



Categories & Criteria

1. Involving Children and Young People

This category recognises community rail's vital role in engaging, inspiring and empowering children and young people (under 26) with their railways, from travel confidence and educational schemes to youth-led volunteering and creative projects. We are especially keen to see projects that promote sustainable travel, life skills, inclusion and wellbeing, and which draw on children and young people's views and ideas.

Entries invited from: We invite entries from community rail partnerships, station adoption or friends' groups, or other community groups and representatives. Rail industry partners can submit entries where a project was undertaken in partnership with a community rail partnership or community group, but the entry must clearly demonstrate this partnership working, be agreed with the community partner(s), and their contact details provided.

Judging criteria:

- Empowering and awareness raising – it successfully shared knowledge, opportunities and/or awareness, for example about rail travel, local history, culture or environment;
- Improving mobility, confidence or life skills – there was a positive impact on children's, young people's or families' ability, understanding, perception of and confidence to access rail, use sustainable travel, or other life skills;
- Engaging, enjoyable and beneficial – there is evidence it was well-received and those involved saw benefits to mobility, inclusion, health, wellbeing, confidence or awareness;
- Interactive and drew on children/young people's input – it enabled interaction with and between young members of the community, drawing on their ideas and views, or was youth-led.

2. Empowering Diverse Groups

This category recognises community rail activity that empowers diverse groups, for instance spanning ethnicities, ages, disabilities, genders, sexual orientation, religions or beliefs. We are looking for approaches that have empowered wider audiences, especially bringing together different groups, and/or socially marginalised people to direct, lead or strongly inform projects or pieces of work. We're keen to see evidence of promoting inclusion, cohesion, skills, mobility, health, or wellbeing, as well as promoting diverse leadership in projects or regularly occurring work.

We would like to hear how you reached out to diverse groups to enable their voices to be heard; how your work supported local resilience efforts and brought new voices to community rail, enabling leadership and collaboration.

Entries invited from: We invite entries from community rail partnerships, station adoption or friends' groups, or other community groups and representatives. Rail industry partners can submit entries where a project was undertaken in partnership with a community rail partnership or community group, but the entry must clearly demonstrate this partnership working, be agreed with the community partner(s), and their contact details provided.

Judging criteria:

- A good fit with local needs and contexts – designed to meet local needs and appropriate to local opportunities, especially to build more inclusive, connected communities, informed by strong diverse voices;
- Engaging, enjoyable and beneficial – there is evidence it enabled diverse voices to lead work, well-received and those involved saw benefits to mobility, inclusion, health, wellbeing or awareness;
- Empowering and awareness raising – it successfully shared knowledge, amplified voices with lived experience, gave opportunities (for example new project leadership) and grew confidence and/or awareness, for example about rail travel, local history, culture, leadership skills or environment;
- Interactive and amplified ideas and input – the initiative empowered those who identify with protected characteristics to lead, direct, strongly inform and collaborate, demonstrating diversity within the community.

3. Community Creative Projects and Station Arts

As a pilot/trial, this category has been re-structured for 2024 and entries will this year be grouped for judging according to the size/type of the group/organisation making the submission. This means the judges will be comparing projects more equally in terms of resources available to each group and what they achieved accordingly:

Large groups- these will be any CRPs that sit under an umbrella organisation

Medium groups – these will be any stand-alone, funded CRPs with only 1-2 members of paid staff

Small groups – these will be any unfunded station adoption/friends/community groups

There will be one winner at each of these levels, no runners' up, so effectively there are three winners for the category and each will come up on stage to receive a trophy and prize money.

This category recognises creative initiatives that have had a transformative, empowering effect on the people involved and their local environment or station, connecting people to their railway, station, and wider community, and making the railway a welcoming place.

Projects involving all forms of creative expression are eligible (art, music, spoken word, writing, storytelling, photography, interpretation panels or sculpture), creating a sense of pride and community, and promoting connections between communities and railways. We are especially keen to see projects that promoted inclusion and positivity and drew on local input and creativity in innovative ways.

