

# Station Partners and Community Projects Guide



June 2026



# Welcome

Thank you for your interest in becoming one of our station partners. This booklet should give you everything you need to know about the scheme, which has been playing a vital role in helping communities get the most from their stations for over ten years.

You will be joining many others who tirelessly play a role in providing a link between our railway and the community it serves. As well as being highly rewarding, it's an excellent way to involve and get to know other people from your neighbourhood who are also keen to volunteer.

There are many benefits to being a station partner, from improving your health and wellbeing and making new friends, to improving confidence. Becoming a station partner is also a great way of developing a skill or reviving an old one, from growing vegetables, designing a flowerbed or putting on an art display. There are plenty of opportunities to learn something new. We have featured some of our existing partners and their projects in this booklet to help demonstrate the array of fantastic activities that are undertaken, as well as offering some inspiration.

Our dedicated community team are available to discuss any ideas you have for a station project and can provide a small grant to help bring those ideas to life. This booklet explains the benefits of being a station partner and includes a step-by-step guide on how to become one.

For further information, please contact us our community team:  
[community@gtrailway.com](mailto:community@gtrailway.com)

Thank you and we hope to see you join our railway community soon.

Best wishes

GTR Community Team

## What are the benefits to station partnerships and community projects?

One of the major benefits is creating a sense of community and inclusion, where people of all ages and backgrounds can come together to make a positive difference to their community and forge lasting friendships.

Volunteering is a very sociable and satisfying activity, as well as benefitting the health and wellbeing of individuals taking part. You can develop new skills and give yourself a sense of achievement when improving your surrounding environment. Furthermore, creating partnerships with local schools, community groups, charities and businesses can foster a sense of community spirit and promote access to, and understanding of the railway, across diverse groups.

These can sometimes lead to further projects being initiated across the

community. Another major benefit is the opportunity to enhance the appearance of your local station, which is often the first sight a visitor will have of your area, creating a warm and welcoming gateway to your community. Many of our partners look after the beautiful gardens and planters at their local station or showcase stunning art projects enhancing the travel experience for our passengers.

This can have added benefits, such as encouraging rail use and helping to reduce anti-social behaviour. Other benefits are often achieved through specific projects, such as promoting awareness of sustainable travel or environmental issues, improving station access such as walking and cycling paths, or bringing disused station property back into community use.



# Showcasing Station Partners

The 'All Aboarders' at Welwyn Garden City have repainted the station in heritage colours, with interpretation boards provided to present the station's history. They also worked with our Facilities team to restore and display an historic sign.



Beds & Herts Community Rail Partnership regularly arranges 'Try a Train' events with local schoolchildren to enable them to travel independently by train and teach them about rail safety.



Trainees from the Sand Project taking part in a Try a Train trip from Worthing



Aldingbourne Trust provides opportunities for adults with learning disabilities or autism to live meaningful lives and to positively contribute to their communities



The Camberwell Society have curated an unusual collection of static and moving items at Denmark Hill station



Whyteleafe Community Hub was awarded silver level in the 'It's Your Station' category at the 2024 Community Rail Awards. The hub's submission focused on its base for their food hub operations



## Hints and tips for forming a partnership



**Michael Solomon Williams from the 'Friends of Ally Pally Station' gives his top tips on being a successful station partner.**

The group have an extremely successful partnership, with a range of plants and tubs being donated by the local community. In 2017, just a year after they started, the group was shortlisted for a Community Rail Network award and have since received several additional awards from them, as well as awards from Rail Partnerships, Haringey in Bloom, and more.

**"At Ally Pally we have made a point of involving lots of different stakeholders, including schools, existing community groups, businesses large and small, musicians and individuals."**

### What ideas do you have?

"I would recommend having a strong initial idea but do remain open to new suggestions. There are many possibilities – even just with plants!

Perhaps, as in our case, your local garden centre might help you get off the ground by donating some pots or compost.

"In terms of administration and long-term health, if you are forming a new group it's a good idea to have a constitution and a bank account. You may want to form a committee and allocate roles."

### The practical side – what do you need?

"GTR offers money to help with some of the set-up costs, but you may need to consider external funding, especially for ongoing costs. This might be from your borough council, parish council, local businesses, Community Rail Network or grant-making groups. Alternatively, group members may be able to donate equipment or resources to help.

"In our case, we were born out of the generosity of the local garden centre, a few businesses and lots of locals who brought along plants and plant pots. From that point we have found funds to cover any further costs."

