



Campaign evaluation

20 to 26 May 2023

Sponsored by

Rail Delivery Group



2024 objectives & key messages recap



Overarching goal: Raise awareness of community rail across Britain by showcasing the variety of projects and initiatives delivered by members throughout the year, around the theme of 'More Than a Railway'.

Objectives

1. Showcase the role community rail plays in enabling people to access work, education and other opportunities that may otherwise be out of reach
2. Amplify and elevate members' stories, providing them with the tools to reach a larger audience with their messages and promotions
3. Encourage more people to use the train as a sustainable, healthy way to travel
4. Deliver positive online social engagement about rail, engaging with partners and showing unity with the wider railway industry
5. Showcasing the work of community rail linked to the theme of 'More Than A Railway'

Key messages

Our key messages below will form the basis of the campaign's communications:

- Community rail provides travel confidence, increases access to opportunity and gives communities a voice, putting railways and stations at the heart of community life
- The importance of rail and the benefits it can bring to communities, businesses and the economy
- Encouraging more people to consider the benefits of making at least the occasional switch to greener, healthier, more social forms of travel
- Community rail is 'More Than A Railway'

Community Rail Week in numbers



% are compared to 2023 campaign



85

community rail partnerships and station volunteer groups participated

Increase of 17%



110

member-led events & activities took place throughout the week

Increase of 20%



3.7k

unique users visited CommunityRail.org.uk in the lead up to and during the week

Increase of 61%



88k

views of Community Rail Network content across social media

New measure for 2024 so no comparison available



93

Partners and supporters were involved in activities and/or shared our messages online

Increase of 79%



50

pieces of media coverage referencing Community Rail Week

Decrease of -36% (due to factors including external news factors and increased figures in 2023 due to World Cup of Stations media)



175

retweets of Community Rail Network content on X/Twitter alone

Decrease of -21%, due to increase of partners sharing our content organically instead of retweeting



113

downloads of member toolkit

Decrease of -9%



5 million

potential users reached online through social media posts

Increase of 25%

Previous years comparison



Community Rail Week is an annual awareness-raising campaign that showcases the important benefits community rail brings to local areas, by shining a spotlight on innovative projects and initiatives delivered by our members. First held in 2021, Community Rail Week has since become an annual staple in the community rail calendar, focusing on different key themes every year, see below.

Go Green by Train 2021 campaign

Community Rail Week was first developed in 2021 in the lead-up to COP26 in Glasgow. The week highlighted the role community rail can play in stimulating and enabling more sustainable behaviours, with a focus on young people being the journey makers of tomorrow.

3m users reached

28 pieces of media coverage & 1.4k unique users on our website



Give the Train a Try 2022 campaign

The focus for 2022 was to inspire more people to use the train, encouraging the many families and individuals who rarely or never use public transport and rely on cars, or those with limited mobility, to consider the benefits of making at least the occasional switch to greener, healthier forms of travel.

16m users reached

55 pieces of media coverage & 2k unique users on our website



Connecting Communities by Rail 2023 campaign

The 2023 theme helped us to raise the profile of the work community rail delivers to help bring people together, creating more inclusive communities and mobility as well as highlighting the wider socio-economic benefit that the railways deliver. It will also give us the opportunity to navigate around some of the negative press that focused on the ongoing industrial action.

4m users reached

79 pieces of media coverage & 2.3k unique users on our website



Evaluation against target success measures



1. Members

Target: 80+ members taking part, with a combined total of 100+ activities

Achieved: 85 members participated, with a combined total of 110 activities

2. Media mentions

Target: Featured in 100+ media outlets, regionally and locally

Not achieved: Featured in 49 media outlets, regionally and locally, see detailed analysis on [page 12](#)

3. Regional media

Target: Secure three quality media features in regional press

Not achieved: Although we did reach some smaller regionals including North Somerset Times (launch event Yatton article), London World (Alexandra Palace Station article), Manchester World (student depot tour article)

4. Partners

Target: Support from 70+ partners, sharing our messages online

Achieved: 93 partners supported the campaign by sharing our messages online and helping members with their activities

5. Social media

Target: 4 million+ users reached online through social media posts

Achieved: 5 million users reached online through #CommunityRailWeek social posts



Core event highlights



Community Rail Network coordinated three core activities that helped to provide a focus for our PR and media work.

