



Great Western Railway

Community Rail 2017



A **First**  company

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Foreword



It's been another great year for our Community Rail Partnerships, which make a vital contribution to the local economy, promoting tourism as well as being a lifeline for residents, helping to overcome the very real problems associated with rural isolation.

Apart from the obvious travel benefits borne out by increasing passenger numbers, the partnerships also strengthen local communities as many different organisations, and individuals of all ages, come together to promote their partnerships and keep stations along the lines in 'tip top' condition.

In recent years we've seen significant passenger growth on our community rail lines and I'm sure the work we have focused on together has helped us to achieve this.

I know much of your hard work is recognised both locally and nationally, but I'd like to personally thank each and every one of you, for the devotion, commitment and time you all give to keep these partnerships alive and flourishing.

The innovation and investment you all put into running your partnerships is very humbling and sets an example for us all.

I'm delighted to see the Community Rail Partnerships growing in stature and recognition, so thank you all once again for your hard work. I wish all of you the best for the coming year.

TransWilts Community Rail Partnership

The TransWilts service from Swindon to Westbury has gone from strength to strength in the year, with the service being officially designated as a community rail service in September 2016, and the trial service becoming permanent in December 2016.

We were delighted to welcome Santa Claus in December 2016, and Rail Minister Paul Maynard in March 2017 when we looked forward to further developments on the line and service.

At the ACoRP awards, Great Western Railway and the TransWilts Community Rail Partnership jointly won the coveted "Best Marketing Campaign" for "Weymouth Wizard via the TransWilts", where we worked together and filled an 8 carriage train with seaside trippers – many of them new to rail. Normally this is a single carriage local train. And our "Days Out" promotion through the

summer and autumn of 2016 has helped build passenger numbers on the off peak services – to the extent that people are standing (for the few minutes between Melksham and Chippenham anyway) on some of these.

Passenger number have risen 10-fold in five years, and there's every expectation that numbers will continue to rise if facilities to handle the numbers can rise to match demand. Great Western Railway and TransWilts, lead by chair Paul Johnson, are working to plan for the future with longer and more trains and improved station capacities, with the aid of a CCIF grant.



Increased 'footfall' in customers and still rising



Volunteers continue to provide tender loving care at our stations

Volunteers continue to provide tender loving care at our stations, and to talk with passengers on the trains and people in the communities served to ensure we're all headed in the right direction. Bob Morrison continues to do a sterling job as Friend's secretary, producing a regular newsletter to keep our members informed. The Melksham Rail Development Group chaired by Peter Blackburn celebrated its 20th Birthday and has been renamed the "Melksham Rail Users Group" - not because there's any less development to

be done, but to signal the important new role it has in supporting our crowds of passengers.

TransWilts has just been awarded a £3500 DCRDF grant from ACoRP / the DfT to promote leisure and tourism using the TransWilts line over the next two years, and our volunteer graphic artist Lisa Ellis has been awarded an "Enhancing Melksham" award for 2016 for all the work she did with her eye-catching "Small line big reach" campaign that reflects the line's role so well.

The Heart of Wessex Rail Partnership

The scenic railway from Bristol to Weymouth is supported at multiple levels by its local communities. Seven local authorities along the route come together to fund the joint venture with Great Western Railway to enhance and promote this 87-mile line and its destinations.

Local Town and Parish councils, community tourism groups, businesses and volunteer groups contribute substantially to our work in various ways, including developing their own initiatives which can be supported through the partnership's Community Projects Grant Fund.

The Heart of Wessex Line website promotes this beautiful route and its access to stunning countryside, including two UNESCO World Heritage destinations, two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, fascinating historic villages and towns, cities and coast. Insider information from local contributors and bespoke practical guides help visitors find their way from stations, and there are nearly two hundred links to local businesses and attractions that tend to be overlooked by more generic tourism marketing. The Bristol to Weymouth Line Guide published three

times a year focuses on special events and ideas for days out for each season, and includes an accessible, easy to read large print timetable. The introduction of all year Sunday services from Bristol to Weymouth is being supported by an innovative special campaign developed in partnership with some of the major attractions along the route and GWR's Publications Team. The new Sunday services, together with the Weymouth Wizard for trips to the beach on Saturdays, are of vital importance to a region where tourism and leisure forms such a substantial part of the local economy, and Weymouth to Bristol services allowing a full day out in Bath and Bristol are being actively pursued to complete delivery of the long-held aspiration for Sunday travel opportunities for all communities along the line.



