

Community Rail Report

2020



Despite the challenges of 2020, community rail has continued to grow across our network. South Western Railway is delighted to have supported so many vibrant Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) and Station Adopters. We look forward to continuing our work with these organisations, and others, in 2021 and beyond.

What is a Community Rail Partnership?

Community Rail Partnerships – or CRPs – are not-for-profit organisations that help connect SWR with the communities we serve.

Connecting people and communities is at the heart of SWR, and CRPs focus on a wide range of projects which aim to: **promote sustainable and healthy travel, bring communities together** and **support social and economic development**. There are 11 CRPs across our network and in which SWR invested almost £300,000 in 2020.



What is Station Adoption?

Station Adoption makes SWR stations more welcoming by **providing a voice to communities** and **better reflecting the communities they serve**.

Station Adopters add planters, create art displays and even set up book swaps. During 2020, we grew the number of Station Adopters across our network to over 60 – an increase of more than 100 percent since 2019.

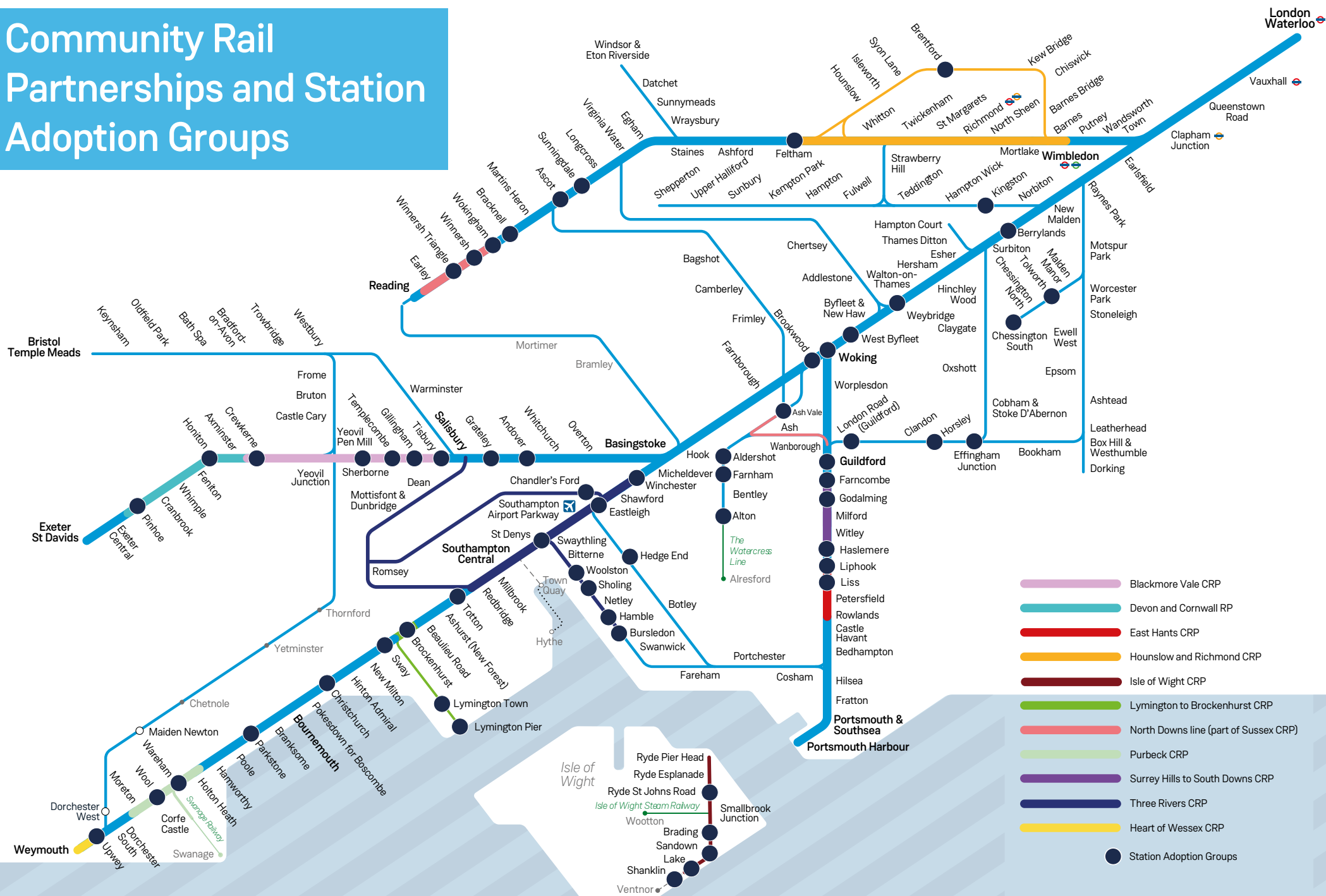
How does SWR support CRPs and Station Adopters?

