

# Annual Community Rail Report 2022



## Introduction

**The Annual Report is our opportunity to showcase in one document the wide-ranging community projects and economic and social outputs delivered over the past year.**

Following the joint challenges of Covid and rail industry changes, both London Northwestern Railway and West Midlands Railway have been delighted to see volunteers retain their enthusiasm to support their own neighbourhoods with station and community projects.

The report covers the values of partnership working between industry and local communities and the results of these collaborations at stations and within communities across the network.

The West Midlands Trains 'Stakeholder & Community' division leads on developing local regeneration, community station project management, supporting station volunteers, strengthening relationships with industry stakeholders and launching and managing the annual CCIF programmes.

This past year we launched our new Community Rail Strategy which has been designed to help embed Community Rail across the business as we continue to shape plans for greater customer, community and stakeholder engagement. We have also expanded our network of partners, developing collaborative relationships with other TOCs, the public sector, rail user groups, communities, and local authorities.

Both WMR and LNR have had the opportunity to deliver events and projects, that have been developed from conversations with colleagues, customers and community groups and we are exceptionally proud of the partnership working that pervades in this division of the business and hope you enjoy reading the 2022 Annual Report.



## Content

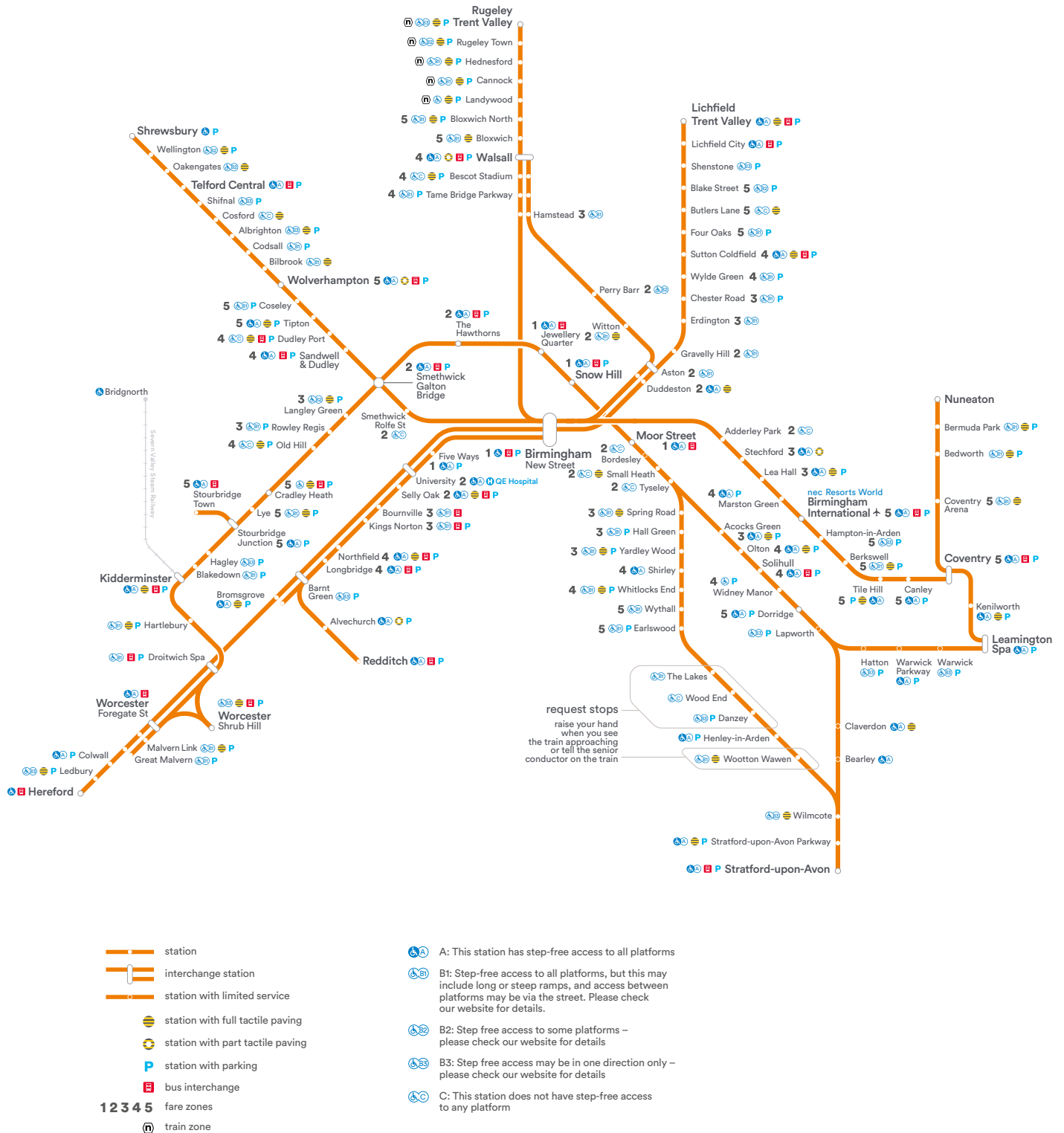
<b>1. Overview of the year</b>	<b>05</b>
<b>2. West Midlands Railway Community Rail Strategy</b>	<b>06</b>
<b>3. Summary of Annual Work &amp; Partner Programme</b>	<b>08</b>
<b>4. Customer &amp; Communities Improvement Fund (CCIF 2022-23)</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>5. Finances and Funding</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>6. Future Plans</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>7. Conclusion</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>8. Appendix</b>	<b>18</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• West Midlands Railway community web content</li><li>• Affiliated community websites</li><li>• Annual Reports for Community Rail Partnerships</li><li>• Annual Report for Community Station Partnership</li></ul>	



