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# COMMUNITY RAIL CONSULTATION **A RESPONSE** BY RAIL NORTH

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Photographs courtesy of TfN



Educating the passengers of the future at Preston station



Promoting the new Burnley to Manchester Service



Community Rail in the City - Lancaster students promote community rail at Preston station



Rose Grove station improved by pupils from Padiham Green and Lowerhouse primary Schools.



At work in the 'craft room' at Preston station



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## ABBREVIATIONS USED THROUGHOUT THIS RESPONSE

<b>ACoRP</b>	Association of Community Rail Partnerships
<b>BAME</b>	Black, Asian, and minority ethnic
<b>CRDS</b>	Community Rail Development Strategy (2004 & 2007)
<b>CRP</b>	Community Rail Partnership
<b>CRPO</b>	Community Rail Partnership Officer
<b>DfT</b>	Department for Transport
<b>ED&amp;I</b>	Equality diversity and inclusion
<b>LTA</b>	Local Transport Authority
<b>RCP</b>	Railway Confidence Programme
<b>TfGM</b>	Transport for Greater Manchester
<b>TfN</b>	Transport for the North
<b>TOC</b>	Train Operating Company

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# COUNCILLOR LIAM ROBINSON, CHAIR RAIL NORTH

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**As chair of Rail North Ltd, I welcome this consultation and the opportunity to further cement and grow the role of community rail. Rail North has pioneered partnership working (with the DfT) to bring decision making and creativity closer to passengers in the north.**

In many ways this reflects the way that Community Rail Partnerships have managed to bring the railway much closer to the people they service and develop innovative ways of engaging with the communities, including those groups of people who have traditionally found it difficult to access the railway.

With 19 Community Rail Partnerships across the North of England we have a fantastic showcase of the best of partnership working. We are keen to not only share best practice, but also remove some of the barriers they still encounter to make them even more productive. We are pleased to have secured very strong commitments and financial backing for CRPs through the new, transformational, Northern and TransPennine Express franchises which, coupled with the new strategy, will allow our CRPs to reach their potential. At Rail North we have given even greater prominence to the role of community rail by making communities one of the five core themes of our updated long term rail strategy. We look forward to ongoing dialogue with the DfT to help community rail initiatives to truly thrive.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Liam Robinson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

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# ABOUT RAIL NORTH AND TRANSPORT FOR THE NORTH

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## Rail North

Rail North Limited brings together local transport authorities across the whole of the North of England into one cohesive and proactive body. Working in partnership with the Department for Transport we manage the two rail franchises, TransPennine Express and Northern. We are also responsible for shaping the strategic and economic development of the network for rail users and will be merged into Transport for the North (TfN) once the Sub-National Transport Body has been confirmed.

The organisation was formed in 2014 and has established a strong joint management team and Partnership Board to oversee the franchises, marking the start of increased local investment and greater local control. Working with partners, Rail North has secured and is leading two transformational and investment-led franchises while working with Network Rail and TfN, to ensure collaboration on future planning and investment for the North.

Rail North would like to thank all those who contributed to this response. In particular special thanks go to Daisy Chapman-Chamberlain, Community Rail Lancashire, for her considerable help with Theme 2, James Syson, TfN / Rail North, for his many constructive challenges to this response and Simon Clarke for proof reading the various drafts.

## Transport for the North

Transport for the North (TfN) was created as a pan-Northern Partnership Board of civic and business leaders from across the North, working with Highways England, Network Rail, High Speed 2 (HS2) Ltd and the Department for Transport. With the support of the business and academic communities, TfN is set to become the first Sub-National Transport Body in England and is tasked with setting out the requirements of the pan-Northern transport network through a Strategic Transport Plan for the North.

TfN's vision is for a thriving North of England where modern transport connections drive economic growth and support an excellent quality of life. TfN has a clear remit to identify and plan the transport infrastructure required to support transformational economic growth in the North. It also has a role to play in supporting local and national government, as well as the private sector and transport operators, to align local investment in public transport and active modes of travel with strategic, pan-Northern investment. This will ensure that national infrastructure projects form part of a coherent long term Investment Programme, which TfN will work to deliver with Delivery Partners and local transport authorities.



Volunteers at work from Network Rail, Friends of Bentham Station and Bentham Line CRP

# INTRODUCTION

The origins of community rail can be traced back to the period in the 1980s and 1990s when the size and shape of the network was still far from certain. Whilst the campaign that led to the reprieve from closure of the Settle Carlisle and Blackburn to Hellifield lines did bring about a change of mind in Government about closing lines there was still a doubt in the minds of many who had lived through the closure era that many rural and regional lines were still vulnerable. The initial objectives of community rail were about making the lines something of value to the community and not just an asset to be stripped. So it is not too surprising that the initial 'Community Rail Development Strategy' launched in 2004 placed considerable emphasis on "increasing ridership, freight use and revenue" as well as on the "greater involvement of the local community". All would help to embed the lines more firmly in the community with local stakeholders from across the public, private and voluntary sectors becoming much more actively engaged in supporting their line.

The strategy has worked. Community rail routes across the country have seen impressive growth take place and have been responsible for creating an 'army' of volunteers who spend many hours looking after their station as well as acting as ambassadors for their service within their community.

In the North of England community rail has an impressive record of working in partnership to make substantial improvements and supported the introduction of the new direct service from Accrington and Burnley to Manchester via the reinstated Todmorden West Curve. Similarly, Blackburn celebrated the start of a half hourly service to Manchester via Darwen and the Bolton Corridor from the 11th December 2017 following a £14m scheme to extend the passing loop at Darwen. The hard work of the CRPs on both lines in developing awareness and usage of the services, supported by rail user groups and station friends groups in creating attractive gateway stations, has made it possible to develop viable business cases for these investments, which in aggregate total over £30m, which previously would have been impossible. Similarly the evidence presented by the Mid Cheshire CRP during the refranchising of Northern will lead to the doubling of the service frequency during 2018.

However, community rail like all movements can't afford to stand still and the current consultation is a welcome opportunity to take stock of what community rail has achieved and to look forward to how it can develop over the next decade. As more CRPs develop specialisms in specific areas, such as Community Rail Lancashire's 'educating the passengers of the future', the Bentham Lines work to create dementia friendly stations or Community Rail Cumbria's 'the rail route to recovery', it is an opportune time to look at how this can be expanded, how CRPs share knowledge and experience and how CRPs could be structured and funded in the future.

It is also worth remembering that not one cloth fits all. CRPs are their own organisations with their own management groups or board of directors. It is important that the needs of a particular line or the expertise of the community rail officer are fully appreciated and supported.



Key Stage 2 pupils learn about rail safety - dressing up helps make it a memorable occasion



Launching the 'Passport to Safe Rail Travel'

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# THEME 1: CONNECTING PEOPLE TO PLACES AND OPPORTUNITIES

**Question 1a: What role can community rail play in improving end-to-end journeys?**

**Question 1b: How can community rail help to:**

- Make Journeys more sustainable?
- Encourage more healthy travel?
- Improve the environmental impact of travel?

**1.1 There are many ways in which community rail can assist with improvements to end to end journeys that promote more sustainable and healthier travel options and they include:**

- act as a conduit between train, tram and bus companies to look at how trains and buses currently interact and provide evidence to promote improved connections and timetables;
- promote bus links to/from a station enabling passengers to reach destinations away from the railway and conversely originating passengers to access the station by public transport;
- encourage the development of specific bus/rail interchanges;
- help promote and further develop the 'PlusBus' scheme;
- in partnership with local authorities and organisations such as Living Streets identify and improve walking routes to a station;
- suggest improvements to the signposting of stations as well as signposting key places from the station such as a bus station, town centre or key visitor attractions;
- improving cycling routes to a station along with secure cycle parking facilities at the station;
- in partnership with local authorities, TOCs and organisations such as British Cycling and / or Sustrans identify and improve cycling routes to stations;
- promote the use of cycling to/from a station through the delivery of secure cycle parking facilities;
- encourage the provision of cycle hire facilities at key stations such as Manchester's Mobike Scheme;
- cycling and walking help promote healthy, active lifestyles and can/should have an impact on the health of the community a benefit that needs to be recognised by public health bodies as well as the Department of Health;
- encourage the provision of park and ride facilities at stations;
- ensure that there is information about local 'hackney' and 'private hire' taxi facilities along with phone numbers and investigate the promotion of taxi share initiatives;
- encourage TOCs and LTAs to provide suitable pick up/set down points for taxis and others – not all stations have room to provide ranking facilities for taxis;
- encourage the provision of multi-modal ticketing, supporting the roll out of TfNs smart and integrated ticketing investment;
- look at how community transport schemes can complement the rail and conventional bus network to improve accessibility to the rail network for mobility impaired people or those with mental health issues or to provide bespoke services to remote locations for ramblers (e.g. the Bowland Explorer – <https://www.communityrail Lancashire.co.uk/news/new-bowland-explorer-service/>);

- encourage other agencies and bodies to promote bus/rail links to support sustainable activities such as this example from the Forest of Bowland AONB – <http://forestofbowland.com/Travel-Information>;
- maximise marketing and publicity activity with CRPs developing/using their websites, Twitter feeds, Facebook pages to promote access to/from their line as per this example taken from the Settle Carlisle web site <https://www.settle-carlisle.co.uk/tickets-times-travel/timetables/bus-information-timetables/>.
- Work with schools/educational establishments to promote active travel and to make pupils and teachers aware of the opportunities rail provides. The involvement of the Department for Education (DfE) would be useful here in making schools aware of the role CRPs can play.
- Working with local government to identify local requirements and ways in which they can help improve the end to end journey. The DfT needs to ensure that DCLG (Department for Communities & Local Government) is aware of the role that CRPs can play in meeting its objectives.



Clitheroe Interchange is a good example of a rural bus / rail interchange – developed through a Rural Bus Challenge grant with additional funding from Lancashire County Council and the former East Lancashire Partnership. The Interchange opened in 2000 as an attractive gateway to the town improving links between the bus and rail networks and included the information and ticket office shown in the picture as well as a bus station, cycle parking and a small car park. Changes were made to the bus network to improve bus/rail connections and the office was initially staffed 7 days a week. A report into its effectiveness concluded that there had been an increase in bus to rail connections and vice versa comprising about 5% of rail journeys to/ from Clitheroe.

- 1.2 Key to developing improved access to / from a station and growing/supporting demand for rail services is to understand what the local community wants and not just to provide something the latest grant fund is directing you to.** This can be hard but investment must be led by a full understanding of local barriers and challenges and the solutions identified must maximise the resources available. CRPs can be very important in picking up through local contacts issues of concern to local people and acting as a conduit between the community, local authorities and public transport operators ensuring local need is identified and evidenced through surveys to find out in more detail what the real requirements are. A tool that CRPs can use was developed as part of the ATOC station travel plan project and can be found at [www.stationtravelplans.com/what-are-steps](http://www.stationtravelplans.com/what-are-steps).
- 1.3 Refranchising also offers CRPs an opportunity to promote improvements but bidding groups will almost certainly want hard evidence of need.** However, in partnership with the DfT, local government and LEPs it would be possible to ensure that bidders were encouraged to identify funds to improve accessibility to/from a station (accessibility within a station is a separate issue). Match funding can often be secured through local authorities, including planning gain; charitable bodies; Sustrans; community transport groups and other organisations.