Launch day

We launched the week at Yatton Station, working with Sevenside Community Rail Partnership, Friends of Yatton Station, Strawberry Line Café and Cycle Project, Platform and GWR. The event was a celebration of community rail activities including a station-based social enterprise, providing jobs, training and skills among young people with learning disabilities; a cycle hub supporting greener and more accessible journeys; a community garden boosting biodiversity; and a programme engaging thousands of children and young people on rail confidence. Invited guests experiencing these activities included Jacqueline Starr, CEO of Rail Delivery Group and campaign sponsors plus representatives from Department for Transport and GWR.



Festival of Urban Community Rail Stations

We hosted a visit for the Shadow Rail Minister Stephen Morgan MP to meet the Friends of Ally Pally, along with representatives from other community rail groups, GTR and Rail Delivery Group. The Shadow Minister had a tour of the station, with its vibrant community garden and artwork displays, and chatted extensively with volunteers from Ally Pally, Gipsy Hill and Welwyn Garden City about the work they do to bring communities together and promote sustainable travel around London.



Young people confidence day

We worked jointly with Northern to increase awareness of community rail and boost confidence around using rail to access work and training. 24 female students were welcomed to the Newton Heath TrainCare Centre, where they showed great enthusiasm as they toured the facility, met engineers and gained an insight into career opportunities available in the rail industry. The students also heard about the work community rail delivers across the country from inspiring women speakers from community rail.



Minister's planned visit to London Liverpool Street

We coordinated the then Rail Minister Huw Merriman MP's visit to London Liverpool Street Station where he planned to spend time speaking with community rail partnerships from the East of England and representatives from Greater Anglia. Due to the announcement of the general election the day prior, this visit was cancelled by the Minister's office.

Member activity highlights



Over 100 events, activities and promotions were delivered by 85 community rail members. Below are some highlights.

Open Station Garden – Essex & South Suffolk CRP

Essex and South Suffolk CRP launched East Anglia's first railway station 'Open Gardens' event at Wrabness. Station volunteers showcased their work in developing the attractive garden and new wildlife area to visitors including Deputy Lieutenant of Essex Nigel Spencer MBE. Other station volunteers were also in attendance to share best practice and help connect communities from across the region.



Try the train – Penistone Line Partnership & Yorkshire Coast CRP

Penistone Line Partnership, working jointly with Yorkshire Coast CRP, led a community group on a trip from Sheffield to Bridlington by rail to highlight how to reach the coast by train. The group were greeted by Yorkshire Coast CRP at the station where they could learn more about their work including the opportunity to trial the new line guide app 'Traxplorer'.



Eco station open day– Community Rail Lancashire

Community Rail Lancashire hosted an open day at Accrington Eco Station. Welcoming around 80 children from local schools, the students enjoyed a variety of activities including making seed bombs, art work, hearing about railway careers and tours of the station.



Member activity highlights... continued



Below are member highlights from social media, including examples of the toolkit being used.



It's [#CommunityRailWeek](#) and volunteers are here at [@NetworkRailMAN](#) with lots of walking guides and ideas for days out by train [@northernassist](#)



Happy [#CommunityRailWeek](#) 🚆 CRPs in Wales and borders have played a significant role in developing [#WalesOnRails](#), acting as expert tour guides, expanding links with their communities by identifying attractions and things to do [#MoreThanARailway](#) [bit.ly/44NwJic](#)



Community Rail is about so much [#morethanarailway](#) Today, we're celebrating our relationship with the Uni of Glos and the opportunity we've had to work with some amazing students this last year, over a lovely shared lunch with one such student [#communityrailweek](#)



[#CommunityRail](#) engages with some 65,000 young people per year through educational activities including rail safety. Over the past year the East Suffolk Lines Community Rail Partnership has led initiatives involving more than 600 young people. [#MorethanARailway](#) [#CommunityRailWeek](#)



We are always shouting about community rail and its benefits to communities. [#communityrail](#)

Have a wee look of how we impact here in Scotland

[scotrail.co.uk/sustainability...](#)



[#CommunityRailWeek](#) 📷 we have had ! We have educated 482 children in 16 workshops on rail safety and careers; taken 190 children out on 6 amazing train adventures; attended 2 exciting launch events and had the BEST time ever! [#careersadvice](#) [#railsafety](#) [#Freetravel](#)



[#CommunityRailWeek](#) is nearly here. The week runs from 20th until 26 May and this year's theme is [#MoreThanARailway](#). We will be showcasing our work and sharing the positive benefits it has on local communities. Find out more about the work we do here: [yccrp.co.uk](#)



[@C2MCRP](#) [@CommunityRail](#) [@northern_pr](#) [@northernassist](#) [@BestKeptStation](#) Plant and herb sale along with volunteering taster session as part of Community Rail week at Alderley Edge Railway Station Saturday 25th May 10:00am [#CommunityRailWeek](#)



Partner activity highlights



We received valuable support for Community Rail Week from our rail industry and external partners, with many supporting our members with their activities and sharing our key messages through social media. Highlights are below.

