Worcestershire
Community
Rail Partnership



ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022



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CHAIR'S REPORT

I am writing this report at a time when the railways are under a number of pressures and the government's desire to cut costs. I consider it is a given that the commuter market before the Pandemic will not return to 100% so we need to consider what role Community Rail Partnerships may be able to play in attracting new passengers who would otherwise not have travelled by rail. As you will see elsewhere in this report Worcestershire Community Rail Partnership has been very active in a number of areas, including finding new adoption groups, rail education and promoting tourism.

I start with the good news that we have received our annual accreditation by the Department of Transport. Accreditation is a recognition be the Department for Transport that a community rail partnership operates to a high standard and that its objectives and activities are supported by the government.

Community Rail
Accredited Partnership
2022-23

"The plan shows the CRP is active along its three routes developing links and engaging with the communities it serves. The CRP is listening and responding to suggestions, activities and ideas put forward by local communities and station adopters. There are 'area-wide' activities planned and engagement events promoting the importance of the routes in the county and for its communities as part of the regional and national rail network. (DfT/CRN Accreditation Report, 2022)

One matter following our accreditation which I was keen to address and that has been highlighted in the pre-accreditation meeting relates to the composition of the Steering Group. The relevant paragraph states:
"An aim of the CRP should be for wider mix of partners from the community sector and local councils to balance the rail sector groups currently on the steering group and to a lesser extent on the wider stakeholder group. We need to address this imbalance ".
As will be seen later in the proceedings, we have invited SLC Rail and Community First, Herefordshire and Worcestershire to join the Steering Group which will go some way in broadening its membership.

Since the Pandemic the CRP has been able to undertake a number of activities and I wish to reflect on some of these.

We held an annual event at The Guildhall in Worcester in November 2021 and had a very interesting presentation from Friends of Droitwich Spa. We also had a competition for naming the three lines serving Worcestershire.

For the third year,the CRP has taken part in the laying a wreath on Remembrance Day on a GWR Hereford-London Paddington train travelling through Worcestershire. This was part of GWR's desire to place a wreath on the first morning trains arriving at London Paddington.

The Partnership has, with three other CRP's, formed a Joint Education Scheme called "Platform" to provide rail education in schools and holiday playschemes.
This further promotes our engagement with the local community and encouraging young people to make sustainable choices. There is a dedicated website with resources for schools, linked to the national curriculum.

I am pleased to report that we the Steering Group has met on a quarterly cycle at The Hive in Worcester which has been well attended. We have been able to hold hybrid meetings which has been beneficial to those members who would not otherwise be able to join us.

Looking to the future I consider one of our priorities must be to make ourselves better known as a CRP to further increase our desire to bring communities to the railways. We also need to promote Worcestershire as a leisure destination and what is offered in our towns/villages served by rail. We know the railways have to attract the leisure market and I believe CRP's are a fundamental part of this drive.

"I must congratulate you all on the annual report and for the tremendous work you have done and will continue to do for the local community." (Cllr. Alan Amos, County Council Member for Highways & Transport)

I have completed three years as Chair of WCRP and this is the maximum term of office permitted by the Terms of Reference. I feel privileged to have been involved in its formation and by what has been achieved in the last three years. I would like to express my thanks to all members of the Steering Group for their support and particularly to Fiona Saxon our CRP Officer in promoting a number of successful initiatives which are referred to in her report.

William Whiting, Chair, September 2022



ANNIVERSARY EVENT



Invitations were sent to all Worcestershire MPs and also several district and city councillors, Chairs of station adopters, stakeholders and winners of the Naming the Line competition.

Although small, the event was well-received by station adopters and the cabinet member for Transport, Cllr. Alan Amos. It was held at Worcester Guildhall and light refreshments were served. Several Stitch Train tapestries were displayed around the room and the video was played in the background. The Chair welcomed people to the event and Cllr. Amos also spoke of the need for good integrated transport in Worcestershire. The winners of the Naming the Line competition were given mementoes by Cllr. Amos and the line names were publicly announced. The Wyre Valley Line (Hagley, Blakedown, Kidderminster, Hartlebury), the Arrow Valley Line (Barnt Green, Alvechurch, Redditch) and the Saltway Line (Barnt Green, Bromsgrove, Droitwich Spa). A press release resulted in good local media coverage.



Friends of Droitwich Spa gave a well-received talk on the process of station adoption.
Networking took place following the presentation.



"... so interesting, motivating and good for networking, and tremendously useful." (Barnt Green Station Adopter)

PLATFORM

Platform is a community rail education scheme developed on behalf of Severnside, Transwilts, Gloucestershire, and Worcestershire Community Rail Partnerships. Representatives from each of the four founding partnerships joined together and accessed funding to hire a team of fully qualified teachers to deliver rail education on their behalf. It is sponsored by GWR, Cross Country, and Community Rail Network, and was established in January and is working with schools across the area. West Midlands Railway have supplied free travel for staff and students accessing the scheme on their network.

The website, www.platformrail.org, launched on April 1 and reached over 600 users in its first month. This surpassed its target of 500 users in year one and illustrates the appetite for rail education in schools.