Entries invited from: We invite entries from community rail partnerships, station adoption or friends' groups, or other community groups and representatives. Rail industry partners can submit entries where a project was undertaken in partnership with a community rail partnership or community group, but the entry must clearly demonstrate this partnership working, be agreed with the community partner(s), and their contact details provided - Note: This type of partnership entry will automatically be judged within the large groups level.

Essential Requirements: Please include photographs, images or clips with your entry where relevant, showing/linking to the artwork or finished piece(s). **You must also state clearly whether your group comes under the Small, Medium or Large groups levels and you must describe the structure of your organisation to support this. Failing to provide this information will result in automatic disqualification as the judges will not be able to assess your entry. To allow for this explanation and in this category only, you are allowed to submit 750 words in the fuller written description.**

Judging criteria:

- Promotes positivity and celebrates railway and community – clearly appreciated by passengers and local people, promoting pride, understanding and positivity, and connecting community and railway;
- Successful engagement across the community or target audience – successful efforts were made to engage people widely across the community, or amongst a clear target audience;
- Interaction and drawing on community viewpoints – the scheme enabled interaction with and between the community, such as drawing on and sharing local perspectives, memories and ideas;
- Clear benefits for the community – wider benefits have been delivered, such as through increased wellbeing, confidence, skills, cohesion and inclusion, or supporting regeneration.

4. Small Projects Award (£500 or less)

This category can only be entered by station adoption or friends' groups, community groups or community rail partnerships. It allows smaller, low-cost projects to be judged on merit, rather than competing against larger projects. Any project that cost £500 or less (excluding volunteer hours), can be submitted.

We are looking for projects that delivered great value for money and benefitted the community in a way that is connected to the railway. Awareness-raising, digital and communications projects will be considered alongside practical/physical projects.

Entries invited from: Entries can only be submitted directly by the station adopters, community group or community rail partnership (or a representative of them) running or involved with the project.

Essential requirements: **You must include a simple budget overview with your entry to clearly demonstrate costs, otherwise it will be disqualified.**

Judging criteria:

- Excellent value for money – this might be demonstrated through careful management, creativity, pooling resources, and/or drawing on support from partners or volunteers;
- Clear value and connection to the railway – we can see evidence that a station or line has been enhanced, passengers benefitted, or positive connections and interest built among the wider community;
- Project sustainability or replicability – entrants are clear about lessons learnt and what worked well and intend to build on this and/or share with others (or have already).

5. Most Effective Communications Campaign

Effective communications are key to promoting and raising the profile of community rail activities. This category is seeking submissions that can evidence the delivery of a well-planned integrated communications campaign, aimed at publicising community rail activity or promoting success. Judges will be looking for effectively managed campaigns with evidence of PR activity and clear examples of measuring the campaign's impact (e.g. through social media).

Entries invited from: We invite entries from community rail partnerships, station adoption or friends' groups, or other community groups and representatives working in partnership with a community rail member. Rail industry partners can submit entries where a project was undertaken in partnership with a community rail partnership or community group, but the entry must clearly demonstrate this partnership working, be agreed with the community partner(s), and their contact details provided.

Judging criteria:

- Delivery of an effective communications campaign, accessible and engaging for the intended audience, working with partners to drive results;
- Evidence of PR activity undertaken and media log/clippings of successful features/articles;
- Conveys clear messages and promotes community rail in an informative, interesting way, relevant to the audience;
- Good planning, management, and use of appropriate channels – evidence of rationale behind the choice of media, planning, timing, audience and coordinated use of channels;
- Evaluation – clear evidence of the impact of the campaign, including the reach across social media/increase in followers (if appropriate).

6. Best Community Engagement Project

Community rail is all about engaging local communities. This category is no longer just about one-off community rail events, it is also about long-term engagement within communities. It aims to highlight the creativity and hard work that goes into developing, organising and promoting community engagement projects on and linked to the railway.