Train operator support

A total of 20 out of 29 train operators (TOCs) (as listed on the [National Rail website](#)) supported Community Rail Week on social media, an increase of 8 on last year's figure. This welcome increase is a result of increased communications with TOC comms teams in advance of the week.

In addition to providing support online, train operators have also worked with our members to bolster activities and events.

Examples of this included EMR supported their local community rail partners with a display at Sheffield and Nottingham Stations and Avanti West Coast continued to work with Community Rail Lancashire with their Feel Good Field Trips, see partner highlights on pages [10](#) & [11](#).

TOC support

The train operators that supported us last year are in blue

Avanti West Coast	Lumo
c2c Rail	Merseyrail
Chiltern Railways	Northern
East Midlands Railway	ScotRail
Greater Anglia	Southeastern
Great Northern	South Western Railway
GWR	Southern
Hull Trains	Thameslink
LNER	Transport for Wales
London Northwestern Railway	West Midlands Railway

Chiltern Railways @chilternrailway
We were delighted to be joined by Saqib Bhatti MP, The Friends of Dorridge and Heart of England CRP to celebrate a refresh to the ticket hall at Dorridge station. A fitting way for local people to celebrate #CommunityRailWeek.



London Northwestern Railway @LNRailway
It's #CommunityRailWeek so we're shining a spotlight on some of the transformations, starting with Bletchley Station & the @marstonvalecrp
This station adoption project highlights our commitment to the community & the environment
Huge thanks to all the volunteers!



Northern @northernassist
It's #CommunityRailWeek!

We're extremely proud to work alongside our community rail network to help connect the railway to the community. #MoreThanARailway



ScotRail @ScotRail
Today is the start of #CommunityRailWeek, which is sponsored by @RailDeliveryGrp. The theme this year is 'More Than A Railway' which aims to generate curiosity and to raise awareness of the work community rail delivers. @CommunityRail
communityrail.org.uk/events-and-cam...



National Rail @NationalRail
The big day is here: it's #CommunityRailWeek, sponsored by Rail Delivery Group!
#CommunityRail is #MoreThanARailway: it's a grassroots, community-led movement made up of community rail partnerships, station friends, volunteers and other community groups engaging with railways and stations in different ways. #CommunityRailWeek
Learn more here: https://t.co/uk/8GVu



Southern @SouthernRailUK
We had a great day yesterday creating a new wildflower & herb garden at Ore station with @SoutheastCRP & @NetworkRail for #CommunityRailWeek.
This is one of a series of events happening this week to show that as an industry we are #MoreThanARailway. @CommunityRail



London North Eastern Railway @LNER
We're proud to support #CommunityRailWeek.
Rail is one of the greenest ways to travel, connecting people across the country.
To learn more about the events and activities happening this week, head to @CommunityRail or visit spki.io/601744MPN



SWR Help @SWRHelp
Today is the start of #CommunityRailWeek where we celebrate the lesser-known community side of the railway.
Here's a reminder of some of the great work done by the local volunteers who have adopted more than 100 of our stations: youtu.be/OP4pZetXEQ7s...



Hull Trains @Hull_Trains
We're supporting #CommunityRailWeek - a week to raise awareness for the work the Community Rail members deliver within their communities all year round to deliver social, environmental, and economic benefits.
#MoreThanARailway communityrail.org.uk

Community Rail Network @CommunityRail - May 20
promoting social inclusion
combatting the climate crisis
widening access to green travel



Partner activity highlights... continued



A total of 93 partners and supporters shared our messages on social media throughout Community Rail Week. See below for highlights.

Partner toolkit

In advance, we sought support and encouraged partners to get involved by providing them with a digital toolkit. The toolkit was downloaded **114** times (an increase of 15% compared with last year) and included logos, social media graphics, members' activity log and social media schedule.

