

# Train Times

**AC:RP**  
New life for local lines

News, views and features from the world of Community Rail

No. 62 Autumn 2011

**Stagecoach and  
Community Rail –**  
*Profiling the transport giant's  
support for rural and community  
routes...*

Plus: Full coverage from this year's  
Community Rail Awards...

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## Contributors

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Special thanks go to Lucy Tennyson and all of our contributors for their ongoing hard work and support.

**Front cover picture** – An East Midlands Trains service on the Derwent Valley Line.

# Hello and Welcome...

Is it my imagination or has this year passed by with alarming speed? It only seems like yesterday that I was writing about the 2010 Awards and suddenly, here I am commenting on 2011! What a great event it was though. It could sound clichéd to say it's the highlight of my year but it's true – I love seeing all my friends and colleagues, all those expectant faces and the smiling



winners. For me, that's what Community Rail is all about and it's the one time of the year when we can all shine and blow our own trumpets. The ACoRP team did us proud once again; the Sheffield City Hall was quite some venue, whilst Tim Shoveller and Steve Butcher – our very own Ant and Dec – provided the best double-act I've seen for a while!

I hope you all forgave me too for giving a slightly serious introduction. With the graphs however (*bottom of page 8 in case you missed them!*) I did want to emphasise what you're all achieving and as I said, although there are some economic influences at play, by and large *you* did this! All you Community Rail Partnership Officers, station adopters, volunteers – this is what you're achieving and I congratulate you for it!

So, what do we do next? If we continue with these extraordinary increases, pretty soon we're going to run out of capacity – just like the main lines (and I never thought I'd be writing *that!*) Despite the current financial climate, ACoRP has received unprecedented support for the next three years, Community Rail is beginning to be recognised as a key delivery agent for the Coalition Government's social aspirations, Network Rail is developing its 'Alternative Solutions' Route Utilisation Strategy and the whole package is supported by the McNulty Report.

It's not necessarily local or rural lines that are haemorrhaging money as the report acknowledges, but the key focus still needs to be on cost reduction. Many Community Rail Partnerships are majoring on increasing passenger numbers but are finding cost reduction rather more difficult, due to many of the issues raised by McNulty. As a result, a number of colleagues share my concern that the Community Rail Development Strategy is not being used to its full potential. ACoRP is therefore running a conference in November to explore current practices and costs and find *deliverable* alternatives to them, possibly culminating in a formal report or paper. It's not going to be a talking shop – we plan to attract speakers who will not only provide us with radical proposals but who can also help drive the agenda forward.

On top of that, we will be holding parliamentary receptions in the House of Commons and the Senedd in Wales, to 're-launch' the concept of Community Rail to the many new MPs in both countries. We're in a very good place at the moment and we need to capitalise on it. ACoRP can only do this with your help though, so when the call comes, please be ready to act in your locality.

**Neil Buxton, General Manager**

# Sponsor's Spotlight

**Sir Brian Souter – Chief Executive of this issue's sponsor - Stagecoach Group – outlines his company's commitment to Community Rail.**

At Stagecoach Group, we understand the vital role that our train, bus and tram services play in connecting communities and we help millions of people to access employment, education, healthcare and leisure facilities every day of the year.

As a Group, we remain very supportive of the valuable work taking place in Community Rail and I am therefore pleased that Stagecoach Group has been given the opportunity to sponsor this edition of Train Times.

We operate two very different train companies - South West Trains, the UK's largest and most complex commuter network, and East Midlands Trains, which covers a mix of intercity high-speed services to London and local routes around the East Midlands region. However, both companies have clear similarities – they include a number of rural routes which have an important job in providing train services for their respective local communities.

Community Rail across East Midlands Trains and South West Trains therefore has an active role in our business and we have worked hard to establish good working relationships with the six Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) across our routes, which include Derwent Valley, North Staffordshire and the Poacher Line on East Midlands Trains and, on the South West Trains network, the Lymington-Brockenhurst line, Three Rivers and of course the Isle of Wight line, which has been designated as a Community Rail line.



We recognise the positive effect that the growth of our business has on the communities we serve. Recently, the Derwent Valley line (Matlock–Derby–Nottingham) on the East Midlands Trains network has been the subject of some positive national media coverage as a result of the significant 86% growth on that line. This follows the introduction of an improved timetable with increased frequency, more reliable services and refurbished trains and the ongoing successful partnership working between East Midlands Trains and the Derwent Valley Line CRP.

