



Department  
for Transport

## **Community Rail Consultation Response Form**

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<b>Question 1a</b>	
What role can community rail play in improving end-to-end journeys?	
<p>Railfuture believes that this is a key issue and one with scope for significant improvement.</p> <p>In general, community rail partnerships (CRPs) have been good at providing information to support end to end journeys, and many have encouraged bus interchange, secure cycle storage and safe walking routes to stations through better signage, new access footpaths or bus laybys, often raising local funding to do so. This should be continued more widely, with bus operators being encouraged to cooperate.</p>	
<b>Question 1b</b>	
How can community rail help to:	
make journeys more sustainable?	The best way to achieve this is to encourage modal shift from car where energy use is relatively inefficient. Full trains are highly efficient with low emissions per passenger kilometre and where lines are electrified are entirely sustainable as any source of power for generation can be used, including renewables.
encourage more healthy travel?	Use of public transport involves physical exercise not required for car journeys, through walking or cycling to/from the stations. Rail travel reduces the stress of driving and also helps by also allowing efficient use of time in terms of reading, use of social media or preparing for meetings in a way which is not possible by car.
reduce the environmental impact of travel?	By encouraging more trips to be made by train as, in the short run, no additional environmental costs are incurred by additional individual passengers. Where trains are lengthened or additional trains run, environmental impact increases, but provided passenger numbers grow to fill the new capacity, the environmental impact remains less than if the additional journeys were made by car.
<b>Question 2</b>	

How can community rail help:	
communities have a voice in influencing the provision of rail?	CRPs are an effective channel for the voice of rail users to reach the service providers as well as those specifying the service or providing support (including infrastructure). They need to embrace rail user groups and actively use their expertise.
complementary transport services and development of the rail network?	CRPs are well placed to build a business case for development of the rail network on local projects, particularly if they work with the line rail user group. This may also extend to complementary transport services, but the competitive nature of the bus network (outside London) means that there is no mechanism (like the franchise agreement for rail) to ensure provision of bus services unless they are contracted.
<p><b>Question 3</b></p> <p>Where should the government encourage community rail to develop on parts of the network currently without active CRPs or other community participation?</p>	
<p>Community Rail is a grassroots movement so it cannot be prescribed, or imposed from above, but has to grow from local initiative. Increasingly, the terms on which it is developed will depend on the structures and incentives established by devolved administrations. Within England, there is scope for it to develop on local lines not currently covered by CRPs, and also on suburban routes where there are willing volunteers. Railfuture branches are closely linked to rail user groups and could help in providing a link with groups who might be prepared to help in forming new CRPs or station adoption schemes.</p>	
<p><b>Question 4a</b></p> <p>What is the role of community rail in supporting:</p>	
community cohesion?	<p>Railways by their nature link communities and help with cohesion between them. They also serve the entire community, not one part of it, and particularly on local lines this supports cohesion too.</p> <p>Partnerships and station adoption have proved to be a great way of bringing people together to achieve big benefits in terms of partnership working, and mutual respect. (eg Smethwick Rolfe Street and St James Street Street, Walthamstow).</p>

<p>promoting diversity?</p>	<p>There is already great diversity on local railways both amongst railway staff and passengers, but more could be done.</p> <p>Northern's Ambassador programme started to tackle this issue, but such schemes need continuity of funding if they are to be effective. They really require external funding to work as they cannot be fully paid for through the farebox.</p>
<p>enabling social inclusion?</p>	<p>Railways are a cornerstone of social inclusion, although this is affected on some services by the fares structure and level. Some reduction in 'on demand' fares might help here, along with greater public understanding of the lower fares already on offer.</p> <p>CRPs can help through developing and promoting local railcards and by providing easily understood information on the fares available.</p>
<p><b>Question 4b</b> How is this best achieved?</p>	
<p>Some of this is delivered by the railway as part of the nature of the service it provides. Part requires additional work, and this may require external funding as the costs cannot just be met from fares. In most cases, these roles need to be explicitly recognised and encouraged through the franchise agreement, and/or the line designation, or in the funding agreement with ACoRP on the Designated Community Rail Development Fund.</p>	

**Question 5**

How can community rail help to make sure that the railway is accessible to as many people as possible?

Railfuture has campaigned successfully to improve accessibility and there have been recent successes at Ambergate and Hadley Wood.

Funding under Government programmes has clearly helped here and should continue, but plenty of stations built in the Victorian era still have limited accessibility.

CRPs, along with rail user groups have a key role to play here, both in terms of identifying priorities and in helping to design projects and in fundraising as well.

**Question 6**

How can community rail support local economies and railways grow through:

Increasing employment?

Rail is the essential link between people and jobs throughout the country, not just in London. Borders Railway is the classic example of a new line linking a skilled workforce with the job opportunities of the capital over a distance that would preclude car or bus commuting. Newcourt and Ilkeston are examples of new stations that do this. On the existing network CRPs can have a key role in encouraging local employers to including rail in their travel to work plans. Local authorities should also be looking at the potential of rail in considering planning consents for new developments, and using developer funding for new stations or expanding existing ones to serve new workplaces.

