

Annual Report 2019/2020



Worcestershire Parkway Station
the County's first new station for 100 years

Foreword from Lord Faulkner of Worcester

Writing in his novel “Sybil” in 1845, Benjamin Disraeli correctly predicted “The railways will do as much for mankind as the monasteries did”. From their earliest days our railways have enjoyed a special relationship with the British people – critical and demanding, but affectionate and supportive too.

An excellent example of that relationship is the Community Rail Partnership movement, which now extends across Great Britain from Helmsdale in the far north of Scotland to St Ives in far south west of England. There are about 70 partnerships and over 1,000 station adoptions, and thousands of volunteers who care sufficiently about their local railway to give of their time in activities such as arts and gardening projects on stations, working with train companies to improve services and helping disabled people to use the railway.



The Worcestershire Community Rail Partnership is one year old, and I wish it a happy birthday and thank everyone in the county and in the wider West Midlands area for providing the funding and support to get it up and running.



GWR IETs 800010 & 800012 at Norton Photo: Steve Widdowson

Chair's Report

It is difficult to believe that a year has lapsed since the formal launch of the Worcestershire Community Rail Partnership at the Guildhall in Worcester on the 8th November. It was great to see so many people attend the event and for Lord Faulkner to be with us to toast the launch with shortbread and sponge cakes provided by the owners of the tearoom on Great Malvern Station.

Working in partnership is a fundamental way of enabling an organisation to flourish. I wish to place on record the assistance given by Worcestershire County Council in developing the Partnership and particularly Andy Baker, Transportation Manager who decided to take early retirement in August. He had a key role in the recruitment and selection process when we were seeking to appoint a Community Rail Partnership Officer and enabled the Rail User Groups to meet on a frequent basis to discuss the Council's priorities for a Rail Investment Strategy.



William Whiting

One of the reasons for my involvement in the setting up of a Community Rail Partnerships is the benefit I have seen when travelling with my wife three years ago on the line from Lancaster to Leeds known as the Bentham line. The Community Rail Partnership has developed the line to be dementia friendly and there are a series of walks from stations along the route.

I am therefore pleased to be part of a Steering Group overseeing the work of the Partnership that is committed to the aims of Community Rail in Worcestershire. We are also fortunate in having the West Midlands Combined Authority hosting the Community Rail Partnership Officer by providing accommodation and internet facilities.

On your behalf I was pleased to attend the Community Rail Conference in Bristol on the 2nd and 3rd March, just before the government announced lockdown. There were some excellent speakers and some most useful workshops. One workshop that struck me most was on tackling loneliness which we know can have a devastating impact on those who are isolated. We were told how the Friends of Beeston Station enabled people living on their own to take part in their activities. The conference was also a great opportunity to meet other delegates which included Community Engagement Officers in train operating companies.

At this uncertain time it is likely that the commuter market will have suffered permanent decline so there is a need to think what the role of Community Rail Partnerships might be in promoting rail and leisure travel. Worcestershire is a great county to explore and the rail network serves many places with a fascinating history.

William Whiting

Chair Worcestershire Rail Community Partnership

Our First Year...

The Community Rail Partnership for Worcestershire was formally launched on Friday 8 November 2019 at The Guildhall in Worcester. The event was attended by the founding partners along with representatives of interested organisations from across the County. An opportunity was given for breakout groups to suggest what they would like to see the CRP prioritising in its first year. This list has been influential in guiding the planning of both the Partnership Officer and the Steering Group.

Peter Chapman was appointed as Partnership Officer from Monday 16th December. Formally, he works within the structure of the West Midlands Rail Executive as the Partnership is an unincorporated organisation. The Partnership remains grateful to the Executive for handling both the employment of the Officer and the financial aspects of the Partnership's work.



Peter Chapman - Partnership Officer

The work of the Partnership is guided by the Steering Group made up of representatives of the funding organisations and of the local Rail User Groups. The Steering Group works to the Terms of Reference established during the formation of the Partnership: both the Terms of Reference and the membership of the Steering Group are to be found on p. 11 of this Report.



One of the joys of being Partnership Officer is visiting the wonderful stations in Worcestershire. A WMR Class 170 and a GWR IET cross at Great Malvern in September 2020.

Unsurprisingly, the year's work has been defined by the restrictions due to the Covid-19 pandemic from March. Up to that point, the Partnership Officer had been out and about in the County meeting actual and prospective station adopters and planning with interested parties on how the Partnership could best meet its objectives. From March, the emphasis has been on Projects which could be done from the Officer's home.

