



# Between the Lines

Issue 5 | January 2024





Welcome to the fifth edition of *Between the Lines*, South Western Railway's community rail newsletter. 2023 was a fantastic year for community rail at SWR, with Waterloo 175, the King's Coronation, Community Rail Week being launched on our network, plus many more exciting events and activities thanks to our station adoption groups and Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs). We are really looking forward to all the great things that will happen throughout 2024 and showcasing them in future editions.

***(Front Cover): Father Christmas reading a book at Hedge End station.***

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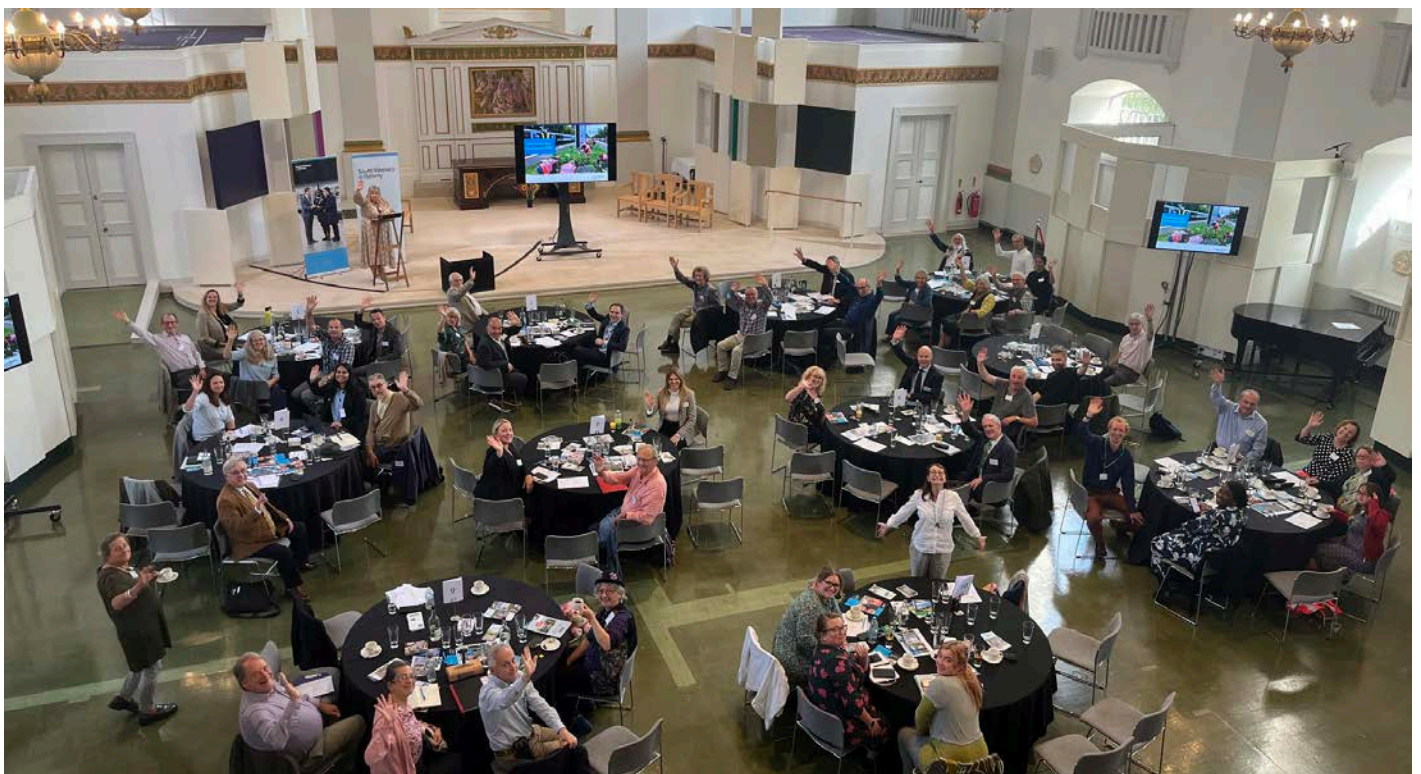
## Community Rail Conference 2023

In October, we held our annual Community Rail Conference. It was a chance for all our community rail advocates, from across the network, to celebrate all of the fantastic events from the year.

