

# Encouraging collaborative working

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Map of Wales showing rail routes and stations.



PROMOTING GOOD PRACTICE IN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WITH RAIL | DEVELOPED BY



# Encouraging collaborative working

**Increasing the level of collaboration between rail industry partners was seen as vital to maximising the value and legacy of projects. Research participants gave examples of projects where different elements of community engagement had not been joined up, with work and effort duplicated as a result. It was felt that if community engagement is done better, organisations can work as ‘one railway,’ not as a host of different partners.**

**This also ensures that competition between organisations is removed, encouraging an altruistic approach that promotes the good of the industry as a whole, and local place-based impact.**

Desired and suggested elements of best practice included:

## **Strategic planning and ownership**

- Develop a unified strategic plan for community engagement and social value across all partners.
- Assign clear ownership for collaborative efforts to ensure accountability and direction.
- Integrate social value into every stage of project planning, from business case development to delivery.

## **Community engagement**

- Ensure continuity and coordination in community activities across different suppliers to avoid duplication.
- Promote a ‘one railway’ approach, where all partners contribute to a shared legacy rather than isolated efforts.
- Create dedicated roles within organisations to support community engagement and collaboration.

## **Internal capability building**

- Educate all levels of staff, including senior leadership, on the importance and impact of community engagement and social value.
- Build capability across the supply chain, including commercial, procurement, and delivery teams.
- Encourage sponsors and business case authors to consider community engagement as a core component.

## **Collaboration culture**

- Foster a culture of openness and shared purpose, moving away from competition toward mutual benefit.
- Encourage altruistic approaches to promote sector-wide improvement.
- Create mechanisms for open dialogue between partners, communities, and authorities.



## Encouraging collaborative working

### Working with community rail and communities

- Include community rail consultation in strategic planning charters or MoUs.
- Support community rail with dedicated posts in property and planning teams to streamline collaboration, and simplify and standardise processes (e.g. community licenses, asset protection agreements) to reduce delays.
- Maintain regular catch-ups with community rail partnerships to ensure transparency and responsiveness.
- Leverage local authority partnerships to strengthen ties between rail industry and communities.

### Innovation and learning

- Promote initiatives like Remake Learning Rail to share ideas and foster innovation.
- Provide examples and resources to help stakeholders understand and visualise the impact of social value.
- Encourage learning and adaptation, recognising that collaborative working is still evolving in the industry

### Why is collaborative working important to the rail industry?

Collaborative working is essential to the rail industry because it enables partners, suppliers, and communities to create outcomes that no single organisation could achieve alone. A unified strategic approach ensures that social value and community engagement are embedded from the earliest planning stages through to delivery, leading to more coherent and impactful projects. Clear ownership and shared accountability strengthen direction, reduce duplication, and keep long term community benefits at the forefront.

Working collaboratively also helps build continuity across different suppliers, avoiding siloed or inconsistent approaches. A 'one railway' mindset encourages partners to contribute to a collective legacy rather than isolated initiatives, fostering trust and shared purpose. This cultural shift, from competition to openness and mutual benefit, supports innovation and sector wide learning, enabling the industry to adapt and evolve.

Internally, collaboration enhances capability building across all levels, from senior leaders to commercial and delivery teams. When staff understand the value of community engagement, they make better decisions that align with broader societal goals. Externally, strengthened relationships with organisations including community rail partnerships and local authorities lead to more efficient processes, clearer communication, and greater responsiveness.

Collaborative working allows the rail industry to deliver meaningful social value, support thriving communities, and build a more resilient, inclusive, and forward looking network.

*“Community engagement and social value is still a learning curve, but we want to do things properly, and there is an excitement to share ideas and collaborate with others.”*

*“A collaborative approach is the way forward, with everyone bringing something different to the table.”*

*“Competition cannot be a barrier; it is about working together towards mutual industry benefits with open dialogue. Think about who you are doing things for.”*

*“Delivering events and activities collaboratively hugely increases the impact. There is still a bit of old-school thinking and culture to overcome.”*

*“You don’t need a lot of experts to make community engagement happen; you need the collective will. There needs to be a collective understanding about the importance of delivering for communities.”*



## Encouraging collaborative working

### Case Study:

#### Collaborative working on the East Coast Digital Programme

**The East Coast Digital Programme** (ECDP) is a pioneering cross-industry initiative transforming the southern section of the East Coast Main Line with in-cab digital signalling (ETCS). With over 30 organisations involved, collaboration is at the heart of its success. ECDP breaks traditional boundaries by integrating track, train, and operations into a unified delivery model focused on creating a safer, greener, and more reliable railway.

This partnership model nurtures strong relationships across diverse stakeholders, guided by shared values – caring, pioneering, inclusive, and tenacious – and six charter principles that promote trust, transparency, and mutual support. The programme's collaborative ethos enables it to tackle complex integration challenges across technical, operational, and organisational domains, continually learning and adapting to change at every stage.

By prioritising people over technology, ECDP ensures that change is inclusive and focused on the end user, empowering teams to learn, adapt, and innovate together. The long-term technology partnership model further strengthens collaboration, aligning infrastructure providers with operational needs.

ECDP sets a new standard for industry cooperation, laying the groundwork for future digital signalling rollouts across the UK. Its impact will be felt through improved reliability, punctuality, and sustainability, making the railway work better for everyone.

