grant aid. See [communityrail.org.uk/resources-ideas/funding-advice](https://communityrail.org.uk/resources-ideas/funding-advice).

## Communications, marketing and consultation

Promoting your group effectively will increase awareness of your aims and activities, and get more people involved, increasing volunteering, membership and support. Involving wider audiences, and giving people the means to interact and talk back to you, helps you understand your local community and the people who will be affected by your work.

It's a good idea to build communications and marketing into your plans, and make sure you have members of the group who can take responsibility for this.

There are various methods you can use to raise awareness of your group and its activities, including:

- running stands and chatting to people at community events;
- using social media, to tell people what you're doing, and to converse, engage and listen;
- displaying posters on local noticeboards or placing flyers at the station or other local outlets (with permission), ensuring contact details and website/social media details are included;
- writing online articles and blogs, and reaching out to local media;
- developing a simple website, ensuring your social media platforms link to it. Make sure you have a way to keep the content up to date.

Make sure that you use communications to tell people not only what you've been doing and your successes, but also to look ahead and encourage more people to get involved. You'll therefore need to think ahead, about what you'll need to promote when, to give people sufficient advance notice.

You can also use communications, and/or undertake research and consultation, to inform your activities. For example, you might use Facebook or Twitter to ask people what they think about your aims and plans, conduct surveys with passengers at the station about what improvements they would like to see, or send questionnaires to local schools and community groups.

You could even co-create your annual plan or long-term aims with the community, at a public meeting.



*The Friends of Handforth Station*

Immerse yourself in your local community and business environment to use the support available. Use ACoRP and your local community rail partnership, if one exists, as 'a bridge' into the rail industry, with the knowledge and contacts that brings. Talk to people, use local authority links, use local chambers of trade, use existing community networks such as your local CVS. In short, try and embed yourself into your community as best you can.

Don't be afraid to ask for help. There may be lots of opportunities for working with local businesses or local government, e.g. parish or town councils. Some may like to sponsor a flowerbed or some artwork. Local post offices, newsagents and other retailers might be keen to help you promote the station and local railway, as well as agreeing to stock and distribute any newsletters you produce. Also consider your local schools, colleges and universities. Could you engage students in any of your projects?

If you mention ACoRP or use its logo in any publicity material or a press release, please ensure we see a copy beforehand. **For ACoRP's guidance linked to media, communications, and marketing, visit [communityrail.org.uk/resources-ideas/reports-resources-tools/](https://communityrail.org.uk/resources-ideas/reports-resources-tools/)**



## Essentials: being legal, safe and responsible

### Getting rail industry approval

Train operators recognise the benefits of station adoption, as it helps each station to reflect the needs and aspirations of the communities it serves. Adopters are ideally placed to identify opportunities to develop station environments and help make changes happen, benefitting the railway, passengers, and the wider community. Try to build a relationship with staff at your station, resulting in a positive environment for you all to work in.

Different train operators will work with station adopters in slightly different ways. They will be able to advise on their approach and the support they can offer, as well as providing views on your ideas and plans. It's critical to work collaboratively and cooperatively with the train operator from the outset, or Network Rail if the property in question is outside the train operator's lease, involving them in your planning and group's development. After all, you will be relying on their support and permission to work on the station, and on their advice of what is realistic and achievable.

But how do you get started? Every train operator will have their own procedures, but there are some essential steps you will need to take prior to beginning any activity.

### Getting approval to become official station adopters – the typical process:

Contact the train operator's community rail team to inform them of your group's interest in adopting your local station. Check that the station is suitable for such activity and not already adopted by another group.

Arrange a meeting to discuss and set out your group's main aims, structure and activities. Draft some initial outline plans, ready to discuss with the train operator.

Meet the train operator's community representative to discuss the plan, and whether the activities are appropriate and achievable for the station. This may involve other key rail industry partners if relevant and appropriate, e.g. local community rail partnership, local authority, Network Rail.

Submit a formal proposal for work you would like to do at the station. Some train operators will have a specific application form and require accompanying documents, e.g. a constitution, bank details.

At this stage, you might also discuss with the train operator any resourcing needs and funding opportunities, and answer any queries about your proposal. There may be a need to further discuss and amend your plans as they are considered.

Once your proposal is agreed, you will need to meet with key train operator staff, such as the station manager, to go through safety-related matters, undertake a risk assessment, and organise and undergo a safety briefing. Every volunteer must attend a briefing, delivered by an authorised train operator representative, before taking part in any work.

Your group will need to sign formal paperwork, such as a station adoption form or partnership agreement, confirming that you agree to abide by the necessary health and safety requirements, code of conduct and any other terms and conditions.

The group officially starts work, in line with agreements and plans made. This could be accompanied by a press release and other local communications, which you and the train operator should jointly agree and promote.