It's great that stories such as this are receiving national recognition, but we know that to continue achieving growth, we need to keep investing in our services and our stations. The North Staffordshire line has benefitted from the installation of CCTV, customer information systems and even a fully refurbished new waiting room at Kidsgrove as a result of the drive and commitment of the Community Rail Officer, working in partnership with East Midlands Trains.

Meanwhile, at Pokesdown, the station has been transformed through a community art scheme created through a successful partnership between South West Trains and Bournemouth Council.

Of course, all of our Community Rail Partnerships have a good story to tell and I was particularly pleased to hear from Tim Shoveller, Managing Director of East Midlands Trains, who co-hosted this year's ACoRP Community Rail Awards, about the many successes we had at the awards. From winning station employees to best in class station adoption groups, successful community days and first prize in the Best Community Art Schemes category for the aforementioned Pokesdown, it's a positive sign of the differences and improvements that can be made by working in partnership with local people and organisations.



*A Stagecoach service on the popular Isle of Wight Community Rail line*

# Regional Round-Up

## What's going on in your neck of the woods

### Restoration for Glossop



Glossop's grade two listed station has been officially re-opened following a major restoration.

Jointly funded by Derbyshire County Council and train operator Northern Rail, the project has seen a relocated ticket office replacing the original (in use since 1847), along with the refurbishment of two waiting rooms, including a toilet for the disabled.

The new facilities were officially opened at a special event held at the beginning of September, organised by Northern and the Friends of Glossop Station and featuring a special guest appearance by 89 year-old Jimmy Melia - a former signalman at Glossop.

Other guests included Councillor George Wharmby, Chairman of Derbyshire County Council, Northern's Area Director Lee Wasnidge and representatives from the High Peak and Hope Valley Community Rail Partnership, Transport for Greater Manchester, Network Rail and ACoRP.

A special commemorative plaque was unveiled during the event, followed by a tour of the restored rooms, which feature scenes from Glossop's railway past as well as a small gallery.

### Bus meets rail on the Medway

Links between bus and train services in the Medway Valley have received a major boost with the launch of co-ordinated publicity, branded vehicles and rail ticket acceptance on the 151 bus route. A joint venture between Kent Community Rail Partnership, Kent County Council, Medway Council,



Launching the Links scheme on the Medway Valley.

SouthEastern and Nu-Venture buses, the campaign aims to get people out of their cars and onto trains and buses when making local journeys.

Branded 'Medway Valley Links,' the scheme will see the acceptance of rail tickets on the 151 bus between Strood and Snodland, helping improve travel options along the whole route.

As a result of Kent County Council's successful bid to the Local Sustainable Transport Fund, additional funding has also been secured to support the work of the CRP, with the current annual contribution of £10,000 increasing to £25,000 from 2012 until 2015.

Commented Chairman of the Kent Community Rail Partnership, Maidstone Borough Councillor Mike Fitzgerald: "The Medway Valley Links project serves to demonstrate what can be achieved with relatively small investment and lots of goodwill from all those involved to promote public transport in the Medway Valley."

- The Medway Valley rail line links Paddock Wood, Maidstone West and Strood, with rail services operated by Southeastern.

## Making an exhibition...

Lancashire CRP's 2011 Community Rail exhibition was officially opened in August, with projects focusing on Whalley and Accrington Eco Station.

The exhibition - the fifth annual Clitheroe Line and East Lancashire CRP celebration of the work carried out with local schools - told the story of Whalley Primary School's project to create a piece of art work for their local station, linked to a self-guided walk around the village to see the places of importance shown in the art work.

The schoolchildren also produced a supporting leaflet, utilising modern technology to make use of the new QR codes, which quickly link those with smart phones to websites explaining more about the places of interest.

The exhibition, which ran for two weeks at the Platform Gallery in Clitheroe, also featured a display highlighting the work of children who visited the new Eco Station at Accrington, based around sustainability and using recycled materials.



Children from Whalley Primary School open the exhibition

## On the airwaves

Lancashire CRP's have found fame on the airwaves as part of a series on 'Lancashire's Railways.'

Run by BBC Radio Lancashire, the features formed part of presenter John Gillmore's show and were done as outside broadcasts from stations throughout the county, with the local CRPs well represented.

The first one of the series was recorded at St. Annes-on-the-Sea, when both Richard Watts and Simon Clarke were interviewed, with Simon becoming a regular guest on the shows.

