

Customer and Communities Improvement Fund

2025/26 Scheme Handbook



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Front Page: *Senior Saints is a group run by the Saints Foundation which helps those over 60 living in Southampton improve and maintain their independence through a mixture of physical exercise and social activities. Investment from this year's CCIF round is funding multiple 'Try the Train' trips for the Senior Saints. These trips will offer enjoyable experiences and days out to Saints members, whilst educating them on the practicality and advantages of rail travel and building their confidence with using public transport.*

Welcome to our Customer and Communities Improvement Fund 2025/26

The Customer and Communities Improvement Fund (CCIF) is South Western Railway's programme to support projects that have a community benefit or address an area of social need across our network.

CCIF is intended to support small and medium-sized projects which can be completed over the course of the year. The most recent round for the railway year 2024/25 has brought the total number of projects supported by CCIF to more than 120, and SWR has given more than £7 million worth of grants across three rounds of funding. We are delighted to have been able to help important local causes and initiatives, delivering extensive social value and benefit.

A central element of CCIF is that customers and stakeholders help inform which schemes are taken forward. Once a list of preferred schemes has been finalised, it is sent to the Department for Transport (DfT) as part of our Annual Business Planning process and budget setting. This will lead to a final decision on which schemes go ahead.

We are pleased to say that we are now inviting bids and proposals for our next round of CCIF. This handbook provides details on the type of projects we are looking for, the application process, and how to contact us should you have further questions about CCIF or your application.

We look forward to seeing a wide range of bids from all parts of our network.



Pictured above: Students undertaking a course with the 4Ps Project, a Charity based on the Isle of Wight that runs award-winning free courses in conjunction with Vectis Radio CIC to help young people on the Island build their confidence and improve their communication skills. The 4Ps Project is one of the initiatives that received funding this year, in the CCIF 2024-25 cohort.

Overview

CCIF offers communities across the SWR network the chance to bid for funding for projects that address an area of social or community need and engage with local communities.

We would welcome bids from grassroot or neighbourhood groups, local authorities (i.e. parish or town councils, borough councils, county councils), elected representatives, civic societies, charities, sports teams, social clubs, or any other organisation with a great idea for how CCIF may be able to help their community.

CCIF is intended to support schemes that have a tangible community benefit, address an identified area of social need, and are not primarily for commercial gain. Our own Socio-Economic Needs Analysis of our region has identified four main areas of social need in the communities we serve:

- **Employability and Education** - focusing on building skills and promoting employability and education amongst marginalised groups by investing in the current and future skills requirements.
- **Community Health & Wellbeing** - promoting aspects of wellbeing such as physical, mental, and financial health, social connection, arts, culture, heritage and the environment.
- **Environmental Sustainability** - providing support to environmental projects and encouraging sustainable mobility, looking at ways to reduce the impact of congestion on our customers and communities, cutting emissions and improving air quality.
- **Accessibility and Inclusion** – improving accessibility and/or supporting diverse and inclusive community projects, reducing social isolation, and providing new opportunities for learning and the social mobility of vulnerable groups.

A good CCIF scheme application should:

- Show clear evidence of how it will address at least one of the areas of social need of a community served by SWR network identified above;
- Demonstrate a clear level of community engagement, through offering clear evidence of meeting an issue identified by the community; and
- Set out clear plans for delivering the project, with accurate costs, timescales, how the project will be managed and, where appropriate, assurances about any consents or permissions needed from other organisations.

Match funding is an important part of many projects, and we welcome applicants who are able to utilise other funding, especially confirmed, in support of their CCIF applications. That said, we are aware that not all schemes are able to generate or source match funding, and this should not deter bidders from submitting schemes that have a clear social need and have demonstrated a high level of community engagement.

Projects in this round of CCIF should start no earlier than **1 April 2025** and must be completed by end of **March 2026**. If a project is expected to take longer to complete, it must demonstrate how this will be achieved without any further CCIF funding beyond March 2026.

The maximum value of bid we are able to consider for this round of funding is **£65,000**. Bids seeking more funding than this will not be able to be supported.

What we can support

We would like to encourage a wide variety of bids from a diverse range of bidders. To help try and provide some guidance, we have identified three broad categories of projects we would be happy to support.

Station improvements

This category of project is for bids to make improvements at or in the immediate vicinity of SWR-managed stations. Delivering projects on railway land is often more complex or restrictive than elsewhere and our station property teams would oversee the delivery of successful projects, in discussion with the applicants.

