

# The Value of Community Rail



Community rail is a unique and growing movement comprising 75 community rail partnerships and 1,300 volunteer groups that help communities get the most from their railways.

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

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

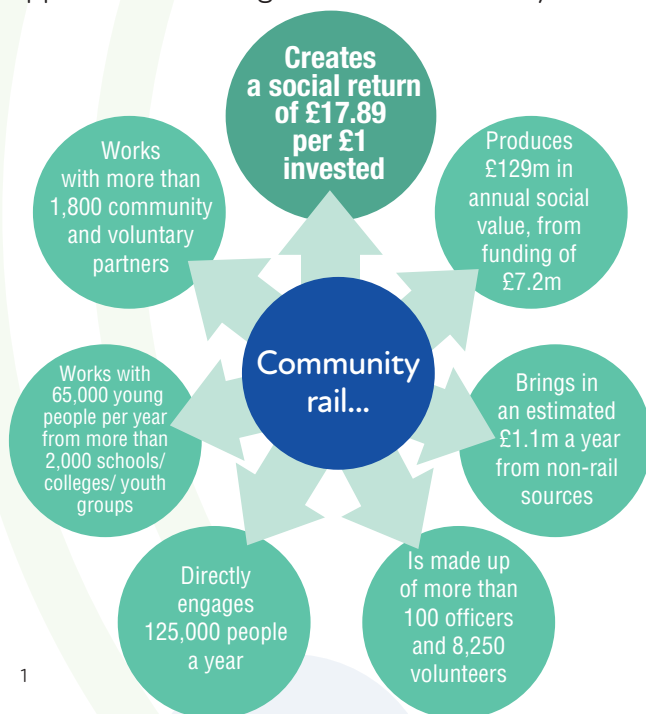


75 community rail partnerships

cover more than a third (34%) of Britain's railways, spanning both rural and urban lines

1,300 station groups

work on or around stations across Britain, with 50% of the network 'adopted' by local communities.



Each Year

8,250



Volunteers

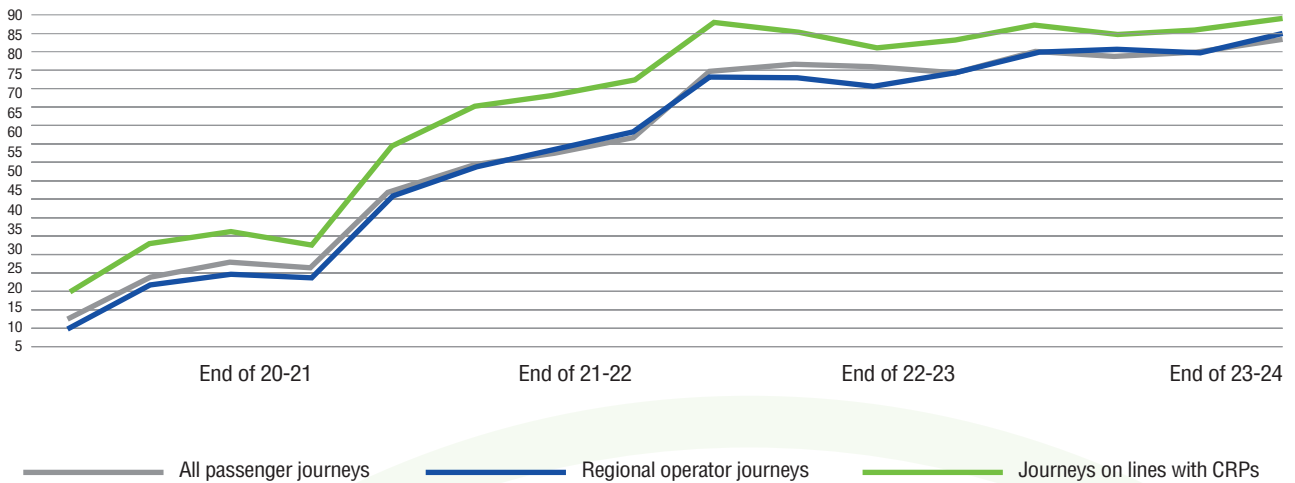
Giving

380,000 Hours



Worth £30.9m

## Recovery of passenger journeys April 2020 to March 2024 <sup>2</sup>



Lines with community rail partnerships have shown significantly stronger passenger growth and recovery from the pandemic.

**Passenger numbers on community rail lines rose by 42% between 2008/9 and 2017/18, higher than the overall increase of 35%**

3

By breaking down travel barriers and supporting modal shift, community rail enables big carbon savings.

Rail vs Large car (petrol) – 86%

Rail vs Medium car (petrol) – 79%

Rail vs Small car (petrol) – 73%

4

### Community rail:

- Acts as a critical friend to the rail sector, helping it respond to local needs
- Supports local authorities’ strategic priorities
- Brings partners together to create integrated travel
- Encourages and enables modal shift and promotes healthy, green travel
- Helps make rail inclusive and accessible to all, and builds travel confidence among young people and marginalised groups
- Supports economic prosperity and sustainability by encouraging rail-based tourism and leisure travel
- Uses rail as a catalyst for regeneration, including developing stations as community hubs

Community rail is ideally placed to play a vital role in the new government's vision of a passenger-focused, inclusive railway that’s responsive to local needs, and creating greener, more integrated and equitable transport networks that promote social mobility.

To find out more about the insights we offer and collaborative opportunities, get in touch: [communityrail.org.uk](https://communityrail.org.uk)

1. All statistics are taken from our 'The value of community rail' report, sponsored by Rail Delivery Group, published in September '24.  
 2. Passenger journeys on a significant sample of railway lines with community rail partnerships (n=46) recovered faster from the pandemic, standing at 89% of pre-COVID levels at the end of 2023-2024. This compares to an average of 83% for all passenger journeys across the network (excluding the Elizabeth Line), and 84% for regional operator journeys.  
 3. Figures over a ten-year period from 2008-9 to 2017-18 show that passenger numbers on a significant sample (n=36) of community rail lines rose by 42%, higher than the increase in total (35%) and regional sector (29%) journeys.  
 4. Comparative figures devised using <https://ourworldindata.org/travel-carbon-footprint#licence>. 'Average' community rail journey distance calculated by taking the total km of community rail lines in Britain and dividing it by the number of lines. An average journey is deemed to be a full one-way trip on the average line length – 46km.