**"We need Community Rail to help restore confidence in the railways and bring passengers back to rail"**

**Peter Wilkinson**, Managing Director, Passenger Services, DfT (2020)

## our network







## People, Innovation & Railways

### 1. Overview of the year

The aims of this sector in the industry is to support the people we serve, develop community-led rail recovery, and enable the railways to act as a catalyst for social and economic regeneration projects. This report reflects works at stations, by registered volunteers and the conversion of 5 disused station buildings for community use. Also included in the report are details of projects that enhance customer experience, demonstrate collaborative behaviour, deliver third-party funding, and create impactful community rail programmes that we share with our communities, stakeholders, and colleagues in the industry.

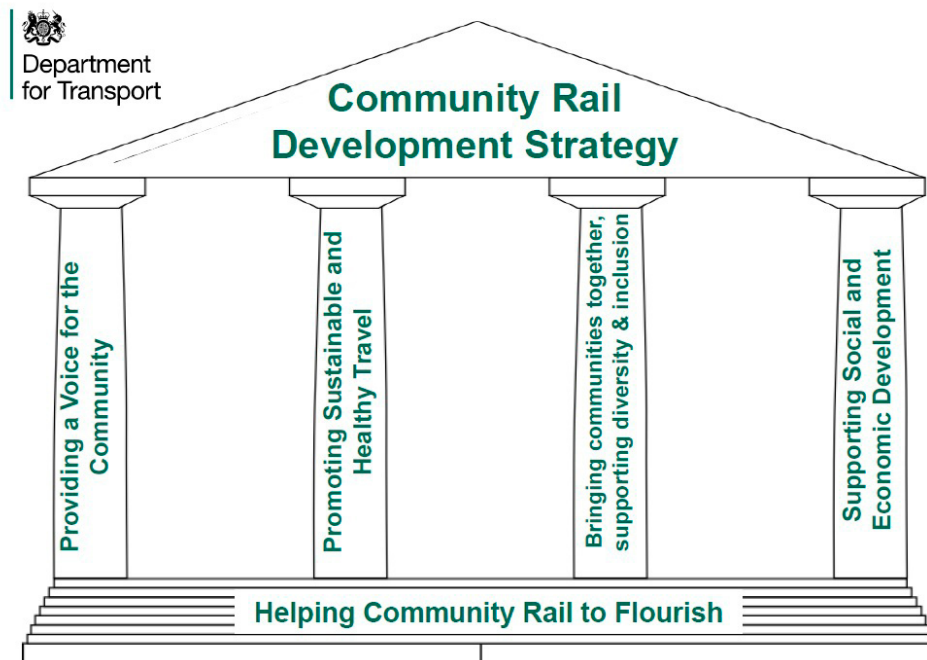
Specifically, over the past year, West Midlands Railway has managed 12 Customer and Communities Improvement Fund (CCIF) projects delivering over £1million in benefit to local areas and supported and worked with two Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) and three Community Station Partnerships (CSPs) encompassing works at 25 stations and 38 individually adopted stations.

