



Between the Lines

Issue 6 | April 2024



Welcome to the sixth edition of Between the Lines, South Western Railway's community rail newsletter. It has been a brilliant start to the year, with plenty of community spirit, thanks to our station adoption groups and Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs). We've welcomed new CRP Officers, and held many great events.

(Front Cover): Basingstoke Cubs on a Try The Train trip to Fleet.

Contact Details

Paula.Aldridge@swrailway.com
Community Rail Manager

Family Fun Day at Reading Station

In February, Reading to Basingstoke CRP joined forces with Southeast CRP's Windsor to Reading Line, Network Rail, SWR, GWR, Reading Buses, and Brighter Futures for Children to provide a free family fun day at Reading Station.

Activities during the day included the opportunity to look inside a British Transport Police van, contributing to a piece of artwork which will be displayed in the station, and an activity to spot the dangers on a model railway. Families also found out about the most economical way to travel and exploring an area travelling by train.



Visits to the Isle of Wight

Paula met Sue Godden in March at Shanklin to hear about the group's plans for the station.

They seem to have a tropical climate over on the Island as the geraniums were in full bloom from last year.



Community Rail Awards 2024

The Community Rail Network Awards was this year held in Swansea on 18th March. We were delighted to have four shortlisted entries from our network.

Congratulations to Hampshire Community Rail Partnership on their 1st place for the 'Small Projects Award', with their Winter Warmers project. Thanks to generous donations from the local community, over 1,000 pieces of pre-loved clothing were redistributed to those in need at Reading and Petersfield stations. The project relied solely on community goodwill and kindness. Following the success of the events, the CRP hopes to hold more Winter Warmer events in the future.

'A really well delivered and readily repeatable project that involved so many people, all at no cost, to bring benefits for those in society who need it most' - Andy Savage, Chair of the Railway Heritage Trust and Community Rail Awards 2024 judge said.



Left to right: Lewis Brencher, Jools Townsend, Paula Aldridge, Lucy Lomax, Nick Farthing, Mark Hopwood.

Further congratulations to go Southeast CRP for achieving 2nd place with their 'Coronation Connections' in the 'Most Effective Communications Campaign' category. Also, to Isle of Wight CRP

Welcome to our new CRP Officers

We have recently welcomed two new CRP Officers to our ever-growing network.

Mikey Nevitt, Wey Valley Community Rail Partnership

Introducing Mikey, the dedicated Community Rail Officer for the Wey Valley Line.

Mike has recently joined the community rail team, bringing with him a wealth of experience from various roles in the public transport industry. When he's out and about, you can often find him travelling with his friendly dog named Dusty.

Please say 'hi' to Mikey and Dusty if you see them around!



Charlene Arrondeau, Three Rivers Community Rail Partnership

Charlene told us 'I am happy to be part of the community rail family and I'm excited to be stepping into this role.'

'While the railway industry is a new field for me, I'm ready to take on the challenge where I can contribute to foster a stronger, more connected community around our rail services.'



Basingstoke Cubs Try The Train

Basingstoke Cub Pack spent an evening on the railway courtesy of our 'Try the Train' initiative.

Facilitated by Duty Control Manager Sam Cullington, the group met at Basingstoke to learn how to navigate a railway station before making a journey on a train to Fleet and back.

The group learned about the importance of railway safety, which will contribute towards their personal safety badge.

For all Cubs it was the first time they had been on a train without a parent, but for two of them it was the first time they had ever been on a train!



Freddie Mercury Event in Feltham

Freddie Mercury is returning to Feltham on the 12th June in a celebration of all things Queen. This will include a tour of Feltham, and a silent disco at London Waterloo - with lots of singing and dancing.

More information will be coming soon.



Welcome to Stuart Meek

Last month we said goodbye to Managing Director Claire Mann, who has moved onto a new role as Chief Operations Officer at Transport for London. We welcome as Interim Managing Director Stuart Meek, who understands fully the importance of community rail. He has already been very engaged with our communities, and attended and presented awards at 2023's Stations in Bloom ceremony in Sherborne. Stuart looks forward to getting out when he can to visit all of our fantastic community groups and individuals across the network.



Stuart Meek presenting an award at the Stations in Bloom Ceremony 2023.

Celebrating Shawford's Rich History

Marking one year since the opening of Platform 1 café at Shawford Station, Hampshire Community Rail Partnership held a ceremony to celebrate the special occasion. The community café was previously a street level station building when the station first opened in 1882. Railway Historian Mike Lamport and his son, SWR Commercial Guard Andrew Lamport, were invited to mark the occasion due to their close history and connection with the station. Andrew's great, great grandfather Matthew Mathews was the station master when the station opened.

His story and the family's continued connection to the station, along with its Sophia Loren connection, are now told by way of attractive wall mounted displays, and a booklet which can be purchased at the counter of Platform 1.



Rail to Trail Walks

Organised by Hampshire CRP, Isle of Wight CRP, and New Forest CRP, the first Rail to Trail Walking Festival took place between 6th & 14th April. The festival sustainably connected the railways to guided walks around the beautiful surrounding countryside.