Said Simon: "It was a great opportunity to explain exactly what a Community Rail Partnership is and what the aims and aspirations of each line are. It has also been an excellent way of making sure that the work of local volunteers is highlighted."



Lancashire CRP's Brian Haworth (right) and Simon Clarke (left) with the Radio Lancashire team

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Big team clean-up at Frome

The Heart of Wessex Community Rail Working Party (CRWP) and Network Rail joined forces for a special effort at Frome station in August.

The volunteers, from locations including Bristol, Trowbridge, Bradford on Avon, Westbury, Frome, Bruton, Dorchester, Upwey and Weymouth, signed up to take part in Network Rail's Community Scheme for the disused platform at Frome.

With support from Network Rail's Mike Franklin, the group was also joined by members of Network Rail's track maintenance and off-track teams from Westbury and Swindon, helping clear the track and line side. In just two hours, the 21-strong team completely transformed trackside and platform.



Cleaning up at Frome

### Club 55 returns...

Arriva Trains Wales (ATW) has re-launched its popular Club 55 discount scheme, allowing over 55s to travel anywhere on the ATW network (including all of the Welsh CRPs) for just £18 return.

Travel with a Club 55 ticket is available until 14 December 2011 and tickets can be purchased now. Full terms and conditions can be found at [www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk/55](http://www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk/55)

Over 55? Travel anywhere on the Arriva Trains Wales network for only £18 return

Available to purchase from 27th August  
Travel between 4th September - 14th December

CLUB 55

On sale at [www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk/train](http://www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk/train)  
Tel: 0844 3751 778  
and at station booking offices

ARRIVA Trains Wales  
Trenau Arddal Cymru

# Regional Round-Up

## Community mural for Uttoxeter

A 120 ft mural celebrating Uttoxeter and its history has been unveiled at the local railway station.

The mural, a project developed by the North Staffordshire CRP, is a major feature on Platform 1 and was designed and painted by professional Staffordshire artist Anthony Hammond.

Based on ideas put forward by the local community and station volunteers, the mural features historical figures linked to the town, such as Dr Samuel Johnson, local businesses famous to Uttoxeter and even the town's new civic sculptures, all of which are entwined around the words 'Welcome to Uttoxeter.'

The project was funded by the CRP and a grant provided by ACoRP, together with contributions from Alton Towers Resort, JCB, Uttoxeter Racecourse and Uttoxeter Town Council. Local operator East Midlands Trains' estates team also repaired and painted the background wall to receive the mural.

North Staffordshire CRP Officer Faye Lambert said: "We are absolutely delighted with the mural. It is so clever and colourful and has really improved the environment of the station. Many thanks to ACoRP and all the local sponsors for their kind support for our project, which we hope will provide a lasting tribute to the town."



ACoRP Chairman Peter Roberts (left) with the mural's creator Anthony Hammond

## Salad days at Wemyss Bay Station

It's a case of grow your own at Wemyss Bay Station on Scotland's Clyde coast, where the local Friends group have created a thriving station garden,

Supported by ScotRail, the garden includes a vegetable plot and a polytunnel – home to tomatoes, courgettes and peppers, which will also be used for growing bedding plants for the station.

Nancy Cameron, chairwoman of the Friends of Wemyss Bay Station, said: "The new garden allows nearby flat-dwellers a chance to reconnect with gardening. Already the beds are planted with onions, leeks, carrots and salad crops."



## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Kidsgrove takes top spot at station awards

Kidsgrove Station on the Crewe-Derby route took top spot at this year's East Midlands Trains' Best Stations Awards.

Kidsgrove was awarded winner of the Best Small Station category, just pipping to the post Blythe Bridge, which took the accolade in 2010 and was named Runner-Up this year.

Kidsgrove also featured in the Best Community Station category, awarded Runner Up (to Market Rasen, Lincolnshire).

### Oompah on the Poacher Line

The foot stomping, thigh slapping sounds of the Bavarian Band come to the Poacher Line (Nottingham – Skegness) on Friday 28 October as part of the ongoing programme of music trains.

This is followed on Friday 25 November by the Sleaford Ukulele Orchestra and on Thursday 15 December by Sleaford Concert Band with an evening of Christmas Carols.

Scheduled service trains are used for the music train events between Sleaford and Wainfleet. A normal rail ticket is required for the journey (current train fares apply) and can be purchased as usual from stations/conductor on train. There is no additional charge above the current train fare to join a music train event.