We had 80 attendees at St John's Church in London, and a wide range of speakers including SWR Managing Director, Claire Mann, each of our 10 CRP Officers, as well as some of the members of our communities profiling their projects.

Attendees found out more about the mosaics at Surbiton, how colleagues work with the community in Southampton, and heard from our Service Quality Excellence team, finding out more about how to get involved in keeping our stations failure-free, as well as a selection of other interesting speakers.

**This year's conference will be on Thursday 10th October 2024, venue to be confirmed. Hold it in your diaries!**



Attendees at the Community Rail Conference 2024.

## Spotlight on Sustainability

We have just announced our new charity partners for 2024. After a nomination process that was open to all SWR colleagues, we are pleased to announce the below charities for each of our regions.

### West - Devon Air Ambulance Trust

A charity providing emergency medical services through the provision of two helicopter-based air ambulances and two critical care cars, which cover the county of Devon in South West England.

### South - Forget Me Not Fund

The midwifery bereavement teams in Hampshire Hospitals provide care to families following late miscarriage, stillbirth, and babies who have died shortly after birth

### Metro - Scotty's Little Soldiers

A British charity supporting children whose parents have died while serving in the armed forces. Providing relief from the effects of bereavement to young people who have experienced the death of a parent who served with the Armed Forces of the Crown.

### Central - SERV Surrey and London

Transport blood products, urgent samples and medical supplies, along with donated breast milk to hospitals and milk banks across Surrey and London. They also carry out a daily delivery of blood to Air Ambulance Kent Surrey Sussex

### Network-wide - Young Minds Charity

A charity fighting for children and young people's mental health. They want to see a world where no young person feels alone with their mental health, and all young people get the mental health support they need, when they need it, no matter what.

## Community Rail Network Awards Shortlists

Congratulations to the four award entries on the SWR network which have been shortlisted in the Community Rail Network Awards 2024, which will be held in Swansea on 18th March.

### Best Community Engagement Project

Isle of Wight CRP - Dinosaur Day

### Outstanding Volunteer Contribution

Val Hart - Petersfield Free Shop

### Small Projects Award

Reading to Basingstoke CRP - Reading and Petersfield Winter Warmers

### Most Effective Communications Campaign

Southeast Communities CRP - Community Rail Coronation Connections

Good luck to all of our entries!





## Safety in Southampton - Try the Train

Satty Potiwal, Southampton Central Duty Station Manager, has been working with the Polygon Special Educational Needs (SEN) School in Southampton. The school recently had a visit from Satty with a Rail Community Officer (RCO) to talk about safety on the railway.

A Try the Train trip followed this in early December, travelling from Southampton to Portsmouth. The group spent the day at the Spinnaker Tower and watching the Royal Navy aircraft carriers in dock. They asked lots of questions about the trains, and were particularly fascinated with the trains themselves, and the train announcements.



Try the Train group being shown how to use Ticket Vending Machines.

## Wey Valley's New Adoption Group

Thanks to the power of Facebook, the Wey Valley CRP was able to find like-minded volunteers keen to become part of a new station adoption group. They have named themselves 'Ash Vale Station Gardeners'. The budding gardeners had the opportunity to visit Alton to discuss their plans and learn from a well-established group - it's amazing what can be achieved when groups come together to support each other over a cuppa and a bacon butty!

Ash Vale Station Gardeners are enjoying the support of new station manager Dave Josey, who gave them a warm welcome during their safety brief and is helping with a much-needed water supply and a place to store their tools and more. Jessica Van Staden from the SWR Sustainability team has also been advising, with a list of great suggestions of what hardy UK plants add colour over winter.

A lovely example of how many people can contribute to supporting a new group; we look forward to seeing their entry into Stations in Bloom next year!



Some of the Ash Vale Station Gardeners, Dave Josey, and Martyn Turner at Ash Vale.



# Honiton Artwork Unveiling

In a project led by the Friends of Honiton Station, attractive new artwork has been installed on the side of the station's footbridge and a storage facility on platform 1. In addition, an illustrated town map has been placed in the station forecourt. The project is the brainchild of Friends' member and East Devon and Honiton Town Councillor Jenny Brown.