- 1.4 Legislative framework: In looking at bus/rail connections it is always important to remember that outside London bus services are deregulated and this can make co-ordination more difficult especially if commercial services are involved.** A local authority can help using its supported network to improve connections but again will need evidence of need. However, due to austerity measures imposed by central government in recent years there has been a major impact on the ability of many authorities to continue to provide non-commercial bus services. In the case of Clitheroe apart from a few commercial routes the vast majority of the network was tendered by Lancashire County Council making it easier to adjust services but vulnerable to austerity measures. Yet even here many services are operated to get scholars to/from school or fitted in with hospital surgery hours.
- 1.6 Whilst changes to the legislative framework may in future encourage the franchising of networks in time the biggest issue facing local bus networks today is funding.** The squeeze on the concessionary reimbursement and the cuts to local government budgets and therefore funding towards non-commercial services are all making it harder to be innovative, especially as changes to the transport network take time to settle in. The DfT normally sees new rail services taking anything up to 3 years to reach their forecast potential and there is no reason why this wouldn't also be the case for new bus services. Pump priming a service as well as any on-going support are therefore important issues. Bus users, just like rail users, need certainty that a new service is there for the long term and not just for the few years that grant is available. It is difficult to encourage behavioural change when the public is sceptical about/lacks confidence in interchange opportunities. This makes it very hard to convince rural communities that today's bus link isn't going to be tomorrow's budget saving. The same also applies in urban areas where there has been a progressive decline in early morning and evening services as well as a reduction in Sunday services. It is perhaps an irony of the current Northern franchise that a whole raft of services are seeing their best ever Sunday frequencies at quite a high cost set against continual reductions in local bus services that link to them which are provided at a much lower cost.
- 1.7 In some cases community transport can fill the gap and there have been some good examples of this in the Dales area serving Wensleydale and Swaledale.** CRPs can work with these groups to help identify niche markets that these services can plug. Again, on the Settle-Carlisle line this has been done to good effect linking Garsdale to Hawes using the Little White Bus which is operated by the Upper Wensleydale Community Partnership Ltd (UWCP), a not for profit community company. Yet in many cases community transport relies on volunteer drivers and also on the senior citizen reimbursement to make 'ends meet'.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

- 1.8.1 There are many areas where CRPs can help promote improved access to/from the rail network and through that help promote a more active lifestyle which should have health benefits.**
- 1.8.2 The DfT has an important role in helping to promote these benefits to other government departments such as the Department of Health (DH) and the Department for Education (DfE). It is important that other government departments are made aware of the role CRPs can play in meeting their agendas. In addition, through DCLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) can reinforce the benefits of CRPs to local authorities in meeting their agendas.**
- 1.8.3 Acting as a conduit between the local community and local government and public transport operators, evidence of need gathered by CRPs can put the case for worthwhile changes to improve end to end journeys.**
- 1.8.4 However, as we state above the legislative and funding responsibilities of local and national government can be an obstacle to development. DfT needs look at ways in which it can give greater encouragement to the sustainability of bus networks especially in rural areas. As discussed above this also has an impact in urban areas where the gradual reduction of morning, evening and Sunday services affects end to end journeys.**

## Question 2: How can community rail help:

- Communities have a voice in influencing the provision of rail?
- Complementary transport services and development of the rail network?

### 2.1 As discussed elsewhere in this response CRPs involve the: **Community and Railway in Partnership.**

There are many ways in which a CRP can identify the needs of the communities along its line. Ideas will come in multiple ways and below are a few suggestions:

- Discussion at CRP management group or at Board of Director level
- Public meetings
- Involvement with local government at all levels from parish council through to a combined authority
- Talking to local groups – e.g. WIs, faith groups and so on.
- Talking to schools, colleges, universities, teachers, pupils
- School councils
- Discussions with LEPs through LTAs
- Discussions with local Chambers of Trade
- Surveys
- Utilising national and local data sources such as the IMD (Index of Multiple Deprivation)
- Talking to local businesses and developers including house builders.

### 2.2 **Communities are very diverse and often the needs are different for different groups. So perhaps the question is how does a CRP distil often conflicting requirements into say something that a TOC or Network Rail might take a look at and/or be able to respond to?**

### 2.3 **Within any community there will be strong personalities with their own very clear idea of what needs to be done.** Again CRPs need to be an authoritative voice of the community to the railway as well as from the railway to the community. There has to be a two way understanding of what can and can't be done.

### 2.4 **Key to how the CRP presents its priorities are its Action Plan which says what it can do with the resources it has and if it is on a designated line then its more strategic priorities will be set out in the 'Route Prospectus' (this is dealt with in more detail in section 10).** The Action Plan will always be a compromise between what some sections of the community want and what the railway is able to deliver.

### 2.5 **CRPs can also play an important role in communicating community requirements and aspirations to bidders during the refranchising process.** In order to be an authoritative voice CRPs will need to gather evidence to support their 'asks' and this can be through local surveys or more in depth consultancy studies. As an example during the refranchising of Northern and Trans Pennine the Furness Line CRP and Cumbria County Council carried out a study into the requirements of the Lancaster to Barrow line which showed how important through services to Manchester were. This hard evidence was very instrumental in securing through the TSR improved services from the Furness Line to Manchester. **So independent evidence can be important in identifying community needs and then in securing the required changes.** It gets away from the noise that all CRPs will have experienced that all trains must call at so and so station to being able to say that the line is better served by this more strategic change.

### 2.6 **So CRPs are a voice for the community but they cannot represent or promote all the views a community might have. Realism and understanding are required.**

### 2.7 **In explaining their role all CRPs have websites, Twitter feeds, Facebook pages and these are also ways in which they can gather views from the community.** Care, of course, needs to be taken to screen comments so unrepresentative views which distract attention or are offensive are not promoted or endorsed.

## 2.8 Conclusion and recommendations:

- CRPs are a conduit between the community and the rail industry.
- CRPs need to balance the many views they will receive from the community into something that is realistic and achievable – the Action Planning process is a good way to do this as well as the formal designation process.
- CRPs can commission independently or in partnership studies to identify local requirements which can then be used to promote changes through for example the refranchising process or to local government.

### Question 3: Where should the government encourage community rail to develop on parts of the network currently without active CRPs or other community participation?

- 3.1 The current community rail strategy was designed to help stabilise an otherwise vulnerable part of the network.** The success of the strategy whereby resources were pooled from a variety of organisations in the public, private and voluntary sectors has proved to be a great success. Community rail has helped show that lines once seen as peripheral to the ‘main network’ are in fact a vital part of it and a vital means of transport for those communities. Revenue allocation is a vexed issue and remains so but in essence the value of the lines identified in the 2004 ‘Community Rail Development Strategy’ has been demonstrated and externally validated. It works!
- 3.2 The community rail methodology to developing a line means it can be applied anywhere from the quietest rural line to the busiest commuter route.** Both can benefit from the knowledge the local community can bring and adjust fares and marketing approach to suit new and previously untapped markets as well as opportunities to develop stations.
- 3.3 So fundamentally if the community wants to establish a community rail partnership then it should be encouraged to do so.** The new CRP should be entitled to become designated and enjoy access to funds such as the ‘designated line community rail development fund’ as well as any that its TOC has available. So the first test is does the community want a community rail partnership? If yes then every encouragement and assistance should be given to it by ACoRP, its TOC, the DfT community rail team and Network Rail.
- 3.4 There are instances where communities resist the formation of a community rail partnership.** In the north there are two lines that come to mind being the Settle-Carlisle and the Calder Valley. They are not the only lines where this is the case. In the case of the former example the various bodies on the line state quite candidly that being part of the community rail movement downgrades their line. Yet the line was only saved from closure by combined community effort coordinated by the Settle Carlisle Joint Action Committee and the joint local authority working group. Aside from campaigning a lot of effort went into marketing and developing the line during the closure process including the introduction of the Dalesman local service. It was classic community rail at its best. So perhaps the name community rail itself is an issue? In the case of the latter example the line already has a string of very active station partnerships as well as active and vocal user groups. Perhaps that is enough? They certainly seem not to want to join forces except at events organised by Northern and others.
- 3.5 What happens to lines where communities don’t show an interest in forming a partnership?** In many ways it is not possible to create a genuine community rail partnership if the community is not engaged or does not want to be engaged. If ACoRP or any other agency feels that a community rail partnership should be formed on a line it can be proactive in trying to engage with the community to form one. Specialist help might be needed to encourage the community to become more involved.
- 3.6 There are some areas in the north of England where it may prove very hard to get the community involved to the level required.** In these areas other ways of involving the community may need to be tried such as engaging with schools or colleges or faith centres or residential homes.
- 3.7 The first Rail North ‘Long Term Rail Strategy’, July 2014 supported the possible extension of the CRP concept to new lines when in paragraph 7.48 it commented “There is opportunity to develop the Community Rail concept where established Partnerships already exist and there are opportunities to extend it to lines which currently do not benefit from Partnerships.** The Partnership approach can be integral to the development and regeneration of stations, but is, of course, not limited to this”.

### 3.8 In conclusion

- 3.8.1 Where the community shows that it wants to form a community rail partnership and has committed funds to this and developed an action plan then it should be encouraged and formally recognised.**
- 3.8.2 Advice and practical assistance should be given to the fledgling community rail partnership by ACoRP and if available from its TOC and Network Rail. In the first instance though ACoRP should be the key first contact.**

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# THEME 2: SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

## Question 4a: What is the role of community rail in supporting:

- Community cohesion?
- Promoting diversity?
- Enabling social inclusion?

## Question 4b: How is this best achieved?

**4.1 The rail industry has made great strides in recent times towards full inclusion and diversity, working towards enabling all members of society to not only access the national network for a full range of social and economic benefits, but also to be employed and volunteer within it.** To continue the pace of progress towards a fair and equal society, this initiative should be extended beyond TOCs and into community rail. For CRPs, the challenge of which groups to engage and how to effectively approach them is the initial concern; support needs to be provided at a local and national level to facilitate this engagement and to illustrate the benefits full social cohesion and integration can bring. Community Rail Lancashire (CRL) aims to offer this support with the regional and national expansion of their Railway Confidence Programme (RCP), including a tailored training offer for those within the industry.

**4.2 When we discuss cognitive needs and disabilities in particular, it is important to consider the facts; 6% of children, 16% of working-age adults and 45% of over-60s have a recorded cognitive need or disability; prevalence rises with age.** This refers to conditions and needs such as Down's Syndrome, dementia, and many more. Within this, only 8% of families with a relative who has a disability claim assistance from social services, despite the fact that it costs, on average, 3 times more to raise a child with an additional need. Later in life, only half of disabled adults are in work. Despite this, British adult citizens with additional cognitive needs have a total spending power of £249bn per annum (DisabledGo, Shaw Trust, gov.uk).

**4.3 Alongside cognitive health needs, mental health needs, such as anxiety, agoraphobia, schizophrenia and depression, affect one in four to one in six of British adults throughout their lives (Mental Health Foundation).** Clearly, there are vast numbers within our society who must be afforded every opportunity and reasonable support to access the railway, either alone or with a supporter, in order to have full education, employment (including within transport), health and leisure opportunities.



Their first train journey

**4.4 Equal access is vital for all groups, to support rapidly growing and changing communities; especially into a progressively technological age.** Communities continue to expand, diversify and adapt and local transport networks must do the same.

**4.5 To achieve full access and integration of all groups of people, regardless of; age, sexuality, gender, race, religion, culture, socio-economic factors and mental, physical and cognitive health, consideration must be given to how awareness of and confidence in working with all groups can be instilled within staff and volunteers of CRPs and station groups.** However, this must be led by the rail industry with staff from TOCs receiving additional training, as one of the greatest barriers identified to inclusive use of the network by those with additional cognitive and mental health needs is unfriendly or unhelpful staff (Mackett, 2017). The benefits of diversity and inclusion should also be emphasised in order to organically increase the desire to work with a range of different groups to produce exceptional outcomes, and there should be funding specifically and clearly available for projects focussing on inclusion.