Financial Summary

The CRP is largely funded by the three Train Operating Companies through both recurring grants and one-off project-based contributions. Additional contributions are made by the County Council, West Midlands Rail Executive, and the Cotswold Line Promotion Group.

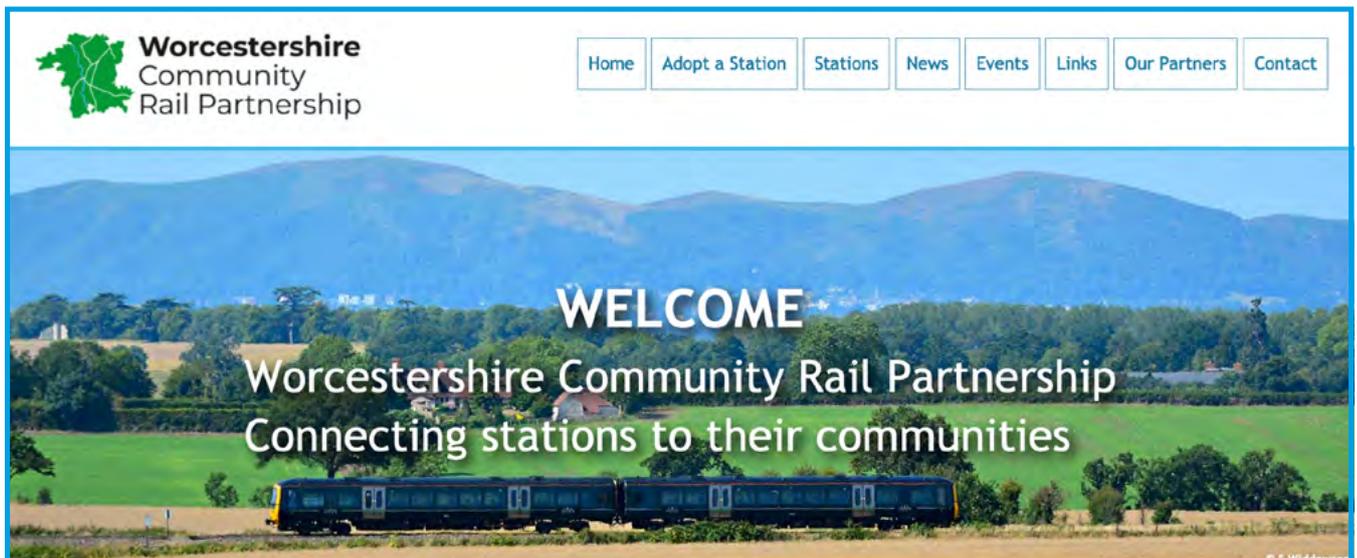
The Partnership Officer is employed on 0.6 FTE contract and is the key recurring cost to the CRP. This means that the bulk of the CRP's expenditure is focused on supporting Station Adoption and on one-off projects (completed ones listed below).

Income 2019-2021	£99,285.20
Expenditure – Partnership Officer 2019-2021	£21,633.59
Expenditure – Delivered Projects 2019-2021	£19,135
Expenditure – Planned Projects 2020-2021	£12,530
Balance for Projects 2020-21 / 2021-2022	£45,986.61