Running in board event



Westbury Group

The partnership acts as a conduit for the ideas and aspirations of local communities, and almost all of the stations have been adopted by local voluntary groups who have created gardens, help to keep the stations clean and welcoming, and have initiated local projects to improve customer facilities, access, information and signage. The Wessex Wanderers attract additional new visitors with their annual programme of free guided walks, and local organisations have also developed their own initiatives to promote their local economies. 13,300 hours of voluntary time and talent were gifted to the line and its stations in 2016/7. Local needs are regularly collected up and filtered through to the train operators through a regularly updated "matrix of needs" which includes the now well established "Community

Wish List" of aspirations for both local rail users and visitors. This list is used periodically to select priorities for Great Western Railway's annual community rail investment, and to respond to funding opportunities, such as the Customer and Communities Investment Fund.

This combination of locally focused promotional work and volunteer contributions to station enhancements has undoubtedly contributed to the tripling of passenger journeys on the Heart of Wessex Line between 2003 and 2015, without any increase to the service provision. Growth has slowed substantially over the last two years, but for every 100 passengers in 2003 there are now 290 on the same trains – a growth rate that far outstrips the national average.

Sevenside Community Rail Partnership

The Partnership is a Community Interest Company. We cover all the lines radiating from Bristol. The main aspect of our work is ensuring that the 25, mainly unstaffed, local stations provide a safe and welcoming environment.

We are considerably assisted by schools and local communities who undertake horticultural projects and arts schemes on a voluntary basis. This is supported by the Community Payback Scheme which provides supervised groups of low risk offenders to assist with station projects.

The Sevenside Community Rail Partnership has recently sponsored substantial improvements to Avonmouth Station.

The Bristol bound platform was brightened up in 2014 by featuring a photographic art gallery, showcasing work by students under the City-to-Seaside secondary school project. From the Severn Beach bound platform industrial dereliction dominated the view, and the anti-social use of the land at the rear of the platform caused anxiety to passengers and was a wider deterrent to use of the station. In summary the station previously gave a very unfavourable impression to workers, visitors and potential developers. With strong support from the local community, the Partnership put together proposals to achieve a more welcoming, attractive and safer station that would encourage more passengers. Over the coming winter here will be more tree planting.

The improvements have included a new shelter (located to provide cover for arriving passengers waiting for the level crossing barriers to be raised), seating, lighting, planters and screen fencing. They have been funded and supported by Bristol City Council, the Association of Community Rail Partnerships, Sevenside Community Rail Partnership, Great Western Railway and Network Rail, with considerable assistance from the Champions of Avonmouth Station, Incredible Edible Bristol and Probation Service Community Payback.



Avonmouth – Before



Avonmouth – After



Station work in progress

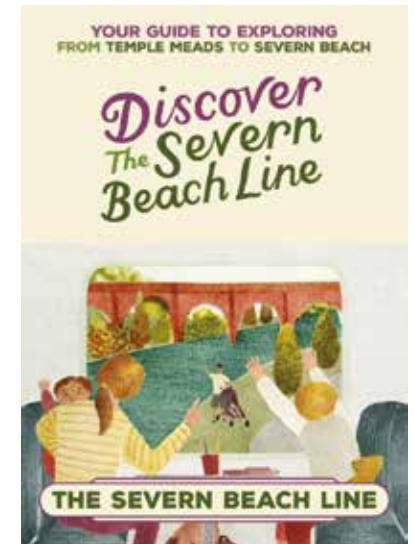


Days out by train in the West of England

With sponsorship from the GWR Customer and Communities Improvement Fund, we have been working in partnership with the University of the West of England (UWE) delivering a scheme providing disadvantaged communities the opportunity to enjoy a day out in the West of England.

This programme run between July 2016 and February 2017, has allowed The Centre for Transport and Society at UWE to obtain data from over 2000 participants providing us with a greater understanding of barriers, or perceived barriers, to rail travel.

The Partnership is proud of its long running schools engagement programme, through which we deliver a rail



Discover Severn Beach Line

familiarisation programme to year six primary school pupils. Helping them build confidence using the railway independently before they progress to secondary school. Our successful arts schemes engage a range of primary and secondary school students.

In April 2017 we launched of a new website **discoversevernbeachline.co.uk** with a set of activities based around the Severn Beach branch line. This is designed for children of primary school age to undertake with their school, youth group or family. The project was developed with funding from the Association of Community Rail Partnerships and through the Heritage Lottery "Forgotten Landscape".