With more than 20 varied walks, with a range of difficulties and distances, they were each led by local experts who were keen to showcase their stunning local areas.



RAIL TO TRAIL
Walking Festival



Biodiversity Week

In March, the Sustainability team hosted a biodiversity volunteer week with teams of colleagues visiting stations to enhance and help improve the biodiversity at stations. On the Tuesday, the team visited Raynes Park where along with the Friends of Raynes Park, they moved an impressive tonne of topsoil onto the flowerbeds, ready to be planted with wildflower seeds and native plants.



On the Wednesday, 16 volunteers from Sustainability, Department for Transport, Station Property, and the community rail team headed to Pokesdown, where they planted eight planters with UK-native flowering plants, to give the station a welcome uplift.

Finally on the Thursday, the team met with the station adoption group at Havant where they weeded and tidied the flowerbeds at the station.



Woking Artwork Refresh

Along with the spring flowers, some new colour has arrived in the waiting room on Platform 1 at Woking station in the form of brightly painted pictures by young artists. Woking Arts Society has arranged the exhibition with pictures from the Horsell Village School in Woking. This is part of a nationwide Art @ the Station programme led by The Arts Society, which aims to give young people the opportunity to exhibit their work in a public space at a local railway station.



Bike Security Marking Events

Across various stations around the network, we've worked with local communities and Bike Register to hold 10 free bike marking and maintenance events throughout the course of March. From Wokingham to Aldershot, Winchester to Brockenhurst, over 100 customers had their bikes marked with an identity sticker, registering it to a national database used by all UK Police forces. Bike Register's marking kits can help reduce the likelihood of cycle theft by 83%.

Brockenhurst, being an ideal location for cyclists, was the event with the most uptake from customers with over 40 bikes successfully marked on the day.

These events also provided the opportunity to discuss active and sustainable travel with customers while their bikes were being marked, and talking to them about the different places to visit on the network where they might want to take their bike.



Brockenhurst



Winchester



Farncombe



Sherborne

If your station adoption group or CRP would like to host a bike marking event, we still have some Bike Register stickers available. Get in touch and we can arrange an event.

Classic Mini Cooper Visits Waterloo

In January, The Community Brain (Tolworth station adopters) turned back the clocks to the swinging sixties to commemorate the Mini Cooper's legendary win at the Monte Carlo Rally in 1964.

Marking 60 years since the victory The Community Brain, in collaboration with SWR, Network Rail and British Motor Museum, brought the original winning car (registration 33 EJB) to display at London Waterloo to celebrate its sporting success and shine a light on the Surbiton designer and engineer who made it possible - John Cooper.



Their presence at Waterloo revved up excitement ahead of its programme of Mini Cooper-themed events that will take place in Surbiton and the surrounding area throughout 2024. The biggest of these will be a gathering of more than 200 Minis as part of a family fun day on Saturday 18th May.

Mark your calendars for a series of spectacular events celebrating the iconic Mini Cooper. From heritage displays to floral tributes, each event promises to be a unique journey through the Mini Cooper story.

Saturday 18 May, Hollyfield Road, Surbiton: Witness a grand gathering of more than 200 Mini Coopers and Minis from the last 60 years, complete with live 60s music performances and a screening of 'The Italian Job'.

2 - 7 July, Hampton Court Garden Festival: Experience a unique blend of horticulture and automotive history with The Community Brain's Mini Cooper-themed garden display.

Saturday 28 September, Surbiton Festival: Enjoy a special Mini Cooper heritage event celebrating the legacy of this iconic car.

For full details about all the events, visit: www.thecommunitybrain.org or see social media.



A few words from Dan, who left CRN in March

It has been a great pleasure to support community rail across the SWR network in my role working for Community Rail Network – but by the time you read this I will have left for my next adventures. One of these includes writing a book about railway stations; it's very hard to shake the transport sector off once you start working for it!

When I look back over nearly six years in my job, I am incredibly impressed with the expansion of community rail across the SWR patch. When I started, there was just a handful of station adopter/station friends groups. Now, there are over 100! That's easily the highest of any train operator in the south east, and one of the highest nationally. As Paula reminds me from time to time, in terms of percentage of stations, it's the highest in the country.

I might have left but I'm not going to miss a final opportunity to nag you to apply for funding to carry out all those excellent projects you want to do. On that topic, SWR is one of the very few train operators which offers its own funding pot – the Station Adopter Fund – so make good use of that too!

One of SWR's particular areas of interest has been in getting disused spaces at stations back into community use. These can be challenging projects – disused railway buildings aren't always in very good shape, and their conversion to new uses often requires quite a lot of imagination and even more money. But thanks to SWR's Community Use Spaces programme, the paperwork and permissions process is far easier here than anywhere else on the national rail network. The result has been an explosion of community organisations bringing new life to parts of railway stations that have fallen out of use. We've seen radio stations, music charities, free shops, baby banks, information centres, libraries of things, community kitchens and event spaces (to name but a few) created. I have a personal interest in railway buildings and architecture, so this particular area of work has always been one I have been particularly fond of, not least when I get to go poking around behind the scenes of railway stations, finding historical bits and bobs that have been forgotten.