First Year Achievements

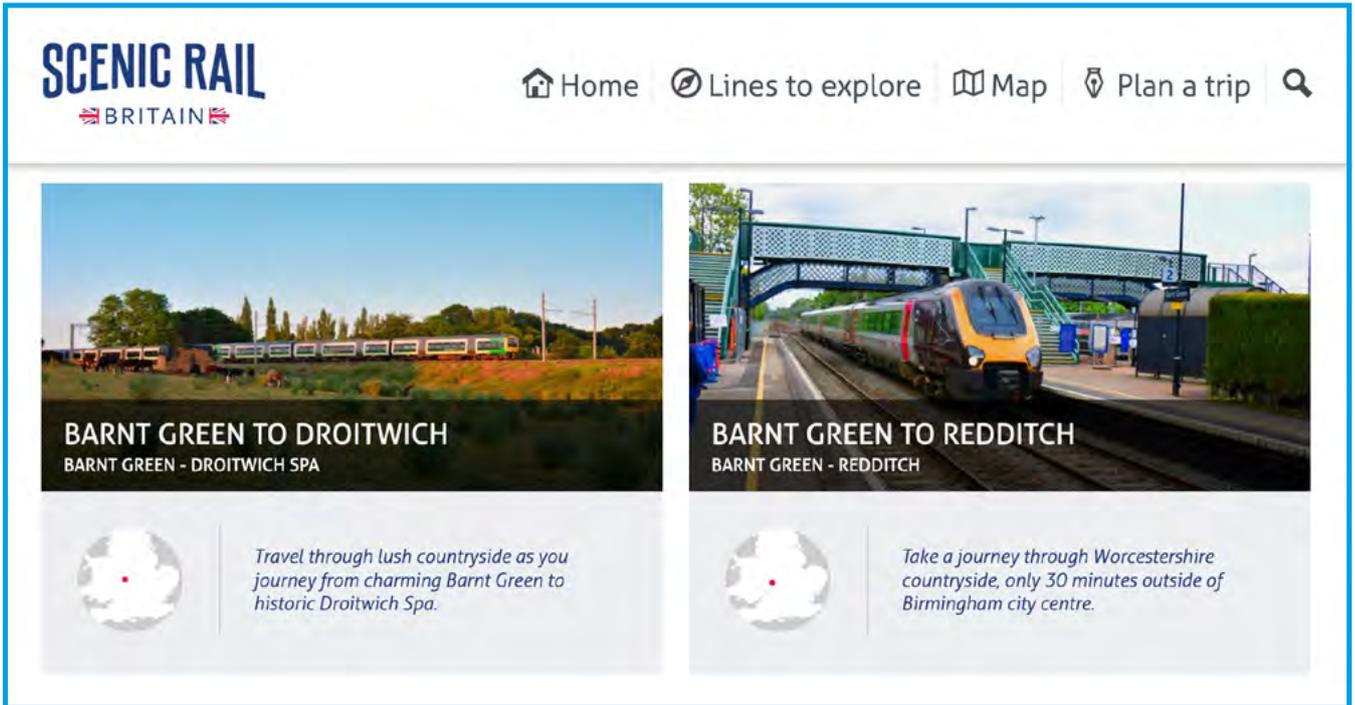
Key projects delivered have been:

- The CRP's web site (www.wcrp.org.uk) and social media presence



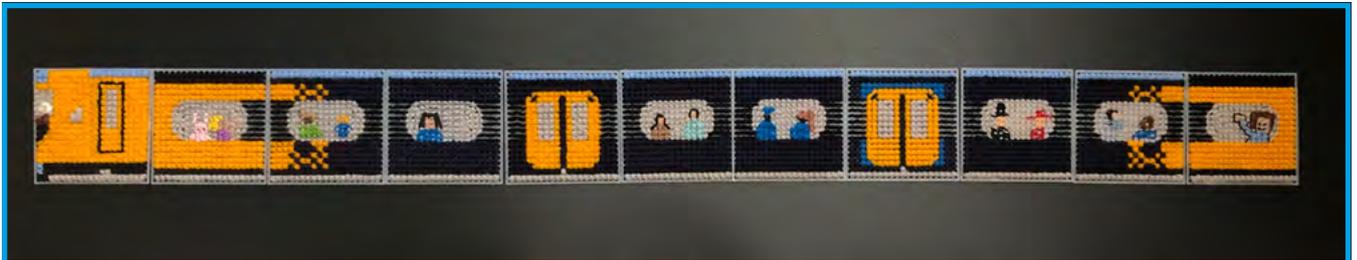
CRP web site

- Populating the Scenic Rail Britain web site (<https://www.scenicrailbritain.com/regions/midlands>)



Two of the County's lines highlighted on the Scenic Rail Britain web site

- Developing the StitchTrainWorcs project (<https://wcrp.org.uk/stitchtrain>) with funding from the Community Rail Network



WMR Class 196 as created by the volunteers of the #StitchTrainWorcestershire project

- Supporting the Backtrack Anti-Trespass competition (<https://wcrp.org.uk/backtrack-anti-trespass-competition/>)
- Producing a promotional video for the Barnt Green to Redditch line. See the CRP's web site (www.wcrp.org.uk)
- Arranging Station Neighbours for Bromsgrove. See the CRP's web site (www.wcrp.org.uk)

From September, the CRP has supported the #RailtoRecovery initiative in conjunction with the Partnership's Train Operating Companies.

Station Adoption

Working with the volunteers who give their time to Station Adoption is at the heart of what the Partnership is about. Clearly, the work that could be done in 2020 was severely curtailed by the pandemic restrictions but our existing adopters at Malvern Link and Evesham have continued to make an impact.