The expanding community of WMR station adopters now numbers 330, and we have set in motion a programme to secure formal accreditation for the volunteers within West Midlands Trains. These volunteer groups connect their local communities to the railways and play a key role in improving the environment of our stations as well as delivering projects which promote inclusion, diversity, creativity, sustainable travel, and new reasons to travel by train.

Our work continues to centre around the DfT four pillars of Community Rail and this year, we report on work that includes the renovation of disused station buildings, upgrade of WMR stations, joint works with community rail and station partnerships, collaborative working with TOCs and Network Rail, and projects coming to fruition within the second programme of the Customer and Community Investment Fund.

### Four Pillars of Community Rail (DfT)

1. Providing a voice for the community
2. Promoting sustainable, healthy, and accessible travel
3. Bringing communities together and supporting diversity and inclusion
4. Supporting social and economic development



## 2. WMR Community Rail Strategy

The National Rail Contract under which West Midlands Trains operates is measured on the delivery of four customer-focussed performance metrics, which are:

- Operational performance
- Customer experience
- Financial performance
- Collaborative behaviour

Community rail works and programmes are a positive contributor to these measures and this year, we published the first Community Rail Strategy as we felt it important to identify the projects and outline the community vision for the business for the duration of the National Rail Contract.

Communities are central to our railway and this Strategy covers how volunteer community works in local neighbourhoods are connecting railways to the people they serve, developing new levels of 'localism', brokering new connections, breaking down barriers, providing customer support and enhancing the experience of rail travellers.

The entrepreneurial spirit and local knowledge of volunteer groups combined with the support and funding from the TOC and other funders produces growth and development for the community rail movement and WMR supported organisations successfully reach into local communities to connect with the rail industry.

West Midlands Railway has successfully embedded Community Rail into the core business model, providing development budgets and support and funding to Community Rail Partnerships, Community Station Partnerships and volunteer groups who are adopting stations in increasing numbers.

**The Community Rail Strategy comprises five themes:**

1. Youth Engagement
2. Wellbeing
3. Personal Safety
4. Encouraging Modal Shift
5. Rail Recovery

**Results**

In delivering works throughout the year, we measure success via outputs self-generated by the TOC and via Service Level Agreements with the organisations that we fund.

We encourage our funded partners to collect data against KPI measures so that we can demonstrate the social and economic impact of TOC community funding.

- Numbers of stations adopted
- Numbers of volunteers registered
- Number of volunteer hours logged
- Annual Station Footfall & ASB data
- Levels of third party matched funding
- Examples of positive media coverage



### 3. Summary of the Annual Work & Partner Programme

The wider aims when delivering the annual work programme are to strengthen relationships with industry stakeholders, bring communities together, improve the customer experience, enrich local neighbourhoods, and promote and increase rail travel.

## 2022 Core Outputs

### Station Adoption

Station adopter numbers increased to 330 with the numbers of stations singly adopted increasing to 38 stations and 25 within Community Station Partnerships (CSPs).

An additional CSP has been established for the network on The Chase Line. We now support three CSPs in the West Midlands, in Warwickshire, Staffordshire and Herefordshire and these partnerships operate on the Shakespeare, Chase, and Ledbury & Colwall Lines. CSP's were developed to support railway volunteers who are keen to work at their local stations but do not want the burden of paperwork and administration.