Three Rivers Rail Partnership

As in previous years, the Three Rivers Community Rail Partnership enjoys close Partnership working, building on recent successes at Romsey, Mottisfont & Dunbridge and Dean rail stations.

Our main focus during the past year has been improvements to the station path at Romsey rail station, together with the unveiling of the Romsey WW1 Commemoration Stone situated at the front of the station, in full public view on the station approach.



WW1 Memorial Stone – Station Approach
Romsey Station

For many years, there had been an aspiration to upgrade walking and cycling routes to Romsey rail station. The issue was highlighted as part of the original Station Travel Plan undertaken by the Partnership, in liaison with the Train Operator, Test Valley Borough and Hampshire County Councils. A scheme to upgrade the path to the surrounding area was identified and designs prepared.

Nick Farthing Chair of the Three Rivers Community Rail Partnership project managed the scheme and together with funds from the GWR Customer and Communities Improvement Fund (CCIF), the Partnership and the Local Authorities, we have been able to get the path relaid and made more usable, providing a very useful link from the station to the Signal Box museum, surrounding neighbourhood and the wider Community.

In addition to the path and with the kind financial support of Romsey British Legion and original stonework by local artist and sculptor Caroline Dear, and again joint funded through the GWR CCIF, a World War One Memorial Stone has been placed on Station Approach.

The stone has been carved out of Welsh slate with an overall poppy motif. It has created a handsome addition to the Romsey sculpture trail, having already been featured at the Chelsea Flower Show.

The Memorial Stone complements a WW1 commemorative series of displays at Romsey Railway Station Waiting Room put together by the Three Rivers volunteers, in which pupils from The Romsey School

Before upgrade



Path towards station from Signal Box Museum

After upgrade



Path towards station from Signal Box Museum

have also participated. The young people have been researching the stories of Romsey men who gave their lives in the First World War.

The Memorial Stone was officially unveiled by Brigadier David Harrison Hampshire President of the British Legion during a ceremony on 10 November 2016.

Special mention is made on behalf of our stalwart Volunteers Shirley Rogers and Simon Scott who were instrumental in getting the stone project underway, and raising funds for Combat Stress.

Further CCIF funds were allocated for Community Notice Boards to be installed



Dean Community Notice Board



Mottisfont and Dunbridge fish

at Dean and Mottisfont and Dunbridge Stations which have been well received by locals and rail passengers alike.

There is also ongoing great volunteering work at Dean and Mottisfont and Dunbridge Stations regarding litter picking, cleaning, art and planting, which continue to keep these rural stations tidy and attractive. We have this year installed new planters at both stations, and changed the artwork at Mottisfont and Dunbridge Station where the older "Shaun the Sheep" murals were put out to pasture and replaced with images of local River Test fish created in association with local Lockerley Primary School.

North Downs Line Community Rail Partnership

The Partnership is managed by the long-established Sussex Community Rail Partnership (SCRП).

The North Downs Line Community Rail Partnership was introduced to potential partners in the community at an event near Dorking in July 2017 and the inaugural steering group meeting was held in Guildford in October 2017.

The CRP is bringing the local community together with local authorities, GWR, education, business and environment representatives who are all working to improve the value of the line to the local community and visitors. This underpins the economic development and community support objectives of partners and will enhance the accessibility of the railway, the quality of the stations and the train services that operate along the line, to increase use by visitors and the local communities.



The line is operated by GWR and runs through the beautiful countryside that forms the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, within a short distance of the North Downs. It is a mecca for walkers and cyclists being close to the site of the 2012 Olympic cycling circuit at Box Hill and flanked by the North Downs Way and Greensand Way long distance paths.

Gatwick Airport Ltd. also welcomed the formation of the CRP. A spokesperson said "Gatwick is very keen to improve accessibility to and from the airport for passengers and staff. Any move directed towards more rail connections with Reading and the Midlands, which improvements along this line would bring about, are very welcome. We already work closely and successfully with SCRП along their other community rail lines serving the airport."

The line begins at historic Reigate where you can discover the beauty and tranquillity of Reigate Castle and Priory Park, or history at Reigate Priory Museum, passes through Dorking and the stunning Surrey Hills to Guildford.



Denbies Vineyard, England's largest and most spectacular, is easily reached from Dorking Deepdene station and there are numerous walks in the Tillingbourne Valley accessible from the stations along the line. Gomshall station provides the gateway to the picturesque villages of Shere and Abinger Hammer, a little further is Albury with its unique chimneys. Guildford, with its cobbled High Street, has all the charm of a country town, situated as it is on the River Wey and close to the Surrey Hills. It offers first class entertainment, excellent restaurants and superb shopping as well as history at Guildford Castle, the Great Tower.



Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership

The Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership (DCRP) brings together local authorities, GWR and others to support the counties' branch lines – benefiting local communities and the region's economy alike.

In 2017, the Partnership's marketing of the region's scenic branch lines included a series of high-impact new videos, a Poldark-themed app and a pair of 'Foodie Guides' to whet the appetite of potential passengers.

The videos focus on branch line day trips from the cities of Plymouth and Exeter. Local volunteer models were filmed on their rail adventures to the beach in Looe, the National Trust in the Tamar Valley and the Tarka Trail in Barnstaple.

A further film used the latest drone technology to capture the scenic Looe Valley Line from the skies. Watch all the films at dcrp.org.uk/videos. The videos were shared using Facebook advertising to reach more than 300,000 people in targeted towns and cities. Campaigns such as these

have raised the profile of the Partnership's Great Scenic Railways Facebook page, which now has 8,000 followers.

The Partnership worked with Visit Cornwall to develop and launch the "Experience Poldark" app – using the popularity of the BBC's hit series to inspire more trips to Cornwall including by train. Downloaded more than 7,500 times in its first six months, the app was funded through the government's Heritage and Community Rail Tourism Innovation Competition.

Another new development was the launch of 'Foodie Guides' for the Tarka Line (Exeter-Barnstaple) and Maritime Line (Truro-Falmouth). The booklets highlight the award-winning eateries, local produce and foodie events within easy reach of



stations along each line. 114,000 copies of the guides have been distributed in tourist leaflet racks across the South West and at stations from Penzance to London Paddington. An online version of each guide is also available at GreatScenicRailways.co.uk/food.

The guides received excellent media coverage, with the launch event covered on Radio Cornwall and double-spread features achieved in two local and regional newspapers.

The new marketing materials complement the Partnership's ongoing promotions. These include the GreatScenicRailways.co.uk website aimed at local day trippers and tourists from further afield which now attracts more than 150,000 visitors per year. In print, the Partnership produces a range of targeted publications aimed at holidaymakers, local residents, students and other audiences.



Launch of the Poldark app at Community Rail in the City



As well as marketing the branch lines, another major strand of the Partnership's work is to engage the local community. School children are introduced to the railway on their doorstep through taster trips and class projects. Businesses get involved in their local lines. University students are encouraged to not only explore the rail network of their adopted region but also to volunteer at stations. This takes place through the Partnership's long-running student volunteering project at Plymouth University, where the Partnership's team is based. Regular line forum meetings bring together local stakeholders to facilitate communication between the railway and the community.

Community engagement highlights from 2017 have included the award-winning Carbon Reduction Challenge schools project (see page 22) and the formation of a brand new Friends of Gunnislake Station group.

This 17-strong group of volunteers has already begun station gardening projects to brighten this gateway to the Tamar Valley. Meanwhile at Barnstaple station the Partnership has brought together organisations as wide-ranging as Barclays Bank, Network Rail and the Tarka Rail Association at work days to transform heavily overgrown planters and give passengers a much-improved station environment. A photo of one of the work days is on the front cover of this booklet.

Gardening projects are not the only way in which the Partnership improves stations. With funding from the Designated Community Rail Development Fund and other avenues, the Partnership helps deliver new and refurbished signage, art projects, access improvements and more. During the summer season on the Looe Valley Line, the Partnership runs a ticket office at Looe station, and an information centre and shop at Liskeard.



Friends of Gunnislake Station

The information centre received more than 830 visitors from all over the world in a six-week period.

The Partnership also works at a strategic level to help shape plans for the branch lines. In 2017 this included carrying out a survey of rail users and non-rail users on the Maritime Line to gauge their views about the train service and their future aspirations for the line. The survey received more than 1,500 responses. The results will feed into the work of the Maritime Line Forum which includes representatives of Cornwall Council, Great Western Railway, Network Rail, Falmouth and Penryn Town Councils and the Partnership.

On the Tamar Valley Line, the Partnership has worked with Cornwall Council to commission a survey into the economic benefits that the line brings to the local area, with the results to be reported in 2018.



Tarka Trail

GWR Community Rail Conference 2017

On 16 June 2017 we held our annual Community Rail Conference in Barnstaple, North Devon. The event was hosted by the Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership and the Tarka Rail Association.