Entries invited from: We invite entries from community rail partnerships, station adoption or friends' groups, or other community groups and representatives. Rail industry partners can submit entries where a project was undertaken in partnership with a community rail partnership or community group, but the entry must clearly demonstrate this partnership working, be agreed with the community partner(s), and their contact details provided.

Judging criteria:

- Successful engagement in person or online across the community or target audience – successful efforts were made to engage people inclusively, or among a clear target audience;
- Engaging, enjoyable and beneficial – there is evidence it was well-received and those involved saw benefits to mobility, inclusion, health, wellbeing or awareness;
- Empowering and awareness raising – it successfully shared knowledge, opportunities, confidence and/or awareness, for example about rail travel, local history, culture, or environment;
- Interactive and drew on community viewpoints – the project enabled interaction with and between the community, such as drawing on and sharing local perspectives, memories and ideas.

7. Tourism and Leisure Award

Leisure and tourism initiatives can play a vital role in supporting local economies, encouraging more people to use the train for sustainable travel, healthy days out, short breaks, and longer stays. This award celebrates innovative and effective initiatives or events that have been promoted to audiences beyond the local community. We're looking for submissions that can clearly evidence how they inspired and motivated people to use community rail lines and/or stations for leisure or tourism activities. Extra consideration will be given to submissions that can demonstrate partnership working with local businesses or tourism attractions alongside the promotion of sustainable and green travel messages.

Entries invited from: We invite entries from community rail partnerships, station adoption or friends' groups, or other community groups and representatives working in partnership with a community rail member. Rail industry partners can submit entries where a project was undertaken in partnership with a community rail partnership or community group, but the entry must clearly demonstrate this partnership working, be agreed with the community partner(s), and their contact details provided.

Judging criteria:

- Delivery of an initiative or event that showcased a local leisure and tourism offer, promoted sustainable travel, and improved the overall visitor experience with community rail at its heart;
- Evidence of how the initiative or event was promoted to leisure and tourism audiences beyond the local community (e.g. through social media, distribution of promotional literature etc.);
- Demonstration of creative partnerships, working together to achieve results. Partners may include local attractions, heritage railway lines, tourism businesses, or third sector organisations;
- Evidence of an effective evaluation approach including details of the estimated visitor reach, feedback, and outcomes achieved, where possible.

8. Photo Competition | *Best image capturing the essence of community rail*

We want you to get creative! We want to see light-hearted, inventive images that capture the essence of community rail. These can be in any setting, as long as the connection to rail/community rail is immediately obvious.

Entries invited from: We invite entries from any source, but the below requirements must be adhered to.

Essential requirements:

- A maximum of four photos per entry
- Digital photos must be in JPEG format ONLY (high res)
- Please supply a brief, one-line title or caption for each photo in the 200-word summary section of the entry form and on a Word document to be uploaded
- Any photos that show health and safety contraventions on the railway or station will be disqualified

In submitting photos you confirm that:

- all people within the photos have provided consent for their photos to be used in publicity including print, online and all social media channels. If the photos contain images of children under the age of 18 written consent must be secured from the parent or guardian, either directly or via their school/college.
- you are the owner of the image(s) and agree to it/them being used in publicity. Or, the image(s) is/are not your own but you have the relevant permissions/consent to submit on behalf of the owner, and they agree to them being used in publicity. In this case, you must state within the 200-word summary section who you are submitting on behalf of.

Judging criteria:

- Captures 'community rail in 2022/2023';
- Impactful, eye-catching and good quality – credit will be given to photos that are suitable for using online and/or in promotional materials, to help raise the profile of community rail;
- Inclusive, positive, and people-orientated – the content of the photo, and/or the way it was taken or produced, helps to get across the 'community' aspect of community rail, and might encourage more people to get involved.

The shortlist for this category will be open to a public vote on Survey Monkey, for one month from 6 November 2023, and this will provide the final placings.

9. Influencing Positive Change and Sustainability

This category recognises community rail's important role in innovating and driving change locally, to help create a more sustainable and inclusive future. We're especially keen to see great partnership working where community rail partnerships and groups have encouraged more future-focused, climate-aware and inclusive thinking and approaches, **even if the results have not yet fully materialised**. This is about supporting sustainable forms of development (as per the UN's [Sustainable Development Goals](#)), adopting greater care for local and global environments, more resilient and cohesive communities, and leaving a legacy for future generations.