CSPs are collectives of adopted stations that enable central administration, they are volunteer led, supported by independent trustees, and have objectives to encourage people to adopt railway stations, developing the stations as community assets & bringing people together to enhance the passenger experience by making the station more welcoming with a sense of community and localism. For the 'rurally based' 'Beyond the Hills' CSP, a further objective has been added: *'To give the rural community railway a voice'*. All the partnerships are not for profit entities and work programmes are based on the principles of rail recovery, station upgrades and local economic and social regeneration with project funding via the TOC and other sources.

### The Community Station Partnerships:

1. **Friends of The Shakespeare Line CSP** is a not-for-profit community enterprise with 5 principal members/trustees. Railway stations are adopted between Birmingham Snow Hill and Stratford upon Avon and the group comprises 80 volunteers who look after the 18 stations. The Annual Report is included at the Appendix. [www.friendsl.org.uk](http://www.friendsl.org.uk)
2. **Chase Line CSP** has been created to inspire people to adopt their local railway stations and to enhance the passenger experience to encourage more travel along the Chase Line. The group comprises 23 volunteers who are all station adopters, the Chair of the group also works with local stakeholders to help tackle increasing levels of anti-social behaviour evident along the line [www.clcsp.org.uk](http://www.clcsp.org.uk)
3. **Beyond the Hills CSP** is managed by Rail & Bus for Herefordshire and operated by volunteers to support the adopters of railway stations at Ledbury and Colwall. The group is supported by several local organisations including Ledbury Town Council, Ledbury Civic Society, Ledbury in Bloom, Sustainable Ledbury, and Sustainable Transport Herefordshire [www.bthcsp.org.uk](http://www.bthcsp.org.uk)  
[www.communitystationpartnership.co.uk](http://www.communitystationpartnership.co.uk) is the website for the multi-station adoption groups



## **CCIF 22/23**

Grant programme covering 12 projects to be completed March 2023

### **Annual Conference**

Community Rail content was delivered as part of the main business conference 10/10/22. The WMT Annual Stakeholder Conference included 'Community' for the first time as we presented Community Rail as an integral part of the business. This was well received by stakeholders; the all-day event took place in Birmingham and was the first fully in-person event we had organised since the pandemic. Over 100 delegates attended, and they heard about the vital role that community stakeholders play in supporting social and economic regeneration.

### **Third party funding**

Volunteer hours and matched funding £500k in estimated annual value

### **Annual Community Rail Budget**

The annual budget supports core funding for 2 x CRPs, 3 x CRPs and Level 2 station adoption projects, community events, publications and promotions

### **Disused Station Buildings**

The disused station buildings programme covers 5 stations and we have spent the past year liaising with local communities in conjunction with CCIF project leaders to support potential occupants for disused station buildings. The aims being to add community facilities to local neighbourhoods whilst broadening the role of the 'station' to offer more services to the local area. With the rail industry taking a more flexible and enabling approach to lease conditions in relation to community use, this programme has resulted in collaborative working with schools, local community groups, councils, rail user groups and station partnerships and 2023 will see the creation of the following amenities at WMR stations:

- Community, Visitor & Arts hub at Stratford upon Avon (CCIF)
- Woodrush School Station Community Cabin at Wythall (CCIF)
- Science Museum 'The Science Station' at Great Malvern (CCIF)
- Art & Transport Community Centre at Ledbury (CCIF)
- Community Enterprise Hub at Henley (CCIF)
- Climate Action Centre at Wellington (Local Authority Scheme)

### **Community Stations Charter & Toolkit**

Work is underway with Network Rail to develop a Community Station Charter to provide the industry with template policies and procedures for site and building restoration projects at stations and we are working with West Midlands Stations Alliance to develop the Community Stations Toolkit to support volunteer works at stations.

## **TOC Community Rail Managers National Forum**

We work collaboratively with TOC and Network Rail community rail managers to share best practice across the industry, meeting quarterly to discuss the sector and pool ideas.