Each year, SWR provides funding for each CRP to employ an officer who delivers the CRP's community activity. SWR also contributes funding towards CRP projects.

We are actively involved with each CRP, and passionate about working in partnership to deliver outcomes that benefit as many people as possible.

We help Station Adopters establish themselves and refine their plans.

We also provide Station Adopters with funding for materials, equipment and new projects as they are developed.



CRPs: Promoting sustainable travel

During the early days of the pandemic, **East Hampshire CRP** harnessed the feeling of missing travel by rail amongst many people in the local area, with their short story competition, entitled: Dreaming of an adventure by train. The winning entries were read out on the local community radio show.

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**Lucy Lomax, Project Officer,
East Hants CRP**

The winning entries were full of imagination, description and showed great writing skill.



Awards alert...

The **Friends of Wool Station** took second place in the Small Project (under £500) category of the National Community Rail Awards for their 'Making Connection' work which included creating leaflets and onwards travel information (pictured above) for visitors and locals alike.

As lockdown eased, the volunteer-run Information Hub at **Haslemere** reopened.

The space, provided rent free by SWR, had been given a major refurbishment in the summer of 2019 (thanks to funding from SWR and the Community Rail Network), and was able to adapt its way of working to safely advise locals and visitors about walks and attractions.



Awards alert...

Haslemere won the Most Enhanced Station Building award at the National Community Rail event, recognising the partnership approach to the Hub and other improvements across the location.



CRPs: Bringing the community together

When the pandemic struck, the **Isle of Wight and Lymington to Brockenhurst CRPs** used funding previously provided for a musical event to develop a programme whereby volunteers took meals to the most vulnerable.

Food on the Move ran throughout most of 2020, receiving almost £50,000 of funding from various sources – much to the appreciation of locals across both lines.



Awards alert...

The efforts of both CRPs were recognised with second place in the Best Community Engagement Project category of the National Community Rail Awards.

At the start of 2020, SWR leased to **Three Rivers CRP** the redundant spaces at Swaythling for a peppercorn rent. During the year, work was undertaken to turn two rooms into a community facility, replicating **East Hampshire CRP's** Free Shop programme (pictured). The project, which started at Petersfield, takes in food which would otherwise be wasted, and passes it on to those who can make use of it.





Art has continued to flourish across the network, with groups taking innovative steps to create new displays. The **Art Society Guildford** were unable to continue their displays of artwork created by school children in the waiting rooms at Farncombe, Guildford and Woking, so instead supported adults to develop their skills during lockdown and showcased their work (Guildford, pictured).

Elsewhere, the **Art Society Shalford** finally put up their first display towards the end of the year at Godalming, whilst frames are also being installed for future use by the Kingston branch.



Awards alert...

Two projects which added art to our stations were recognised at the National Community Rail Awards.

The Lightbox, **Station Adopters at Woking**, took second place in the Community Art Schemes (Permanent or Larger) for their innovative art display on the footbridge, while **East Hants CRP** was awarded third for their efforts with local groups at Liss.

People passing Lake station were also wowed when a lifeboat themed planter arrived as lockdown eased, thanks to **Station Adopters Broadlea Primary School.**

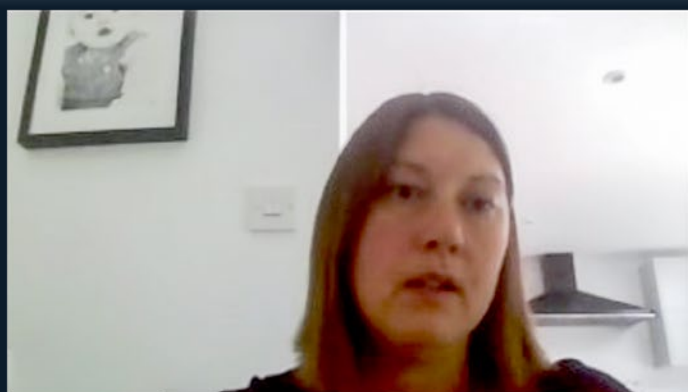
The planter joined the existing one, designed to look like the old Island Line trains, and the group's next project is to create an additional planter to match the new trains.



