



Lancashire Rail Ramblers

# Tourism & leisure strategy

April 2025 to March 2028



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# Executive summary

**Community rail is a powerful force in driving modal shift and inspiring and enabling rail travel, especially for tourism and leisure, with a proud tradition of drawing on local culture, stories and landscapes to support this.**

Across Britain, 75 community rail partnerships and 1300 station friends groups engage directly with more than 16,000 people per year in grassroots activities to promote rail-based sustainable tourism, on top of the tens of thousands more through their local and regional communications[1]. However, there is more that can be done.

The aim of this strategy is to give focus to Community Rail Network's tourism and leisure work over the next three years. It identifies areas of opportunity for us to maximise and deliver results, while engaging and supporting our members and partners to do the same. This aligns with the [Department for Transport's Community Rail Development Strategy](#) as well as Community Rail Network's overarching strategy, see our [strategic fit here](#).

**We have engaged with our community rail members, rail industry partners and tourism organisations and developed five key aims:**

Support members to deliver effective, evidence-led tourism and leisure campaigns locally and regionally

Provide online platforms for members to bolster their tourism and leisure promotions and extend their reach to wider audiences

Encourage the tourism and leisure industry to promote rail as a sustainable and healthy way to travel, drawing on and working with community rail

Influence strategy and thinking at a regional level, towards more sustainable, inclusive and healthy travel, drawing on local insights and initiatives, including in community rail

Secure funding for Community Rail Network's tourism and leisure work, to provide a sound financial footing to drive results



# Introduction

This strategy enables us to take a longer-term view and consider how community rail can engage communities with rail-based tourism and leisure in the most impactful, beneficial ways, helping to make the shift to more sustainable, inclusive, healthy and economically beneficial forms of travel.

The framework in this strategy provides a focus for us to work alongside our members and the tourism industry to shape and develop plans and activities that will capitalise on the local knowledge and insights from across community rail. It looks to expand and develop our current tourism and leisure work, introducing new campaigns and initiatives, and enhancing community rail promotions, their reach and impact.



## Strategic aims

Support members to deliver effective, evidence-led tourism and leisure campaigns locally and regionally

Provide online platforms for members to bolster their tourism and leisure promotions and extend their reach to wider audiences

Encourage the tourism and leisure industry to promote rail as a sustainable and healthy way to travel, drawing on and working with community rail

Influence strategy and thinking at a regional level, towards more sustainable, inclusive and healthy travel, drawing on local insights and initiatives, including in community rail

Secure funding for Community Rail Network's tourism and leisure work, to provide a sound financial footing to drive results



# Strategic fit

## Department for Transport Community Rail Development Strategy

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 Rail Network's mission

To empower, support and champion the community rail movement, helping community rail partnerships, station friends volunteers and other community groups to:

Enhance the railways' contribution to social inclusion, sustainable development and health and wellbeing, including by maximising access to and use of the railways

Ensure the community has a voice and plays a part in the development and improvement of our railways, so this meets community needs and aspirations and delivers maximum social value

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

## Community Rail Network Tourism and Leisure Strategic Aims 2025 – 2028, see page 4

We are also mindful of seeking alignment with wider national, devolved and regional strategies including the Government's new transport priorities, forthcoming National Integrated Transport Strategy, Wales, Scotland and regional transport strategies and the forthcoming Visit England Tourism Strategy.

# Delivering our aims

## Aim 1: Support members to deliver effective, evidence-led tourism and leisure campaigns locally and regionally



We recognise the importance of community rail partnerships, station friends volunteers and other community groups in the development and promotion of an area's tourism offer, and specifically their ability to encourage more inclusive, sustainable and locally-beneficial forms of tourism. We will provide members with the opportunities, skills and tools to participate in wider national and regional campaigns working with local partners to promote rail as part of the sustainable tourism offer.

We will continue to provide ad-hoc tourism and leisure support for our members, working together to drive results on their local projects and initiatives. Our support and development team will continue to work closely with our communications and policy team to identify opportunities and deliver support, providing one to one guidance and assistance tailored to the needs of each member.

Our Tourism Network will continue to play a vital role, providing a forum for members to receive peer to peer support and exchange best practice. We will aim to grow the network over the next three years, bringing in additional support and expertise from community rail and external speakers from across the tourism and transport sectors to grow skills and share information.



High Peak & Hope Valley Community Rail Partnership.  
Photo: Dark Peak Photography

We will increase the number of tourism and leisure campaigns we deliver, from two to four. Spread throughout the year, these campaigns will provide Community Rail Network members and their partners more opportunity to get involved, focusing on different audiences and themes.

This enhanced calendar of campaigns will consist of three bite-sized campaigns lasting around two weeks and one signature campaign (continuing with our Days Out by Rail promotion) running for four weeks in summer.



## Aim 1 continued...

Building on the success we've seen with our Days Out by Rail campaign, we will apply a similar model with the new campaigns. Each will focus on a theme and include community-led content and story-telling, with sustainability and inclusivity at its core.