Education and training opportunities?

Local railways provide the link between home and education for students and, as educational facilities are concentrated and local schools and colleges close, its role becomes more important to support education in rural areas and small towns.

Supporting small businesses?	Many CRPs promote local businesses to a wider audience through line guides (for example restaurants or visitor attractions). Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership's 'Foodie' guides are a good example, supporting local produce and pubs or restaurants.
Social enterprise development?	Community Rail can offer facilities in which social enterprises can thrive, typically through use of redundant station buildings. Railfuture believes that this should be encouraged to provide a reassuring human presence on stations and that in some cases, where no suitable premises exist, they might be encouraged through grant support for new buildings on or near the station, perhaps in conjunction with the local authority.
<p><b>Question 7</b></p> <p>What role can community rail play in making best use of:</p>	
Station buildings?	CRPs are well placed to bring the parties together and use the tri-partite lease to provide a simpler way of leasing rooms or complete buildings.
Railway land?	<p>Railfuture believes that more railway land should be retained for railway or community use, and that guidance to ORR should reflect that, to lift the pressure on Network Rail to dispose of land which is unused at the moment.</p> <p>There have been too many examples in the past of land disposals that have precluded a new station being built or a car park being extended, or a site being available for a freight terminal.</p> <p>CRPs could certainly help to identify sites for development and, by the same token, those sites where there is never likely to be a need for use by passengers or freight customers.</p>

**Question 8**

How can community rail be best supported to act:

Innovatively?

Devolving some decisions to CRPs and encouraging rail user groups to participate, will itself generate innovative ideas.

Innovation also implies challenging national standards and agreements where they prevent worthwhile local initiatives.

Effectively?

CRPs have become effective over time through earning the support of user groups and volunteers, including station adopters, and the respect of TOCs through working with them to develop and promote their local services.

Any new strategy needs to encourage this and encourage the continued development of partnership officers and the volunteers that support them through training and networking opportunities. It could also include rail user groups and Railfuture branches as appropriate.

**Question 9**

What opportunities are there to secure a:

Diverse income base for community rail?

The benefits of community rail in increasing passenger numbers and thus fares income justifies the continuation of a significant TOC contribution to their CRPs (and a support from long distance TOCs whose services are fed by CRP lines.) The benefits to other areas of Government policy (health, education and employment) justify Government support through ACoRP. Local authority support is important, but has been squeezed over the years as funding has been reduced and this is an area that needs to be strengthened. Over the next decade, local railways will be essential to support new housing development, and the opportunity should be taken to capture some of this benefit in developer funding for new stations or lines or for upgrading existing services to provide the capacity required.

Sustainable income base for community rail?	Core funding through the franchise agreement is probably the most sustainable way of achieving this. Other challenge funding from Government or through charities, is, by its nature, going to be short term.
<p><b>Question 10</b></p> <p>How can community rail designation be developed to more fully realise its potential?</p>	
<p>This might be through identifying some benefits that could be achieved by using the flexibility that designation can give, and then running one or more pilot projects to demonstrate that. Such projects would give confidence and encourage further ideas to take advantage of the flexibility offered.</p> <p>Examples might be in local fares, performance measures including crowding standards, or infrastructure design using non standard components where local constraints demand it.</p>	
<p><b>Question 11</b></p> <p>How can community rail:</p>	
Support the development of rail line and stations improvement?	There remains plenty of scope for development of lines and stations, and the provision of new ones. CRPs are well placed to identify these and to suggest how they might be taken forward. Railfuture branches are close to the current proposals and possibilities in their areas, and could also feed in ideas here.
Contribute to the development of rail line and station improvement?	The value of the CRP will be in identifying the requirement for development and in practical experience of working with the rail industry to know how it might be taken forward. Railfuture branches are ready to help here where they can.
Make greater use of heritage railways?	Railfuture believes that greater use should be made of heritage railways as part of the public transport network. Independent heritage railways could be encouraged to participate where their routes can provide better access to the rail network, with



	financial support where required, providing there is a business case for doing so.
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**Question 12**

Do you have any other comments on how Government can best support the future of community rail?

The Community Rail movement has done much to improve and develop the local railways they cover and in doing so, to remove the threat of reduced service levels that was a feature of an earlier period when demand was declining. Government support for the movement is acknowledged and has evidently been successful with above average increases in passenger numbers.

Railfuture would like to see the present strategy continue and improve. In particular, the need for some match funding for projects (even if for pump priming) is going to continue to be essential.

The objectives emerging from the new strategy should be kept simple and unambiguous, and they should be widely disseminated.

Railfuture endorses the recognition in the consultation paper of the wider benefits of rail and believe that they should continue to be recognised and encouraged in the new strategy.

Awareness of the potential of rail remains low in some areas, including some local authorities and some LEPs, and we would support an approach by the Department that continued to promote the potential of local rail services, particularly where it supports new housing.