## Network Rail's Community Licence scheme

If your station adoption project covers land that is not in the train operator's lease, then you may be able to do something with it via Network Rail's Community Licence scheme.

Some of the sort of spaces covered by community licences include disused platforms, land under viaducts or over tunnels, and disused branch lines. Groups have created gardens, wildlife areas, wildflower meadows, murals and artwork, as well as clearing litter and generally tidying up.

To keep you, members of the public, and the operational railway safe, Network Rail will assess each proposal in line with their required minimum safety standards. They will ask your group for safety documentation because they need to check that how you plan to keep safe meets these standards, and that you understand the dangers and risks of the environment you'll be working in.

Your group needs to be really clear about what you are hoping to achieve so that from the outset, Network Rail can get all the relevant people to look over your application. Even for a relatively simple sounding project, they will probably need to get permission from their engineers, maintenance team, and property teams as a minimum. They'll need to do a number of checks including safety of the area, making sure your suggestion won't interfere with railway operations, and that the land isn't planned to be used in the future for railway improvements. This is why you should engage with them as early as possible, as it can take time to get these checks done.

If you have an idea for a scheme please contact [communityrail@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:communityrail@networkrail.co.uk) or call **0345 711 4141**.

For Network Rail's community rail guidance, go to [cdn.networkrail.co.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2020/01/Community-Rail-Guidance.pdf](https://cdn.networkrail.co.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2020/01/Community-Rail-Guidance.pdf)

### Dronfield wildflower meadow

The Friends of Dronfield Station took on a triangle of Network Rail land on the approach to the station, transforming it from overgrown wasteland to wildflower meadow in little more than a year. Their work resulted in awards from both ACoRP and the local media.

CASE STUDY

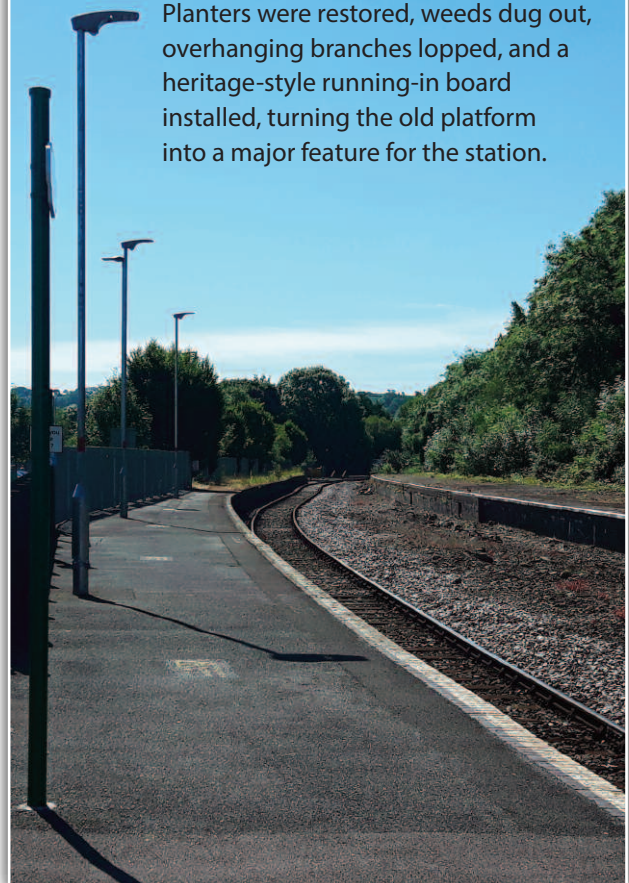


### Barnstaple disused platform

Barnstaple Station's huge island platform, overgrown after decades of closure, was the focus of one of the earliest Network Rail schemes, taken on by the Tarka Line Association.

Planters were restored, weeds dug out, overhanging branches lopped, and a heritage-style running-in board installed, turning the old platform into a major feature for the station.

CASE STUDY



## Health and safety

Health and safety is paramount in a station environment. It will be the number one priority for your train operator, who will expect all station adopters to conduct themselves in a safe and responsible manner. Your own safety, and that of people around you, must be your first concern at all times.

### **You will not be able to start work at a station until every volunteer has attended a safety briefing.**

This is also the case every time a new volunteer joins the group and wants to work in the station environment. Train operators will aim to respond to requests for safety briefings for new volunteers as soon as possible so as not to put people off joining your group.

The briefing must be delivered by an authorised train operator representative, e.g. station manager, who will tell you exactly what you can and can't do on the station. Failure to follow this guidance may result in volunteers not being covered by the train operator's insurance policies. A good rule of thumb is to only go where passengers are normally allowed to go – but you will get detailed, site-specific advice. If you are working on Network Rail land, you will get a safety briefing from one of their team.

Train operators and Network Rail reserve the right to remove anyone from the station adoption group, or suspend your station adoption, if they feel their safety brief, regulations or code of conduct are not being followed.