What will I miss the most? Perhaps it's not surprising, given that community rail is all about communities connecting with and to the railway, but it's the people. Every time I have come out to see a community rail project with a CRP or a station-based group, I have come away re-energised by your commitment to your railway lines, stations, and local communities. With every new history board installed I have learned something more about the importance of the railway to its local people, and with every gardening project I have better understood the importance of stations to local communities. Railway stations are almost unique today in being places where people from all backgrounds come together. It's no wonder they make such good places for community projects that have tackled loneliness, promoted community cohesion, taught skills, provided employment, educated people and provided outlets for artistic ambition.

Daniel Wright, Community Rail Network



Community Live Dates 2024

Don't forget to join our Community Live sessions throughout the year, running from 16:00 - 17:15 on the dates shown below. On the calls, we will be joined by Community Rail Network, Network Rail, SWR's Regional Development teams, and a guest speaker.

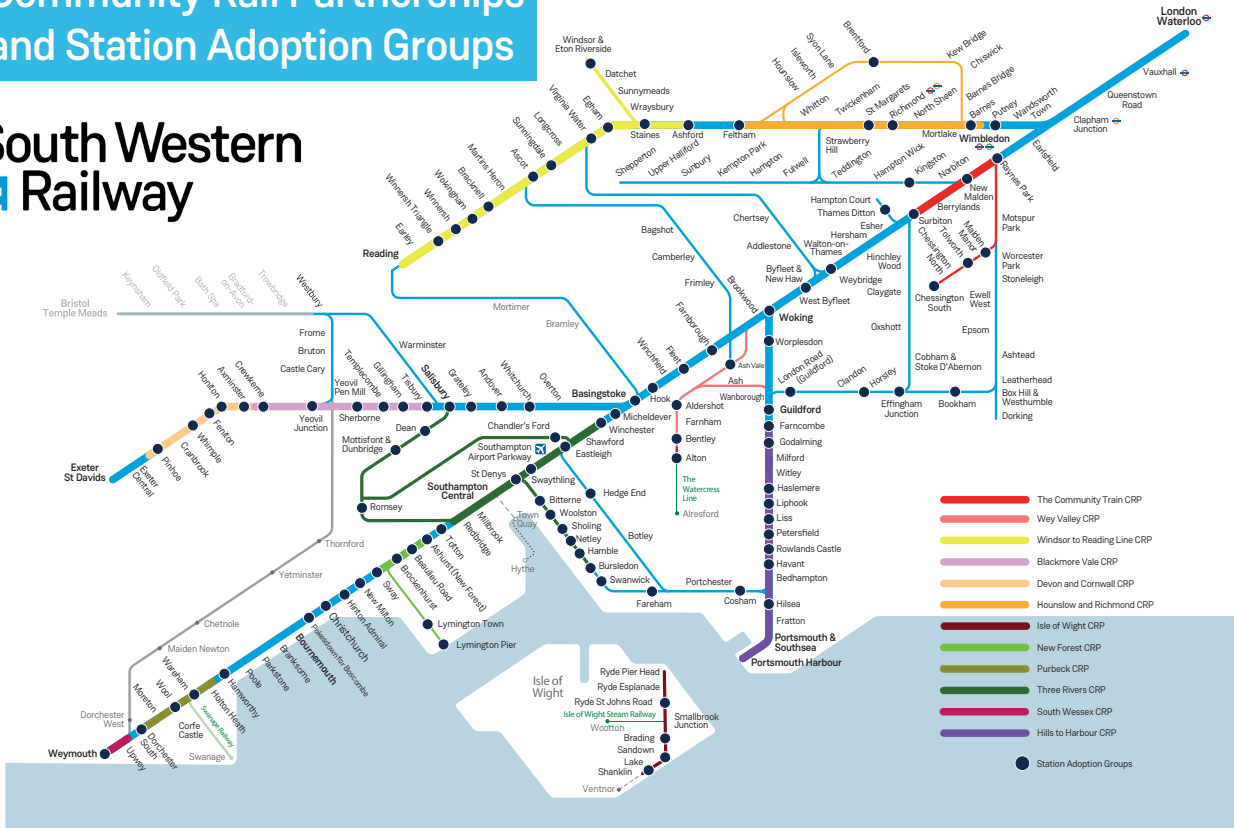
- Monday 3rd June
- Tuesday 2nd July
- Monday 2nd December

We look forward to welcoming you to the sessions online. Links will be sent out one week prior to each call.

Thursday 10th October - Community Rail Conference

Once again, we will be holding our annual Community Rail Conference. The venue is yet to be confirmed, and will take place all day. This year, the event will feature an awards ceremony for the first time!

Community Rail Partnerships and Station Adoption Groups



The latest CRP map, showing all 105 adopted stations and 12 Community Rail Partnerships across the network.



Peter Williams (SWR Commercial Director), Lucy Lomax (Hampshire CRP) and Paula Aldridge (Community Rail Manager) celebrating a win at the Community Rail Network Awards 2024.