We hold this event each year to bring together all those involved with, or who have an interest in, the various Community Rail lines and community activities across our region.

The aim of the conference is to keep all our community rail partners informed on industry developments and updated on GWR news. The event provides a platform for all our hard-working Community Rail Partnerships to share updates on their activities and sharing best practice.



The day brought 150 delegates together with the opportunity to network and have a broader discussion on Community Rail over dinner the evening before.

Customer and Communities Improvement Fund (CCIF)

Funding Map

CCIF is Great Western Railway's programme to support projects, proposed by communities, across our network which address a social need.

For more information please see

www.gwr.com/about-us/supporting-our-community/customer-and-communities-improvement-fund

WALES – Year 2

- £35k – Phase 2 of the Train Training programme from CCIF Year 1

WEST Region – Year 2

- £10k – Illuminated Timetable Boards for stations on the Avocet Line
- £3k – Improvements to the access road at St Germans station
- £62k – Creation of a new car park at St Germans station
- £12k – A new touring art exhibition in the Exmouth area
- £3k – An on-train musical project on the Looe Valley Line
- £36k – Enhancement of Barnstaple station entrance
- £10k – Funding to facilitate the opening of The Loop Cafe at Penryn
- £49k – Training for young people with disabilities to enter the workplace
- £13k – A feasibility study for a new footpath between Roche station and Victoria
- £3k – Support for local families to travel by train in the Plymouth area
- £80k – A new disabled toilet at Torquay station
- £3k – A study to address the issue of isolation in over-50s in Torquay

Across the West region:
● Robert Owen Communities

Across South Wales:
● Construction Youth Trust
● Vale of Glamorgan School Education
● Train Training (Part 1)
● Train Training (Part 2)

EAST Region – Year 2

- £95k – Replacement of the waiting room at Moreton-in-Marsh station
- £6k – Refurbishment of the public conveniences at Kintbury
- £3k – Leaflets to promote visitors to Goring & Streatley
- £22k – Improved signage and way marking connection Slough, Burnham, and Langley stations
- £30k – Funding to create a new Community Rail Partnership on the North Downs Line
- £40k – New footway at Theale

Across the East region:
● Funding for a new Community Rail Partnership on the North Downs Line

CENTRAL Region – Year 2

- £9k – A project to educate disabled people how to travel independently
- £31k – A personal development programme for dis-engaged 16-25-year-olds in Swindon
- £16k – A feasibility study to determine increased facilities needed at Severn Beach station
- £50k – Creation of a new cycle way in Yeovil
- £1k – Funding for improvements to the Strawberry Line Cafe at Yatton
- £55k – Design study into a new northern access route at Melksham station
- £70k – Access improvements at Westbury station

Key:

- Funding received in CCIF Year 1
- Funding received in CCIF Year 2
- Funding received in both Year 1 & 2

ACoRP Community Rail Awards 2017

The Community Rail Awards, now in its 13th year, recognises the important and often unsung work carried out by Community Rail Partnerships, station friends and other community rail groups across the country.

The awards are about celebrating the passion and hard work of everyone involved in community rail. They help us to understand the breadth of work happening across this wonderful grassroots movement that is Community Rail, sharing good practice, and to spread the word.

They help build understanding of community rail's role in engaging local people with their railways, making a vital contribution to mobility, sustainability, prosperity, health and wellbeing, and encourage more people to get involved.



Involving Diverse Groups



Severnside CRP, University of the West of England & Great Western Railway for Days Out by Train in the West of England

Days Out by Train in the West of England was established to improve the Community Rail Partnership's understanding of barriers to rail travel for low-income communities living in the West of England.

This was achieved with a grant from Great Western Railway's Customers & Communities Improvement Fund, providing group rail tickets for 120 eligible organisations.

The scheme benefited over 2,000 participants living in socio-economic deprivation, including refugees. Participants completed a survey, which provided the basis for a study by the Centre for Society and Transport at the University of the West of England.

The findings of the report will influence future decisions around local rail.

Involving Children and Young People



Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership for The Carbon Reduction Challenge

Concept and aims

The idea of the Carbon Reduction Challenge was to run a programme of school engagement centred around a competition, promoting awareness of rail as a form of sustainable travel among primary school children, cutting across curriculum themes. A key aim was to involve the wider community, not just the classes, by getting children to act as ambassadors at home and at school, hoping to change habits through 'pester power'. The competition element helped to incentivise children to get adults involved.