Support spotlight: Northern

During the lead up to the week we held regular catch ups with Northern's media team, highlighting members' activity and how they could help support. Northern helped promote week to their regional media contacts. Also during the week Northern shared the campaign messages to their online audiences and created a special Community Rail Week video highlighting community rail within their network. We also worked closely with the Northern community team and the team at Newton Heath TrainCare Centre to host the female students for a rail confidence and career day, as one of our core events.



Rail Delivery Group

Campaign sponsors, Rail Delivery Group, provided additional support during the planning and delivery. This included securing Jacqueline Starr, CEO of Rail Delivery Group, to attend the campaign launch, where she could see the value and importance of community rail first-hand. Jacqueline also provided a supportive video in advance, that we were able to use in our online promotions.

Rail Delivery Group helped us to reach out and engage with all the train operators through their national comms group as well as helping to share our campaign messages, and those of our members', through their social media accounts.



Partner activity highlights... continued



Support spotlight: Great Western Railway (GWR)

We worked closely with GWR's community and media teams to deliver the campaign launch at Yatton Station, see [page 6](#) for details. The media team helped to try promote the story to their regional press contacts and it was hoped there would be media in attendance. However a national and local story around the contaminated blood report dominated the news for the day. GWR also provided support during the week by sharing our campaign messages to their audiences on social media channels .



Support spotlight: East Midlands Railway (EMR)

The community rail team at EMR began the week with Derwent Valley Line CRP hosting a local school trip to Matlock Bath where the students made bug hotels and learnt more about community rail. They were joined by EMR Managing Director Will Rogers.



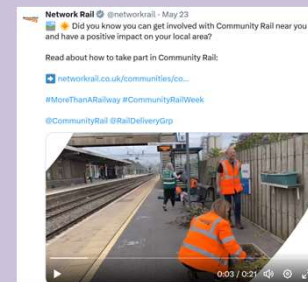
Other activities throughout the week included EMR CRPs showcasing their work at stations in Sheffield and Nottingham, volunteer action day in Driffield and a pumpkin planting party at a farm along the Robin Hood Line.



Support spotlight: Network Rail

Network Rail has provided support throughout Community Rail Week by helping our members promote their work and sharing our messages to their audiences online. The North West team hosted a community rail showcase at the start of the week for local community rail partnership and station volunteer groups to promote their work on the concourse at Manchester Piccadilly Station.

Online, Network Rail shared our messages to their audiences on social media to their 210k followers on X/Twitter and 300k followers on LinkedIn. Additionally, they hosted an article on their website titled 'What is community rail and how to get involved'. Chair of Network Rail, Lord Sir Peter Hendy, provided us with a supportive video message that we shared as part of the week's promotions through our socials.



Media & PR



Our approach & external factors

This year we put together three media packages based around our core events. These packages were sent out in advance (along with an invitation to attend the events) to regional media outlets and consisted of a regionalised press release, photographs, video clips and interviews with volunteers and spokespeople. After each event (the same day) we sent out post-event press releases with photographs and video clips. In addition to our PR consultant, we also had the support of GWR's media and communications manager and Northern's media relations manager who helped to try sell the stories to their regional contacts.

However, during Community Rail Week several breaking news stories dominated regional and national media. The contaminated blood scandal had regionalised personal stories and later in the week the announcement of a general election dominated all media which left little space for our stories to break through.

It is also worth noting that last year's media mentions were bolstered by 'World Cup of Stations' publicity receiving a total of 72 media mentions. If we remove these mentions from last year's media figures, it gives a more accurate figure to base our results on, see below.

2023 media mentions (minus World Cup of Stations based releases): **44**

2024 media mentions: **50** increase of 14%



Yet to be published

We have also been working on several 'round-up' pieces that are yet to be published. These articles are due to be released in July:

RailProfessional

modern railways



Social media



Our approach

Social media has redefined the way people consume news and learn about awareness days / campaigns. This year, we wanted to fully utilise our social media presence to expand the reach of the campaign, complement our traditional media work and raise awareness of community rail in an immediate, engaging way.

As well as delivering our organic, scheduled posts throughout the week, we took a more structured approach to engaging with other content and users on social media. This involved:

- Building the 'hype' / awareness around the campaign through reactive engagement such as liking and sharing other people's content. Responding to comments and questions provided an opportunity to engage in a two-way dialogue with people seeing our content, adding a more personal, conversational touch than simply 'broadcasting'.
- Tagging in train operators, corporate partners, trade and news media outlets, tourism organisations, other transport and third sector partners, key figures / influencers and specific transport and environmental correspondents to our key posts.
- Checking in with partners we have existing relationships with via email and direct messaging, encouraging them to show support for the campaign.