At Malvern Link, the team from the Malvern Community Forest have obtained a grant from the Community Rail Network to install interpretation boards on Platform 2 to explain what their work is achieving. In addition, a grant from Malvern Town Council is enabling the installation of poster boards on Platform 1 so that additional information displays can be regularly refreshed.

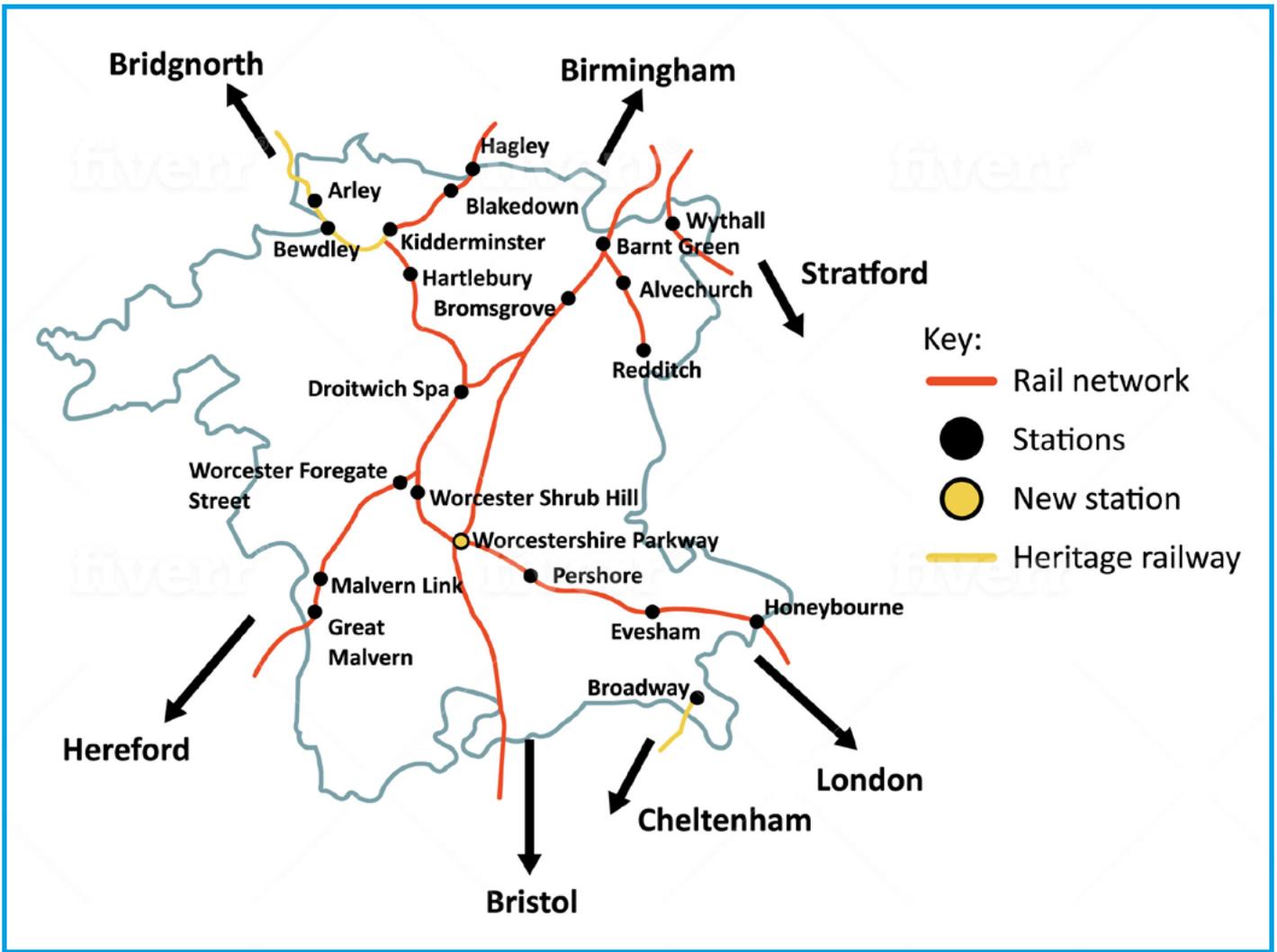
At Evesham, the Friends of Evesham Station continue to develop the garden on redundant Network Rail land behind Platform 2 as well as maintaining the planters on the station as a whole. Their work has been recognised in the 2020 Community Rail Awards where they have been shortlisted for the 'It's Your Station' bronze award. The Friends are hoping to work with Natural Networks Worcestershire and Network Rail in making further redundant land into a wildlife area.