What happened

A lesson learnt early on was to do with getting schools involved. The Partnership initially focussed on a new line (the Maritime Line) where they had done little work before and this proved difficult, showing how important relationships are when it comes to school projects. When the Partnership then contacted schools around the Looe and Tamar Valley lines, where they have worked extensively, schools signed up straight away.

Schools were invited to take part with an offer of a free taster trip on the train. Before this, each school had a visit from Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership's development officer, who explained the project and played a specially commissioned video starring Coco the cat – [youtube.com/watch?v=c8ehk-J9p9g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8ehk-J9p9g).

Results

This encouraged children to explore their area by train and encourage friends and family to do the same. The idea was to empower children immediately to become ambassadors for the project, and the response was positive: teachers were interested and children enchanted by the animation. The pilot had eight schools sign up to take part. The projects submitted to the competition ranged from posters warning of the dangers of climate change, video debates and question time sessions, to a rap.

The winning school produced a book looking at greenhouse gasses and fossil fuels, sustainable transport and train travel. This school measured the CO2 savings made over a month of swapping car journeys for train journeys and the total was 1.2 tonnes, equivalent to driving from Cornwall to Scotland and back three times.



The project fulfilled its objectives with numerous schools involved, some great projects and a winning school that put a huge amount of time and effort into measuring their carbon data and their creative project. The story on Facebook received 1,000 views, the Coco animation 520 views, and the story was covered in the Cornish Times. An unexpected result was the Partnership being invited to a Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) day by Cornwall Learning. This was for local teachers to meet with organisations that can help with teaching STEM subjects and has led to new contacts being made for future projects.

Most importantly, the children involved developed language, literacy, geography and science skills and awareness through exploring the global concepts of climate and carbon reduction. They have been given the opportunity to examine their values and attitudes and understand the global context of their local lives.

Teacher Veronica White, Duloe School, said "The children were fully engaged in the project and enjoyed completing the research, posters and collecting and analysing the data. We were able to use the project across several subject areas: maths, geography, PSHE and ICT. We are delighted to have won."

Best Marketing or Communications Campaign



Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership for Seize The Sunday

Concept and aims

When a long-held aspiration is close to being achieved, it's important to seal the deal, and that's what happened on the Avocet Line (Exeter-Exmouth) in 2016. Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership mounted a marketing campaign to make sure that a long-awaited trial of a year-round half-hourly Sunday service was a big success. The trial, which began in May 2016, was the culmination of years of effort by partners including Great Western Railway (GWR), Devon County Council, the Avocet Line Rail Users Group and the Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership (DCRP). To make the improvements stick, DCRP worked with these partners to run a comprehensive marketing campaign to maximise 'bums on seats' and prove the demand for the services.

What happened

Step 1: Understanding the market

To understand the local audience, GWR and DCRP commissioned Ice, a behaviour change agency, to run focus groups and interviews. These explored attitudes to Sunday travel and perceived barriers. The results informed the marketing plan, which aimed to make Sunday rail journeys easy, fun and popular by giving people reasons to travel.

Step 2: Branding the campaign

Catchy campaigns work best, so DCRP invented 'Seize The Sunday', a slogan that stuck in the mind and emphasised that Sundays are unique: they can be dull and slip by, or the most care-free, fun day of the week.

Step 3: Implementing the campaign Online

- Website: **www.SeizeTheSunday.org** was the campaign hub, with information about the extra services, journey times and fares. The site's blog provided ideas for days out along the line, from festivals to places for brunch near stations.
- Facebook ads: Targeted Facebook ads were shown to residents of towns and villages served by the line. The ads were tailored to each location, giving people relevant day trip ideas, fares and journey times from their nearest station. Many recipients shared the posts with friends. The ads offered excellent value. For example, one £25 ad reached nearly 5,000 people.
- Videos: Three short videos, each featuring a different day trip idea, were produced to inspire people (<http://bit.ly/CRA17dci>, <http://bit.ly/CRA17dcii>, <http://bit.ly/CRA17dciii>), embedded on the website and shared on social media.
- Twitter: DCRP's @AvocetLine account raised the profile of the line and promoted the extra services. It now has more than 1,300 followers. The hashtag #SeizeTheSunday was used throughout the campaign.

- Photo competition: DCRP ran a summer photo competition, with local residents sending in photos of their trips to win a pair of First Class tickets to London, provided by GWR.