ACoRP also requires all of its members to act safely, responsibly and cooperatively, including abiding by its station adopters' code of conduct, see above right.

All train operators have a zero tolerance policy towards the use of drugs and alcohol, and do not permit any station adoption volunteer to go on the track or lineside under **ANY** circumstances. Remember that the behaviour of your group affects not only its own standing within the local community, but also the reputation of every station adoption group within the rail industry.

As stated previously, your train operator will provide you with their own set of specific safety guidelines, covering key rules and regulations, risk assessments, accident reporting procedures and details of the safety briefing.

For further information on health and safety, visit [communityrail.org.uk/resources-ideas/resources-for-station-groups/](http://communityrail.org.uk/resources-ideas/resources-for-station-groups/)

### **ACoRP's station adoption code of conduct:**

- Appropriate permission must be obtained from the train operator (and/or Network Rail where relevant) before undertaking any work at a station, and you must only work in areas where you have been given permission to do so;
- Comply with all terms and conditions for station groups specified by your train operator (and/or Network Rail where relevant), including:
  - signing in and out at the station, logging every visit;
  - wearing specified high-vis gear and using suitable tools and equipment;
  - never interfering with railway equipment;
  - reporting any incidents using the specified procedures;
  - ensuring no volunteers/group members ever work under the influence of drugs or alcohol;
  - ensuring no volunteers/group members go on the track or lineside under any circumstances.
- Never put yourself or anyone else in a situation that poses personal risk;
- Ensure that no member of the group acts in a manner that may bring your group or the community rail movement into disrepute;
- Any issues regarding the train operator or Network Rail must be raised directly and handled internally within the rail industry;
- Ensure your group is open to everyone regardless of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, or religious belief, and operates in line with the Equal Opportunities Act;
- All group members and volunteers should adhere to the inclusive, positive behaviours set out in the Women in Community Rail code of conduct;
- Use and draw on the guidelines in ACoRP's station adoption guide.

You must immediately report to your station supervisor or the British Transport Police (BTP) any signs of trespass, vandalism or suspicious behaviour from members of the public at the station. Your quick thinking may prevent criminal activity, anti-social behaviour and may even prevent a person endangering their own life.

If you find yourself in an emergency situation, you should call 999 immediately. You can also text BTP on 61016 to report a crime or incident.

We also encourage station adopters to bear in mind that 'small talk saves lives': for every life lost on the railways, six more lives are saved by people around them. You should be willing to step in and say something if you see someone who could be in trouble or having suicidal thoughts. See [www.samaritans.org/support-us/campaign/small-talk-saves-lives](http://www.samaritans.org/support-us/campaign/small-talk-saves-lives).

## Ensuring positive, inclusive conduct

As well as making sure that all members of your group are behaving in a responsible manner and putting safety first, it's important to ensure that positive, inclusive behaviours are the norm for everyone involved.

As a community group that is seeking to benefit local people, it's important that anyone can get involved and feel welcome. ACoRP therefore encourages all station adopters, and asks all its members, to sign up to, embed and promote the Women in Community Rail code of conduct, below.

### I/we will at all times:

- promote positive relationships to deliver positive outcomes and discussions;
- champion diversity and inclusion, aiming to ensure that community rail is welcoming, engaging and respectful for everyone;
- value others by listening and not making assumptions;
- challenge bullying, harassment, intimidation and report all negative behaviour;
- never act in a manner that could bring community rail into disrepute.

**ACoRP members can access further advice and training on embedding inclusive behaviours. Visit [communityrail.org.uk/resources-ideas/reports-resources-tools/](https://communityrail.org.uk/resources-ideas/reports-resources-tools/) and [communityrail.org.uk/events-training/](https://communityrail.org.uk/events-training/)**



An event at Rose Grove Station

## Insurance

There are various types of insurance relevant to working in community rail, and you **must** ensure that all activity undertaken by your group is covered. Key policies to consider for the minimum and most basic level of cover will include public liability and employers' liability insurance.

Groups working on projects within the station lease area should be covered by their train operator's public liability insurance policy. Where work extends into an area covered by another leaseholder, such as disused platforms or railway buildings under the control of Network Rail, or station approaches that have been adopted by a local authority highways department, this will not be the case, but the same guidelines may apply regarding their own public liability cover. In either case, however, you should **always** check that you are covered before starting any activity.

Train operators will offer advice on insurance in the station adoption information they provide to community rail groups. To be covered under their public liability insurance, your group will need to comply with all the necessary terms and conditions. In many cases, this will include committing to a signed agreement and work plan and abiding by a code of conduct and all health and safety requirements. Even if some of your activities may be covered by partners' insurance, it is your responsibility to make sure that you are suitably covered for all your activities. **Never** assume you are covered by others' insurance without proof of such cover. If in doubt, check.

