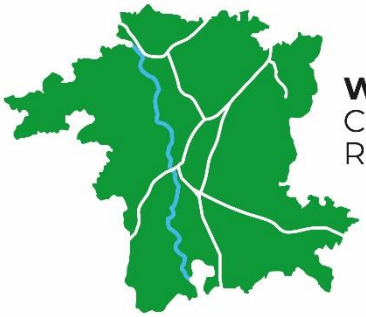

Worcestershire
Community
Rail Partnership

Annual Report 2020/2021

Chair's report

I would like to welcome you to the AGM of the Worcestershire Community Partnership.

It has been a difficult year for the rail industry and Community Rail Partnerships as many activities have been curtailed by the restrictions imposed as a result of the Pandemic. However, this has not prevented a community tapestry stitch project. This enabled 18 tapestry train artworks to be displayed at Worcester Guildhall in July. It is intended to join all the 18 displays at an Annual event in November again at the Guildhall in Worcester.

I would like to record our appreciation of the work that Peter Chapman as our Community Rail Partnership Officer and his achievements during the past two years. Peter decided to retire at the end of July and we are very grateful to him for going the extra mile in ensuring the newly formed Partnership had an excellent start.

I hope you will give a warm welcome to Fiona Saxon our new CRP Officer who has only been in post for two weeks having started on the 1st September. The hosting arrangements will be the same in that Fiona is based at the offices of the West Midlands Rail Executive and it will provide the necessary facilities.

The Steering Group has been able to meet by video conferencing so we have definitely not been dormant during the Pandemic. I am grateful to the Steering Group members for their support of the Partnership during the past year.

In looking forward to the future I am aware that the railways face an uncertain future and I sincerely believe that Community Rail Partnerships are the key to promoting stations as leisure destinations.

William Whiting
September 2021



Financial summary

b/f from 2019/2020	-£34,704.95
Income 2020/2021	-£68,580.25
Expenditure - Partnership Officer 2020/2021	£17,130.28
Expenditure – Delivered Projects 2020/2021	£12,996.34
c/f to 2021-2022	-£73,158.58

Challenging times …

There is no doubt that our first full year in operation has been challenging. Covid-19 restrictions have made it difficult for us to meet and work with communities in person. Despite this, however, WCRP is still here and still has an important role to play in making stations attractive to new and existing users. Our work is particularly relevant now when the recovery of the railways needs first class customer experiences to entice users back on-board trains.

Despite these challenges, we have delivered some fantastic projects and built excellent relationships with interested community groups, schools and businesses. Here are some examples of our work over the year:

Bee Friendly at Worcestershire Parkway

Aware of the need for bees and insects to fertilise our crops three large wooden planters have been installed at Worcestershire Parkway funded by GWR's Community Department.

Two planters on the paving in front of the station entrance and another by the bike racks, these are in addition to the three large flower beds created when the station was built.

Inside the station to enliven the blank walls by the lifts, Alice Baker has painted murals on the theme of how we need bees and plants for us to live.

Photos below by C Major





Wheels 2 Rail

In the interregnum between Partnership Officers Colin Major the Vice-Chair coordinated two Wheels 2 Rail events at in Evesham and Pershore stations in conjunction with Wychavon DC and GWR with funding from the Community Rail Network's "Integrated Sustainable Transport in Community Rail Fund".

Wheels 2 Rail events enable cyclists to bring their bikes along to a railway station anytime on the day for a free maintenance check from Dr Bike and whilst there they can have them security marked, so they can be tracked if they are stolen.

Free family cycling sessions also took place between 10am and 12noon and 2pm and 4pm. The sessions were run by a qualified Bikeability instructor and help families learn to ride together with confidence in different situations, including cycling from and to the station

The first event was held at Evesham station on Saturday 14th August where the Bikeability was sold out. Attendees cycled from and back to the station learning the safest route possible but not as many as hoped for the marking or mending bikes. However the event did create a buzz at the station as you will see from the photo. We had a local cycling group setting up there too.