- 4.6** There are of course many benefits, but to name just a few; for education purposes, to increase safety, to inspire passion for the transport industry (especially in the young), to enhance economic prospects for local and national businesses, for the financial benefit of individuals, for environmental and ecological enrichment and conservation, to access healthcare, to enable social inclusion and interaction, and for diversity, cooperation and cohesion. Additionally, due to the economic power of such large numbers of people (see above), to attract the passengers and employees of the future, and finally to instil greater confidence and trust in the railway network and relevant TOCs.
- 4.7** In producing new programmes and initiatives, working with outside agencies is vital; including representation within development, as well as working with experts in relevant fields of cognitive and mental health, gender equality, and racial and religious inclusivity. By actively engaging these groups and those with lived experience of issues of diversity and inclusion, the economic opportunities offered by rail to access employment and education can be fully realised; including those financial and social initiatives that directly work within the industry (for example, community hubs, cafes, education facilities, charities and libraries on the network).
- 4.8** As mentioned above, CRPs are an organic representation of the area in which they have developed, but very frequently are made up of representatives of a single ethnic, gender and age group. Groups that are currently excluded are in the vast majority of cases not done so deliberately, but rather through a lack of experience and the skills required within the CRP. In order to ensure that community rail as an industry, and transport in a wider sense, can attract a more diverse body of employees and volunteers, the existing groups need to engage more significantly with diverse groups; especially BAME (Black, Asian, and minority ethnic) and those with additional and special needs, including new project creation as well as inclusion of diverse groups in traditional CRP activities such as gardening.
- 4.9** An example of helping to address the omissions mentioned in 4.8 ‘Women in Community Rail’ (WiCR) was established in 2016. WiCR has representation from across the community rail movement with both male and female members to help remove imbalances in diversity and inclusivity. Training, networking, influencing and mentoring are the key objectives of WiCR.
- 4.10** As mentioned above, CRPs must not be expected to introduce these initiatives without support, as they are very different to most current projects nationally. Training is a must, for example in Makaton or British Sign Language, through Enhance the UK, or the National Autistic society (potential key delivery partners), as well as mutually learning through partnerships with education facilities such as schools, colleges and universities, as well as the possibility with engaging with CRL’s training offer. Alongside this, contacting a nationally respected organisation to arrange a specific training programme to run in 4 to 6 national locations for CRPs to access would provide a starting point for combating any existing stereotypes and ensuring an equal footing for national programme implementation. Peer support could also be provided by CRPs with current experience in promotion of diversity and inclusion (such as the Essex Line CRP and the Bentham Line CRP) but this would require consultation from relevant charities in order to ensure assessment by those with lived experience. With this support in place, national replication is possible.
- 4.11** This engagement should begin initially through education facilities and local groups (Special Educational Needs and Disability schools, residential homes, schools with a high proportion of BAME e.g. St Peter’s Burnley), through education, art and confidence programmes. For further details of BAME-focussed projects, see [‘Revitalising Burnley Central’](#). It may also come through other avenues, such as Dementia Friendly Stations (Bentham Line), Essex CRP’s work within residential care homes, as well as working within traditionally diverse environments such as Universities to promote programmes and volunteering. Examples outside Community Rail can also be transferred into the industry, such as ScotRail’s application for the first Autism-friendly station at Inverurie, through Autism-Friendly Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire projects in partnership with Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnerships, and wider programmes such as inclusion within the Scouts, for example, or work with local social clubs, churches, mosques, temples and synagogues to run programmes of travel and engagement.



Revitalising Burnley Central, Community Rail Lancashire’s diversity-focussed art and education project.

**4.12** Examples of this engagement would be the Railway Confidence Programme for working with those with additional mental health and cognitive needs and disabilities through individually developed programmes of learning, both in-school and on the network. Early engagement is vital to ensure lifelong confidence in use.

## The Railway Confidence Programme

### Aims and Objectives

- To expand Community Rail Lancashire's education programme into non-mainstream schools
- To offer young people in Special Educational Needs and Disability schools the chance to experience the railway, as well as increase their travel confidence (Railway environments are confusing and hectic for many people; including iconography that can be indecipherable and social rules for interaction that are simply unknown)
- To increase the confidence of parents in family train use
- To increase diversity and inclusion on local and national railway lines

### Outcomes

- Engaged SEND young people in CRL's education programme
- Increased confidence of SEND young people in railway use
- Increased inclusion and diversity on local and national railway lines
- Benefitting and enabling the passengers of the future

For a glossary of terms, and an outline of the programme offered by CRL, please see the Railway Confidence Programme document and leaflet at <https://downtheline.org.uk/projects/the-railway-confidence-programme/>

## 4.13 Conclusion:

**In short, community rail has an important role to play in promoting cohesion, diversity and inclusion because community rail is a community initiative, and therefore should reflect the area in which operates, and ensure that stereotypes are challenged.** CRPs will also recognise the many benefits of this type of engagement, when they have the correct support in place to implement new programmes. One of the best stages to begin to engage is within education, due to the willingness of participants and the lifelong impacts of programmes when participants are under 18 years old.

### **4.14** We recommend the following actions should be considered by CRPs regarding inclusion, as follows:

- Potentially engaging with CRL or other groups for training regarding use of the 'Railway Confidence Programme' on individual lines and at stations.
- Engaging with wider charities and groups for learning and training purposes regarding unconscious bias and collaboration; which can include inclusion of diverse groups within current CRP activities such as gardening projects.
- Investigating the possibility of providing travel opportunities for diverse groups to experience the railway beyond a school context, including work with local charities and groups such as care homes.
- Potentially engaging with 'Dementia Friendly Stations' on individual lines and at stations.

## Question 5: How can community rail help to make sure that the railway is accessible to as many people as possible?

- 5.1 The aim is to engage CRPs in working with a range of groups in order to diversify and enable inclusion in the railway nationally.** This may be using the Railway Confidence Programme, or by developing a programme through training with CRL or others in the industry, or through work with societies outside the industry, to ensure effective, sustained and meaningful access for all local and national groups. These adjustments on the whole are very minor and cost-effective, looking away from physical adjustments to programmes and projects of access, education and confidence.
- 5.2 As outlined above, access to employment, health services, education, training and leisure must be equal across all social groups.** CRPs are well placed to assist in provision of this, due to their relationship with and status as part of the local communities in which they exist; they have an exceptional understanding of local needs and issues. With training and support to identify a more diverse range of needs, they will be able to identify these at a more relatable level than the majority of TOCS, and will be able to increase accessibility through providing outreach programmes, and advising TOCs on access issues within stations through locally-led initiatives. This is as well as reaching groups through programmes including art, educational engagement, marketing, social media, dance and music to bring wider cultural representation to the network.
- 5.3 This training, offered by the DfT, ACoRP or individual TOCs and CRP support networks, could include holding focus groups with individual CRPs and adopters to accurately record views and opinions, as well as an audit and benchmarking assessment.** Following this, the production of individual community reports for different CRPs and other groups to accurately display their local diversity makeup, i.e. how many within their community are living with additional needs, physical needs and mental health issues; these can be generated online very easily and may reduce the difficulty that some groups have regarding internet use. This will enable CRPs to more easily and accurately reach relevant groups.
- 5.4 Different levels of diversity toolkits would also be extremely useful; a 'beginner' toolkit would be useful to simply outline equality, diversity & inclusion (ED&I) terminology, particularly regarding disabilities and additional needs, sexuality and gender differences and a range of religions and ethnic backgrounds, explaining the benefits of inclusion and highlighting a process which includes diverse groups in existing work, thereby embedding the validity of inclusion.** Following distribution of toolkits and community reports, it would be helpful to have two training levels offered, one that is the 'beginner' level, more focussed on myth-busting and general discussion, and one that is more advanced, offering support for specific projects focussed on a range of diverse groups.
- 5.5 Alongside this, specific ED&I funding for projects regarding working with a range of diverse groups would additionally incentivise these groups, as well as clarity regarding the financial benefits of inclusion, as well as the moral and philanthropic initiative.**
- 5.6 A range of programmes for increasing accessibility have been detailed above; within Community Rail Lancashire, the key education programme 'Educating the Passengers of the Future' is open to all schools for Early Years and Primary.** The diversity of communities within Lancashire enables CRL to use area profiles to ensure work is carried out in schools with a range of races and religions, as well as different proportions of Pupil Premium Grant (indicating social disadvantage). For all young people, this ensures inspiration, safety knowledge, and practical information for accessing the network into their teenage and adult years.
- 5.7 Alongside this, CRL offers the Railway Confidence Programme (RCP) to all age groups within education, which is aimed at Special Educational Needs schools (though can be used by mainstream schools if they feel they would benefit, or have a particularly high proportion of SEND pupils), to assist those with hidden disabilities.** This outreach education initiative is designed to instil lifelong confidence, and is flexibly adapted for every group. As above, the programme is nationally replicable with support and training.
- 5.8 Experience schemes of all types, such as the RCP, are absolutely vital for ensuring that young people in particular are able to confidently use transport in the future, be that independently or with a supporter.** If the support is not made available to those with additional needs when they are young, it is likely they will not see rail as a viable travel option in the future, making it harder to engage with them when they are adults.

- 5.9 Learning new skills when young enables lifelong use, as opposed to the potentially more difficult task of identifying and engaging with adults, many of whom will already have travel patterns they do not wish to alter.** By engaging with the young, we ensure we contribute to these travel patterns and are able to facilitate confident, safe travel for families and for future adults, ensuring all young people have access to full health, education, employment and social prospects.
- 5.10 Excellent schemes such as Dementia Friendly travel programmes and stations, and travel initiatives aimed to assist the elderly in care homes and social clubs are also valuable, as these help to increase community cohesion and reduce isolation in the elderly.** A scheme developed by Merseyrail helps rail staff identify those elderly passengers who may need assistance at stations by passengers wearing a tulip. It helps boost the confidence of elderly passengers knowing assistance is available if needed. A further example developed by the Bishop Line CRP and Northern helps Syrian refugees learn how to use the train to reach for example the mosque in Middlesborough which holds services in Arabic not Urdu.
- 5.11 If train operators commit to working with their local CRPs, as well as making staff available within their businesses for community education engagement, as well as potential involvement with Network Rail's community engagement team, there is great potential to engage a large number of young people with additional needs nationally, for a very minimal cost.** Training when working with young people with and without additional needs is also available free of charge through Community Rail Lancashire. Working with young people also has the additional added bonus of reducing trespass, vandalism and antisocial behaviour. Further details can be found at <https://downtheline.org.uk/projects/the-railway-confidence-programme/>
- 5.12 Railways are stressful places in many situations; for those with and without additional needs and barriers. CRPs cannot change the physical features of stations in many cases due to high levels of regulation and a simple lack of space (for areas such as quiet spaces and staffed help points).**
- 5.13 Therefore assistance for those with mental and cognitive health needs, and those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, must come through three sources; firstly through programmes to instil confidence e.g. The Railway Confidence Programme and the 'Passengers of the Future' programme, to enable children to develop confidence in use into adulthood.**
- 5.14 Secondly, though information provision and staff assistance on stations (which TOCs must ensure is suitably provided).** CRL is exploring the possibility of developing a Railway Exploration simulation, which explains the rail environment, iconography, travel processes and what to do when things 'go wrong', aimed at those with cognitive or mental health needs, to ensure confident travel, through a virtual reality station and journey format. Provision of suitable information has been identified as a key step to ensuring access to the network for those with additional needs (Mackett, 2017).
- 5.15 Thirdly, CRPs are well-placed to advise TOCs as to further needs at specific local stations; decisions which could not be made on a national scale, and are required within a distinct community.**  
As diversity and inclusion within the CRPs themselves increases into the future, they will be increasingly able to provide specific key advice that accurately reflects local needs. Physical alterations for station access must also be made on a case-by-case basis, though the existing infrastructure is a great barrier in this area, and staff training (for example, in guiding those who are visually impaired) may be an important compromise to ensure accessibility.
- 5.16 Regarding BAME groups, stereotypes within community rail should be addressed.** Providing CRPs with information regarding accessing area and school diversity statistics, and explaining the benefits of accessing different types of schools and groups, may begin to assist in addressing a need which simply may have gone unconsidered (as previously mentioned). More diverse projects with wider meanings can also help to attract different groups, through representation of languages and art, for example, to make station environments more welcoming to a range of people within society. Working with some of the local and religious groups mentioned previously may also assist in this area (see '[Revitalising Burnley Central](#)').
- 5.17 Regarding those Not in further Education, Employment or Training (NEET groups) and those with other social disadvantages, the development of volunteering programmes and apprenticeships (such as those at CRL and ACoRP) is a great step forward, and considerations should be made for how to extend these offers beyond young people already in Further/Higher Education to those who are NEET.** This will ensure that those with disadvantages can access the programmes and potentially provide them with new employment prospects and skills. Working with outside agencies will again be key here; for example, the Prince's Trust, and other youth charities.