We have identified some suitable example small and medium-sized projects which would be deliverable over the course of a year. We would be looking for bids to demonstrate how these improvements support at least one of the four identified areas of social need set out on page 4, and potentially how they fit in to other planned improvements or projects in the local area.

- Multi-modal CIS screens
- Information totems
- New or improved cycle facilities
- Murals and artwork
- Noticeboards
- Living or green walls
- Wildlife “facilities” i.e. wildlife gardens
- Bus shelters
- Improved integration signs
- Inclusivity signage

This list is not necessarily exhaustive, and we would consider other ideas assuming they can be delivered within the established timescales of **April 2025 to March 2026**.



***Pictured above:** CCIF Funding this year is going towards the creation of a new community facility for Pinhoe, in Exeter, Devon. Pinhoe Community Hub is a community-led initiative to develop a new community centre adjacent to Pinhoe Railway Station on land owned by Exeter City Council, housing a library, a contemporary community centre, with a cafe, meeting rooms. Pictured are the design plans*

Grant funding

We can also provide one-off grant funding to local community projects that do not require any on-station development. A strong application for this category would demonstrate some kind of connection to South Western Railway or the railways more generally, the communities we serve, and how the funding will address one or more of the four priority areas mentioned on page 4. It will also demonstrate what ongoing positive impacts will be generated for the future.

Major project design and scoping work

We are happy to consider proposals for larger development projects, with a particular focus on bringing redundant and under-utilised spaces back into use. We know from previous rounds of CCIF that such projects can be major undertakings, be that in the scale of the work to be done or the complexity of the project.

This round of CCIF funding differs from previous rounds in that all projects have to be delivered in a single year, 2025/26. As such, we are focusing this time on supporting the necessary and scoping work that is required for major refurbishment or restoration work.



Pictured above: No Limits is a Hampshire-based youth charity supporting vulnerable children and young people through detached youth work in the Hampshire area. They offer open access support through their Advice and Wellbeing Hub and specialist services including substances, housing, mental health. CCIF funding granted to No Limits in 2024 has supported further engagement with these vulnerable children and young people at risk of exploitation through awareness-raising campaign at SWR train stations (examples of posters above), on social media and via a dedicated helpline.

What we cannot support

CCIF cannot be used to fund work that SWR is already committed to deliver as part of our National Rail Contract or Annual Business Plans, or anything that forms part of our day-to-day operation.

CCIF is intended to support projects which would not usually be commercially viable or deliver a return. Bids that would generate direct revenue benefits to SWR are also unlikely to be successful. We are not able to fund the day-to-day resourcing of organisations or the ongoing employment of individuals.

Bids can only be accepted for projects in communities geographically served by our network and any project must be completed by **31 March 2026**. Bids for projects that require ongoing funding beyond this date will need to show how this will be secured without access to further SWR funding, as no further monies will be available beyond the amount requested in your application.

We are not able to consider bids for funding feasibility studies into the opening of new stations or reopening of closed railway lines, as these are large and complex projects well outside of the scope of CCIF.



***Pictured above:** Community cookery lessons in Ryde funded by SWR's CCIF 2024/25 round. The grant was used to hire a skilled instructor, who creates sessions around the needs of the group, as well as recipes, all ingredients and room hire for each session.*

Application and assessment process

You can apply for this new round of CCIF by using our online application form. You can access the application form through the CCIF webpage at: <https://www.southwesternrailway.com/ccif>

Please contact us if you have any difficulty submitting your application.

All bids must be sent to us by the deadline of 23.59 on 31st December 2024.

After the closing date, SWR will review and assess all applications received and, if necessary, may contact applicants on any issues that require clarification.

Shortlisted projects will be submitted to the Department for Transport for their final approval, as part of the Annual Business Plan negotiations for the railway year 2025/26. We will notify bidders in April 2025 whether their bid has been successful or not.

Successful bidders will have to provide appropriate administrative and financial details, agree a joint press release, and countersign a community funding agreement with SWR.

Once that is complete, we will help you get your scheme underway and then keep in touch as you deliver your project.



Pictured above: CCIF funding in 2023/24 funded a project at Fenton Station, where the local station adoption group used the funding to improve the look and signage on the disused platform.

Contact us

If you have any further queries about the application process or general questions, please contact CCIF@swrailway.com and we will be pleased to support you.

Alternatively, if you have any questions about an area of the South Western Railway network and what sorts of project might have previously been successful or could be for this round, please contact one of our Regional Development Managers.

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