Before taking out any insurance policy for community rail activity, always speak to an independent broker or qualified professional to seek appropriate advice. For more information, see ACoRP's guide to insurance at [communityrail.org.uk/resources-ideas/reports-resources-tools/](https://communityrail.org.uk/resources-ideas/reports-resources-tools/)

## Developing your activities

The last few years have seen a growing confidence on the part of community groups wanting to go beyond a traditional station adoption model of simply reporting problems and carrying out modest upkeep and improvements. That is not to say that this traditional work is no longer a key part of station adoption activity, but the range of activities and aims has broadened.

### Gardening and horticulture

Gardening activities at stations are more than just flower beds and planters: they are about people coming together, learning new skills, exercising outdoors, and creating an environment that people can enjoy. This helps to create feelings of pride, belonging, and a sense of place, and benefits health, wellbeing and community cohesion. Often, areas that have become neglected or disused can be brought back to life, creating real impact and a sense of achievement.

Some station adoption groups might just tend to window boxes, hanging baskets, or small planters, whereas others may be able to access larger areas, for larger floral displays or food growing and biodiversity projects. Speak to your train operator about what you want to do and see how they can help.

Check with them where you can plant and where you can dig. Any gardening project is likely to improve the physical appearance of a station, so they should be keen to help wherever they can.

An increasing number of stations are being used for growing vegetables, fruits, and herbs, promoting access to nutritious and locally grown food. The nationwide 'Incredible Edible' movement started in Todmorden in West Yorkshire, and from the early days, the town's station had herb beds on the platforms, where passengers were encouraged to pick samples. This movement has spread to other stations, with produce being offered on a pick-your-own or pay-as-you-feel basis, or given away or sold at low cost through local events, schools or cafes.

See [www.incredibleedible.org.uk](http://www.incredibleedible.org.uk) for ideas.

Some station adopters have sought to provide a home for wildlife and support biodiversity, often involving local schools, colleges, or cubs/guides. Activities have included the construction of 'bug hotels', 'bee cafes' and bird boxes, providing a sustainable habitat.

The Bee Friendly Trust offer useful advice: see [www.beefriendlytrust.org](http://www.beefriendlytrust.org), as do Grow Wild:

[www.growwilduk.com](http://www.growwilduk.com). This has again improved the station environment while helping children and local people use the station as a site for outdoor learning. It has also encouraged people to discuss the importance of appreciating and protecting the natural world, which can be linked to the idea of rail being a means of more sustainable travel.



Adopters from Hall Green  
and Yardley Wood Stations

## Bringing buildings back to life

In recent years, a growing number of community rail groups – including station adopters – have played a vital role in bringing unused and derelict railway buildings back to life, making stations more hospitable and delivering a wealth of benefits to local communities. **For examples, see ACoRP’s ‘Community Stations’ report at [communityrail.org.uk/resources-ideas/reports-resources-tools/](http://communityrail.org.uk/resources-ideas/reports-resources-tools/)**

Buildings have been renovated for a variety of uses, including as:

- meeting, office and activity spaces for local community and support groups;
- wildlife discovery and local history centres;
- bookshops and local crafts shops;
- cafes;
- tourist information;
- pop-up shops and market space;
- art galleries;
- youth centres.

In all of the examples cited above, these projects have turned buildings and spaces going to waste and draining railway resources into community hubs and assets.

The Department for Transport encourages train operating companies to identify potential sites suitable for regeneration and to support community rail groups to find alternative uses for these. Where such spaces are not earmarked for commercial development, train operators and Network Rail are urged to take a pragmatic approach to offering leases, such as ‘peppercorn’ rents or a simple and long-standing lease.

It is therefore worth considering if your adopted station has any disused, or under-utilised buildings or spaces. Even if the space is small, could you potentially use it for meetings, storage or shelter? If so, ACoRP can offer specialist advice on potential opportunities, and bringing projects through to fruition. It is also important to explore ideas with your train operator, and Network Rail if appropriate, and keep talking to them throughout the process. If they have been meaningfully involved in the project since its inception, this also gives you a greater chance to maximise resources, knowledge and expertise.

All stations have a history, even if the original buildings no longer exist. Your group could research the history of the site and use the information to create imaginative displays that link your station to the local community.



Settle Station

Community rail partnerships and station adoption groups have the ability to initiate schemes to put railway land and buildings to better use, both for their own benefit and that of the wider community.

Community Rail Development Strategy, Department for Transport

## Developing small business or social enterprise projects

Railway stations can be ideal places for small business or social enterprise projects to thrive. They offer guaranteed footfall, transport links, an accessible location and a neutral public space.

As a station adoption group, you may be ideally placed to implement, or help to coordinate, small-scale business or social enterprise projects due to your knowledge of the local area and contacts within it. You will have indications as to community needs, market demand for the provision of potential goods, services or facilities, and knowledge of whether any project could prove to be sustainable and possible to translate into a workable business model.