CRPs: Supporting social and economic development

Two CRPs used time during lockdown to achieve the Department for Transport's coveted Accreditation, and now have the opportunity to apply for additional funding.

Well done to **Purbeck** (pictured) and **Surrey Hills to South Downs CRPs**. They join **Devon and Cornwall** and the **North Downs** which have previously achieved DfT Accreditation.



SWR supported **Three Rivers CRP**, and its partners, to investigate the potential of reopening the Fawley Line, pulling out all the stops to run a trial train down the line. The event was attended by Transport Minister Chris Heaton-Harris MP, Network Rail Chair Sir Peter Hendy (both pictured with SWR's Interim Managing Director Mark Hopwood) and other local stakeholders, and was well received by those on board and along the line.





Station Adopters: Providing a voice to the community

In April, SWR provided three additional CRPs with funding. Two (**North Downs** and **Surrey Hills to South Downs**) used the money to employ officers to progress projects.

The officers have strengthened links with local groups around our stations. Maddy Mills of North Downs CRP is working with CLASP (a group supporting adults with learning disabilities) to develop a photographic guide to access Wokingham station, as well as on a biodiversity project at Wanborough.

Lucy Lomax, the first ever officer for the Surrey Hills to South Downs, has also been working with local stakeholders to create the partnership's first ever line guide, as well as developing educational resources.

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Maddy Mills, Project Officer, North Downs CRP

I've been the Education Officer with Southeast Communities CRP for 18 months and during that time I've heard about all the fantastic activities my fellow officers have run on their lines. I'm relishing this new challenge on the North Downs line.

Projects that I'm progressing include working with youngsters to create new artwork to be displayed at Winnersh and Winnersh Triangle stations and holding discussions on the possibility of two groups adopting Wokingham station.

Station adopters along the West of England route did their best to celebrate the 160th anniversary of the line during 2020. Although the **Friends of Crewkerne** could not hold the event they wanted, they worked with SWR to add a commemorative banner at the station and encouraged locals to share their memories of the railway for display.

The **Friends of Honiton**, supported by **Devon and Cornwall CRP**, put up a history display at the station, using the frame installed by SWR for them (pictured), whilst also producing a celebration booklet which was stocked at the local museum.

Station Adopters: Helping our stations reflect the communities they serve

In March 2020, SWR hit its ambitious target of having 50 registered Station Adopters 15 weeks ahead of the deadline.

Despite lockdown, we've continued to add groups, growing the number up to 61 by the end of 2020. We continue to hold online discussions with potential groups, with the aim of adding more during 2021.

During the year, a number of stations with adopters were recognised nationally. Both **Haslemere** and **Templecombe** were shortlisted in the Station of the Year category of the National Rail Awards, while



Hedge End (pictured below), **Sandown** and **Sherborne** made it through to the last 48 of the Rail Delivery Group's online competition: World Cup of Stations.



Awards alert...



The efforts of the **Friends of Brockenhurst Station** were recognised with third place in the Small Project (£500 or less) category of the National Community Rail Awards.

The award recognised their efforts to further involve the community in the station, through planting, a history display in the refurbished waiting room (pictured) and a festive mince pie meet and greet in 2019.



How to get involved

Community Rail

If you're interested in rail, looking to volunteer – either regularly or on an ad hoc basis – or would just like meet some new people, why not join your local community rail partnership? There are 11 CRPs across the south west to choose from.

Email **Paula.Aldridge@swrailway.com** to find out more.

Station Adoption

If you're looking for a place to stretch your green fingers, make good use of some time, or help brighten up your local area, why not consider adopting your local station?

- We work with you to develop your plan.
- We provide safety training relevant to your station, so that your aspirations can be delivered safely.
- We provide funding for your group to join the Community Rail Network (the national body for station adopters) which gives you access to more funding.
- We support your group's work through our communication channels.

Email **Paula.Aldridge@swrailway.com** to find out more.