These will draw on evidence on what's effective in promoting behaviour change, and current trends and opportunities. Our members will be encouraged to participate and engage tourism and leisure partners on a local and regional level. It is hoped that across the course of this strategy the campaigns will become embedded within the community rail and wider industry calendar.



We will also involve, draw on and align with our railway partners to further increase their support by continuing to identify opportunities to collaborate. For example, we previously worked with National Rail during our Days Out by Rail campaign, with them providing prize incentives for our competitions and sharing our campaign to their audience of over 1 million.

We will work with national tourism organisations including Visit England, Visit Scotland, Visit Wales and national campaign leaders such as Railway 200, Heritage Open Days (England), Open Doors (Wales) and Doors Open (Scotland) to develop opportunities for Community Rail Network and our members to participate in and benefit from.

## Success measures

- ↑ Increase the social value of community rail's tourism and leisure promotions from **£4million**
- ↑ Increase the number of people community rail engages in activities around promoting sustainable tourism from **16,000**
- ↑ Increase the number of members recognising tourism and leisure work as one of their top priorities from **40%**, measured through our annual members' survey
- ↑ Increase the percentage of members taking part in our campaigns from **78%** of community rail partnerships and **34%** of station groups – benchmark from 2024 members survey
- + **90%+** members feel our campaigns are beneficial to their work, measured through our annual members' survey – no benchmark available as we've not recorded this before
- + **90%+** of Community Rail Tourism Network members feel the Tourism Network sessions are meaningful and worthwhile – measured by feedback gained through a new year-end survey, no benchmark available as we've not recorded this before

# Delivering our aims

# SCENIC RAIL



ScenicRailBritain.com

## Aim 2: Provide online platforms for members to bolster their tourism and leisure promotions and extend their reach to wider audiences

**NB:** We are currently without a sponsor for Scenic Rail Britain which is for now restricting our ability to step-up and develop the activity below beyond the bare minimum. Some of these activities will be scaled back and adapted while we work towards securing funding for this work stream, [see aim 5](#).

We will continue to use [Scenic Rail Britain](#) to showcase community rail routes, stations, projects and initiatives as inspiration for domestic and international visitors through the website and social channels, shining a spotlight on the benefits of rail travel. We will continue to ensure the Scenic Rail Britain website and social media accounts are kept up to date with new and inspiring community-driven content. Scenic Rail Britain will also be used as a conversation starter within the tourism industry to raise awareness of community rail within this landscape.

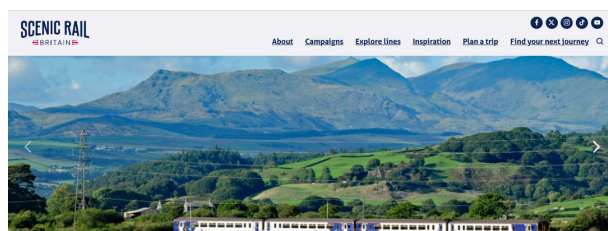


We will increase our promotion of accessible travel for tourism and leisure journeys, by highlighting community-led projects that help increase confidence in navigating stations and travelling by train.

We will continue to use Scenic Rail Britain's social media channels as a platform for community rail members to share their tourism offer to a wider audience.

Our social channels will play a key role in campaigns and during quieter months, dependant on funding, we plan to develop paid-for adverts, specifically targeting audiences that have not yet engaged with us on a national and potentially international level.

We will use research from Visit Britain's annual inbound visitor and domestic trip reports to identify opportunities where we can effectively encourage modal shift on to rail-based travel. This aims to drive more hits to the website, which as a result will increase traffic to our members' websites and increase the number of tickets sold through our Trainline affiliate scheme.



### Go greener with adventures by train

Welcome to Scenic Rail Britain

Taking the train is one of the greenest ways to travel. It enables you to uncover Britain's hidden gems, head off the beaten track, marvel at spectacular views, discover our country's diverse history and many more adventures avoiding the stress and pollution of driving and parking.

Driven by insights and local knowledge from community rail, here you will find inspiring itineraries and suggestions for delightful days out, tranquil train-hopping and splendid short breaks across England, Scotland and Wales.

It's time to experience Scenic Rail Britain.

[Find your next journey](#)



# Delivering our aims

## Aim 2: continued...

We will continue to support rail industry and tourism sector partners by amplifying their campaigns and linking in relevant community rail activity via our platforms.

Once funding has been secured, we will be in a strong position to invest in the Scenic Rail Britain brand. We will use online advertising to promote community rail routes to new audiences, maximise SEO and create an increased flow of traffic and engagement from and to our social media platforms, building on past experience.

## Success measures

- ↑ Increase website users to a consistent average of **150,000** per year – from 90,500
- ↑ Hit **30k** followers across all social media channels (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and X) – currently 16.7k
- ↑ Grow newsletter subscribers to **10,000** – from 4,000 subscribers
- 📢 Members see Scenic Rail Britain channels as an effective outlet to promote their tourism and leisure initiatives, measured through number of referrals to members' websites and results from members' surveys
- ✚ Increase ticket sale conversions through Trainline affiliate scheme from current level of **134** conversions on average per year



# Delivering our aims

## Aim 3: Encourage the tourism and leisure industry to promote rail as a sustainable and healthy way to travel, drawing on and working with community rail

We want to support tourism and leisure organisations on a national and regional level to benefit from community rail's insights and local knowledge to increase promotion of rail's green credentials, help drive behaviour change among visitors, and support more sustainable, inclusive and locally-beneficial forms of tourism.

