

Huge growth in passengers using Community Railways due to improved local services and smarter stations.

A new report shows that Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) and station adopters are making rail travel a vastly improved experience for local people in the UK.

The report shows that local routes with CRPs are seeing a higher growth in passengers than other local routes whilst volunteer station adopters are making a real difference by transforming local stations into a pleasing environment.

Main findings:

- 2.8% additional growth on community railways compared to regional lines.
- CRPs add value and 'pay for themselves'.
- 3,200 community rail volunteers give 250,000 hours of their time worth £3.4m
- Station adoption leads to improved station environments and stronger communities.

The research was commissioned by the National Community Rail Development Steering Group. This partnership comprises central and local government, infrastructure owner Network Rail, the commercial sector Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) and the voluntary sector Association for Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP).

As well as promoting local railways and encouraging more people to travel by train, CRPs add economic, social and environmental value to their lines, by bringing together local people and the rail industry to develop solutions. Their collective initiatives provide access to jobs, schools, shops, tourism attractions and other services, contributing to sustainable communities.

Financial appraisal shows that the 11 CRPs assessed in the study achieved a cash surplus showing that CRPs create more income than they cost to run.

CRPs were first developed in the 1990s and the National Community Rail Strategy was launched in 2004. This report shows that the DfT, train companies, Network Rail, ACoRP, CRPs and station adopters contribute to a continuing renaissance in regional rail travel, with local routes and the stations along them thriving - in some cases surpassing previous record levels of patronage.

Commenting on the report Baroness Kramer Minister of State for Transport said:

“Community Rail Partnerships have a vital role to play in building a stronger economy and a fairer society, as demonstrated powerfully by this research. By encouraging more people to travel by train, they bring real economic, social and environmental benefits to their areas, and support the record investment we are making in the rail network. I hope this inspires more people to set up partnerships and develop their own community railways.”