### Medway Valley wins DCRDF grant

The Medway Valley Line CRP has been awarded a grant from the Designated Community Rail Development Fund.

The grant, for £1,666, will be used to fund artwork at Wateringbury Station, which is operated by Southeastern.

# ACoRP Community Rail Awards

## Lucy Tennyson reports back from the 2011 Community Rail Awards held in Sheffield...

ACoRP's seventh Community Rail Awards, held at a Gala Dinner at Sheffield City Hall on September 23, marked a real coming of age for the annual ceremony.

Small voluntary groups shared the platform with senior management from some of the UK's largest train operating companies to receive awards for outstanding achievement in Community Rail Development during 2010/11.

ACoRP's General Manager Neil Buxton was thrilled at the achievements of the Community Rail movement over the last year. Hot on the heels of ATOC's August announcement about growing passenger numbers on rural routes, September also saw a new designation for the Preston to Ormskirk line. Said Neil: "It's a real achievement that throughout this current recession, Community Rail has continued to develop and grow for the benefit of all concerned."

Presenting the awards were the double act of East Midlands Trains Managing Director Tim Shoveller and Northern Rail's Chief Operating Officer Steve Butcher.

For the second year running, First Great Western scooped the overall winner's prize, with a group of 50 (including FGW Managing Director Mark Hopwood and his

team, volunteers and partnership officers) arriving in style at Sheffield station in their own class 158 from Exeter.

Leading the way for the voluntary movement was the Tarka Rail Association's John Phillips, who took top spot in the Outstanding Volunteer Contribution category, with Rachel Nafzger taking the runners-up position. Fellow volunteers Liz Roberts and Anna Wynn Hughes travelled from Dolwyddelan on the Conwy Valley line to accept the station garden award, whilst South West Trains' Stakeholder Manager Phil Dominey took to the stage to accept the award for Best Station Adoption Group on behalf of the Swaythling Station Adoption Group



FGW Managing Director Mark Hopwood (centre) receives the Overall Winners award from hosts Steve Butcher (left) and Tim Shoveller (right).

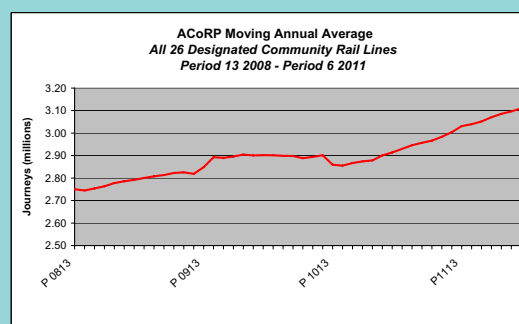
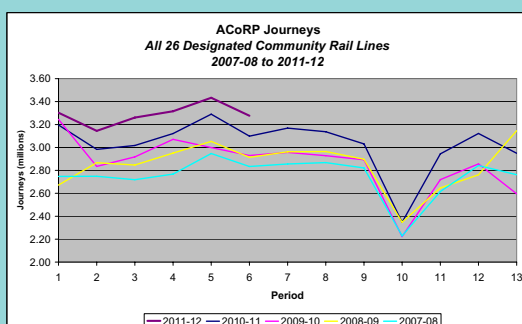


Outstanding Volunteer John Phillips of the Tarka Rail Association.

Norfolk also made its mark, with National Express East Anglia, Paston College and the Bittern Line Community Rail Partnership gaining recognition for their work to increase student travel on the Bittern Line, with a first prize in the 'Passengers Matter' category. Their collective efforts have led to an increase in the numbers of students using the train service and thereby cutting their carbon footprint when travelling to and from the college.

Going global, Richard Rudolph, still jetlagged after a 3,000 mile flight from Maine, received the International Award on behalf of the Rail Users Network in the United States.

Below - The graphs used at the awards by ACoRP General Manager Neil Buxton to illustrate Community Rail's growth over the last four years.



Graphs provided courtesy of the Association of Train Operating Companies.