# How to sign up and become a station partner

Set out below are the steps required to become a station partner. We will assist you in the process, providing our time and some funds to help you get set up. Please follow all the guidelines in the order set out below for the safety of yourselves, our staff and passengers.

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | You have an amazing idea for a project   |
| 2 | Check to ensure the station is managed by GTR (Great Northern, Southern or Thameslink - <a href="#">Find a Station</a> )   |
| 3 | Approach the Station Manager/Station Staff; GTR Community Engagement Officers or CRP Line Officer to discuss the project.  |
| 4 | Read the "Station Partner & Community Projects Guide" and complete the short online application form for approval  |
| 5 | If you require funding, you can apply to the Station Partner & Community Projects (SPCP) Small Grants fund – Application by <a href="#">online form here</a>   |
| 6 | If you need to apply for a Station Access Permit (SAP) request the weblink from <a href="mailto:gtr.propertyteam@gtrailway.com">gtr.propertyteam@gtrailway.com</a> – Check on our website for the "Guide on completing the SAP", Risk Assessment and Method Statements |
| 7 | Ensure you and your volunteers have a safety talk with the Station Manager if volunteering at the station  |
| 8 | There is a range of support on our website, through the GTR Community Engagement Officers the CRP Line Officers, Community Rail Network and Station Staff  |
| 9 | Let us know how your project is progressing. We love to hear and share your good news and the difference it has made to the community.   |

*Be bold and imaginative, but also be organised!*



Cricklewood station garden

## Points to note

A Site Access Permit (SAP) is required for all works. If you require access to carry out maintenance activities (eg watering plants), you can apply for a permit which is valid for a year.

If you are undertaking a one-off project (eg the installation of artwork) then the application must cover the duration of the project. When applying for a SAP, consider all the works you wish to undertake and when they need to happen.

When you are putting together your method statement, you need to consider the impact of your work on your people, as well as our staff and passengers. We strongly recommend that you take notes when conducting your site visit with the station manager, which will help you to write up your agreed way of working. We will provide an example method statement to assist you in the process.

The station manager will be able to guide you on what hazards need to be considered and managed when you put your method statement together.

In accordance with the station partnership agreement, by having a SAP following the agreed method in your method statement and risk assessment, you will be covered under our public liability insurance. Once the group has their SAP, they are allowed to carry out activities at the station.

At the start of each visit to the station, the group will need to sign in (at staffed stations), show their SAPs and receive a site-specific safety briefing. Only then will works be allowed to commence.

If you have a SAP which is valid for a year, it is the group's responsibility to renew the permit. Don't worry – we will remind you when it is due. If nothing has changed in the work undertaken, you will only need to review the paperwork and resubmit an application.

If throughout the year there are any significant changes to the work you are doing at the station, for example in terms of how you wish to undertake it or if the activities themselves change, you must apply for an updated SAP.

We are very appreciative of the wonderful work that station partners do and we want everyone to enjoy their time and be safe in the station environment. For this reason, a valid SAP must be in place for all work undertaken.

## Further resources

The following resources are available online:

[Car Parking Permit Application](#)

[Station Partners Agreement Form](#)

[Station Partners' Small Grant Fund](#)

In addition, the following resources are available by contacting our Community Engagement Managers:

Artwork Method Statement

Drugs & Alcohol Policy

Fundraising Guide

Gardening Method Statement

GTR Equal Opportunities Policy

How To Apply for a Site Access Permit

Risk Assessment template

Using Artwork at stations – a Best Practice Guide

Wildflower Planting poster



## Equal opportunities

We welcome applications from all groups and individuals regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief and sex, or sexual orientation.

We seek to be representative of all the communities that we serve and wish to actively promote participation for groups and individuals that are underrepresented within communities.



Everyone's welcome - Pride bench at Welwyn Garden City

## How we can assist you

We are more than happy to talk through your ideas with you.

Please bear in mind that the operational nature of the railway means that not everything may be possible, however we are always keen to look at what can be done.

We will provide examples for the method statements and risk assessments. We can also provide budget templates, car parking permits (if needed), as well as officer support.

Funds are available from us to help new station partners get off the ground. You may also be eligible for funds from other sources in your area. We can offer support here also (or direct you to the people who can!)

We will provide regular updates on activities and events.