- 5.18 Regarding gender equality, the change again must come through education programmes.** The vast majority of children will refer to a train driver as ‘he’; CRPs must ensure that they use gender-neutral or equal terminology to combat this bias, in order to attract people of all genders to the industry. Training and peer support could also be provided in this area through groups such as ‘Women in Community Rail’.
- 5.19 For all the above regarding D&I, it is vital to understand that training and support will be absolutely necessary to ensure positive outcomes for the majority of CRPs.**

## 5.20 Key outcomes:

Through engaging with young people it is possible for CRPs to:

- Increase the confidence of young people in railway use
- Increase inclusion and diversity on local and national railway lines
- Benefitting and enabling the passengers of the future to be better integrated into society

**5.21 In addition to the recommendations directly for CRPs at point 4.13, we recommend the following initial action points for TOCs/DfT/ACoRP to assist CRPs in this area:**

- Holding focus groups with individual CRPs and adopters to accurately record views and opinions, as well as an audit and benchmarking assessment.
- Producing individual community reports for different CRPs and other groups that will accurately display their local diversity makeup, i.e. how many within their community are living with additional needs, physical needs and mental health issues; these can be generated online very easily and may reduce the difficulty that some groups have regarding internet use.
- Producing different levels of diversity toolkits. A ‘beginner’ toolkit would be useful to simply outline ED&I terminology, explain the benefits of inclusion and highlight a process which includes diverse groups in existing work, thereby embedding the validity of inclusion.
- Highlighting benefits morally and philanthropically, but also the financial and revenue benefits of inclusion for specific lines.
- Training offers; following distribution of toolkits and community reports, it would be helpful to have two training levels offered, one that is the ‘beginner’ level, more focussed on myth-busting and general discussion, and one that is more advanced, offering support for specialised projects.
- Specific ED&I funding for projects.



Having the confidence to buy a ticket



Finding out about Blackburn station

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# THEME 3: SUPPORTING LOCAL AND REGIONAL ECONOMIES

## Question 6: How can community rail support local economies and railways grow through:

- Increasing employment?
- Education and training opportunities?
- Supporting small businesses?
- Social enterprise development?

### Education and training opportunities?

- 6.1 Community rail partnerships have the potential to play a significant role in educating the ‘passengers of the future’; young people who are placed to be the passengers and employees of the national rail network in the coming years.**
- 6.2 In supporting local railways, engaging with young people in a positive and constructive format prior to school-leaving age ensures that rail employment can be seen as a viable employment option.** Though car use is on the rise in the UK, car use per person amongst the young, particularly men between 17 and 20 years old, is declining (DfT, 2016). By introducing them to rail early in their lives, it becomes not only an option for employment, but a more likely choice for future commuting, leisure, health, training and education purposes.
- 6.3 Within this, local economies benefit from a more mobile future workforce, where rail enables future employees to travel further for employment, as well as make longer and more frequent leisure trips.**
- 6.4 Engagement of the young can encompass all age groups from the Early Years Foundation Stage to Further and Higher Education, and has clear links to the Development Matters, National Curriculum and volunteering / work experience requirements within education groups.** Work with both young people who have additional and special needs, particularly when considering future independence, is also a key part of educational engagement.
- 6.5 Engagement may include specific education programmes, such as Community Rail Lancashire’s ‘Passengers of the Future’ or ‘Railway Confidence Programme’ offers, but can also involve schools working with CRPs to complete station projects.** By engaging young people in station projects we not only enhance local community pride in the area, but give the young people a sense of ownership over their local transport network, as well as having a significant impact on antisocial behaviour and vandalism following project completion.
- 6.6 By engaging young people at an early age, we ensure that their perception of the rail industry is a positive one for employment.** The gender and race demographics within the industry being predominantly white and male contributes towards a lack of diversity through lack of representation and role models. Early gender stereotyping casts train drivers and other staff as ‘male’ in the minds of the majority of children and young people. This should be combatted early by providing examples within the industry, considering marketing and advertising, neutral language use and early ‘work experience’ opportunities, including interaction with BAME and female crew and staff members.

**6.7 To deliver this effectively, staff within TOCs, CRPs and other agencies should undertake unconscious bias training, in order to be able to deliver a neutral and positive session to a range of ages.**

Working collaboratively with agencies such as the DfE to provide wide-reaching resources and programmes of early perception intervention also have great potential. Engaging with NEET (Not in further Education, Employment or Training) young people is also key; the rail industry and community rail industry has the potential to place itself as a pioneer for recognising untapped potential in the young; working with agencies such as the Prince's Trust will enable this. Project work to engage specific communities such as BAME groups and those with additional needs also ensures early diversity within the industry and a positive perception that can lead through to future employment consideration.

**6.8 CRPs can also work with Network Rail, TOCs, LTAs and Charitable Trusts to identify under-utilised and redundant space on the railway estate that can be used to support opportunities for local commercial or social enterprise developments.**

If managed correctly vacant station buildings and railway owned land can often provide affordable, accessible and useful space for supporting business start-ups and social enterprises with grants often available through local authorities and LEPs. Increasing footfall to and from the station (and the local community) by broadening the social and economic activity at a station can improve natural surveillance and security and support economic growth. The provision of community services on or about the railway estate (café, small office space, galleries, learning zones, meeting rooms etc.) create welcomed community hubs stimulating further investment for the local area but also reducing incidents of social disorder, trespass and vandalism on the railway. Examples in the North include the developments at Irlam, Moorthorpe and Ellesmere Port stations.

## **6.9 We recommend the following action points for CRPs:**

- Engaging with a range of education programmes currently operating across CRPs, accessing this information through ACoRP,
- Attend the range of seminars and workshops on offer by ACoRP and the DfT regarding working with young people,
- Undertake unconscious bias training,
- Engage with diverse groups through project work as detailed above.

## **6.10 We recommend the following action points for ACoRP/DfT/TOCs to support CRPs in this area:**

- Continue to provide high-quality workshops and seminars,
- Explore offering webinars and linking to online sources of help such as [www.downtheline.org.uk](http://www.downtheline.org.uk),
- Continue to provide awards specifically for educational engagement,
- Explore the possibility of offering funding exclusively for educational engagement,
- Continue the work within ACoRP that aims to identify how CRPs can collectively support student volunteers and apprentices across a range of education providers and train operators,
- Provide early 'work experience' opportunities with the chance to interact with a diverse range of staff,
- Undertake unconscious bias training,
- Investigate collaboration with wider agencies such as the DfE and Prince's Trust.
- Investigate opportunities for better utilising railway owned buildings and land for commercial and social enterprise.

## Question 7: What role can community rail play in making best use of:

- Station buildings?
- Railway land?

### Station buildings

- 7.1 The question seeks responses about how community rail can make better use of station buildings.** Yet, this is only part of the question about the role and function of stations and how community rail/station partnerships can support the rail industry, government, businesses and voluntary organisations in making the best use of them and turning them into community assets or put another way into local community hubs. This response, therefore, widens out the question to look more holistically at how community rail can play a much wider role in station development. At all times, though, it is important to know what the community wants of its station and if it has the appetite to do something more than just provide a boarding/alighting point for passengers. Passenger surveys are one way to identify specific needs of both users and also non users. Talking to local groups such as parish councils and user groups is another way. Whatever developments are initiated they are for the long term. For this reason larger scale projects need to be supported by a viable business case and smaller ones by a CRP or station partnership that can demonstrate its commitment and sustainability.
- 7.2 Let us always remember that stations are the gateway to the rail network and are the first physical contact passengers will have with it. Stations are also the last contact passengers have with the railway so it is important that the needs of destinating passengers are also taken into account.** Stations also form a key part of the engagement with the rail industry carried out by CRPs and station partnerships. Passengers have their own perceptions of stations and how comfortable they feel in using them. Many stations, especially across the north of England, offer minimal facilities for passengers. There are also many stations which have large buildings many of which are either poorly used or redundant. This can result in stations being seen as isolated and having threatening environments. Examples across the north include Blackburn and Bolton which have large redundant spaces or Burnley Central which is oversized, isolated and has an unwelcoming and threatening environment.
- 7.3 Yet stations should be dynamic environments responding to changing needs - in some cases facilities need to contract whilst in others grow to meet changing footfall.** It could be argued that privatisation hasn't helped! The split responsibility between TOCs and Network Rail with their different time horizons and objectives create a fault line which stations can often fall between. The short term vision of the lessee can hinder projects that have a long lead time and payback period. Significant station developments are normally beyond the horizon of an 8 to 9 year franchise and tend to get parked in favour of quick wins such as refurbished waiting rooms, gatelines, or projects such as cycle hubs funded by others. Lancashire County Council has gone part way to resolve this by owning station buildings such as Accrington and Burnley which it has a long term interest in developing. TfGM in its 'Case for Change' also set out potential to make better use of redundant or underused station buildings which could also act as a catalyst for local regeneration of adjacent brown field sites and run down urban environments.
- 7.4 Despite investment from Local Transport Authorities, Station Facility Owners and other funders, there are no consistent standards of quality or facilities across the network, with some stations lacking basic facilities such as waiting shelters and real-time passenger information displays.** Many lack step-free access. There is often poor information about onward travel options and little reflection of the community in the 'look and feel' of the station. Some larger stations, and those on busy commuting routes, can be subject to overcrowding on platforms and at bottlenecks such as automatic ticket gate lines – which can slow down pedestrian flow and lengthen train dwell times.
- 7.5 Stations can provide a catalyst for wider regeneration and transformation, framing the station as a central component of the area it serves, and a destination in its own right.** This has been achieved most notably in London, with the recent redevelopment and repurposing of St Pancras and Kings Cross, but good examples have also been achieved in the North of England – such as the Stephenson Quarter development adjacent to Newcastle station - and several others are proposed, including at Doncaster, Leeds and Darlington and also smaller stations as noted in 6.8.
- 7.6 Further opportunities for stations can be seen in local authorities significantly reducing their asset base.** Whilst austerity for many local authorities has led to many closing buildings, flexible and agile working provides scope for railway buildings to be used to deliver services (see also 7.8 stations as community hubs) for local authorities or to provide agile working spaces.

## What do passengers want?

**7.7 Many reports and surveys have repeatedly shown that for passengers the basic requirements boil down to:**

- Creating a safe environment that helps reduce the fear of anti - social behaviour BUT not just by proving remotely monitored CCTV;
- Create activity at the station, which doesn't have to be rail related, if possible at all times that trains are operating;
- Ensure that there is connectivity with other modes such as walking, cycling, buses, taxis, car parks;
- Use IMAGINATIVE design to create a pleasant and welcoming environment and a fit for purpose station; and
- Where possible create links with the vernacular of the local area and/or that relate to the history of the area.

**7.8 Through meeting these requirements a station can become a more valued asset in the community as well as developing into a community hub.** There is of course nothing new in stations being 'hubs'. At the outset stations offered a very comprehensive range of services and activities which linked the community and the railway. Buying tickets, providing information, telegraph services, refreshment rooms, bookstalls, goods sheds, parcels services, station gardens, station hotels and so the list goes on and of course at many stations the Station Master and his family lived 'over the shop'! It was only as retrenchment took place that many stations became unstaffed, desolate and unwelcoming. So it is perhaps not too surprising that efforts are being made across the UK to breathe new life into stations. Today this is often done as a partnership between the community and the railway with CRPs often, but not exclusively, the champion of such initiatives. This is in many ways a new and unique departure from the railway of old and allows new forms of enterprise to be established that can be run using a variety of different business models.