## **Customer & Community Improvement Fund**

The key project of 22-23 has been the delivery of the CCIF programme, from inception & marketing to community group support and successful delivery. In April, the fund launched publicly and in May we organised the judging process which resulted in the selection of eleven projects with an additional scheme added in November. The total twelve projects are now being delivered to meet budget, output, and timing targets, to be completed by March 2023. All projects are arranged under Third Party Led Contracts with WMR providing ongoing project management for the community leads with WMT Property Team support and delivery of publicity and promotions to enable the projects to successfully deliver their contracted outputs.

## **Rail User Groups (RUGs) & Community Rail**

We work year-round with Stourbridge, Cotswolds & Bromsgrove Rail User Groups in supporting the Worcestershire CRP. the Shakespeare Line Promotion Group in Warwickshire to manage the Shakespeare Line CSP and with Hereford Rail & Bus in Ledbury and Colwall to help develop multi-modal travel for the rural regions.

## **Business Improvement Districts**

We work with Jewellery Quarter BID via the station adoption programme for the city centre station.

## **Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs)**

We support the CRPs with core funding and WMT is a member of both Steering Groups. The two Community Rail Partnerships in the West Midlands network are both led by a Steering Groups with independent chairs and part time CRP Officer posts.

Both CRPs have been accredited and the groups focus on the importance of local railways, sustainable travel, and social and economic development. The CRPs help communities engage in, and have a voice, in the railways. Activities include supporting station adoption, promoting rail travel, developing a service for community rail lines, marketing tourism destinations and rail confidence sessions.

**The Heart of England Community Rail Partnership** is formed of eleven partners and the organisation is hosted by Warwickshire County Council. The Partnership area includes 36 stations with 18 of the stations managed by the Shakespeare Line CSP and the remaining 18 by the CRP

**[www.heartcommunityrail.org.uk](http://www.heartcommunityrail.org.uk)**. **The Worcestershire Community Rail Partnership** is formed of eight principal partners and the organisation is hosted by West Midlands Rail Executive. The Partnership area includes 21 stations **[www.wcrp.org.uk](http://www.wcrp.org.uk)**

## 4. Customers & Communities Improvement Fund (CCIF 2022-2023)

The CCIF programme supports schemes identified by communities that create lasting benefit in addressing areas of social need: create environmental gains, help regenerate the places and communities the railway serves and, of great importance this year, help to create reasons to travel by train. Your Community, Your Fund is the 'community-facing' name for the Customer and Communities Improvement Fund and the principle of the fund is to enable projects to be developed BY communities FOR communities.

The Fund at West Midlands Trains was launched in 2019 to inspire local people to get involved with the rail industry and work together to improve local communities. To qualify for funding all projects must be not for commercial gain, costs must be in proportion with social and regeneration outcomes created, there must be clear community focus and the projects must help restore confidence in the railways and bring benefit to local places and people.

The investments are released to the community schemes based on 'Third Party Led Contracts' and we work closely with the community leaders and groups to ensure the projects are delivered on time, in budget and with the agreed outputs.

We also help the community leaders to promote their projects, our Marketing Team provide a 'Marketing Your Project' pack and support the community leaders with publicity for the projects via press, pr and social media channels. The project leaders also develop collective web presence at [www.communitystories.co.uk](http://www.communitystories.co.uk) which includes the 2020 projects as well as this year's programme and provides a legacy value in onward visibility of the CCIF programme and the community groups.

The total funding for the 2022-3 West Midlands Railway CCIF community grant programme covered 12 projects which are detailed in this report.

Matched funding is contributed from the applicants, either in terms of other financial grants, tangible inputs or volunteer time that is invested into the project delivery. As with our station adoption scheme, we log the hours provided by the volunteers, each hour is valued at £15 and this input creates significant matched funding for the projects.