Honiton Primary School pupils created the new artwork on the station footbridge during workshops with artist Alistair Lambert at Thelma Hulbert Gallery (THG), Honiton Museum, and the Blackdown Hills National Landscape. The workshops were part of THG's Honiton Hippo project for the national Wild Escape campaign. [www.artfund.org/explore/the-wild-escape](http://www.artfund.org/explore/the-wild-escape)

Local artist Brittany E Lakin created the artwork as seen on the back cover.

The £6,700 project has been made possible thanks to funding from South Western Railway, Honiton Town Council and grants organised by Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership from Cross Country and the Community Rail Development Fund, a joint initiative of the Department for Transport and Community Rail Network.

The artwork was unveiled by the Mayor of Honiton, Councillor Helen Hurford, in early December, attended by the local community and the Department for Transport.



Unveiling of the artwork and new town map in December 2023.

# Community Live Dates 2024

Community Live sessions will continue in 2024, running from 16:00 - 17:15 on the dates shown below. On the calls, we will be joined by Community Rail Network, Network Rail, SWR's Regional Development teams, and a guest speaker.

Monday 12th February

Monday 8th April

Monday 3rd June

Tuesday 2nd July

Thursday 10th October - Community Rail Conference - all day, venue TBC

Monday 2nd December

We look forward to welcoming you to the sessions online. Links will be sent out one week prior to each call.

## Drawing on the Outside

A project called Drawing on the Outside has recently seen the culmination of work at Swaythling station with artwork being put up on previously unsightly blank and boarded-up windows.

Run by local artists and part funded by Hampshire Community Rail Partnership, the project was a nine month long programme. The fortnightly workshops in Swaythling were for local men experiencing isolation to get together, make stuff, draw and reconnect with their local community and spaces. They decided what to make and do and provided inspiration and materials to come up with the wonderful artwork which has recently been installed.

Hampshire CRP were delighted to be able to use Swaythling Booking Hall and their leased rooms for many of the workshops after official closing hours, so utilising spare SWR space and bringing the community to the station to provide a lasting asset has worked fantastically well. Already, they have been receiving very positive feedback from members of the local community who are delighted that the art has helped brighten up the station.



Examples of the new artwork at Swaythling.

## Bronze at Byfleet

A 13-year-old schoolgirl from Pyrford is working hard to make her neighbourhood bloom. Allegra is volunteering with the West Byfleet Community Gardening Group and, having started whilst needing to amass volunteering hours towards her Duke of Edinburgh Bronze award, she now volunteers on Saturday mornings with the group.

She said “I didn’t know what to expect when I joined the gardening group, but I found that I really enjoy gardening and helping my local community. All the volunteers are very friendly and helpful, and have made me feel part of the group. I feel I am making a difference. I look forward to gardening on Saturday mornings as it gets me out of the house, working in the fresh air and I am learning new things. I don’t even mind if it’s raining!”



Allegra and fellow volunteers.



## Cooking in the Community

The Community Brain have opened up their community kitchen at Tolworth station to refugee families, asylum seekers, and people living in temporary accommodation due to various circumstances. These families and individuals currently have no access to kitchen facilities or equipment to heat food as they are being housed in hotels around the borough. The families pre-book their time to cook and are provided with basic pantry staples. The project has proved a great success as many families have been utilising the facility. Working in partnership with Kingston Council and Refugee Action Kingston, they plan to run for as long as the service is required in the community. So far, around 30 families have been using the kitchen over the past couple of months.

Below are some of the dishes they've shared recently.



## Dr Bike Visits Twickenham

In November, Hounslow & Richmond CRP organised a joint bike security and maintenance session outside the main entrance of Twickenham station.

Following recent thefts, station manager Manoj Bhardwaj was keen to address the issue. Rail Community Officers tagged bikes and advised cyclists on security, while the Dr Bike team did free safety checks and maintenance on around 20 bicycles.

We are running anti-theft marking events across the network in March. Keep an eye out for more information to come.



Dr Bike joint security session at Twickenham station.



## Farncombe Christmas Market

On a bitterly cold Saturday in December, Godalming Band played Christmas songs for visitors at the Farncombe Christmas Market at the station's car park, following the success of the first market in September. Godalming Town Council, the station adopters, were delighted to bring Farncombe's community a market which has been very well supported and attended, bringing much-needed footfall to the village.

The stalls were a selection of fresh produce, Christmas gifts, Christmas trees, crafts, gins, wines, cakes and baked goods, fresh bread, local honey, farm produce, eggs, chutneys, jewellery, gifts, flowers, wreaths, goat's cheese and meat, deli produce, as well as Christmas decorations and cards.