**7.9 CRPs are one of the many agents that can lead to the transformation of a station and its environment.** Station projects cover a whole range of initiatives. At one level the projects can be very small scale with the costs met by the CRP sometimes using grants available from ACoRP or TOCs. At the other extreme they can involve multiple agencies in multi million pound projects. **CRPs should be the catalyst for the regeneration of stations on their line.** With their 'ear to the ground' and ability to mobilise local opinion CRPs should be able to identify the needs of the area and ensure this is communicated to TOCs, Network Rail, local authorities, LEAs. In all cases the needs will be different - it might be how to make community or commercial use of redundant space in a station building to identifying the need for a new facility that has been removed or demolished in an earlier rationalisation when the railway was contracting not expanding. As looked at in the next paragraphs CRPs can also be the instrument of station regeneration by taking over and directly managing commercial/community activities in them.

**7.10 However, it has to be stressed that there is no specific model except that they have the community, station and railway as their central focus. The central objective of making stations into community hubs is so that they become livelier and busier places, where people come for other purposes than just to catch a train.** As we have already seen passengers like stations to be centres of activity it increases their sense of safety and security and this particularly applies to young people, women and the elderly. It takes away the isolation that stations devoid of activity and perhaps hidden from view can engender. There are many stations across the UK where this concept has been applied but much still remains to be done to make all or at least most stations attractive community hubs.

**7.11 Through the Northern franchise it is planned that the 'Station Improvement Fund' ensures that most stations get the basics of information, shelter, security and ticketing right - it is in essence playing catch up time for years of neglect through 'no investment' franchises.** So the opportunity for CRPs and station partnerships is to look at what else can be done to further enhance their station using the skills contained in the community whether from voluntary groups, local government, schools, colleges, commercial bodies working with the railway industry. Developing community hubs often requires either capital or revenue funding (usually both!!) and it is important that this is taken into account in the development of projects. The new franchises may offer some help through the Social and Commercial Development Plan as well as through the Customer and Community Improvement Fund. Other funding streams are available from a wide variety of sources but they very seldom offer on-going support except in the very short term perhaps up to 3 years.

The benefits of developing stations as community hubs can be considerable, adding up to making stations sustainable in the full sense of the term, in social, economic and environmental senses.

- **Socially**, by making stations the heart of community life and ensuring they are safe and attractive places to use. The sort of station envisaged here is a major asset to a community, providing a focus and in many instances a place that people feel proud of, contributing to a genuine sense of civic pride. Use of station buildings for community purposes brings a very direct benefit to local community life.
- **Economically**, this approach helps improve overall usage of a station by making it a high-profile and attractive facility, increasing revenue to the railway. Increased use of station property helps improve the TOC's bottom line and at the same time stimulates local business and creates jobs. An attractive station with a good service provision can act as a huge magnet to surrounding development (housing, business) particularly if encouraged through the planning process.
- **Environmentally**, by helping to improve rail's overall use, encouraging modal shift from car to rail (which may include 'rail-heading' at the station instead of making the entire journey by car). Practical measures to encourage journeys to and from the station by foot, cycle and public transport further help improve rail's overall environmental advantages. Several stations (e.g. Accrington, Liverpool South Parkway) can be beacons of good environmental design, helping to embed ideas of sustainable building design and use in wider.

## 7.12 Summary and recommendations

**7.13 Stations are more than just places passengers go to catch trains.** They are important community facilities and can become community hubs. Stations are also central to all passengers experiences of the rail network and it is important that, no matter what size it is or what footfall it has, that it offers a welcoming environment and provides all the essential information and facilities a traveller requires. Below are our recommendations for the role that CRPs/Station Partnerships can play in the development of stations.

**7.14 Within the draft Long Term Rail Strategy for the North of England TfN notes the need to define a set of minimum stations standards to apply to stations in the North of England.** This will seek to raise the condition and improve facilities at stations across the region, providing greater consistency and levels of passenger comfort. Stations Friends groups and adopters, Community Rail Partnerships and other community representatives should be encouraged and supported to take greater ownership of stations. Where feasible, the commercial viability of stations should be explored, which could introduce valuable new revenue streams as well as supporting local enterprise and providing employment.

## 7.15 Recommendations:

- CRPs should be proactive in identifying the requirements at stations on its line/s.
- CRPs need to promote station developments through their action plans.
- 'Line Plans' on designated lines/services should encourage station development through generic statements not specific projects e.g. develop stations as gateways or look for commercial/community opportunities at stations or work with the TOC to find new uses for redundant buildings or develop funding packages to regenerate stations.
- CRPs can be funders of small scale schemes often in partnership with friends groups, 'in bloom' groups, user groups, parish council, using funds such as ACoRPs 'small grants scheme'; or on designated lines the DfT's 'designated line community rail development fund'; TOC specific grants such as Northern's seed corn fund or its station adoption fund' Trans Pennine have a grant scheme available to CRPs and there will be other examples. Some Combined Authorities provide grants such as TfGMs small grants fund available to CRPs and station partnerships in its area.
- CRPs can broker bigger projects and help secure grants for much bigger projects. For example the East Lancashire CRP helped secure through the EUs Interreg IVb programme station projects at Accrington and Burnley Manchester Road. The former through the SusStations project (Sustainable Stations) and the latter through Citizens' Rail a project that was led by the Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership.
- CRPs can initiate community based activities in redundant station buildings and/or help to identify commercial use of the space. This could be cafes, ticket offices, tourist information, educational rooms, small offices.
- CRPs need the support of the DfT in ensuring through the franchising process that TOCs are encouraged to work with and support CRPs through contributing to their core funding as well making other grants available for projects such as station developments.

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# THEME 4: SUGGESTING INNOVATIVE WAYS TO IMPROVE THE WAY THE RAILWAY WORKS

## Question 8: How can community rail be best supported to act:

- Innovatively?
- Effectively?

### Innovation

- 8.1 At the outset let's be clear what we mean by innovation.** Innovation is a slippery word but there is a common thread running through the various definitions which is that innovation is an improvement to something that already exists. So innovation is not invention. Raising platforms is not new but the Harrington Hump was an innovative way to raise short sections of platforms at lower cost at stations where it would have been hard to justify raising the full length. Likewise developing websites is not new but CRL's 'Down the Line'; is innovative in being a dedicated website setting out how CRPs can successfully plan to work with schools, colleges and apprentices along with lots of practical examples written by CRPs and schools. There are many areas where community rail can be innovative for example in the way it communicates with younger people to attract them to work or volunteer in community rail or by breaking down barriers to using the railway for potential passengers - themes that this response will return to.
- 8.2 The question also asks what are the barriers to realising innovative schemes.** Put simply it is often a combination of funding, railway processes and franchising. None in themselves stop innovation but they can at times be formidable barriers to making progress. Network Rail's culture is hyper cautious and process driven for very sound reasons but it makes them very wary of thinking outside the box and innovation requires that. Likewise franchising may also be a hindrance. The best innovation is generally seen during the bidding stage when bidders are after those extra credits! In many ways it would be good to be able to pick and mix the ideas of all bidders not just the preferred one once the process is over. No one bidder has a monopoly of the best innovations yet the process does not allow this.
- 8.3 It is not possible to look at all aspects of innovation so the following sections look at three particular areas where innovation can or is taking place:**
1. the use of digital technology linked to smart phones;
  2. innovations and art projects; and
  3. working with other agencies.

### Innovation using digital technology

- 8.4 Innovation in communicating with potential passengers: innovations in the use of digital technology could help potential passengers explore the railway in a 'virtual' environment before they try it out for real - in some ways on-line mapping services such as google maps already go some way to providing this.** Through the innovative development of apps it might be possible to take people wary about using the railway through a 'virtual journey' so they can find out how to get to the station, what to expect when they get there, how to purchase a ticket, how to board a train, learn about how to use the railway safely. The same app could also take you on a virtual tour of a station. All of this could be done using a personal smart phone. Smart phone ownership is very high and especially in those aged under 34 where it is nearly 100%. Of those aged 35 to 55 ownership is hovering around 85%. There will be costs associated with the development of the apps but the rewards in potential passengers gaining confidence in trying the railway will be significant. A trial should be established to test the impact such an innovation could have. Certainly in the north of England rail use is lower than in other parts of the country with many people never having travelled by train. It is easy to see how an app that demystifies rail use could be of significant value.
- 8.5 This sort of innovation won't work easily for everyone especially given the demographic of many people working or volunteering in community rail.** The use of digital technology and apps may not be high on their agenda - however innovative the app may be! So to help introduce them to digital technology we recommend that DfT, ACoRP et al establish a programme of workshops, webinars, seminars targeted at this age group.

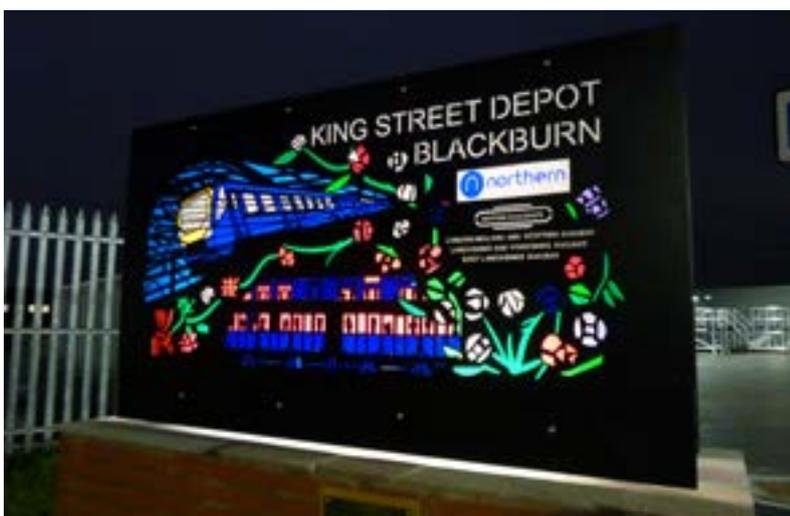
**8.6 Yet, involving young people is key to ensuring sustained growth and innovation in community rail.** The issue is how best to capture their ideas and turn them into practical reality? We would, therefore, strongly recommend that one way to foster this would be to establish a **National Community Rail Youth Board**. The Board would be an opportunity to discuss key topics within community rail which in turn could be fed back to the DfT, TOCs, ACoRP and other groups. The Board would be one way to help bring in the new generation of community rail officers and volunteers and thus contribute to the sustainability of the community rail movement. Yet the Board will need to be innovative in how it is made up - community rail employs a limited number of people although has a large band of, as we have seen generally older, volunteers. So the Board will need to broaden its membership beyond the traditional community rail sources to embrace apprentices and/or new entrants in the rail industry to be a part of it as well. TOCs, Network Rail, ROSCOS, DfT, other government agencies should be encouraged to identify young people to be part of the Board. The Board should also have funding to enable it to develop projects that communicate community rail to new audiences.

## Innovation in art work

**8.7 A simple way to involve the local community in projects at their local station is through producing art work for display at the station.** This works well with young people especially through schools, scout or guide groups, youth groups etc. Art work may not sound very innovative but there are many ways in which projects can be innovative. It can be in the groups that take part or in the way the art work itself is utilised for display.

**8.8 A side benefit is that working with schools introduces a new audience to rail travel via their local station and curriculum linked artwork can provide very colourful and informative art work for display at the station.** As an example, over the last 10 years, CRL has developed artwork that can withstand the elements as well as the day to day hustle and bustle of a station not forgetting the ever present vandals. From experience the materials and fixing detail have changed.