*Publicity & Branding for the CCIF Programme (2019-2022)*

An example of one of this year's CCIF projects is a scheme at Tyseley Station outlined here:

## **Background & Vision**

### **Tyseley Station CCIF Scheme 22/23**

Work with the local community to create a scheme for Tyseley station to develop artboards to mask unsightly windows, provide a customer asset for the station, improve the general ambiance of the station, communicate local history and encourage more use of rail.

#### **Brief from the Community Group**

The artboards need to provide fascination and information for passengers whilst also providing a meaningful educational resource linked to the social and industrial history of Tyseley. Many local people and passengers do not understand the important role that Tyseley played in the history and wealth creation of the West Midlands.

The installation needs to be high quality and relevant to the local community with the content of the boards designed to encourage people to make more journeys by train, increasing footfall at Tyseley Station and supporting the local economy of the West Midlands.

The design should place the Tyseley 'project' in the line-wide scheme for the Shakespeare Line by using similar styles and project design principles as customers and communities have reacted positively to the programme over the past two years. The unique pattern and style of the Shakespeare Line panels deployed at locations along the route and at both Birmingham Moor Street and Stratford upon Avon, being at both ends of Line would communicate connectivity of the stations along this line and an identity for the locality.

#### **Conceptual Process**

A programme of consultation was undertaken with the local community, sourcing local social history and researching travel times from Tyseley Station to local destinations and attractions to produce the scheme. This is not just station decoration, but a social history and rail recovery mini programme.

#### **The Vision for the art panels for the station**

The boards are designed to bring colour and interest to enhance the GWR station buildings and the aims of the scheme are:

- (i) to provide both visual and textual information that is relevant and unique to Tyseley station
- (ii) to highlight and display, through art boards, the social and industrial heritage associated with Southeast Birmingham and Tyseley and its station and include connections to Bakelite, Rover, Girling Brakes, Lucas Aerospace, and the Great Western Railway.



## **The installation at the station**

- Produce artwork & text boards to cover all windows to provide visual enhancement and information about the area, it's commerce and importance to the Birmingham economy, the broader role for Great Britain and how employment and the work-community of Tyseley functioned.
- The second element of the installation is to showcase several destinations on Snow Hill lines that can provide a daycation trip by train from Tyseley station. These will be depicted with artwork of the selected locations, together with the duration of journey required and the CO2 saving comparison between the train and car.
- This type of installation is already in place at several stations along the Shakespeare Line and also features on art boards at Birmingham Moor Street

## **Overall Approach**

The work proposed for Tyseley is unique to the station and as per the outline above, involves significant levels of bespoke intellectual work, local research and professional drawing and art designs.

The boards will use appropriate graphics to ensure they meet visibility standards with style and content to match and complement the artwork and poster boards in place along the line at Small Heath & Sparkbrook, Hall Green, and Henley in Arden. The meaningful' and locally relevant content of the artboards is an important feature of the designs.

Tyseley is situated in one of the most socially deprived areas of Britain and the vision for this installation is that it's local celebratory nature will raise local levels of civic pride. This impact has been demonstrated at Small Heath, where the use of poster boards and hoardings that contain local and relevant information to enhance the station environment, helps deter anti-social behaviour including graffiti and improves the overall ambience of the station environment.

2022-23 CCIF projects are listed below, the community-led website for CCIF  
[www.communitystories.co.uk](http://www.communitystories.co.uk)