# ACoRP Community Rail Awards



*Left: South West Train's Phil Dominey accepts the best Station Adoption Group award on behalf of Swaythling Adoption Group.*

*Right: 'American Friends...' Richard Rudolph with the International Award.*

*Below: Sitting down to dine*

*Foot of Page: Getting on Track...The Leighton Buzzard Station Travel Plan partners celebrate their Local Transport Integration award.*



The evening's theme of partnership was reflected in a new award, Outstanding Teamwork, sponsored by Network Rail and won by the Arnside Viaduct information team. When the viaduct was closed for four months, causing major disruption to travel, CRP officer for the Cumbrian Coast Jim Trotman and Mick Elliott, Lancashire and Cumbria Station Manager, worked together with all those involved to ensure information was communicated as widely and effectively as possible.

Partnership working also shone through in the Community Arts Scheme category, which was won by Pokesdown Station near



Bournemouth for the magnificent station mural. Supported by South West Trains, Bournemouth Council, Network Rail and the local community, the judges described the project as “an excellent example of how a community working together can transform a station with public art.”

One of the evening's most warmly received winners was Ian Dinmore, Chair of the Wherry Lines, who took the Special Recognition Award for his work as former Community Rail Officer on the Bittern and Wherry Lines.

But the loudest cheer of the night – rivalling the noisy support



Liz Roberts and Anna Wynn Hughes travelled from Dolwyddelan on the Conwy Valley line to accept the station garden award.

from the large South West contingent for Richard Burningham's several appearances on stage - went to 'unsung hero' Kevin Waring, who, in just eight months as station retailer at Ellesmere Port, has helped to make the station safe and welcoming to passengers. And his reward - first place in the Outstanding Railway Staff Contribution category.

All too soon the event was over for another year but already plans are in place for the 2012 Community Rail Awards which will take place on the overall winners' home turf of Swindon.

Mick Elliott, Station Manager Lancashire and Cumbria and Jim Trotman, CRP Officer Furness and Lakes collect the Outstanding Teamwork award



## 2011 ACoRP Community Rail Awards Winners

### Overall Winner:

Sponsored by Network Rail  
Winner: First Great Western

### Involving Young People:

Sponsored by Network Rail  
Winner: Brian Haworth and Simon Clarke for 'Greening the East Lancashire Line' DVD and online teachers pack

### Community Art Schemes:

Sponsored by First Great Western  
Winner: Pokesdown Station Artwork

### Local Transport Integration:

Sponsored by Lancashire County Council  
Winner: 'Get On Track' - Leighton Buzzard Station Travel Plan

### Best Station Garden or Floral Display:

Sponsored by Network Rail  
Winner: Dolwyddelan Station Garden

### Best Station or Train Retail Outlet:

Sponsored by Merseytravel  
Winner: The Bistro at Etchingham Station

### Station Development:

Sponsored by The Railway Heritage Trust  
Winner: The Heart of Wales Line Development Co for Llandoverly Station Development

### The International Award:

Sponsored by Abellio  
Winner: Richard Rudolph of the Rail Users Network in the United States.

### Community Rail Photo Competition:

Sponsored by Northern Rail  
Winner: 'Peter says cheese!' - Catherine Phillips, Heart of Wessex CRP

### Best Marketing Publication:

Sponsored by First Great Western  
Winner: Severnside CRP for the Partnership Annual Report and the Filton Abbey Wood Station leaflet

### Best Community Rail Event:

Sponsored by Go-Ahead  
Winner: Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership and Partners for the 'Munchtime Express on the Looe line'

### Outstanding Volunteer Contribution:

Sponsored by Merseyrail  
Winner: John Phillips - Tarka Rail Association

### Best Station Adoption Group:

Sponsored by National Express East Anglia  
Winner: Swaythling Station Adoption Group

### Outstanding Railway Staff Contribution:

Sponsored by Network Rail  
Winner: Kevin Waring - Merseyrail

### Outstanding Teamwork:

Sponsored by Network Rail  
Winner: Arnside Viaduct Information Team

### Passengers Matter:

Sponsored by First Trans Pennine Express  
Winner: National Express East Anglia, Bittern Line Community Rail Partnership and Paston Sixth Form College's project - 'Increasing Student Travel on the Bittern Line'

### Special Recognition:

Winner: Ian Dinmore

# Stagecoach and Community Rail

Through its train companies - East Midlands Trains and South West Trains - Stagecoach Group is involved in a range of Community Rail initiatives across Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Staffordshire, Lincolnshire, Hampshire, Dorset and the Isle of Wight.