**8.9 At the outset it is also important to understand the station dynamics and the local area to identify possible themes for the artwork (it doesn't all have to be railway) and how the artwork will engage with the users of the station.** Working with local schools can be a quick win, primary school children will produce vast quantities of vibrant art work which can be digitally photographed then re constituted in a computer programme to produce artwork which every member of the class has contributed to. Transfer this into Dibond poster boards or running in boards and you have a display that will lift the station ambiance for intending passengers. For example, CRL has worked with children in various artistic mediums water colours, charcoal and pastel. Art work has been produced on banners, running in boards and poster boards which can easily be attached to station walls and fencing. Use of Dibond material for signage has proved to be the most durable medium for art work at stations. Recently CRL have successfully experimented with digital laser technology to reproduce children's design in laser cut steel. This medium is best explained with the picture below.



The new King Street DMU depot at Blackburn (the Wrangling) displaying the illuminated art work produced by the pupils of St Luke & St Phillips primary school which is close to the new depot.

**8.10 The use of children's artwork at stations is guaranteed to create interest at a station from passengers and the wider community as well as introducing children to rail as an interesting form of transport.** It also helps reduce vandalism as older siblings may be dissuaded from trashing what their family has helped improve.

## Other areas of innovation

- 8.11 Engaging with government agencies beyond the DfT also offers a new way to innovate within current work and programmes.** For example, by engaging the DfE or the DH in specific community rail programmes, such as working with young people or programmes to promote healthy, active and sustainable travel, CRPs would have access to a new range of ideas and experience.
- 8.12 Further ways to support and motivate could include specific funding that is reserved for projects that are considered to be innovative, either technologically or in community terms, and awards that reflect this expectation.** Providing CRPs with contacts within specific agencies and charities outside rail would also enable new and effective community engagement; provision of local area diversity statistics and specific local community groups may also contribute to this broader community agenda.
- 8.13 Engaging with government agencies beyond the DfT also offers a new way to innovate within current work and programmes.** For example, by engaging the DfE or the DH in specific community rail programmes, such as working with young people or programmes to promote healthy, active and sustainable travel, CRPs would have access to a new range of ideas and experience.

## Summary and recommendations

- 8.14 We recommend the following action points for ACoRP/DfT/TOCs to support CRPs in this area:**
- To investigate the possibility of establishing a National Community Rail Youth Board,
  - To establish funding specifically for innovative projects,
  - To provide CRPs with accurate community information and contacts within outside agencies and government agencies where relevant and possible,
  - To establish a programme of workshops, webinars, training and mentoring tailored to meet the needs of specific demographics to encourage greater involvement in community rail.

## Being Effective

**8.15. What is meant by effectiveness and how can community rail be best supported to achieve this?**

**8.16 To be effective a CRP needs to:**

- understand the communities along its line - its social and economic composition, its political make up; the local movers and shakers.
- understand the role the railway can and should play within the communities it serves. As an example the Settle Carlisle is seen by many as a tourist line and many tourists expect to see steam on it. It passes through glorious scenery. Yet hidden unknown to them the line passes through communities with pockets of social and economic deprivation. The line for these communities is literally a life line to better jobs and educational opportunity and yes the tourists also help to underpin jobs in the local economy a win win. In East Lancashire the railway is one of the major forces helping to regenerate communities by linking the area to the regional centres of Manchester, Leeds and Preston.
- know the strengths and weaknesses (SWOT analysis) of their line and how to fix the weaknesses.
- how to market the line by knowing the target audience/s (market analysis and segmentation).
- how to fund developments however big or small.
- how to use social media, apps and websites to 'spread the word'. the methods will be different for different lines and also the skill and knowledge of the CRP officer/s.

**8.17 There is a clear role for CRPs, ACoRP, DfT, TOCs and Network Rail to work together to look to establish what is meant by effectiveness and who is best placed to provide the support required for its many different facets. The current work being carried out by the RSSB may well be helpful here.**

**8.18 There are opportunities for CRPs to link to established events and use their own resources to add value.** One example is the Ormskirk Motorfest which brings large numbers of people to this small town. To ease congestion the West of Lancashire CRP, in partnership with Northern, arranged a special Sunday Service on the Preston – Ormskirk line and helped promote the service to the local community.

## Question 9: What opportunities are there to secure a:

- Diverse income base for community rail?
- Sustainable income base for community rail?

- 9.1 This whole question revolves around what is a community rail partnership for?** As Neil Buxton, the former ACoRP General Manager, used to say it is community - railway - partnership. It forms the bridge between the community, who may not/do not understand the ins and outs of railway operation, and the railway industry in order to make the latter more understandable and responsive to their needs.
- 9.2 Community rail has done this through the formation of community rail partnerships (CRPs) which bring together the public, private and voluntary sectors to pool resources, knowledge and funding with the common aim of improving their local railway and its relevance to the local community.**
- 9.3 Many CRPs have been developed by local authorities but certainly not in all cases and many are hosted or assisted by local authorities.** In the early days many CRPs were informal partnerships held together by 'terms of reference', an 'action plan' and passion and if they were lucky a full or part time community rail officer. Some of the lines have been designated. Many CRPs remain informal bodies but changing fortunes have altered the means by which many CRPs are funded.



tRAILblazers - CRPs are good at drawing in funds from multiple sources. The tRAILblazers project along the Wigan, Kirkby to Liverpool line has received funds from Merseyrail, Transport for Greater Manchester, ACoRP, CRL and the Department for Transport. The young people involved in the project are seen outside the World Museum.



**9.4 The role in particular of local government, especially in the north of England, but I expect elsewhere as well has changed.** Significant budget reductions has meant that many areas of non - statutory activity have been reduced or abandoned. Community rail is one such area. One response to this has been the steady increase in the DfT mandating that new franchises provide financial support to CRPs in their area. This was certainly the case during the refranchising of Northern and TransPennine.

Both ITTs required the bidders to demonstrate commitment to community rail but in the case of Northern this included a mandated sum of £500k per annum index linked. Arriva Rail North, the successful bidder, went better than that and doubled the funds available for community rail and put in place managers who would, inter alia, work with CRPs. There is nothing wrong with this approach so long as it doesn't compromise the integrity of CRPs as the partnership is working to benefit the railway. **It is hard to predicate the value a CRP brings to the bottom line of a TOC so providing core funding towards CRPs acts as a proxy for this.** The two reports looking at the Value of Community Rail have gone some way to show how much a successful and well run CRP can generate new business for its line. Other potential funding streams might be from ROSCOS, local businesses and freight operators.

**9.5 In other cases CRPs have developed into companies to deliver specific projects or services.** The Settle-Carlisle and Esk Valley lines have 'Development Companies' in lieu of CRPs and in Lancashire, Community Rail Lancashire Ltd acts as an umbrella for four CRPs as well as delivering specific projects for Northern. The issue of 'Community Business Units' is explored in section 10.17.

**9.6 Again no specific model needs to be promoted some companies are run as 'social enterprises' and others as 'not for director profit' companies.** The key is to establish as wide a base as possible through the Board Directors and Members. However, once a company is established its focus will change. It needs to generate an income; it has responsibilities to Companies House, HMRC; it will employ people, it may deliver specialist services all of which and many more will mean it works differently. At this point is the company still able to deliver what Neil Buxton described as community - rail - partnership or has its way of working and focus changed? **We would recommend that this is an area where further research may be required.**

**9.7 Our question at the start is what is a community rail partnership for?**

- Is it the bridge between the community and the railway?
- Is it a body delivering services that either complement the activities of the TOC or take on directly some of the TOCs activities?

Whichever it is the CRP will need some funding but how much, what for, who should contribute and is there a role for income generation still need to be addressed.

**9.8 In conclusion there is not one answer to this as CRPs will generate income from multiple sources that will change over time. However, we would recommend that:**

- a. The DfT continues to mandate core funding to CRPs through franchise agreements as a proxy for the value a CRP brings to its bottom line;**
- b. CRPs look to obtain grants from the many funding streams available including those provided by the DfT and ACoRP such as the 'designated line community rail development fund';**
- c. Capacity building advice is available to CRPs who want to develop a formal as opposed to an informal structure. This should include advice on company structures, legal advice, how to draft 'Articles of Association'. This could be provided directly by ACoRP or experts it has access to that either provide a pro bona service or charge modest rates reflecting the limited income CRPs generally have; and**
- d. That advice is available to CRPs who want to develop income streams that support their action plan, line designation.**

## Question 10: How can community rail designation be developed to more fully realise its potential?

- 10.1 Community rail designation is a fundamental part of the 2004 'Community Rail Development Strategy' which was further endorsed by the DfT review in 2007.** The CRDS represented a big breakthrough at the time in that it recognised that secondary and rural lines had a purpose and function and were not just a financial drain on the Treasury. Through an initial set of 3 key objectives, later expanded to 4 by the DfT, it was suggested these lines could be developed to play a much greater role within the rail network. These are:
- i. Increasing ridership, freight use and revenue**
  - ii. Managing down costs**
  - iii. Greater involvement of the local community**
  - iv. Enabling local rail to play a larger role in economic regeneration**
- 10.2 The key to achieving this would be through the establishment of CRPs on the lines who would provide the link between the railway and the community to mutual benefit.** The strategy also suggested that these lines could be taken out of the inter-operability regulations and could potentially have different standards applied to their management, operation and infrastructure. Perhaps one of the shortcomings of the CRDS is that the list of lines identified are often only parts of longer routes and/or services. There are possibly a handful of self - contained lines such as those in Cornwall where in theory at least the approach might be applicable. One such example being the branch between St Erth and St Ives in Cornwall.
- 10.3 To overcome this problem a pragmatic solution was introduced whereby community rail routes are formally designated by the DfT as either a community rail service and/or a community rail line.** The former applied to the train service and stations whereas the latter included the infrastructure as well.
- 10.4 Designation is the result of a formal process that is overseen by the DfT and results in an agreed 'Route Prospectus' for the line.** At the end of the process the designation is either confirmed or not. The fact that this is a formal process endorsed by the DfT with local MP and Ministerial involvement ensures that designation is seen as having considerable status behind it. This has been useful for CRPs when seeking funding to, for example, employ a CRPO or take forward a particular project. It is also useful in talking to stakeholders. It should be noted that Parliament considers designation to be a permanent arrangement although it is recognised that changing circumstances may require a review of the Route Prospectus. Indeed, the early Route Prospectuses were more limited in scope than later ones which are the result of greater collaboration between the CRP and DfT. A reflection of lessons learnt and greater confidence within the DfT team that CRPs are closer to the local community and can more clearly identify local priorities for the line.
- 10.5 However, in looking at what designation was expected to achieve then the response from the rail industry has, on the whole, been fairly muted.** In very few cases have train operators sought derogations from the formal standards they sign up to as part of their franchises. This applies to areas such as ticketing which is formally covered by the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement to areas such as timetabling and maintaining/holding connections. In very few instances has anything bold been tried. For its part Network Rail does not and has not sought to apply differential standards to community rail routes. It is perhaps easy to see why in both cases designation has not lead to a fundamentally new approach. For TOCs the constraints of the franchising process and the requirements to achieve often challenging revenue targets means that the risks associated with doing things differently on a community rail route might eat into valuable management time with potentially limited impact on the 'bottom line'. Equally for Network Rail the ability to apply similar standards across its network makes purchasing materials easier and given its risk averse culture the thought of what might go wrong is generally enough to maintain the status quo!
- 10.6 This is not in any to disparage the financial and managerial support given by both TOCs and Network Rail to CRPs.** It is simply to explain why designation and the opportunities it presents have not been fully exploited by the rail industry. **However, in conversation with CRPs, it must clearly be recognised that they see designation as an important tool and a significant recognition of their efforts by government to promote and develop their line.**

**10.7 So why this apparent dichotomy - a cautious response from the railway industry and a much more enthusiastic one from CRPs?**

**10.8 Perhaps one of the reasons is that many of the routes covered by a CRP were at one time considered to be at risk of closure.** Many were identified in 'The Reshaping of British Railways', 1963 written by Dr Richard Beeching and again in some of the closure options proposed in the 'Serpell Report' of 1982. That sense of insecurity is one of the reasons why CRPs like the recognition given to 'their' line by designation. It means that government is taking these lines seriously and that the threat of closure has at the very least receded - a point recognised in the 2004 Community Rail Development Strategy (CRDS)(1). It is therefore unlikely that any CRP would wish to see its designation withdrawn and why new applications keep coming forward.

