

Summary of Consultation Responses: Community Rail Strategy

Moving Britain Ahead



April 2018

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Introduction

The consultation

Purpose of this document

This document summarises the responses received to the recent consultation on the strategy for community rail in England and Wales. It also includes a number of case studies which illustrate where community rail organisations are already going demonstrating what can be achieved under the themes proposed for the new strategy. We are working across Government and with key delivery partners to develop a strategy which reflects the views expressed. We will aim to publish the strategy in Summer 2018.

- 1 The Government believes that community rail plays a key role in ensuring the railway reflects the communities and customers it serves. Community rail policy was last reviewed in 2007 and in the decade since there has been considerable change. Community rail has continued to develop amid an evolving and growing rail network.
- 2 That is why the Government recently consulted on a new strategy for community rail. Running from 6 November 2017 to 28 January 2018, the consultation asked respondents for their views on the principles that should underpin a new strategy for community rail. We proposed four main themes:
 - Connecting people to places and opportunities;
 - Supporting communities, diversity and inclusion;
 - Supporting local and regional economies; and
 - Suggesting innovative ways to improve the way the railway works.
- 3 The Government received 175 responses to the consultation from a range of stakeholders including responses from community rail partnerships, rail user groups, train operating companies, local authorities; other organisations including charities; and from a number of individuals with an interest in local rail services. The partnership nature of community rail is demonstrated by the number of joint responses we received from train operating companies, local authorities and their community rail partnerships.

4 Responses to the consultation came from the following:

Respondent Type	Total
Local/Regional Government	37
Community rail partnership	32
Rail User Group	29
Individual	24
Friends/Station Adoption Group	15
Rail Industry	9
Heritage Rail	5
Transport Campaign Group	5
Campaign Organisation	3
Transport Authority	2
Other	2
Third sector	2
School	1
Community Group	1
National Park	1
Local Enterprise Partnership	1
Individual/ Local councillor	1
Transport consultancy	1
Transport user watchdog	1
Transport professionals	1
Local authority and rail users	1
Local authority and community rail partnerships	1
Grand Total	175

- 5 Respondents not only provided their views on the future of community rail, but also provided a large number of examples of the excellent work undertaken by community rail organisations. Ranging from flower planting by station adopters, through to community engagement with schools and vulnerable people, to significant infrastructure projects, community rail has been instrumental in improving how local railways operate. These will help to inform the strategy, which will look to identify where good practice could be applicable to other local areas and share the relevant learning more widely. To give a sense of the breadth of work undertaken by community rail organisations, a number of case studies have been included throughout this document.
- 6 As well as publishing a consultation document, DfT ran three workshops to gather views on the themes that could inform a new strategy. The Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP) hosted sessions for DfT at their members' seminars in London and York in November, and the Welsh Government hosted a workshop in Shrewsbury with stakeholders from the region covered by the Wales and the Borders franchise. The workshops provided further helpful information on the

work currently undertaken by community rail organisations, what they hope to do in the future, what is stopping them from doing so and what they want to see in the new strategy. The information provided by attendees at these workshops has also been reflected in this document.

1. Connecting people to places and opportunities

- 1.1 In the consultation, we asked respondents how community rail could help to improve end-to-end journeys, including making them healthier, more sustainable and more environmentally friendly. We also asked how the strategy could support community rail in having a voice on the provision of rail and how it could bring together complimentary modes of transport. We also asked how we could help to improve the reach of community rail, by assisting with the creation of new community rail partnerships.