We will also provide safety briefings for all volunteers working at our stations

## Community Rail contact details

Community rail is a growing grassroots movement made up of community rail partnerships and groups across Britain. They engage communities and help people get the most from their railways, promoting social inclusion and sustainable travel, working alongside train operators to bring about improvements, and bringing stations back to life.

There are nine Community Rail Network partners across the GTR network covering many of our stations. To find out if your local station is covered by one, please contact us for more information. We'll introduce you to them if there is one covering your area.

## Useful websites

Community Rail Network

[communityrail.org.uk](http://communityrail.org.uk)



Southeast Communities

[southeastcrp.org](http://southeastcrp.org)



Rail Partnership

Beds & Herts CRP

[bedsrcc.org.uk](http://bedsrcc.org.uk)



Cam Valley CRP

[camvalleycrp.org.uk](http://camvalleycrp.org.uk)



Darent Valley CRP

[visitsevenoaksdistrict.co.uk](http://visitsevenoaksdistrict.co.uk)



## Safety briefing note

The information below, alongside the site briefing you will receive, is designed to give you the information you need to stay safe whilst taking part in activities on the station. These must be followed by all volunteers when working on our stations. Your own safety must be your first concern at all times.

- **Never put yourself at personal risk**
- **Do not carry out work at a station whilst under the influence of alcohol or drugs**
- **Never go on the track or work near the platform edge**
- **Never leave equipment unattended or where it will block access to a station/train or form a trip hazard**
- **Do not obstruct any paths or access points**
- **Where a foot crossing is provided, only use it when necessary, and follow all instructions provided**
- **Only carry out work covered by your SAP**
- **Follow any instructions given to you by railway staff and show them your SAP when you arrive at the station. Our staff may request to see your SAP at any time – please make sure you show it**
- **Do not act in a way that could jeopardise the safety of yourself or anyone else using the railway when on or near the station**
- **Keep well away from the platform edge – at least four feet (unless boarding a train)**
- **Never touch any exposed electrical wiring or equipment. Report any defects to station staff immediately**

All station partners must comply with our alcohol and drugs policy. We have a zero tolerance to any use of alcohol or drugs. Partners must not carry out any visits or duties at stations or on the network if they are under the influence of, or have recently consumed alcohol or drugs, nor must they consume them whilst carrying out a visit or duties. This applies to all employees and contractors and is extended to station partners carrying out duties at stations or on the network. If this policy is not followed, the partner will be permanently excluded from the station partnership scheme.

## Station partnership agreement

As part of your commitment to becoming a station partner, please complete the form below. By signing this form, you are confirming that you will comply with the terms and conditions of the station partnership scheme.

[Station partnership agreement form](#)



Station 'Makeover Day' at Harlington, Beds

# Corporate Social Responsibility

GTR is strongly committed to doing business in a responsible way, for the benefit of our passengers and to serve the communities in which we operate. People are at the heart of what we do: our overall purpose is to bring people together and to help communities thrive. Potential station partners are strongly encouraged to consider seriously how their proposals could contribute to the development of our four pillar CSR strategy.

## Promoting positive mental health

Mental ill health is a significant problem affecting approximately one in four of us.

We are proud to be working with Mind, strengthening our understanding of the issues, and encouraging wellbeing.

We work closely with the Samaritans to help find ways to reduce suicides on the railways, whilst investing in local charities providing mental health support to those who live and work in and around our stations.

## Diversity and inclusion

We serve a diverse inter-connected network of communities.

In 2022, we proudly became the first transport operator to secure the national equality standard.

Our work in communities supports many different types of groups, charities and community organisations.

## Employability, skills and confidence

GTR is one of the UK's largest train operating companies, generating thousands of jobs, and adding significant economic value across the network.

Our ambition is to build employability skills and personal confidence in our communities, working in partnership with charities and communities on educational projects, work experience, school talks and through our apprenticeship and graduate schemes.

## Protecting our environment

We want as many people as possible to travel by train: rail is the greenest form of public transport:

Our commitment is also to minimise the environmental impact of our operations, embracing initiatives to tackle energy and water consumption and driving down waste. We partner with a variety of charities at national and local levels to help us protect and enhance environments through a biodiversity projects in and around our stations and depots.

If your community rail activity supports any of the above pillars, we would welcome the opportunity to find out more about what you are doing in these areas to see if there are any further ways in which we could support and enhance projects.

# Photo Gallery



Gipsy Hill



Buxted



St Albans City



Crofton Park



**Community@GTRailway.com**