**10.9 Designation also gives community rail lines a psychological boost as it raises their profile locally especially with local government and politicians.** It also enables access to the Designated Line Community Rail Development Fund which has been instrumental in supporting a wide range of innovative projects.

**10.10 The franchising process overseen by the DfT also recognises the value of CRPs and has both encouraged and mandated the involvement of TOCs in the day to day operation and funding of CRPs.** The following extract taken from the Stakeholder Consultation document for the Northern and Trans Pennine franchise competition stated that:

**"We will encourage bidders and the next franchisee to explore the scope for innovative local delivery models, in particular on relatively self-contained parts of the network. The objective would be, by working in partnership with local interests, to improve both the efficiency and the local benefits generated by these services."**

**10.11 The DfT has been encouraged to pursue this approach through having an active community rail team supported by the evidence presented in the 2014 report 'The Value of Community Rail Partnerships and the Value of Community Rail Volunteering', the result in the recently awarded Northern franchise is certainly heading in the right direction (see also paragraph 10.13).**

**10.12 In summary what have been the strengths and weaknesses of community rail designation:**

**Strengths:**

- Formal recognition by DfT
- Community Rail team within DfT
- Psychological boost to the CRP
- Route Prospectus sets out an agreed programme
- Powerful tool when talking to potential funders and stakeholders
- Signal to TOCs and Network Rail that things can be done differently
- Allows the trial of new ideas
- Can take lines outside of the inter-operability requirements
- Allows flexibility
- TOCs support CRPs
- Specific funding available for designated lines

**Note:**

1. For example page 11 says: *"The Community Rail Development Strategy is based on the premise that neither closure nor further conventional cost cutting can improve the current situation of local and rural railways. Closure of rail infrastructure is not part of Government policy ..."*

## Weaknesses:

- Designation has not been fully exploited
- TOCs have been reluctant to step outside of industry requirements/agreements
- Network Rail has not developed new standards for community rail lines
- There is too much emphasis on 'operational' issues and less on community and wider external issues including integration with other modes

## 10.13 Looking ahead

**10.14 Given the strong support for community rail within the DfT and the financial contributions being made by franchisees is this likely to lead to both the TOCs and Network Rail adopting a different approach to the these routes in the future?**

**10.15 Key to this is a strong direction by the DfT as to what it is asking bidders to deliver in respect of community rail.** Bidders days offer the opportunity to set out an agenda for community rail that is different from where we are and to encourage bidders to be innovative and not just to 'play safe'.

**10.16 The recently awarded Northern franchise has taken tentative steps in this direction with the appointment of a non-executive Director responsible for community rail; the appointment of 4 Regional Community and Sustainability Managers; the establishment of ComREG (Community Rail Executive Group) and £1.1m per annum to support CRPs, station projects and new projects.**

Clearly there is an expectation that community rail will play a bigger role within the working of the franchise in growing the business, engaging with outside organisations and developing new ideas BUT the franchise has a plethora of committed obligations and management time will be taken up ensuring that these are delivered to agreed timescales. Nothing wrong in that BUT it does point to the fact that a lot of the innovation comes during the bidding process.

**10.17 Within the Northern franchise there is support for establishing 'community business units'.**

The term is being developed by some train companies as 'Community Rail Business Units' to make it more specific. It is not micro franchising by another name as the line would still remain part of the national network with the infrastructure maintained by Network Rail but elements of the day to day management of the line would be devolved by the TOC to the CBU. This could include:

- **Marketing and income generation – bottom line responsibility;**
- **Timetable specification;**
- **Infrastructure innovation (possibly through an alliance with Network Rail);**
- **Developing the community and commercial involvement at stations to secure significant improvements;**
- **Developing innovative community and/or commercial participation in stations and possibly wider;**
- **Securing and managing station adopters;**
- **Rolling stock development and deployment;**
- **Developing the capacity and capabilities of CRPs; and**
- **Organisational development towards further devolution.**

Designation can help in many ways in the establishment of a CRBU not the least the flexibility to seek derogations from national standards.



## Question 11: How can community rail:

- Support the development of rail line and stations improvement?
- Contribute to the development of rail line and station improvement?
- Make greater use of heritage railways?

**11.1 The development of new lines, new stations or larger station improvements requires significant input of time, stamina and finance! No CRP would be able on its own be able to deliver such improvements without the active support of local government, LEPs, Network Rail, the TOC and a raft of funders.**

**11.2 Below are two illustrations of how a CRP, in this case the East Lancashire CRP working with CRL, can make a real difference:**

**Burnley Manchester Rd** is on the Blackpool North to York and Blackburn to Manchester/Wigan services. Until 2014 it was just two platforms with two shelters. Today it has a state of the art station building offering a comfortable environment for passengers, staff and a community room for the CRP which is used as a training hub for students and apprentices. There were two drivers behind the project firstly the opening of the Todmorden Curve as a precursor to the new Blackburn to Manchester via Burnley service and secondly the opportunity Citizens' Rail (an EU Interreg IVb project) gave to funding capital and revenue costs of the project.



Burnley Manchester Rd was a collaborative project involving the East Lancashire CRP, Lancashire County Council, Burnley Borough Council, Northern, Network Rail and the EUs Interreg IVb programme through Citizens' Rail. The project saw the construction of the new station facility illustrated above which today is served by trains to Preston, Manchester, Leeds and York and has seen passenger numbers rise significantly to over 430k and rising. The station has a 'community room' which is today used as a training hub by CRL for its work with students and apprentices. Opened in 2014 the station has been a huge success but would not have happened without the active support of the CRP and the input of local government and the EU.

**Accrington Eco Station** on the Preston to Colne/Manchester/York lines replaced a very weary building on the wrong side of the station with a new state of the art eco station along with a new car park, cycle parking, bus interchange facilities and improvements to the waiting facilities on the platforms.



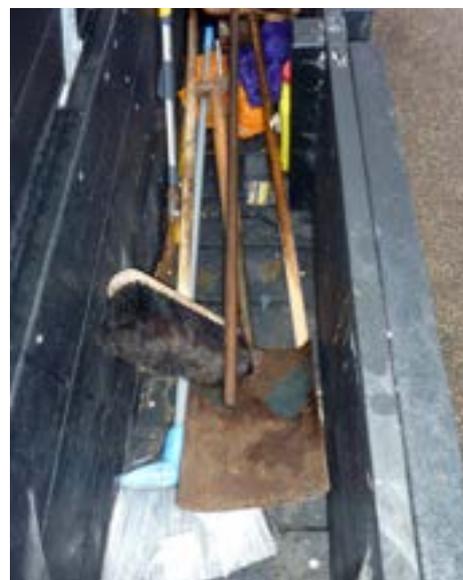
Accrington Eco - station is the home of Community Rail Lancashire and hosts numerous schools and other groups during the year. The station, opened in 2010, was a major step change and was only possible through the EU funded SusStations (Sustainable Stations) Interreg IVb project which was championed by Lancashire County Council and the CRP. Today the station is used by over 460k passengers per year over 100% increase since 2010 and has welcomed over 6000 scholars and students into the 'bunker'.

**11.3** The two illustrations on the previous page show larger projects but CRPs are also involved in a whole host of smaller projects. The next example shows how a CRP managed after 10 years, to persuade Northern to provide a shelter on the shelter-less platform at Giggleswick on the Bentham Line.



A long wait for the new shelter at Giggleswick station

- 11.4** CRPs are also involved in advising TOCs, Network Rail and others of the needs of stations on their line. In some cases the CRP can contribute to the project by using funding from the designated line community rail development fund and other funding pots. On the whole larger projects rely on funds from elsewhere and as the two examples above show these are likely to be from a combination of the rail industry, local government, government funding or other pots such as through EU programmes.
- 11.5** During the refranchising process for Northern and TransPennine the northern CRPs worked collaboratively and through ACoRP and Rail North to ensure positive outcomes for station improvements. The result was that the franchise included a mandated 'Station Improvement Fund'.
- 11.6** Other opportunities can exist to secure station and service improvements through S106 and CIL (community infrastructure levy). Although the timing of the release of money through these mechanisms can be a little unpredictable and makes planning harder to co-ordinate. Opportunities also exist through devolution agreements which offer the possibility of new ways to fund and manage station developments.
- 11.7** CRPs can also be innovative (see also the response to question 8) and develop new ways to solve old problems. One idea promoted by CRL is the tool kit/bench seat which solves a problem for station adopters as well as providing an additional facility for the station. The seats are also made from recycled plastic so they also help the environment.



Example of ones of the bench/tool boxes at Langho on the Ribble Valley line showing the utility of this simple innovation.

## Heritage railways

- 11.8 The question also asks about the potential role that heritage railways can play.** The heritage sector provides a different kind of ‘service’ and relies heavily on volunteers to make the offer viable. It could be argued that the heritage sector potentially warms the market to rail travel although the state of some of the rolling stock used may actually work the other way if that is the first experience potential passengers have with the ‘railway’. It should also be borne in mind that many heritage lines charge considerably more per mile than the national network and ‘premium’ services are usually more again.
- 11.9 Having played up some of the negatives there are also opportunities but we consider that they are limited.** At the most basic where a heritage line shares a station with national rail there is an opportunity for joint promotion and special through fare offers. In very limited cases there is the potential for heritage services to operate over the national network as happens on the Esk Valley and Swanage lines. However, an area that heritage railways excel in is in differentiating their markets from the ‘bread and butter’ service open to everyone to special premium services offering for example quality dining trains sometimes in Pullman cars, santa specials and special autumn trains using observation coaches. The downside is that heritage lines rely heavily on volunteers for the day to day operation of all services and this resource cannot be over exploited or taken for granted!
- 11.10 Perhaps one of the opportunities is for CRPs and TOCs to work more imaginatively on lines that have significant heritage or scenic value.** Two examples come to mind the first is the Settle Carlisle line and the second is the West Cumbria Line. Areas that could be explored are the deployment of rolling stock better suited to the lines that help make the journey more memorable, special fare offers, introduction of premium services which enhance the basic network but on which higher fares are charged aimed at the tourist market the list of possibilities is endless. On the West Cumbria line the deployment of class 37s and mark 2 coaches should have provided just that opportunity if the reliability of the service hadn’t been plagued by the unreliability of the class 37 diesels. On the Settle Carlisle the many groups along the line have done much to develop and enhance the heritage aspects of the line which is sadly let down by the deployment of commuter style class 158 diesel units with cramped seats and often poor views out of the windows. Many people seeing the brown signs to the line assume it is a ‘heritage railway’ and expect to see steam! Imagine their disappointment when a diesel train arrives! Other possible routes include the Esk Valley especially between Battersby Junction and Whitby and the Tyne Valley.
- 11.11 The draft TfN ‘Long Term Rail Strategy’ also made comment on this. The quality of the built environment makes an important contribution to the quality of life in the North of England.** Attractive towns can be found across the North, and the railways make an important contribution to these high-quality urban environments. The formal architectural listed status of Grade One has been awarded to two of the North’s railway stations, at Huddersfield and Newcastle, recognising their outstanding architectural merit, and many more of the North’s railway stations and structures are in the Grade Two\* category e.g. Hebden Bridge station, the Ribbleshead viaduct and Hexham signal box.
- 11.12 In delivering the Long Term Rail Strategy TfN will strive to protect and enhance the built environment of the North, and work with the rail industry to seek that any new structures have high visual quality, such as that achieved at new stations including Burnley Manchester Road; the highway overbridge on the re-opened chord line at Swinton; the new footbridge at Woodlesford; and the footbridge on the re-opened branch line to Arcow quarry.**

**11.13 The refreshed LTRS which will become the primary rail policy for the TfN Strategic Transport plan covering the North of England and will be subject to public consultation in January 2018.**

The LTRS recognises that a high-quality railway network will be an enabler of higher productivity and economic growth throughout the North of England, providing a community resource which supports the natural and built environment and ultimately delivers an improved quality of life, allowing places and communities across the North to prosper.