Offline

- Press: A launch photo-call and ongoing press releases secured repeat coverage in local newspapers.
- Newspaper adverts: Local newspaper adverts were used to reinforce the message.
- Banners: Eye-catching banners were displayed at stations to encourage rail users to take Sunday trips.
- Leaflets: Five station-specific door-to-door leaflets gave residents information tailored to their nearest station.

Results

During the campaign period of May-December 2016, Sunday journey figures grew 22.5% year-on-year. The increased profile of the line also helped to boost travel across the rest of the week, with Monday-Saturday journey figures up by more than 7%. Thanks to this strong performance, the half-hourly Sunday service was subsequently continued throughout 2017.



Most Enhanced Station Buildings and Surroundings



Three Rivers Community Rail Partnership for Romsey Station War Memorial and Station Path

Concept and aims

For three years, volunteers of the Three Rivers Community Rail Partnership have commemorated the 100 year anniversary of World War One through a regularly changing display in Romsey Station's waiting room, special events such as the commemoration of the Battle of the Somme, and fundraising for Combat Stress military charity. 18 months ago, they were approached by nationally recognised sculptor Caroline Dear, who had carved a 6ft monument for the 100 year anniversary and displayed it at the Chelsea Flower Show, but had nowhere to permanently house the monolith.

It was decided that a redundant area of land at the end of the approach road to Romsey Station would provide an ideal location to site the memorial, reinvigorating the land, provoking interest in the station and providing a legacy landmark for the town. At the same time, the Partnership had developed ideas to enhance a path to the station, which often flooded and was in a poor state of repair. The path linked Romsey Station to a new bridge across the Romsey canal, which led to a refurbished Romsey Signal Box Visitor Centre, but owing to the condition of the path was not attracting many people to either the station or the signal box.

What happened

Great Western Railway's Customer and Communities Investment Fund (CCIF) proved an ideal opportunity for the Three Rivers CRP to seek funding, and a successful application provided hope for both projects. However, a problem emerged with discrepancies between land owners, local authorities and train operating company as to how the funding would be spent, who would own the contract and who would manage the schemes.

Eventually the Partnership came up with an innovative solution where its Chair Nick Farthing could project manage the scheme through the Three Rivers CRP via a contract with the charity Sustrans, for whom he worked at the time. This enabled Sustrans to procure a rail-authorised contractor to undertake the works in a shorter period than using Network Rail, Great Western Railway or the local authority's tendering procedures. The contractor's credentials and experience of working within rail settled some common concerns that can crop up in a procurement exercise. The Three Rivers CRP would then administer all paperwork and finances.

All work on the path and memorial was completed by the originally proposed launch date of 10 November 2016. A moving unveiling event was attended by local dignitaries, the chair of the Hampshire Royal British Legion, the Canon of Romsey Abbey, veterans, station volunteers and schoolchildren. Since the unveiling, the

Three Rivers Community Rail Partnership has entered into a maintenance contract with a local gardener to ensure that the beautifully landscaped memorial area is kept neat and tidy.

Results

Many visitors have commented on the attractive memorial and grounds, built to represent the undulating shell holes found between 1914-1918 on the Western Front. Spring flowers adorned the area, and what was a barren plot of land at the entrance to the station has been transformed into a town landmark. This follows previous work by the CRP to turn an unattractive and unloved station master's garden behind the memorial site into a well-cared-for additional car park.

The upgraded path from the Romsey Signal Box is now well used by pedestrians and cyclists, who have welcomed the widening of the path and a raised path that does not flood. This has enhanced the link between the station and the town, providing a better walking and cycling route as part of the Station Travel Plan.

The CRP is now working towards an upgraded car park, and has an ambition to reopen the old station master's house for use as a community amenity. In this way, work is ongoing, but the Partnership is steadily making major enhancements to the station facilities at Romsey, with a view towards its total transformation.

Most Enhanced Station Buildings and Surroundings



Shortlisted



Devon and Cornwall Rail Partnership, GWR and partners for Exeter St Thomas Station

Opened in 1846, in its heyday Exeter St Thomas housed the headquarters of the South Devon Railway. But by the early 21st Century it had lost its shine – an unwelcoming station whose elevated position on a viaduct could make passengers feel isolated and unsafe. With no facilities other than brick waiting shelters, often used by drug users, the station was subject to frequent graffiti.

A partnership that was both European and local stepped in to transform the station between December 2014 and March 2017.