Locally-led sustainable, healthy and environmentally friendly travel

- 1.2 A large number of respondents, including ACoRP and a number of community rail partnerships, felt that a well-funded, independent community rail sector is uniquely placed to represent local communities (not just rail passengers) in conversations about the provision of rail and other transport services. This extended to potential and future passengers as a way of achieving the Government's aims for a more productive, innovative railway.
- 1.3 ACoRP specifically identified a need for holistic thinking around lifestyles, social trends and community aspirations in order to realise benefits, including public health and improved air quality, which extend beyond the railway.
- 1.4 Respondents felt that this included facilitating the provision of facilities to encourage sustainable, healthy and environmentally friendly travel. Promoting cycling and walking to and from stations was raised by a number of respondents, including the pupils of Kirkby High School, as an effective way to help promote healthy and sustainable travel. This should be supported by improved cycle access to and storage at stations. Attendees at the York consultation event highlighted some of the work currently going on in the community rail world including working with bus companies and Sustrans to promote a move away from car travel, and feeding into local transport strategies.
- 1.5 Respondents, including East Hampshire Community Rail Partnership, also felt that it was important that the rail industry put community rail at the heart of their business, including by appointing dedicated community rail teams. With industry support, community rail could work with delivery partners to deliver improvements collectively (including to rolling stock) and to improve links to existing facilities.
- 1.6 Some respondents, including Essex County Council, felt that community rail partnerships should work with local transport authorities and other transport providers to provide better integrated travel and information about links to other transport modes, including options for 'last mile' travel and recreation, although respondents

were conscious of the limitations in this regard given the requirement to comply with current competition law requirements. The Rail Delivery Group (RDG) highlighted the need for setting up links with bus operators to improve bus services that are linked to the train timetable, thus reducing the need for people to drive to the station. Respondents felt that community rail could work with Network Rail and train operating companies to improve cycle routes and footpaths around stations, as well as increase the provision of secure cycle storage. A train operator, Greater Anglia, felt that there could be more active engagement of community rail partnerships and adoption groups in station travel planning as a living tool to garner evidence, gain consensus and draw in third party funding and promote the services and options available locally.

- 1.7 Respondents, including Transport for the East Midlands, felt that the gathering and use of effective evidence was critical to ensuring that community rail partnerships could influence important decisions about rail provision in their areas. To support this, DfT, ACoRP and other rail industry bodies have been working with the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) on its developing framework for assessing the social value of rail.
- 1.8 Station adoption group respondents, including the Friends of Eccles Station and the North West Manchester Station Friends Alliance, suggested that work to improve station environments would help to encourage increased use of the railway. They felt that improving planting at stations, introducing artwork and involving the community in renovation projects would help to ensure that stations were clean, attractive and welcoming places which would encourage more people to use them for journeys. Transport for London highlighted their research which shows that the perception of journey time is elastic and can be influenced by the environmental factors that customers experienced during a journey. Improvements to station ambience, including those that are enabled by community rail programmes and partnerships, can actually make journeys seem shorter to customers and encourage the usage of the rail network.
- 1.9 A number of community rail partnership respondents highlighted the important role of ACoRP in supporting community rail partnerships in influencing the provision of rail. community rail partnerships suggested that ACoRP's role in providing training and facilitating networking between community rail partnerships were important elements in sharing good practice around influencing the provision of rail. This supported community rail partnerships officers in being an effective voice for the local community and helping them to manage expectations of local rail users about what could be achieved.
- 1.10 Respondents also suggested that the DfT should do more to promote community rail across Government as an effective way of providing solutions to help improve public health and environmentally friendly travel. A number of respondents highlighted the importance of working closely with other transport providers and charities at a national level in order to support coordination between modes of transport and provide education on healthy, sustainable travel. They felt that this would help to encourage modal shift from cars, particularly in rural areas.

Case Study: Todmorden Curve and Darwen Passing Loop

The improvements to services brought about by the Todmorden curve (a stretch of rail track completed in 2014) and the Darwen passing loop show what can be achieved when local authorities, the rail industry and community rail work in partnership.



The work of the community rail partnerships in developing awareness and usage of the services on both lines has made it possible to develop viable business cases for these investments, which total over £30m. Community Rail Lancashire supported the introduction of the new direct service from East Lancashire to Manchester via the reinstated Todmorden West Curve and a half hourly service to Manchester via Darwen and the Bolton Corridor following a £14m scheme to extend the passing loop at Darwen.

In particular, the new Blackburn to Manchester via the Todmorden Curve service, launched in May 2015, shows how community rail can bring together the railway and the local community to enhance services and celebrate success.