## CCIF projects

Project Title	Station/s	Organisation & Grant	CCIF PROJECT DESCRIPTION 2022
Community Station Arts & Science Visitor Hub	Ledbury	Hereford Rail & Bus CiC	Refurbishment of the disused station cabin on Platform One and the conversion to a Transport & Arts Hub, the makeover project managed by volunteers and delivered by WMT Property Teams
Thrive Health & Wellbeing PopUps	New Street, Moor Street and Snow Hill Stations	Impact for Life CiC	Developing station-based pop ups to help the travelling public easily access health and well-being advice, support, and products. Working with Network Rail, Chiltern Railways and West Midlands Railway. The Pop-ups launch at New Street Station (the busiest station outside London) with the NR Management at the station enthusiastically supporting the community project.
Henley-in-Arden Community Enterprise Hub	Henley-in-Arden	Friends of Henley in Arden Station	A Network Rail managed building that did not transfer to the TOC. This project is to secure a community lease on the premises and refurbish and repair the two-decades-long empty station building on Platform One. The project will transform the space to a multi-use community hub with local enterprises occupying. The group are working with the Plunkett Foundation to ensure long term sustainability of the project.
Stratford-upon-Avon Community & Visitor Hub	Stratford-upon-Avon	Friends of the Shakespeare Line CiC	Refurbishing the empty unit that has been unused since the station modernisation in 2020. Creating a hub for the line-wide volunteer community and supporting passengers at the station when the station facilities are closed. Refurbishment of the room and onward tenancy supported by Property Teams
Woodrush Education Programme	Wythall	Woodrush High School	Developing an educational qualification for students with learning needs who gain talents and skills by volunteering regularly at the station. The school is pioneering this qualification and will share with other education providers once established. Refurbishment of the station cabin and onward tenancy by the school is supported by Property Teams
Chase Line Young People's Programme	Walsall & Bescot	Ric Nic Youth Led Projects CiC	Developing rail confidence for school pupils, supporting works along the line to improve behaviour and reduce the levels of ASB

Iron Horse: Black Country Legacy Project	Coseley	Big Local East Coseley	Enabling the community-led rescue of an Iron Horse (part of the historic 1960's British Rail Iron Horse scheme between Wolverhampton and Birmingham) to install the sculpture at the station and celebrate the local heritage, giving local people pride in their area and creating a landmark for the station.
Community Information Boards	Droitwich Spa	Friends of Droitwich Spa	Installing poster boards to enable the volunteer group to publicise the existence of the volunteer group, telling the history of the station and enabling local people to join the community group at the station.
Christmas Festival	Shenstone	Friends of Shenstone Station	Creating Christmas Trees from recycled pallets which are painted, decorated, and sponsored by local businesses to raise funds for the Railway Children charity. Installing these to the surrounds of the station and engaging the village and local traders in the activity
Young People's Poetry	Hall Green	Friends of Hall Green	Working with local schools to create poetry composed by the children that will then be displayed in the station waiting room as part of the long tradition at the station for monthly displays of themed poems for passengers to enjoy
PopUp Science Hub at the Station	Great Malvern	Malvern Radar & Technology Society	Creation of 'The Technology Station' in disused rooms on Platform One, the unit will tell the story of the incredible WW2 'science secrets' of Great Malvern. Refurbishment of the rooms and onward tenancy supported by Property Teams
Community Destination Station Boards	Tyseley	Friends of Tyseley Station	The creation of art panels to cover boarded windows on the disused station buildings of Tyseley Station, the theme of the boards is to tell local history and promote local destinations that can be accessed by train from the station

## 5. Finances & Funding

### 2022: Distribution of Community Rail Funding

#### The Operator's Distribution of Community Rail Funds

The funding for Community Rail Partnerships aligns with the Secretary of State's current published community strategy has been discussed with the Community Rail Network, and we have taken on board their feedback.

#### Discussions

We have discussed with each Partnership, their aims and needs and funding required to achieve the outputs for the year. The two Community Rail Partnership's within West Midlands network both have excess funds that can be applied to eligible projects over the coming year, and we are content that the CRPs are able to deliver their planned activities with the allocated funding available to them from West Midlands Railway. The officers of both CRPs are part time and we have supplied the Partnerships with the WMT Community Rail Strategy which contains the outline KPIs to be agreed locally with officers. Manageable work programmes will focus on station adoption and community rail outputs for the coming year, and these are agreed and overseen by both Chairs and Steering Groups.

## 6. Future Plans

#### TOWARDS 2023.

Looking to the future, the West Midlands 30 Year Strategy for Rail published by West Midlands Rail Executive includes a vision for community rail, and the day to day work at WMR aligns to this forward-looking conceptual statement.