There are six active Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) across the routes:

- The Derwent Valley CRP (Matlock-Derby-Nottingham)
- The North Staffordshire CRP (Derby to Crewe)
- The Poacher Line CRP (Nottingham - Grantham - Skegness)
- The Lymington-Brockenhurst CRP
- The Three Rivers CRP, covering rail travel on branch services between Salisbury, Southampton and Eastleigh
- The Isle of Wight CRP

Through developing successful partnerships with each of these CRPs, Stagecoach has delivered a number of award-winning initiatives across its networks.

## Transforming stations

Successful partnerships with local authorities and CRPs have resulted in the delivery of some significant community station improvements:

- Pokesdown Station, Dorset - Winner of Best Community Art Scheme in this year's Community Rail Awards. This project saw the creation of a dramatic mural by local urban artist Soap (Adam Klodzinski) in conjunction with South West Trains and Bournemouth Borough Council. The 450 square metre long mural is an excellent example of how a community working together can transform a station with public art.
- Uttoxeter Station, North Staffordshire - On a similar theme as Pokesdown, North Staffordshire CRP has recently unveiled a 120ft mural at Uttoxeter station, which is managed by East Midlands Trains. The mural was created to celebrate the history and variety of the town, with an intricate design using ideas put forward by the local community and station volunteers.

The CRPs are also great fundraisers, helping improve station facilities for passengers, with North Staffordshire CRP raising almost £600,000 from third parties for items such as anti-vandal shelters, CCTV and customer information systems.

**Think Safe Be Safe**  
**TravelSafe**

If you plan on travelling on public transport, please consider not just your own conduct and safety but also that of others.

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**TravelSafe - are YOU on board?**  
To see the TravelSafe film, please go to: [www.travelsafeuk.org](http://www.travelsafeuk.org)

## Encouraging station adoption

A dedicated team of station volunteers supports East Midlands Trains and South West Trains in ensuring many rural stations are kept in the best condition, with both operators actively encouraging this voluntary support. Adoption groups along the North Staffordshire line, all recruited by the local Community Rail Officer, have transformed stations through the creation of new station gardens on the route. At Kidsgrove, the group picked up second place at the 2011 Community Rail Awards for Best Station Adoption Group and the station was also recently named as best small station in East Midlands Trains' own Best Station Awards.

On the South West Trains network, the station adoption team at Swaythling picked up first prize in the Best Station Adoption group category at the Community Rail Awards for a series of initiatives and schemes to make the station an integral part of the community.



The award winning mural at Pokesdown Station.

## Better train services

To encourage the increased use of rural rail lines on its networks, Stagecoach has worked in partnership with its CRPs and local stakeholder groups to develop and enhance train timetables.

On the Lymington to Brockenhurst line, a new timetable was launched in December 2010 to improve connections for passengers travelling to/from Lymington and offering improved journey times and connections with South West Trains' mainline services at Brockenhurst.

The Derwent Valley line has seen the introduction of an hourly service which runs through to Nottingham, with improved connections with main line services to London. In addition, a new morning peak service is set to launch in December 2011. As a result of the improvements made between East Midlands Trains and the CRP, this line has seen 86% growth over the last four years and is one of the fastest growing rural rail lines in the country.



The community art exhibition at Brockenhurst

## Community initiatives

South West Trains and East Midlands Trains are involved in a regular flow of Community Rail initiatives, arranged in partnership with the CRPs.

### TravelSafe

Encouraging pupils at schools and colleges in the New Forest and Isle of Wight to stay safe around the railway, this project is being successfully delivered by the Community Rail Officer covering these two lines. What started out as a simple poster project designed by students from Sandown Academy on the Isle of Wight has now developed into two films, first from the Island students and then broadened out and developed further by Brockenhurst Media Studies students. The project is also being looked at by the rail industry, with a view to potentially rolling it out across the UK.

Top Right: Winning ways - volunteers from Blythe Bridge and Kidsgrove. Right: Starting 'em young at Kidsgrove



## Rail Trail

To date £81,000 has been raised through funding bids and grants from local authorities, town and parish councils and CRP stakeholders for improved signage at Lymington's 'Showing the Way' Rail Trail, which will take the form of bronze way markers showing the most direct and accessible route between the station and the town centre. Successful workshops for children and their families have taken place to create the markers as a way of encouraging the local community to become involved in their rail service.

## Community Rail Days

A series of Community Rail Days on the North Staffordshire and Derwent Valley lines has proved very successful, with staff from East Midlands Trains rolling up their sleeves and joining the CRP, station adopters and local community groups to deliver improvements to stations, including the re-painting of benches and waiting shelters, litter-picking, gardening and weeding.