The project invested in a raft of infrastructure improvements. This included the installation of ticket machines plus new more attractive waiting shelters and CCTV. Network Rail installed a 'Harrington Hump' which reduced the height difference between the platform and train, improving the previously large gap which caused problems for users with reduced mobility or families with buggies.

Customer Information Screens were also installed thanks to funding from Devon County Council and Great Western Railway (GWR).

Sedum matting, often used in 'green roof' projects, was installed on the station platform and is believed to be a first within the rail industry. It provides a sustainable way to have large-scale greenery at a station that lacks a water supply and that is up three flights of steps. The Devon Wildlife Trust also designed a wildflower meadow and now poppies, cornflowers, ox-eye daisies and other wildflowers provide a beautiful display of colour between June and October.

The improvements and enhanced profile of the station have coincided with a significant increase in its use by passengers. Departures from and arrivals at the station rose 12% between 2012/13 and 2015/16 according to ORR figures, increasing from 196,000 to 219,000.

Innovation in Community Rail



Second place

Severnside Community Rail Partnership, Cotham School and Great Western Railway for Cotham School Combined ID Badge & Rail Ticket

Avoidance of fares has long been a problem on Severn Beach Line school trains. When coupled with blocking aisles, bad behaviour, overcrowding and short distances between stations, school trains were a dreaded part of the day for passengers and rail staff. Alongside a new headteacher, Severnside CRP, GWR and police were determined to tackle the problem and decided an innovative approach was called for.

The solution - the school lanyard ID badge - incorporates a GWR rail ticket, new code of conduct, and payment through school. The result is no more unacceptable behaviour, passengers feel safer, and fares are collected, so wins all round.



Small Projects Award – Under £500



Shortlisted

The Friends of Heyford Station for Heyford Station

The Friends of Heyford Station has always been a small group with limited resources.

In view of this, and in the absence of any station buildings or a local school to relate to, they have been focussing their efforts principally on providing a clean, tidy, welcoming and safe station environment for all.

One thing that has constantly irked the group was the rather forlorn state of a small bank adjacent to the right of the steps leading down to the station car park from the public highway which had only ever been full of both annual and perennial weeds. A major drawback to action was the unusual shape and size of the area which also was on a 1 in 3 gradient.

Notwithstanding these challenges, last autumn the group literally grasped the nettles and resolved to transform this bank by planting it with a carefully-selected range of attractive low-maintenance bushes and shrubs which were chosen for their future height and spread and for their low maintenance at such a difficult location.



Outstanding Volunteer Contribution



Shortlisted

Peter Blackburn, Melksham Rail Development Group

Twenty years ago, Melksham's train service consisted of a daily commuter run up to Swindon, and an evening return. That was a poor service for a town of some 18,000 people, and the Melksham Rail Development Group.

Early data shows passenger journeys to or from Melksham at under 3,000 per annum; that's five-people leaving on the morning train and five back in the evening. Today 3,000 passenger journeys per annum have risen to 60,000, a 20-fold increase and it's anticipated that growth will continue.

Peter pulls the best out of everyone in his quiet and encouraging management, and yet at the same time being there at the coal

face where there are people to talk to on stands, passengers to count and survey on the trains, or drinks to pour for the parents of children excited as they visit Santa.

Peter's enthusiasm and energy in the TransWilts project has been there from the very beginning and he contributed greatly in helping to get the project started. Funded initially by Wiltshire Council and facilitated through a partnership between GWR, Wiltshire Council and the TransWilts CRP, the Swindon – Westbury service has grown remarkably since its introduction in 2013 and has been the fastest growing community rail line in the country for the last few years.



Image: Maritime Line - Antony Christie

Scenic Rail Britain

Scenic Rail Britain is a new initiative to promote travel on the country's most attractive branch lines as well as its lesser known gems through a bespoke website.

The site is aimed at international visitors to Britain and local holidaymakers alike, and was launched in May 2017 at Community Rail In The City events held at major stations across the country.

The project is run by ACoRP and was made possible by a UK Government grant from the Heritage and Community Rail Tourism Innovation Competition.

The Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership was brought in to help deliver the project thanks to its digital marketing expertise.

GWR routes are well-represented on the site, featuring in both the Coastal and Countryside sections. In the run-up to the launch of the site, Community Rail Partnerships were invited to work with ACoRP to create dedicated pages for their lines - with photos, route maps, journey times and links through to their local CRP website for further information.

The project begins its overseas marketing campaign in 2018, giving GWR branch lines a fantastic 'shop window' to attract new passengers from around the world.

Visit the website at scenicrailbritain.com.