A successful initiative that enhances the customer offer at a station has obvious benefits to the rail industry, so partners including your train operator should be supportive if you can evidence the sustainability of your idea and build a case for its success. Be prepared with as comprehensive a business plan as possible, and again, bring key rail partners on board as soon as you can.



## Community art displays

Stations provide a fantastic focal point for community art, and several across the network have been enlivened by such work. They provide public and affordable space at the centre of communities, and can showcase arts and culture to people who might not normally think of visiting galleries or museums. As well as opening up art to a wider audience, bold and colourful pieces can make stations brighter and more attractive spaces for passengers.

There are many opportunities to create locally-themed art which celebrates the local community, such as 'local heroes' or notable landscape features. It can also reflect the heritage and history of the railway and the wider community, and tap into shared identities.

If you have aspirations to develop community artwork, consider how you will consult your community, and involve them in the process – or, better still, make sure the community is in the driving seat. What do local people think would provide a suitable welcome to the area?

There are various examples of community rail groups involving local people, or specific groups such as children and young people, in creating murals, sculptures, posters, and exhibitions to adorn stations across Britain. The presence of such artwork helps to create a feeling of ownership in station environments, helping to reduce graffiti, littering and anti-social behaviour. Stations feel cleaner and better cared for, making passengers feel safer and more comfortable.

Do remember that any artwork on a station will need rail industry approval. For example, you will need to obtain permission if you want to fix any work to a building or fence. So, as with all your projects, if you have a space you feel would be transformed by artwork, speak to your train operator about your ideas and get their support. In addition to rail industry approval, if the building is a listed structure then listed building consent will also need to be obtained before any work can be done.



The Strawberry Line Cafe at Yatton Station

One success story of community rail, often led by station adoption groups, has been the revival of station cafes, and there are many examples of such facilities being a great success for the community, bringing the station back to life, and attracting more people. Many are run as social enterprises, with profits reinvested to secure the future of the businesses. Some also support those marginalised or at risk of exclusion from local labour markets, providing vital work and training opportunities for groups such as young people or adults with learning disabilities.

Many stations have also been successfully developed into 'community hubs', providing a range of services and benefits to local people. While the profits generated by community use may not be huge, the value that such facilities offer mean that they become deep-rooted in the communities they serve. Examples include the provision of public meeting space, offices, art studios, museums, bookshops/libraries, heritage centres, shops, and micro-pubs.

**Practical advice on developing social enterprise opportunities within community rail is available in ACoRP's 'Socially Enterprising Railway' toolkit, which can be accessed at [communityrail.org.uk/resources-ideas/reports-resources-tools/](http://communityrail.org.uk/resources-ideas/reports-resources-tools/)**



The mural at Montpellier Station.  
Photo credit: SWNS

## Engaging schools and young people

Many station adoption groups have forged successful links with local schools, colleges and youth groups, promoting the opportunities offered by community rail and rail travel generally. Activities have included:

- engaging young people in volunteering – volunteering can be promoted and managed in ways that make it more appealing to young people. This might include: promoting a range of opportunities that suit different interests, skills and availability; encouraging people of all ages to get involved; making clear the benefits of volunteering, in terms of skills, employability, enjoyment and social interaction; recognising and celebrating volunteer achievements; and partnering with youth engagement or volunteering organisations;
- railway confidence programmes – station adopters have, in partnership with others, worked with schools and youth groups to promote safe, sustainable and independent travel. This has included helping to teach the practicalities of rail travel, such as planning journeys, using timetables, interchange, and travelling in a confident manner. As well as linking to areas of the curriculum, this work can increase access to greater employment, education, training and recreation opportunities via more sustainable, safe and healthy means than car use;
- rail safety schemes – station adopters have helped to deliver safety-based projects by facilitating station visits, talks, and workshops focusing on safe and responsible travel;

Children tending to station planters



- ‘try the train’ events – working in partnership with their train operator, some adopters have held trips and events, especially involving children and young people who have been disenfranchised from rail travel. Aside from the natural excitement of a positive first experience, evidence suggests a tendency for children to transfer the new-found interest and enthusiasm onto whole families, encouraging a modal shift from driving to rail use.

**ACoRP is increasingly able to offer support, examples and training to its members on engaging with children and young people – including directing to partner organisation like Prince’s Trust who you may be able to work with locally. Ask your operations team contact: see [communityrail.org.uk/about-us/meet-the-team/](http://communityrail.org.uk/about-us/meet-the-team/)**

**A Disclosure and Barring Service check may be required if you are working with young and/or vulnerable people. (These used to be called Criminals Record Bureau – CRB – checks.) For more details, visit [www.gov.uk/request-copy-criminal-record](http://www.gov.uk/request-copy-criminal-record).**



Barnstaple Station



## Promoting sustainable and healthy travel

Many station adopters are involved in schemes to encourage sustainable and healthy travel, including use of the local railway, and walking, cycling, and buses to and from the station and for other short journeys. This could involve: working with children and young people to improve confidence and familiarity with train travel; line guides promoting attractions you can access via the railway, walking and cycling routes around stations; improved signage; guided walks; cycle hire and storage; and partnership working with community transport and local bus operators.