A company clearly committed to supporting and developing Community Rail, Stagecoach Chief Executive Sir Brian Souter states: "We understand the key role our services play in connecting communities and we remain supportive of the valuable work taking place in Community Rail."



# The Rise of Community Rail

**In a break from the usual Partnership Profile feature, Lucy Tennyson looks at how Community Rail is bucking the current trend, with increasing numbers turning to their rural rail routes...**

News of a “surge” in the number of people using branch lines made the headlines this summer, with figures from the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) showing that passenger numbers on some routes had almost doubled in the last three years.

The most significant rises were on the following lines:

- Truro to Falmouth branch line - up by 91%
- Bristol to Severn Beach branch line - up by 90%
- Derby to Matlock branch line - up 86%.

Other CRP successes include Arun Valley (53%), Par-Newquay (53%), Exeter-Barnstaple (47%), Paddock Wood-Strood (25%), Liskeard-Looe (24%), Plymouth-Gunnislake (29%) and Oxenholme-Windermere (20%).

But while ATOC attributed the increase on branch lines to the trend towards “staycations”, Community Rail Officers cited other factors as more significant – in particular well-resourced partnership working.

In Devon and Cornwall, Richard Burningham pointed to the thriving long-term partnership between the CRP, local authorities and train operator First Great Western. Since the CRP started in 1993, passenger numbers have steadily grown from 350,000 to 1.3 million.

However, there are signs of a peak in the upward trend. Travel on the more tourist-focused St Ives line declined marginally last year, although action by the CRP to boost marketing (for example, a days out leafleting campaign at major stations) is already starting to reverse that decline. “We are starting to reach saturation point due to infrastructure,” explains Richard. Solutions for the future will include new sections of line, extra platforms, and additional carriages.

*A TransPennine Express class 185 arrives at Burneside station on its way to Kendal and Oxenholme from Windermere.*



*Commuters catch the train at Belper on the Derwent Valley during last years' winter snowfall. Few cancellations helped to restrict the impact to just 87% of trains on time.*

Keith Walton at Severnside CRP cited three main reasons for the success of a line with little tourist traffic. Bristol City Council funded a second train on the Severn Beach line, turning an hourly service into 40 minutes; punctuality was tightened; all stations were given a makeover by local volunteers.

Fares also remain lower than buses, further increasing the line's popularity with commuters and students. A third carriage has also been added to the busiest service, helping push passenger journeys up to 800,000 a year.

Commenting on the increases, Alastair Morley from the Derwent Line (Matlock-Derby-Nottingham) says: “It is clear local people have embraced the line. For example, the 129% increase at Duffield is nearly entirely by local residents. Journeys to Matlock Bath, our main tourism resort, have also doubled, with the rise comprising of a real mixture of commuters, students, city centre shoppers and visitors to the area.

Reasons for growth include an increase in service frequency from every two hours to hourly; an extension beyond Derby to Nottingham; serving more local stations; major improvement in train reliability by East Midlands Trains (with over 93% of trains on time in the last 12 months compared to less than 80% in 2007); improvements in connections with London and Cross Country services; extensive local marketing and press features; improved timetable information in local communities along the line.

Ian Paterson at the Medway Valley Line puts sustained above average rises on the Paddock Wood – Strood route down to a continuous flow of improvements, including the provision of improved rolling stock from Southeastern, CCTV at selected stations and customer information screens. Network Rail has also



Jules Barford celebrates becoming the millionth passenger on the Maritime Line (Truro to Falmouth) with Julian Crow, FGW's Regional Manager for the West of England. Picture provided courtesy of First Great Western.

saw a rise of 11% last year, despite a growing problem of overcrowding. The line is the only one in the ATOC top ten reliant on tourism, based in an area which welcomes 25 million visitors a year, with the majority arriving by car. "This is unsustainable in the long term," explains Jim Trotman of the Furness and Lakes Lines. "I'm sure that there is a big market out there and the Lakes Line, like many other community lines, just needs the capacity to

Whitby) are running to capacity in the summer. But what about the winter? Can we find new markets? It's getting harder, but it can be done. We need to address how we can improve services at little or no extra cost."

This is one of the key issues to be addressed at ACoRP's Radical Solutions conference, to be held in Cardiff on 2nd November. "It isn't just aimed at CRPs and local authority departments, but operators and

improved station environments, renewing seating and lighting and offering new style help points.