Suzie Gortler and Lucy Lomax with SWR colleagues at the market in Farncombe.

## Santa Visits Hedge End

On Friday 15th December, the station adopters at Hedge End and Father Christmas, held the annual event at the station with over 300 people attending the fayre.

In the morning, the children of Berrywood Primary School visited Saint Nick at the station, with him reading a Christmas story to over 75 children. In the evening, 50 children from the school choir sang carols under the Christmas tree, whilst parents enjoyed the free mulled wine and mince pies. There were 10 Christmas stalls selling last-minute gifts as well as local charities selling gifts to raise money for their charities.

The Grotto raised over £300 which was shared between Heart Start Meon Valley and the Christmas Gift Appeal.



Carols at Hedge End station.



## Free Shop Plaudits

The Free Shop at Petersfield station continues to gain recognition from the local community and is a proud winner of the local community award for Best Contribution to the Community.

Lucy Lomax, the project officer, and two volunteers from the Hub had the pleasure of attending the Petersfield Awards held in October. This annual event showcases the best of the town as nominated by local people. The Free shop was shortlisted by a panel of judges and then put to the public vote to win the award for best contribution to the community. Volunteers, free shoppers and local supporters of the Hub were all thrilled to win the award.



Some of the Free Shop team at the awards ceremony.

## Food on the Move

The Isle of Wight CRP has been successful on being awarded a £20k grant from Connect4Communities from the Isle of Wight Council. The funding will ensure the CRP can support people until March 2024.

Ali Smith who delivers the project from the Gaslight Community Cafe said 'this support is still vital for people in our communities with the spiralling cost of living and families still not on their feet after the pandemic. The CRP have now secured in nearly 4 years well over £300,000 for us to shop, pack and coordinate pick ups and drop offs with our fabulous volunteers and it has brought our community even more tightly to support those most in need.'



## In Memory of David Seares

We would like to recognise the passing of David Seares, a much-loved member of the Friends of Templecombe Station, who worked tirelessly with the group of volunteers over many years. He will be sadly missed.





## An Update from Raynes Park

Approximately ten years ago, the space alongside Raynes Park station looked depressing, with huge advertising hoardings. After removing the adverts, the Friends of Raynes Park station was formed to manage the wasteland and transform it into an attractive landscaped area.

2023 has been the group's breakthrough year. Volunteers have cleared the undergrowth, removing huge quantities of brambles, rubble and litter. After never-ending 'dump runs' to the tip, they now have a multi-level slope of defined pathways and levelled flowerbeds. New wooden planks were slotted in to replace the rotten old timber and keep the soil in place.

They organised four activity days where teams from Thales provided some much needed manpower to terrace the slope. Thanks to their collaboration, they've transformed a very visible piece of neglected land in the centre of Raynes Park into an attractive feature. The friends now wait for Spring to see the results from their marathon bulb planting sessions.



Friends of Raynes Park hard at work.

## Fantastic Art at Weybridge

Some new artwork has been installed at Weybridge station, created by students from the nearby St James Primary School. Sharing pictures via social media, local Weybridge residents have left some nice comments, such as 'what a lovely idea, well done to the children!'



Artwork in the waiting room at Weybridge station.



## Purbeck by Sustainable Transport

The latest video produced during the summer focused on joined-up sustainable transport options with an emphasis on nature, health and wellbeing, enjoying the great outdoors, and the beauty of the natural environment.

Following the success, Purbeck CRP have just received news of their successful bid to the Community Rail Network Integrated Sustainable Transport Fund to produce another video featuring the town of Dorchester travelling by rail and connecting services. This is a joint initiative between Purbeck and South Wessex CRPs who both serve the town, with work commencing in the New Year.

You can view previous films here: [www.youtube.com/@purbeckcrp](https://www.youtube.com/@purbeckcrp)



## Different Tracks

Ahead of White Ribbon Day on 25th November, SWR choir Different Tracks joined with fellow train operating companies Southeastern, Avanti West Coast, GTR, Greater Anglia, as well as Network Rail, Rail Delivery Group, British Transport Police, and Transport for London, for two special performances of Rise, by Callum Scott at London Bridge Station. #ChangeTheStory was the theme for this year and calls on people to reflect and question attitudes and behaviours that may perpetuate violence for women and girls. The White Ribbon mission is to prevent such behaviour by addressing its root causes and stop violence before it starts.