Entries invited from: We invite entries from community rail partnerships, station adoption or friends' groups, or other community groups and representatives. Rail industry or other partners can support and encourage these groups to submit entries where they have worked together.

Judging criteria:

- Community influence – we can see how the community rail partnership, station group and/or community members worked with the rail industry, local authorities, or others to support positive change and sustainable development;
- Great partnership working – there is evidence of engaging successfully with relevant partners and working inclusively to build momentum towards future-focused change;
- Evidence basis – there is an evidence basis for this initiative and expected (or achieved) outcomes to do with sustainable development, inclusion, biodiversity, decarbonisation, modal shift or integration;
- Innovation and/or lessons learnt – an innovative or collaborative approach was used to overcome challenges or consider future needs, and/or the lessons are recognised and being shared.

10. Most Enhanced Railway Spaces

This category recognises the work of community rail or other community organisations to revitalise railway buildings and larger areas of railway land. Any space which has either been brought back to useful life or significantly improved is eligible.

We are looking for initiatives that have enhanced, rejuvenated, or repurposed a railway space and brought it back into the heart of the community, to provide new value for passengers and/or wider communities.

While many projects may involve restoration work to improve appearance and celebrate the heritage of spaces, given that many revitalisations are in non-heritage locations or are land re-use projects this is not a heritage restoration award. Judges are looking for projects that have engaged the local community effectively, demonstrated social value, and have sound plans for how the space will deliver ongoing community benefits.

Note: *This award is not primarily concerned with attracting new passengers to the railway, but rather making use of disused railway assets for wider community benefit. Small gardens and flowerbeds won't be considered in this category, these should be submitted within an entry to 'It's Your Station' or 'Small Projects Award' and art/creative projects should be submitted in the 'Community Creative Projects & Station Arts' category.*

Entries invited from: We invite entries from community rail partnerships, station-based groups, station adoption or friends' groups, or other community organisations and representatives. Rail industry partners can submit entries where a project was undertaken in partnership with a community rail partnership or community group, but the entry must clearly demonstrate this partnership working, be agreed with the community partner(s), and their contact details provided.

This award is for organisations which have leased/licensed/purchased railway buildings or land to deliver their community project, with a legal right of occupation/access.

Essential requirements: Before and after images or other evidence clearly showing the change(s) made must be submitted as part of your supporting evidence, along with any other evidence showing how the project was developed and delivered. Details of the ongoing use for the building/land must be included.

Judging criteria:

- Repurposing a railway space – we can see how railway building(s), or larger areas of railway land have been rejuvenated or repurposed, in whole or in part, to provide community benefit.
- Relevant approach to rejuvenation/refurbishment – making the building or land ready and welcoming for a new community use, sympathetic to heritage where the project is taking place in a historic/heritage building and appropriate for the new use where it is not.
- Clear benefits to users – there is evidence the project has achieved its planned outcomes and has benefited and is appreciated by its target audience/clientele;
- Building positive links with the community – the space has been brought more into the heart of the community and delivers benefits to local people e.g. through local volunteering, community events, communications, outreach, and/or new people using station buildings;
- Great partnership working – we can see how collaboration with the rail industry and others has helped to deliver improvements and overcome challenges, or bring in wider expertise, involvement and ideas;
- A well-considered plan for how the space is intended to deliver ongoing social benefits.

11. It's Your Station

Re-introduced for 2024, this category recognises and rewards the hard-working people who maintain station gardens, displays, notices, and the station environment, on a voluntary basis across the network. Continuing with guidelines introduced last year, there is no overall category winner, with entries instead judged at four different banding levels. The highest scoring entry in each band will be recognised as outstanding at that level. We hope this format continues to facilitate fairer judging on a more like-for-like basis.