The second event at Pershore on 28th was relocated from the station, as it doesn't have toilet facilities, to the Pershore Leisure Centre where the event went ahead. Most of cyclists made it up to the Pershore station to be greeted by WCRP's Vice-Chair and then rode back to the Leisure Centre. The relocation was fortunate as the Pershore Plum Festival was on that day making the town buzz - over 50 bikes were security marked and repaired and many people ask us to do it again as the Bikeability training was also sold out.

Many cyclists hadn't visited either station before and were impressed by the garden at Evesham and the Rose beds in profuse flower at Pershore.





Windowseater – this is an app. for leisure travellers to access on their phones, whilst on the train, which tells the passenger details of places of interest along the line before the train reaches that point. This is being produced in conjunction with GWR and your Vice Chair has had meetings with the app developer to get the Cotswold Line as one of their pilot programmes to which they have agreed. The Vice-Chair has written a script which he recorded with the Windowseater team on a journey from Oxford to Hereford and then on the return to Oxford.

Naming the Line Competition – the line in Worcestershire from Honeybourne to Great Malvern is called the Cotswolds and Malvern Line and has high awareness throughout the UK. But we have three other lines in the county without a name. It was decided to follow up the success of the StitchTrain initiative by involving residents to enter a "Naming the Line" competition split into three routes- Worcester to Hagley via Kidderminster, Droitwich Spa to Barnt Green and Redditch to Barnt Green.

We received 47 entries and your officers have chosen names which will be announced on 12th November at the Anniversary Event in the Guildhall. It is planned to present the three people who supplied the winning entries with a small memento. Until this event the Route names are in a sealed envelope so please do not ask what they are.

Friends of Droitwich Spa Railway Station- This is our latest station adoption group which was formed in May 2021 and very quickly got into action with a meeting with WMR's Head of Stations to explore what are feasible projects and then had Safety training. They obtained donations of plants from Webbs of Wychbold and due to a mix up in communication all the donated plants arrived on the same day with only the central bedding section cleared. The FDSRS volunteers responded by working hard on two of the hottest days, to clear the weeds out and get the donated plants in the ground before they wilted. Feedback on the transformation of the flower beds has been very positive from both station staff and passengers.

They have plans for more planters and decorative murals on the stark concrete walls.



Stitch Train

The Stitch Train Worcestershire project was a collaboration between Worcestershire Community Rail Partnership (WCRP) and Woolly Mammoth Stitch Works CIC and its aim was to find a way for existing WCRP volunteers to stay involved when Covid-19 restrictions were in place. It also proved to be a fantastic way to connect new people across the county with their local train station. Tapestries for each of the 18 train stations and for the two rail companies operating along Worcestershire lines

were created. An estimated 678 hours of volunteer time helped deliver the project which has been nominated in the “Community Creative Projects and Station Arts” category in the CRN Community Awards 2021. Fingers crossed!



Great Malvern Station

The proposal to refurbish disused rooms in the station buildings at Great Malvern Station for conversion to an Enterprise Hub was based on securing a community tenancy in the spaces.
The community tenancy required enough workable space for the Enterprise Hub to be a viable operation and, unfortunately, this space requirement could not be met due to the single space at Platform One being too small for the operation and the space on Platform Two requiring extensive works to make weatherproof and habitable which were not deliverable via this scheme.
The proposed community tenant, Birmingham Enterprise Community have now secured alternative space in Wolverhampton.

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; and
1.7. develop stations as gateways to local communities;
1.8. work with partners to develop improved train and station services;
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.

We thank our Partners not only for their Funding but also for their advice and active help.

Current Steering Group members (*funding partner):

Worcestershire County Council*

West Midlands Railway*

Great Western Railway*

CrossCountry Trains*

West Midlands Rail Executive*

Cotswold Line Promotion Group*

Stourbridge Line User group

Bromsgrove and Redditch Rail User Group

Community Rail Network (advisory capacity)

Network Rail (stakeholder)


worcestershire
countycouncil


West
Midlands
Railway


crosscountry


GWR
Great
Western
Railway


West
Midlands
Rail Executive





Community Rail Network MEMBER

Bromsgrove And Redditch
BARRUP
Rail User Partnership