The LTRS notes that the community rail movement has helped to put the local community at the heart of their railway by creating job and local enterprise opportunities; creating social cohesion through supporting diversity and inclusivity and by reducing the adverse societal effects caused by the abandonment of parts of the railway. Community rail has been a catalyst for bringing partners together to work towards physical, economic and social regeneration. This includes a notable, growing number of community station projects across the North helping to support wider regeneration, as well as signs of community rail playing a broader role in community development.

**11.14 In conclusion there is scope for collaboration between CRPs, TOCs and the heritage sector but in the main this will be limited.** There is also very limited scope for the heritage sector to provide daily commuter style journeys given the heavy reliance on volunteers and the type of signalling generally used.

**11.15 There is, however, considerable scope to exploit the potential of some of the scenic lines on the national network if the will was there to do ‘something different’.** Sadly northern TOCs are more concerned with seats into major centres rather than deploying managers time on developing the potential of their scenic lines - possibly a perverse outcome of the way franchise penalties are constructed?

**11.16 One way to kick start a more imaginative approach would be for the DfT and other government agencies to offer a grant for schemes on the national network that helped develop the ‘heritage aspects’ of them.** This could be something along the lines that saw ACoRP obtain a grant to develop the ‘Scenic Rail Britain’ website - <https://www.scenicrailbritain.com/>.

## **11.17 Conclusions and recommendations:**

- CRPs can play an important role in championing, supporting and even being a small funder of station improvement projects as the examples in this section have illustrated.
- CRPs can also be instrumental in developing the case for additional capacity on lines from longer trains, new services or even new or enhanced infrastructure as Burnley Manchester Rd above illustrates.
- There is scope to develop partnerships between CRPs and ‘heritage lines’ to mutual benefit and for each to learn from the other. The marketing approach of some heritage lines shows clear evidence of understanding the market and people’s willingness to pay for premium products.
- There is a considerable opportunity for TOCs to develop their scenic and/or heritage lines within their franchise areas – in the north examples include Settle Carlisle, Tyne Valley, Esk Valley and West Cumbria. Separate management focus on these lines would be a start.
- There is also scope for the DfT and other government agencies to look at introducing specific grants aimed at exploiting the potential of scenic lines on the national network.

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# SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Question 1:

There are many areas where CRPs can help promote improved access to/from the rail network and through that help promote a more active lifestyle which should have health benefits.

The DfT has an important role in helping to promote these benefits to other government departments such as the Department of Health (DH) and the Department for Education (DfE). It is important that other government departments are made aware of the role CRPs can play in meeting their agendas. In addition, through DCLG (Department for Communities and Local Government) can reinforce the benefits of CRPs to local authorities in meeting their agendas.

Acting as a conduit between the local community and local government and public transport operators, evidence of need gathered by CRPs can put the case for worthwhile changes to improve end to end journeys.

However, as we seen above the legislative and funding responsibilities of local and national government can be an obstacle to development. The DfT needs look at ways in which it can give greater encouragement to the sustainability of bus networks especially in rural areas. As discussed above this also has an impact in urban areas where the gradual reduction of morning, evening and Sunday services affects end to end journeys.

## Question 2:

CRPs are a conduit between the community and the rail industry.

CRPs need to balance the many views they will receive from the community into something that is realistic and achievable – the Action Planning process is a good way to do this as well as the formal designation process.

CRPs can commission independently or in partnership studies to identify local requirements which can then be used to promote changes through for example the franchising process or to local government.

## Question 3:

Where the community shows that it wants to form a community rail partnership and has committed funds to this and developed an action plan then it should be encouraged and formally recognised.

Advice and practical assistance should be given to the fledgling community rail partnership by ACoRP and if available from its TOC and Network Rail. In the first instance though ACoRP should be the key first contact.

## Question 4:

In short, community rail has an important role to play in promoting cohesion, diversity and inclusion because community rail is a community initiative, and therefore should reflect the area in which operates, and ensure that stereotypes are challenged. CRPs will also recognise the many benefits of this type of engagement, when they have the correct support in place to implement new programmes. One of the best stages to begin to engage is within education, due to the willingness of participants and the lifelong impacts of programmes when participants are under 18 years old.

We recommend the following actions should be considered by CRPs regarding inclusion, as follows:

- Potentially engaging with CRL or other groups for training regarding use of the 'Railway Confidence Programme' on individual lines and at stations.
- Engaging with wider charities and groups for learning and training purposes regarding unconscious bias and collaboration; which can include inclusion of diverse groups within current CRP activities such as gardening projects.
- Investigating the possibility of providing travel opportunities for diverse groups to experience the railway beyond a school context, including work with local charities and groups such as care homes.

Potentially engaging with 'Dementia Friendly Stations' on individual lines and at stations.

## Question 5:

### Key recommendations and initial action points for TOCs/DfT/ACoRP to assist CRPs in this area:

- Hold focus groups with individual CRPs and adopters to accurately record views and opinions, as well as an audit and benchmarking assessment.
- Produce individual community reports for different CRPs and other groups that will accurately display their local diversity makeup, i.e. how many within their community are living with additional needs, physical needs and mental health issues; these can be generated online very easily and may reduce the difficulty that some groups have regarding internet use.
- Produce different levels of diversity toolkits. A 'beginner' toolkit would be useful to simply outline ED&I terminology, explain the benefits of inclusion and highlight a process which includes diverse groups in existing work, thereby embedding the validity of inclusion.
- Highlight the benefits morally and philanthropically, but also the financial and revenue benefits of inclusion for specific lines.
- Training offers; following distribution of toolkits and community reports, it would be helpful to have two training levels offered, one that is the 'beginner' level, more focussed on myth-busting and general discussion, and one that is more advanced, offering support for specialised projects.
- Specific ED&I funding for projects.

## Question 6:

### Key recommendations for CRPs:

- Engaging with a range of education programmes currently operating across CRPs, accessing this information through ACoRP,
- Attend the range of seminars and workshops on offer by ACoRP and the DfT regarding working with young people,
- Undertake unconscious bias training,
- Engage with diverse groups through project work as detailed above.

### Key recommendations for ACoRP/DfT/TOCs to support CRPs in this area:

- Continue to provide high-quality workshops and seminars,
- Explore offering webinars and linking to online sources of help such as [www.downtheline.org.uk](http://www.downtheline.org.uk),
- Continue to provide awards specifically for educational engagement,
- Explore the possibility of offering funding exclusively for educational engagement,
- Continue the work within ACoRP that aims to identify how CRPs can collectively support student volunteers and apprentices across a range of education providers and train operators,
- Provide early 'work experience' opportunities with the chance to interact with a diverse range of staff,
- Undertake unconscious bias training,
- Investigate collaboration with wider agencies such as the DfE and Prince's Trust.
- Investigate opportunities for better utilising railway owned buildings and land for commercial and social enterprise.

## Question 7:

### Recommendations:

- CRPs should be proactive in identifying the requirements at stations on its line/s.
- CRPs need to promote station developments through their action plans.
- Line Plans' on designated lines/services should encourage station development through generic statements not specific projects e.g. develop stations as gateways or look for commercial/community opportunities at stations or work with the TOC to find new uses for redundant buildings or develop funding packages to regenerate stations.
- CRPs can be funders of small scale schemes often in partnership with friends groups, in bloom groups, user groups, parish council, using funds such as ACoRPs 'small grants scheme'; or on designated lines the DfT's 'designated line community rail development fund'; TOC specific grants such as Northern's seed corn fund or its station adoption fund' Trans pennine have a grant scheme available to CRPs and there will be other examples. Some Combined Authorities provide grants such as TfGMs small grants fund available to CRPs and station partnerships in its area.
- CRPs can broker bigger projects and help secure grants for much bigger projects. For example the East Lancashire CRP helped secure through the EUs Interreg IVb programme station projects at Accrington and Burnley Manchester Road. The former through the SusStations project (Sustainable Stations) and the latter through Citizens' Rail a project that was led by the Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership.
- CRPs can initiate community based activities in redundant station buildings and/or help to identify commercial use of the space. This could be cafes, ticket offices, tourist information, educational rooms, small offices.
- CRPs need the support of the DfT in ensuring through the franchising process that TOCs are encouraged to work with and support CRPs through contributing to their core funding as well making other grants available for projects such as station developments.

## Question 8:

### We recommend the following action points for ACoRP/DfT/TOCs to support CRPs in this area:

- To investigate the possibility of establishing a National Community Rail Youth Board,
- To establish funding specifically for innovative projects,
- To provide CRPs with accurate community information and contacts within outside agencies and government agencies where relevant and possible,
- To establish a programme of workshops, webinars, training and mentoring tailored to meet the needs of specific demographics to encourage greater involvement in community rail.

## Question 9:

- The DfT continues to mandate core funding to CRPs through franchise agreements as a proxy for the value a CRP brings to the TOCs bottom line;
- CRPs look to obtain grants from the many funding streams available including those provided by the DfT and ACoRP such as the 'designated line community rail development fund';
- Capacity building advice should be available to CRPs who want to develop a formal as opposed to an informal structure. This should include advice on company structures, legal advice, how to draft 'Articles of Association'. This could be provided directly by ACoRP or experts it has access to that either provide a pro bona service or charge modest rates reflecting the limited income CRPs generally have;
- That advice is available to CRPs who want to develop income streams that support their action plan, line designation.

## Question 10:

As a minimum we recommend the following actions should be considered for the future role of designation within the updated community rail strategy, as follows:

- Maintain designation as a valuable tool in recognising the value of community rail as part of the rail industry.
- Drop the distinction between line and service designation.
- Maintain the formal designation process involving DfT, TOCs, Network Rail, local MPs, local authorities, community organisations and other key stakeholders.
- Put a much greater emphasis on community engagement alongside 'operational' aspects, which ensures greater relevance to a wider range of lines than so far has been the case.
- Agree a Route Prospectus and Line Plan which should be reviewed and refreshed at least every three years.
- Annual reviews involving DfT, ACoRP and CRPs should take place.
- Provide accreditation for all designated lines – this allows for the possibility of the community rail status being withdrawn and sets clear standards.
- Identify how community rail will be taken forward by devolved bodies such as Rail North/TfN in England and the devolved governments in Wales and Scotland.

## Question 11:

- CRPs can play an important role in championing, supporting and even being a small funder of station improvement projects as the examples in this section have illustrated.
- CRPs can also be instrumental in developing the case for additional capacity on lines from longer trains, new services or even new or enhanced infrastructure as Burnley Manchester Rd above illustrates.
- There is scope to develop partnerships between CRPs and 'heritage lines' to mutual benefit and for each to learn from the other. The marketing approach of some heritage lines shows clear evidence of understanding the market and people's willingness to pay for premium products.
- There is a considerable opportunity for TOCs to develop their scenic and/or heritage lines within their franchise areas – in the north examples include Settle Carlisle, Tyne Valley, Esk Valley and West Cumbria. Separate management focus on these lines would be a start.
- There is also scope for the DfT and other government agencies to look at introducing specific grants aimed at exploiting the potential of scenic lines.

## For Further Information:

Rail North would be delighted to expand on any of the points made in this response. The initial contact should be Richard Watts, Lancashire County Council and Director Community Rail Lancashire at [richard.watts@lancashire.gov.uk](mailto:richard.watts@lancashire.gov.uk) or 07887 831126.



Women in Community Rail



Having the confidence to travel - Merseyrails Tulip Scheme



Spreading the word on Green Sunday



Holding the classes attention