You could consider how you might engage with teenagers and young people, so you are reaching them at a key time in their lives, as they are starting to travel independently. In some projects, adopters have helped to facilitate active, multi-modal travel among young people, helping them to combine rail with walking or cycling and create personal travel plans, or spearheading work to improve local routes and facilities. This type of activity not only promotes healthy lifestyles now, but has the potential to influence future travel habits and a longer-term behaviour change towards less polluting, healthier modes of travel.

If your group is seeking to promote healthy and sustainable travel in your area, including to and from your station, think about key groups you want to engage, and partners who you could potentially involve. What are the barriers to this type of travel at the moment, and who could you involve in overcoming these?

Consult your train operator and local authority, as sustainable and active travel is likely to also be high on their agenda and they may already be undertaking work that you can tie in with. Your train operator will be able to advise on whether your station has a 'station travel plan' setting out how sustainable and healthy travel to the station will be encouraged, and whether your group could support its development and implementation.

## Community events

You may also wish to consider using your station as a base for events to bring people together, to increase involvement in and support for your work and to get your message out there.

If you are thinking big, you could plan some sort of festival or gala to showcase the best that your community, line and station has to offer. Such events can attract people to the area, boost the local economy, and encourage green travel. The day could be a celebration of the station or local area's heritage and importance, with musical, poetic or cultural performances, art exhibitions and displays, talks and guided tours, and stalls. The event may even have the potential to attract modest revenue via raffles and advertising.

You could also use the station as a base for seasonal events throughout the year, or to mark your group's anniversary or completing a project. These might include:

- family fun days;
- music gigs, potentially in combination with a 'music train';
- farmers' markets, featuring local produce and tasting;
- guided walks;
- afternoon teas;
- garden parties or teddy bears' picnics;
- halloween events;
- festive activities, such as 'Santa special trains' and carol singing;
- art/poetry exhibitions;
- rail ale trails.

If you do run an event, use your contacts to publicise the occasion as widely as possible. You may get some dignitaries there who can help to boost your profile, alongside any media coverage. As ever, consult and work with your train operator, who will be keen to be part of a positive story and highlight how you have worked together. Also talk to them about insurance, to ensure that station events are included in their public liability cover. If not, you may need to arrange your own short-term cover, which can be done for as little as 24 hours.

## Keeping the group going

### Top tips from other station adopters

#### Behaviours

- Be patient and be prepared to be flexible when it comes to timescales
- Be resilient and persevere – don't be disheartened by setbacks
- Enjoy yourself, have fun, and keep an open mind
- Be open to newcomers – everyone will have something that they can offer your group
- Ensure a supportive process for new volunteers, e.g. who to contact for information and an induction

#### Actions

- Appoint a group chair and be clear on everyone's responsibilities. Share the load
- Start small, look for quick wins and set realistic goals
- Publicise what you are doing and how people can help you. Put up a sign at the station with your contact details, you can get more sponsors and volunteers that way
- Take lots of photos and use social media
- Meet regularly, in a good location, and keep things moving forward

#### Partners and support

- Communicate with necessary and relevant stakeholders, e.g. train operators, Network Rail
- Take safety seriously, and always follow health and safety procedures
- Get support and advice from ACoRP
- Talk to and visit other station adoption groups who have been through the process and share advice
- Explore the potential offered by rail industry corporate volunteering schemes, e.g. Network Rail

#### Don'ts

- Don't be intimidated by paperwork
- Don't be afraid to ask businesses and other partners for help and donations
- Don't assume you know everything. Consult others in the community on what they want to see
- Don't use confusing acronyms. Strive for a clear group name and identity
- Don't ignore or compromise on any health and safety guidance given to you by the rail industry

## Maintaining the interest

Keeping a community group going over several years isn't easy, but there are plenty of station adoption groups with long and successful histories.

Alongside the 'top tips' (see left) from ACoRP members, other key advice offered by voluntary groups who have developed and progressed their activities over time include:

- don't expect too much from people, and accept that some will have more time than others;
- don't be afraid to try different things, and try to keep a regular flow of new recruits;
- encourage the 'social' side – coffee mornings, a Christmas meal, an occasional trip;
- get involved in the local voluntary sector – you will learn a lot and gain friends and allies;
- invite existing local organisations to get involved in your work, e.g. could schools or horticultural/arts groups apply what they already do at your station?
- meet regularly, but keep the meetings short and focused, and ensure you're moving things forward.