"We now distribute timetables and our newsletters to an ever increasing number of local community outlets along the line and have appointed a 'station champion' at one rural community to act as a local point of contact," says Ian.

Along with Richard and Alastair, Ian believes marketing plays a key role, with initiatives including a website listing local events and attractions and customised station guides for all stations, delivered door to door along with a current timetable. "In summary, I feel our success is down to a mixture of station and publicity initiatives, helped by a few useful service improvements and of course continued support from our funders."

Over in Cumbria, the Oxenholme – Windermere route



A sunny Matlock Bath on the Derwent Valley.

accommodate them all."

Looking ahead, ACoRP General Manager Neil Buxton believes that a key challenge facing CRPs will be to continue to find new ways of innovating. "One solution is to identify more niche markets," he says. "For example, many rural lines such as the Esk Valley (Middlesbrough -

anyone in a position to make things happen," stresses Neil.

And in its ongoing mission to fly the Community Rail flag, ACoRP will also be making presentations to the House of Commons and Welsh Government this autumn, aiming to further raise the profile of rural and community routes.

Students by train: Left - A school train calling at Redland Station on the Severn Beach line. Right - On the Medway line, students alighting at the unmanned Wateringbury Station.



# Arrivals and Departures

Pene Mather has joined Sam Bryant and team at Sussex CRP as part-time development officer, with responsibility for the Arun Valley and Gatwick to Chichester.

Pene is experienced in travel planning and working with young people (which is what she does for West Sussex County Council the other three days a week) and plans to work with the CRP to encourage Station partnerships, especially with schools and young people, as well as working on promotional events and improving and promoting walking to and from stations.

Liz Drake has been appointed Community Rail Partnership Officer for the Abbey Line (Watford Junction - St Albans Abbey).

At the Tarka Rail Association, which covers Exeter to Barnstaple, John Birch has taken on the role of Chair, after first joining the group three years ago as Rail Integration Officer. By day, John is Deputy Director of Operations at the Confederation of Passenger Transport.

As we closed for press Justine Greening replaced Philip Hammond as Secretary of State for Transport.



*Pene Mather joins the Sussex CRP*

Network Rail has appointed a new Communications Director in the guise of one-time Prime Minister's spokesman Tom Kelly. A former BBC journalist, Communications Director for BAA and current Communications Director for the Financial Services Authority, Mr Kelly takes up his new role towards the end of the year. On the departures side, Kathryn O'Brien has left her role as Client and Stakeholder Manager at Northern Rail to take up a new post with Serco – one of Northern's two parent companies, whilst Barry Woodgett has retired from his role as Sussex County Council's Rail Officer.

*Below: Tom Kelly – set to head up Network Rail's communications team. Kathryn O'Brien leaves Northern*



## Keeping track of Train Times

**How to ensure your stories find their way into Train Times.**

### Guidelines for contributors

To ensure consistency and assist the editorial process, all written material submitted for Train Times should be sent as a word document, using Arial as the font in point 12 text. All grammar should be checked before submission.

### Images

Photographs/images should be sent either as high resolution JPEG files at 300 dpi. Where this is not possible, please send hard copies (which can be scanned) to the Editor at 12 Woodland Avenue, Crewe, Cheshire, CW1 6HE.

**If you require the images back, please include a stamped addressed envelope.**

### And finally...

Please send your contributions for Train Times to the editor at: [nigel@quillpower.co.uk](mailto:nigel@quillpower.co.uk). To ensure inclusion, please submit your material before the deadline.

Thank you to all those who contribute material to Train Times.

## What is ACoRP?

The Association of Community Rail Partnerships is a federation of rail partnerships and rail promotion groups. We are an organisation of 'do-ers', focused on practical initiatives which add up to a better, more sustainable railway. Improved station facilities, better train services and improved integration with other forms of transport are central to the work of ACoRP and its members.

### What ACoRP does

- Works with decision-makers at local, regional and national level to ensure that local rail's rôle is fully recognised;
- Helps identify innovative solutions for local railways; disseminates examples of good practice;
- Works with local stakeholders to develop new partnerships;
- Supports its membership with conferences and training sessions;
- Maintains a lively, user-friendly website and encourages people to think outside their trains!

### Become an ACoRP Associate

Anyone can become an ACoRP Associate and in return for an annual subscription receive *Train Times* and any other publications we produce, as well as being able to claim discounts on attending our events. See our website or contact the office.