The SWR Different Tracks community choir is made up of SWR colleagues, as well as members of community rail groups across the network. They first performed at the Waterloo 175 celebrations in July.



Different Tracks singing at London Bridge station.



# An Update from Community Rail Network

This time of year is a good opportunity to reflect. The gardens are dormant, it's a bit chilly to spend too much time outdoors, and community rail projects being delivered this financial year are reaching their conclusions, before a whole load of new projects start in the spring.

I realise I could write pages about what I've enjoyed, and what has inspired me, during 2023.

We welcomed The Community Train CRP as formal members of Community Rail Network in the spring, just in time for them to host the launch of the national Community Rail Week. That event led to some great media coverage for community rail as a national movement and The Community Train CRP itself. Community Rail Week continued with another local highlight being Rail Minister Huw Merriman MP visiting London Waterloo to meet many of the CRPs from the SWR area (plus me – it was terrifying) as well as Paula and SWR's MD Claire Mann. He got a full rundown of the range of work carried out by CRPs and went away with a pocketful of invitations to visit several of them. And he did! During his summer rail tour he visited Hampshire CRP and Purbeck CRP to discuss their work in more detail.

Purbeck CRP worked with the Swanage Railway to promote the new regular public services from Wareham to Swanage. Hampshire CRP had the formal launch of its station café at Shawford, which is now providing employment opportunities for local people. And I got roped in (very willingly) to help judge the ever-growing Stations in Bloom competition, organised by Blackmore Vale CRP. There were loads of other great projects on the other CRPs too – too many to mention in the space I have.

Community Rail Network has also been really pleased to see the continued development of volunteer groups at SWR stations. This year saw the number pass 100, which is a stunning achievement and easily the highest concentration of station adopters in the south of England. When I started work at Community Rail Network (admittedly a few years ago now), the number was about six or seven. I can't say a big enough thank you to you all for your work in improving the environment of your local stations. I love to see the flowers, artworks, history boards, book-swaps, jigsaws, bug hotels (and more) as I travel the SWR network.

All this only happens due to the support of SWR itself. Paula and Matthew have worked tirelessly to promote and facilitate community rail activities within SWR. I will never forget the day I looked up at an information display screen in a station and saw a slide about community rail appear!

2023 was a year of significant uncertainty about the levels of funding CRPs could expect in the future, but that now looks to have stabilised with SWR continuing to support its CRPs at the same levels as in previous years. SWR also offers one of the most generous packages of financial support to its station adopters anywhere on the rail network through its Station Adoption Fund. Community Rail Network administers it, but it is fully funded by SWR – please do make use of it by submitting a bid for whatever materials you need to make your plans for 2024 a reality.

Who knows what 2024 will hold for community rail in the SWR area? I am sure I will once again be surprised and impressed by the projects that CRPs and station-based groups deliver. One thing I am sure of is that the Community Rail Awards are taking place in Swansea in March. There were four nominations from the SWR area which was great to see and I will be keeping my fingers crossed that some silverware (well, glassware in this case) comes back to the SWR area.

**Daniel Wright, Community Rail Network**





# Matthew's Moments

I have now come to the end of my apprenticeship at SWR, which means I will be leaving community rail for hopefully a new role within the railway.

Each adopted station is different and unique, but they all have one factor in common: passionate, hard-working, and enthusiastic volunteers. Before I started, I had no knowledge of community rail, but I am so pleased to have been able to get out and meet such a large portion of the volunteers and other community groups across the network. I will continue to keep an eye out for community rail gems when I am on my travels in the future.

I have been given multiple amazing opportunities throughout my time here, which have helped me develop into the much more confident person I am today. I've learned new skills, met some inspirational people, been to new and interesting places, and will never forget these two years.

I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to everybody, from volunteers, CRP Officers, or SWR colleagues, who have made my apprenticeship interesting, exciting, and made me feel welcome and part of the community rail family. I have had a fantastic time, and hope to see community rail at SWR continue to thrive in the future.

Here are some photographs of my favourite moments from my two years.







Gemma Girvan (Curator Thelma Hulbery Gallery), Martin Long (Chairman, The Friends of Honiton Station), and Councillor Jenny Brown at the unveiling of artwork at Honiton.