Your group will naturally have its ups and downs. But, continually try to think of new things to do, and learn from what other adopters have done and see if you can apply it to your station. Organise visits to other stations and develop friendly links with similar groups around the country, using the ACoRP network.

Look for 'quick wins', projects where you think your group can make a positive difference with something simple. A community action day to pick litter, tidy up, or paint parts of the station, or an initial session to prepare areas for gardening or artwork, is a great opportunity to make a rapid transformation of the physical appearance of a station, as well as galvanising interest for other, more long-term projects.

Planting at Elstree & Borehamwood



## Volunteers

Your group will only ever be as strong as your volunteers, so draw on as wide a pool of knowledge and enthusiasm as you can. Reach out to the local community at your initial meetings, and always be open to new ideas and recruits. Work in partnership with existing groups in your community, and register with your local volunteer centre or CVS, who may be able to offer their experience and contacts. Ensure your group is as inclusive and welcoming as possible. If someone attends one of your events or meetings, give them a reason to come back!



### NCVO 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

**Figures above from ACoRP's 'Value of Community Rail' report and the NCVO 'Time Well Spent: A National Survey on the Volunteer Experience' – both from 2019**



An exhibition by the 'First Impressions' group

When you are talking to volunteers interested in joining your group, be sure to highlight the benefits to them. This will likely include:

- a chance to give something back to their community and make a difference to others;
- a sense of purpose;
- a chance to meet with others and socialise;
- healthy, outdoor exercise and other enjoyable activities;
- developing confidence and skills.

Being a station adopter is a fantastic way for people to experience happiness, contentment and engagement, with friendships created around a shared area of interest. Promote the fact that volunteering in your group can boost health and wellbeing, both for the individuals involved and the community as a whole. Being part of a station adoption group means you become more connected to the community, and can influence its ongoing development.

## Case studies

### Station adoption in action

#### Elstree & Borehamwood

Elstree & Borehamwood Station in Hertfordshire has been adopted by 'First Impressions', 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. The group brought together a range of partners, including the train operator, different tiers of local government, and the local youth council, to transform the appearance of the station.



The group's efforts have positioned the station as 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. Aside from clearing and tidying gateways to the station and adding planters and garden areas, the group has erected a cinematic mural on a wall previously plagued by graffiti, and installed film and TV information boards and images on the station, alongside plaques and information boards throughout the town, with partners noting positive effects on the local economy.

The group also works with local schools, and has run high-profile events, including a hugely popular exhibition of the 150th anniversary of the railway coming to Elstree & Borehamwood in 2018 at the town's museum.

#### Comondale

Comondale Station on the Esk Valley Railway lies within the North York Moors National Park. The unstaffed station has been adopted through a volunteer programme, organised by a local voluntary organisation 'Beyond Boundaries', who offer inclusive activities for adults and young people with learning difficulties. A shared interest held by many of the members –including those who are on the Autistic Spectrum and those with Downs Syndrome – is the railway.



The chance to engage others with similar interests and hobbies, including passengers and visitors, has proved invaluable.

The station has become a focal point for art and horticultural projects, which has helped to promote health, wellbeing and confidence for those involved. Their presence on the platform is also building tolerance and understanding from staff and passengers, and promotes the station as an inclusive and welcoming space.

#### Borth

Borth Station Volunteers were formed as a group of people who were members of other community groups in the village, and were supportive of developments at the station. Originally consisting of three members who set about monitoring the safety and tidiness of the station, the group quickly adopted a more proactive approach.



They teamed up with a village artist to create a much-loved 'four elements' mural to cover up unsightly boarding on the station office windows and door, built a heritage sign at the north end of the platform, and developed small gardens, planters and window boxes.

After negotiations with rail industry partners, involving various planning permissions, the group raised the £38,000 needed to fund the total refurbishment of the interior of the buildings and the installation of a museum, work that was highly commended by The Railway Heritage Trust.

The group now pride themselves on providing a vibrant centre of activity which is both an educational and social resource, having transformed a building which was previously derelict and neglected.

#### Glossop

The Friends of Glossop Station group was established following the creation of a garden at the grade II-listed station as part of a Glossop Environmental Trust project in 2006.



From there, the group progressed, with assistance from Network Rail, to install a second garden on the embankment opposite the station platform. They were also instrumental in other changes designed to improve the physical appearance of the station, including painting and renovation and the addition of hanging baskets, planters, and window boxes, all changed seasonally.

The group takes pride in maintaining the station and its environment to a high standard, and a group of volunteers meet every Sunday morning to carry out various tasks, amassing over 500 voluntary hours every year.

The group has developed other projects to enhance the passenger experience at the station, such as its poetry platform and an art gallery in the waiting room. Members have also spearheaded the creation of displays and historical information boards charting Glossop's and the line's history, including a poignant display commemorating the evacuation of children from Lowestoft to Glossop in 1940 and a line guide highlighting local places of interest.