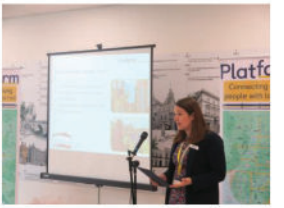
"Many young people across the area will have the opportunity to benefit from the scheme's curriculum linked resources, workshops and rail familiarization trips, and that – thanks to generous sponsorship – these are offered free of charge." (Heather Cullimore, Severnside CRP)



Platform officially launched on 3rd May 2022 and the team invited representatives from the Department for Transport, local authorities, schools, GWR, Cross Country and the Community Rail Network to join them to mark the opening of the project. Guests were invited to join the team aboard a GWR service from Westbury to Worcester Foregate Street for lunch and presentations at The Historical Pod in Worcester City Centre. With guests joining at Westbury, Bristol Temple Meads, Bristol Parkway, Gloucester, and Cheltenham Spa station, it was a lively and interactive journey. Activity booklets, taken from Platform's bespoke resources, were handed out and the team was explained how it had taken important messaging on trains, local areas, sustainability and well-being, and incorporated it into lessons that met curriculum objectives.



Platform's Learning Officer, Imogen Sackett, delivered some rail familiarisation at the station and, later, following the presentations, walked guests into Worcester to demonstrate the range of free, meaningful opportunities schools could access as part of their day out.



Prior to starting the project, the steering group commissioned Bristol educational consultants Sustainable Hive to carry out a feasibility study. This study allowed Platform to base its education offer on research, feedback, and good practice from other Community Rail Partnerships. Clare Marshall and Olivia Ellis from Sustainable Hive then provided project guidance and support to help the new team move the project from concept to concrete.



"It's a great way for schools to engage young people in sustainable travel." (Ollie Hazel, active travel and cycling coordinator, Gloucestershire County Council)

WCRP were delighted to hear that Platform came first in the category *Influencing positive change & sustainability* at the CRN Awards evening in Manchester (October 2022).



WCRP ACTIVITIES 2021-2022

Remembrance Day



WCRP was pleased to take part in the laying of a wreath on a Hereford to London Paddington train on the 11th of November at Worcestershire Parkway Station. Our Chair, William Whiting, and Vice Chair, Colin Major, handed the wreath to a GWR member of staff for transport to London. This was part of the Poppies to Paddington event organised by The Veteran's Charity and GWR and the journey symbolises the long journey made by soldiers on their way to war.

Wheels2Rails



The final planned Wheels2Rails event took place on 26th February 2022 during school half term week at Droitwich Spa. Together with Wychavon District Council and CRN, WCRP encouraged local residents to build their cycling confidence on local roads. The event was funded by the Community Rail Network's "Integrated Sustainable Transport in Community Rail Fund" and has also been delivered at Pershore and Evesham in 2021. The event featured two-hour family cycle training sessions led by a qualified Bikeability instructor. It also included safety check drop-in sessions and an opportunity to security mark bikes so they can be tracked if lost or stolen.

"We are proud to support these events and see our local railway stations continue to provide a safe venue for families to enjoy cycling" (Colin Major, Vice Chair, WCRP)

Try the Train

WCRP teamed up with Transport Museum Wythall and Avoncroft Museum of Buildings to provide a vintage bus service for visitors travelling by train to the museum. The bus transported passengers arriving by train from Bromsgrove railway station to Avoncroft throughout selected weekends this year, encouraging both sustainable travel and tourism within the county.



The bus ran back and forth between the station and Avoncroft so visitors could start and end their day out with a mix of modern and historic transport. The take up rate has been variable with bad weather likely accounting for lower visitor numbers on some days (Avoncroft is an open-air museum). A weekend in April saw 76 visitors use the bus service.



"Thanks to all our collaborating friends who helped make the day – WCRP & Transport Museum Wythall for the beautiful heritage bus rides to and from the station" (Zoe Willems, Director, Avoncroft Museum)



New Station adoption

There has been a lot of wonderful acitivity from our station adopters this year and we have three new adoptions – Worcester Foregate Street, Kidderminster and Worcestershire Parkway. Kidderminster Station has been adopted by the University of the Third Age (U3A) who have fabulous plans to transform the area and make it as exciting and interesting to visit as the Severn Valley Railway next door!





Worcestershire Parkway is in the process of being adopted by St. Richard's Hospice and they are currently seeking new volunteers to maintain the Bee Friendly planters and other areas around the station.

The Friends of Foregate Street have put up a 'What's on' noticeboard in the waiting room and have plans to install more noticeboards and hold a bike tagging event at the station. They have also created their own logo.

FRIENDS OF FOREGATE STREET

Gallery





"...the poster boards are also proving popular and more and more local groups have asked us to put up notices, artwork etc." (Alvechurch Station Adopter)















"I think the Community Rail Partnership is doing great work and getting stations to become part of their community. At the heart of this is the adoption process which not only delivers for the station but ensures that it is seen as an asset."
(Roger Britton, Chair, Community First, Herefordshire & Worcestershire)

WCRP AIMS & OBJECTIVES

The aims and objectives of the Worcestershire Community Rail Partnership are to:

- 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;
- 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;
- 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;
- provide information to further encourage more passengers to use the rail services of the county of Worcestershire for work, education, shopping and tourism;
- work with West Midlands Railway, Great Western Railway and CrossCountry Trains, or any successor rail contract holders to achieve their objectives for community rail partnerships in their contract areas, as set out in their Community Rail strategic plan or any subsequent agreement;
- meet the objectives set out in the Department for Transport Community Rail Development Strategy 2018; and
- develop stations as gateways to local communities;
- work with partners to develop improved train and station services;
- 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 Initial Members are shown in the Appendix to this Constitution which consists of both Steering Group members and Stakeholder Group members.

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)


City centre
2899

PARTNER INFORMATION

WCRP works in partnership with the following organisations:











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