Evesham station garden: One of the many planters in the award-winning station garden at Evesham maintained by the Friends of Evesham Station

Despite the lockdown restrictions, Station Adoption Groups will be started at Alvechurch, Great Malvern, Redditch, and Wythall this autumn whilst Bromsgrove, Hartlebury, Kidderminster, Pershore, Worcester Foregate Street, and Worcestershire Parkway are in the pipeline. Keep an eye on the CRP web site for more information.

Station Adoption is formally through the owning Train operating Company for each station and is supported by Network Rail. For more information see www.westmidlandsrailway.co.uk/adopt-station; www.gwr.com/about-us/supporting-our-community/community-rail and www.networkrail.co.uk/communities/community-rail/.



The CRP covers 18 National Rail stations and three stations on the heritage lines in the County.



Volunteers from Malvern Community Forest at work in the managed wild garden at Malvern Link

Looking Ahead to our Second Year

How will the CRP build upon the foundations laid in 2019/2020? Clearly, a major emphasis will be on rebuilding confidence in rail travel post-Covid and in developing ways to encourage former passengers back to the trains and new passengers to try them. The CRP will be working with West Midlands Railway to highlight the benefits to passengers of the Class 196 diesel trains being introduced from early 2021.

On the ground, this will require community based projects to encourage a return to rail: hyper-local marketing through interested community groups; enabling integrated transport links from station to community / tourist destinations; using local knowledge as to why the railway is not being used and building answers from the ground up.

In addition, funding will be available for larger community projects which have links to stations or the use of the railway services. Ideas for such projects will be developed with the local stakeholders. An immediate example is the work being undertaken at Great Malvern to bring disused rooms back into use for the benefit of the community.

An immediate objective is to get the remaining five stations adopted – Barnt Green, Blakedown, Hagley, Honeybourne, and Worcester Shrub Hill. The Partnership Officer will be looking to work with local stakeholders to achieve this and the wider objectives – please contact him peter.chapman@wmre.org.uk / 07788 190197.



Filming at the Forge Mill Museum during the production of the Barnt Green to Redditch video. Look out for it on Scenic Rail Britain

Our Aims and Objectives:

- 1.1 Enable the rail services of the county of Worcestershire to play a more effective part in contributing to the local transport network by relieving congestion, especially in the City of Worcester and in Kidderminster, and through better integration with other forms of public transport;
- 1.2 Raise awareness of, and to promote, the rail services of the county of Worcestershire as a sustainable way to access destinations for recreation, leisure and tourism;
- 1.3 Involve the community in the work of user groups; station partnerships; arts initiatives and improving links with local schools, colleges and Worcestershire University to develop activities such as rail safety awareness;
- 1.4 Provide information to further encourage more passengers to use the rail services of the county of Worcestershire for work, education, shopping and tourism;
- 1.5 Work with West Midlands Railway, Great Western Railway and CrossCountry Trains, or any successor rail franchisees to achieve their objectives for community rail partnerships in their franchise areas, as set out in their Community Rail strategic plan or any subsequent agreement;
- 1.6 Meet the objectives set out in the Department for Transport Community Rail Development Strategy 2018;
- 1.7 Develop stations as gateways to local communities;
- 1.8 Work with partners to develop improved train and station services; and
- 1.9 Encourage the establishment, and support the activities, of station adoption groups.

Membership of the Worcestershire Community Rail Partnership is open to any local or regional organisation with an interest in furthering the aims and objectives of the Partnership such as local schools and colleges; environmental groups; chambers of commerce and trade; BIDs; tourism organisations; county, district and parish authorities and relevant train operating companies.

The Partnership is a non-campaigning, non-party political organisation and therefore political parties are not eligible for membership.

Current Steering Group Members (*funding partner):

Worcestershire County Council*



Cotswold Line Promotion Group*



West Midlands Railway*



Stourbridge Line User group



Great Western Railway*



Bromsgrove and Redditch Rail User Group



CrossCountry Trains*



Community Rail Network (advisory capacity)



West Midlands Rail Executive*



Network Rail (stakeholder)





Worcestershire
Community
Rail Partnership

CRP Contact Details:

www.wcrp.org.uk

peter.chapman@wmre.org.uk / 07788 190197