The group also coordinates numerous events to reach out to the community – including teddy bears' picnics and festive events for children and families – and takes great pride in positioning the station as a welcoming gateway and asset to the town.

## Alexandra Palace

The Friends of Ally Pally Station group was set up in 2016 to create a community garden and improve the station environment.

The group wanted to bring the community together by inviting people to donate plants and then help tend and care for the area. Pots and planters were sponsored and donated by businesses and individuals, with some put together by local schools. There are now over 40 planters at the station, and the group holds gardening parties every month.



The group, which also acts as a rail users' group, works on other projects to enhance the station environment, such as installing new signage, painting and litter-picking. It has also developed an art and photo gallery, and holds seasonal events such as Easter and Christmas parties.

After teaming up with a local collective, the group started to grow hops in some of the planters on the platform. In the autumn, the plants are harvested and pooled before being taken to a local microbrewery and turned into unique small batch beer. The finished product is sold in the pub across the road from the station, and plans are to re-grow the hops year on year. As well as being an innovative project that has generated pride and excitement, the group makes a financial return that can be reinvested to maintain its activities.

## Largs

Largs is a Scottish seaside town famous for being the last place the Vikings were defeated at The Battle of Largs in 1263. In 2017, three station adopters came together to transform an old siding into a healthy and educational community garden, designed to raise awareness of native plants that had been Scotland's main source of food and medicine during the Viking period.



The objective of the garden was to engage people of all ages and abilities in a community project, particularly those with health issues, to enhance social inclusion.

The gardening group used whisky barrels as raised beds to allow people to grow their own flowers, vegetables, herbs, fruit bushes and trees, and membership increased to over 40 people, including members of a local stroke support group, gardening and rotary clubs.

The group decided to install a Viking boat as the centre piece of the garden, and the bow of a vessel was built by local apprentices at the Scottish Maritime Museum, using materials from Glasgow Wood Recycling, a social enterprise. Other improvements have included a Viking Hut, a wooden thistle sculpture, and paths for wheelchair users, made from free materials destined for landfill.

The garden's mixture of history and social engagement has led it to become a popular tourist attraction in its own right, and a distinctive part of the Largs annual Viking Festival.

## Mytholmroyd

The listed station building at Mytholmroyd in West Yorkshire was closed to the public in the 1980s when new platforms were built.

Over a period of more than 20 years, the building became a dilapidated eyesore, but the Mytholmroyd Station Partnership, formed in 2006, said there was "constant demand" from the local community to bring it back into use.



Having researched market demand, the group developed a business case to convert the three-storey building for community use, and commissioned a full feasibility study. Plans included a marketplace of activities showcasing local businesses and start-ups, including space for a local food manufacturer, art studios and a community gallery, and a walking and cycling hub.

The first phase of this major capital project is now complete, and while the train operator is to take responsibility for the lease – with the station group allocated a base at the site – the group's detailed planning and persistence has enabled them to achieve their core aim of "bringing the building back into an appropriate use", benefitting the community.

The group are extremely active in reaching out to their local community, involving volunteers in a range of gardening and planting activities, and community artwork. They are also involved in varied work with local schools, including environmental projects at the station, organising visits to local businesses under the 'Fanfare for Local Business' scheme, and events such as an annual Christmas carol singing train.

## Further information

ACoRP has created a section on its website highlighting further resources available to station-based groups.

This includes health and safety guidance, an example group constitution, a list of suggested suppliers, and a range of train operator and rail industry contacts.

To access this information, please visit

[communityrail.org.uk/resources-ideas/resources-for-station-groups/](https://communityrail.org.uk/resources-ideas/resources-for-station-groups/)

## End notes

<sup>1</sup> <https://communityrail.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Acorp-Value-of-Community-Rail-12019-V3.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.rssb.co.uk/Pages/research-catalogue/PB009725.aspx>

<sup>3</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/756054/connecting-communities-with-the-railways-the-community-rail-development-strategy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/756054/connecting-communities-with-the-railways-the-community-rail-development-strategy.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/756054/connecting-communities-with-the-railways-the-community-rail-development-strategy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/756054/connecting-communities-with-the-railways-the-community-rail-development-strategy.pdf), pp 26-27

<sup>5</sup> <https://communityrail.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Acorp-Value-of-Community-Rail-12019-V3.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Alexander, Matthew and Hamilton, Kathy (2015) A 'placeful' station? The community role in place making and improving hedonic value at local railway stations. *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice*, 82, pp. 65-77.

<sup>7</sup> [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/756054/connecting-communities-with-the-railways-the-community-rail-development-strategy.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/756054/connecting-communities-with-the-railways-the-community-rail-development-strategy.pdf), pp38