We currently have relationships with core tourism partners Visit Britain, Visit England, National Trust, Eco Attractions and Good Journey. Most recently we've worked with Visit England to introduce their Local Visitor Economy Partnership (LVEP) scheme to the Tourism Network and our chief executive has been providing community rail insights in the development of the Visit England Tourism Strategy. We want to focus on developing these key relationships, where we see much greater scope to deliver results, to encourage modal shift onto rail-based travel and raise awareness of community rail.



National Trust



eco attractions

good journey

We will also improve our horizon-scanning to identify, explore and plan for opportunities to build on existing relationships as well as foster new contacts within the tourism and leisure landscape.

We will encourage our members to develop their own partnerships to drive this forward locally. We will use this work to advocate on behalf of our members within the tourism and leisure landscape for greater use and promotion of rail-based travel and its benefits for local communities.

## Success measures



Enhance our tourism partner relationships, with evidence of impactful collaborations across 12+ influential partners to promote sustainable travel by rail



Community Rail Network to have had at least 10 strategic influencing meetings/speaking opportunities with high profile tourism organisations such as Visit Britain, National Trust etc.



# Delivering our aims

## Aim 4: Influence strategy and thinking at a regional level, towards more sustainable, inclusive and healthy travel, drawing on local insights and initiatives, including in community rail

We want to position Community Rail Network as a respected and knowledgeable advisor in sustainable travel for leisure and tourism across the regions.




Working closely with our tourism partners, as per in [aim 3](#), and our community rail members, we will identify forthcoming opportunities across the tourism landscape that are relevant for us. We will utilise our developing relationships with Mayoral authorities and other regional bodies to advise them on promoting rail-based sustainable tourism and feed into local consultations and policy initiatives.



East of England Community Rail Partnerships at London Liverpool Street

We will produce a PR calendar, highlighting days when key regional and national reports and statistics are set to be released. This will mean we identify times where we can be part of the conversation and allow us to prepare. We will also develop a document containing pre-defined messaging to raise awareness of our work, in order for us to respond quickly to a piece of news and use this effectively during our reactive work.

## Success measures

-  Evidence of at least five examples of effective PR per year, i.e. press releases achieving coverage in target media
-  Relationships with relevant officers in at least three key regional mayoral authorities established, to feed into their tourism and leisure offer
-  Host tourism visit for at least one regional Mayor per year

# Delivering our aims




## Aim 5: Secure funding for Community Rail Network's tourism and leisure work, to provide a sound financial footing to drive results



We are urgently seeking sponsorship of Scenic Rail Britain to help us continue our work in promoting community rail routes to a wider tourism audience and set us up for future growth through the website and social media channels. We're keen to build on what we've achieved so far and grow our reach and influence further, however we need funding to be able to do this. Our fundraising and partnerships lead in the team is actively working on this and is tasked with ensuring this sponsorship is maintained continuously.

Working with our fundraising and partnerships lead, we will consider opportunities to maximise income for this area of our work, and the potential for it to be fully covered by dedicated sponsorship/income in future.

### Success measures

-  Secure a sponsor for Scenic Rail Britain confirmed for at least a year with the aim of securing a long-term partnership
-  Maximising opportunities from sponsorship, ensuring our members are benefiting from the sponsorship through Scenic Rail Britain
-  Progress towards full cost recovery for this area of work





# Looking forward to March 2028

## What success looks like:

- The community rail movement has become an active, recognised part of the tourism and leisure landscape, at a local and regional level, via a significant number of our members being active in this space, and nationally through Community Rail Network's partnership work.
- Our Scenic Rail Britain website is on a sound financial footing providing members with an enhanced platform to share their tourism projects while promoting our wider tourism and community rail work.
- Our Scenic Rail Britain website has seen a significant growth in users, resulting in a substantial growth of referrals to members' websites. We have also surpassed our ambitious social media engagement targets.
- We will have seen the social value of community rail's tourism and leisure promotions dramatically increase, with more people being engaged in activities through our members' work, and plans put in place for how we continue to develop this longer-term, focused on activities that create greatest impact.
- We will be in a strong position to launch a new tourism strategy from 2028-2031 with higher reaching targets and goals to keep the momentum from this successful strategy.
- Community Rail Network has a consortium of established relationships with tourism organisations that support us during campaigns and help drive awareness of community rail and the benefits of sustainable travel for leisure and tourism to their audiences, and who we have (where relevant) influenced to make rail-based travel more central to their work.
- We are continually called upon by tourism partners to give our valuable insights at a strategic level to help drive modal shift and behaviour change with initiatives driven by non-rail partners.

*This strategy will be reviewed annually in March 2026, March 2027 and a final review at the end of the three years in March 2028.*