*"Putting stations at the heart of community. Our vision for railway stations in the West Midlands is that we want them to be at the heart of communities and be welcoming places that support the economy in the areas that they serve. Making this vision happen involves restoring unused facilities for shops, businesses, and groups to use. Making it easier for all people to access and use the train and improving the quality and feel of stations"*

During the coming year, we plan to expand our works in collaboration with other TOCs and regional stakeholders to progress joint projects at stations, in education and in the communities we serve. Our work programme will support the role of stations as neighbourhood assets, help improve the quality of rail journeys for the travelling public, develop the concept for community hubs in disused station buildings and enrich the quality of life in the neighbourhoods we serve.

We will continue to work closely with the expanding numbers of community groups around the network and will build on the success of the CSP model for community stations to develop further partnerships, enabling match funding for the groups from regional enterprises with social value ethics. We will also build on the success of the 2022 CCIF schools programme at Woodrush High School to assist in the introduction of the scheme to other schools in the region.

We look forward to the year ahead as the rail industry works together to provide passenger satisfaction, support for stakeholders, enrichment to local neighbourhoods and inspiration and support to our communities.



## 7. Conclusion

This year has been a challenging time for both the rail industry and the communities we serve and the projects and works described in this report have been designed to support neighbourhoods, enhance stations, improve the rail experience for passengers and invest in our local communities.

Given the feedback from surveys, and the general response from communities to our work programmes, the efforts are well-received and appreciated by our stakeholders.

We look forward to seeing the completion and outcomes of the 'Your Community, Your Fund' projects and are confident that our relationships with these community groups will continue to flourish as will the legacy-value of the projects.

We are positive about the year ahead and look forward to the remainder of our National Rail Contract and the delivery of schemes in collaboration with community partners and with the guiding focus of the WMT Community Rail Strategy.

**"The future of the railways depends on the creation of a new system centred around passengers, delivering social economic and environmental benefits"**

**Peter Wilkinson (2020)**

## 8. Appendix

Community Rail content WMT website

**WMR Community Rail Web**

Affiliated Community & Community Station Partnership websites

**[www.friendsl.org.uk](http://www.friendsl.org.uk)**

**[www.bthcsp.org.uk](http://www.bthcsp.org.uk)**

**[www.clcsp.org.uk](http://www.clcsp.org.uk)**

**[www.communitystationpartnership.co.uk](http://www.communitystationpartnership.co.uk)**

Affiliated Community Rail Partnership websites

**[www.heartcommunityrail.org.uk](http://www.heartcommunityrail.org.uk)**

**[www.wcrp.org.uk](http://www.wcrp.org.uk)**

Links to Annual Reports for CRPs and CSPs

**[Heart of England Annual Report](#)**

**[Worcestershire CRP Annual Report](#)**

**[Friends of The Shakespeare Line CSP Annual Report](#)**

## Community Stations Adopted By Volunteers



**Alvechurch**

**Bearley**

**Bedworth**

**Berkswell**

**Bermuda Park**

**Bescot**

**Canley**

**Chester Road**

**Claverdon**

**Colwall**

**Coseley**

**Danzey**

**Droitwich Spa**

**Earlswood**

**Great Malvern**

**Hall Green**

**Hampton in Arden**

**Hednesford**

**Henley in Arden**

**Jewellery Quarter**

**Kenilworth**

**Kidderminster**

**Landywood**

**Ledbury**

**Malvern Link**

**Marston Green**

**Northfield**

**Olton**

**Redditch**

**Rugeley**

**Shenstone**

**Shirley**

**Small Heath**

**Snow Hill**

**Spring Road**

**Stratford Parkway**

**Stratford-Upon-Avon**

**The Lakes**

**Tile Hill**

**Tyseley**

**Water Orton**

**Wellington, Shropshire**

**Whitlocks End**

**Wilmcote**

**Wood End**

**Wootton Waven**

**Worcester Foregate  
Street**

**Wylde Green**

**Wythall**

**Yardley Wood**



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