Entries in this category are still assessed and points awarded over four sections: community, gardening, art & heritage, environment & sustainability. The total points achieved will equate to one of the four bands: bronze, silver, gold or platinum. Every group passing the first sift, will receive at least a bronze certificate, but following the judges' online assessments, specific bandings will be allocated from the four listed above, and certificates awarded accordingly at the presentation evening. ***The highest placed entry in each banding will also be presented with a trophy and a cash prize on stage.***

Entries invited from: Station groups or community groups directly involved with looking after the nominated station.

Essential requirements: Entries must describe the work you have done or are doing to improve your station garden and environment. You must include before and after images (relevant to when the work started) with your entry, and other suitable evidence, clearly showing the station environment and how it has been improved. **The full 'Judging Assessment Criteria' can be downloaded from the Community Rail Network website [HERE](#)**

Note: *Our judges are no longer able to make personal visits to stations, so you must make sure that your entry is well supported by photographs and video footage, as this will be the only opportunity to showcase your station and the work you've been doing. We have therefore developed a toolkit, designed especially to support you to make the most of submitting an entry to 'It's Your Station'. [Download the toolkit HERE](#)*

In addition to this, we have a drop-in session on Zoom with the 'It's Your Station' category judges, where you can ask questions/seek advice before submitting your entry. [Download the schedule and Zoom details HERE](#)

Outline Judging criteria:

- **Community** - inclusive of and represents local people. Engages with the local community to collaborate and participate in the planning and delivery of projects and in publicising its activities.
- **Gardening** - station gardens and environments enhance the passenger experience – quality, colour, and variety of planting and changing displays are maintained and cared for throughout the year.
- **Art & Heritage** - Artwork impacts the station showing skill and imagination. Local artists, schools or other community groups involved in the design and delivery. Heritage installations have a railway (eg signage or other artefacts) or a local historical theme.
- **Environment & Sustainability** - Group is improving the station environment by litter-picking, leaf-clearing, weeding platforms etc. Creating or maintaining green space, which addresses sustainability by rainwater harvesting, composting, recycling etc.

Please note: Shortlisted entries in this category will be informed of the level awarded in advance of the presentation evening, where all certificates will be available for collection.

12. Outstanding Volunteer Contribution

This category recognises the invaluable contribution that so many volunteers make to community rail, and their stations, lines, and communities. We are especially keen to see nominations for committed individuals who make an outstanding contribution on a regular basis, or those who have gone the extra mile in the past year, impacting positively within their local community, station group or community rail partnership.

Entries invited from: Nominations for this award can be made by community rail partnerships, station adoption groups, other community groups, train operators, other partners, or individuals, so long as they are nominating a volunteer who is active in community rail. *Self-nominations will not be accepted.*

Essential requirements: Independent testimonials (up to four) must be provided as supporting material, showing how the volunteer meets the criteria.

Judging criteria:

- Commitment and passion for community rail – they have worked hard, with enthusiasm and commitment, making an exceptional contribution to their community rail partnership or group;
- Clear benefits for the community – their contribution has been shown to positively impact on the community, for example bringing people together, raising awareness, or creating a more welcoming, sustainable, and inclusive local environment;
- Inclusive, collaborative, positive working – they have taken an inclusive, collaborative, and positive approach, for example getting more people involved in community rail, engaging new groups or partners, and/or building positive relationships.

13. Outstanding Contribution to Community Rail

Community Rail Network's senior management will present a special award to a partnership or group that, in their view, has demonstrated an outstanding contribution to community rail over the past 12 months. Nominations are invited for this award, but they must be for a third party, as self-nominations will not be accepted. There will be no shortlist for this category, there will just be one winner who will receive a trophy, cash prize and certificate. This can also be made as a discretionary award i.e. not necessarily selected from the nominations.

14. Board's Special Recognition Award

The Community Rail Network board will present a discretionary special award to an individual in recognition of **longer-term exceptional service to, or, the championing of, community rail**. This will reflect individual commitment to community rail and could be given to an individual from within community rail or a partner organisation.

Note: Nominations are not needed for this award