It was encouraging to see so many of our partners not just supporting the campaign by sharing our messages, but by creating their own meaningful and engaging content. A [personalised post](#) from TeamBA, a [video](#) from Northern and support from sub-regional transport bodies like [Transport East](#) Transport for the North shows just how significantly our partners are putting their weight behind the campaign.



Member & partner feedback



After Community Rail Week had finished, we sent out two surveys to gather feedback from our members and partners. Below is a summary of the results and suggestions of how we can improve in future years.

Members feedback

99% of members found the campaign to be valuable. Many members said they benefited from using the campaign to raise the profile of their partnership/group and providing the opportunity to work together with other members and partners.

Nearly half of members surveyed felt they received best results from social media engagement when promoting their campaign activity and 32% felt a combination of delivering traditional press and media work (such as press releases) and social media worked well.

Several members expressed they want the date and theme announced earlier to allow for more time to plan and engage with partners. They also suggested sending the toolkit out 4-6 weeks before the launch at the latest. We will aim to incorporate this when planning for 2025.

Partners

100% of partners surveyed found the campaign to be valuable with many partners using the campaign to raise the profile of how they support community rail throughout the year. Partners also said they benefited from the opportunity to promote community rail to internal colleagues and talk about the movement with their audiences.



Member & partner feedback



Below are a selection of positive comments gathered from members through our Community Rail Week feedback survey.

"Great to have a CRN rep at our event to support and promote our work"

"Thank you for all the support. It was a great week and good to work with and connect with other CRPs"

"Community Rail Week enabled us to develop links with two new schools and a local artist. Look forward to participating in 2025!"

"We look forward to greater involvement in 2025"

"Thanks for all the tools provided to assist. Always helpful."

"The events and engagement opportunities produced were fantastic."

"A big thank you for the CR Week toolkit! The graphics came in very handy and the suggested social media posts were great; the text was easily customisable to fit our local situation and it gave me a roadmap as to what to post and when over the 7 days."

"You gave everyone a positive framework to work with. A job well done."

"All events attended and organised at Sheffield Nottingham and Worksop, which we supported, enabled direct engagement with the community, rail users, other rail partnerships and TOCs who attended/supported events which was very positive."

"Thank you for publicising a great week overall."

"I think the formula adopted this year and the places events took place, we're the right ones, and essentially in the heart of our communities."

Key learnings



1)

Members' toolkit needs to be released earlier (4-6 weeks prior)

Feedback from members and experience from previous years shows that the toolkit should be delivered earlier to give valuable time for members to plan their online activity in line with our key messages. This also provides members with the opportunity of inviting local dignitaries and MPs to their events and seeking their support for activities in advance. We would look to communicate the toolkit as early as a month before to provide our members with even more time.

2)

Our interactive map showcased the scale of the activities delivered across the country during the campaign week

This was the first year we'd developed an interactive map and it showed the vast scale of involvement from members across the country. It also provided as a gentle nudge to remind members to tell us about their activity plans so we could include them on the map. This is something we will look to deliver again in the future.

3)

Support from train operators and other partners was a standout success, with an increase of partners getting involved up 79% compared to last year

Shortly after the theme was announced to our members, we delivered comms to our rail industry and other third-sector partners providing suggestions on how they could help support members in their areas. We spoke one on one with some partners including TOCs discussing how they could specifically get involved. We produced a partner toolkit that was sent out 1-2 weeks before the campaign launched – next year we would look to deliver this toolkit around the same time as the member toolkit, around a month before and continued the increased comms with partners.

4)

Corporate partner support could be improved

This year we received less support from our corporate partners than during previous campaigns, despite having stepped up our communications with them. We met with 6 corporate partners in advance, providing specific advice and suggestions on how they could get involved. However, we received support online from 4 partners and no events/activities were held (unlike previous years).

We will re-evaluate this process with our fundraising team and consider other ways we could seek support in the future.

1. **Decide on dates for next year** and liaise with RDG re. potential sponsorship so we can begin planning as early as possible.
2. **Consider how to incorporate Railway 200 into plans:** what would resonate with wider audiences and our members, and appeal to media.
3. **Hold kick-off meeting in September.**
4. **Liaise with RDG's comms team** to identify potential opportunities.
5. **Liaise with Railway 200 project team** specifically around potential opportunities for CR Week 2025.