The launch of the new service was celebrated through the involvement of Community Rail Lancashire and the East Lancashire Community Rail Partnership. The community rail partnerships had been working on promotional material for the new service with Padiham Green CE Primary School, including a book, called 'Operation Stickleback', which describes the journey of a stickleback between Rose Grove and Manchester - a nod to the sticklebacks found in local steam engines when they were sent away for repair.

As part of the introduction of the new service, the station at Rose Grove was improved through a grant from the Burnley Pendle Growth Fund to provide new passenger facilities at the station. Two local schools, Lowerhouse and Padiham Green CE Primary School, also produced artwork for display at the station based on the 'Operation Stickleback' theme. At the same time a handy foldable guide containing the new timetable was designed by Padiham Green, using pupils' artwork to show the route from Padiham to Rose Grove station.

Encouraging new Community Rail Partnerships

- 1.11 The majority of respondents to this question felt that it was important that community rail partnerships remain grassroots organisations set up by and run for the local community. Respondents felt that the Government could do more to change the image of community rail as a rural movement by encouraging more urban community rail partnerships to be established. However, most felt that the most important thing was that community rail partnerships should not be imposed by Government but should only be established where the local community wants one.
- 1.12 Some respondents, including the train operator Abellio, felt that the Government should focus its support for new community rail partnerships on new lines or those lines with significant investment available for stations, trains or services. Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) said that it was important to grow community rail where there is local support and identified one of the key barriers to establishing a new community rail partnership is initial finance. The Kent Community Rail Partnership suggested that Government should encourage community rail to develop in areas with low rail usage and where community involvement will benefit all. ACoRP highlighted the need for greater awareness of community rail (both within the rail industry and beyond) as a key factor in encouraging more community rail partnerships. They also suggested a role for themselves and for DfT in promoting community rail, and highlighted the benefits of empowering community rail partnerships and other community rail groups to communicate their own work and messages effectively.

Key messages for the strategy

The Government considers that the following issues should be addressed in the new community rail strategy:

- Encourage and support community rail organisations to look beyond the railway to improve their reach, attract new passengers and contribute to healthy, sustainable, environmentally-friendly travel.
- Community rail organisations are a unique voice of local communities. As such, the strategy should support their independence and encourage creation of new community rail partnerships and station adoption groups where there is a genuine, community-led desire.
- Ensure effective mechanisms are in place for the industry to draw on, listen to and work in partnership with community rail.
- Increase the reach of community rail - for example, make it clear that community rail partnerships can cover urban as well as rural areas, and empower them to promote the good work they do.
- Create the right environment for community rail organisations to support healthy, sustainable, environmentally-friendly travel to stations. This includes supporting safe cycling and walking to and from stations, and more joined-up working with other public and community transport providers.
- Encourage and support community rail organisations to gather and use evidence to help demonstrate their impacts, secure funding and support proposals for infrastructure and service improvements. This could help with better understanding of social impacts around inclusion, cohesion, access to opportunities, health and wellbeing.
- Help community rail organisations to establish and maintain effective working relationships with other organisations including other transport providers, charities, train operating companies and Network Rail.
- Support the next generation of rail and community rail through engagement with children and young people, to help them to adopt sustainable and healthy travel habits and to give them a voice in the railway.

2. Supporting communities, diversity and inclusion

Supporting community cohesion, promoting diversity and enabling social inclusion

- 2.1 A significant number of respondents told us that community rail partnerships and station adoption groups have an important role to play in improving community cohesion, promoting diversity and enabling social inclusion. Most respondents agreed that community rail organisations should look to extend their reach beyond the station boundary into local communities, working alongside existing organisations to help improve diversity and inclusion, and tackle social exclusion and loneliness. ACoRP highlighted the importance of stations as community hubs and their role in helping to reach out to underrepresented groups. The Samaritans identified a number of ways that community rail could help to improve social inclusion and prevent suicide, including through the Samaritans' training offers and by engaging with their Community Outreach Locations.
- 2.2 Respondents felt that community rail groups are well placed to understand the demographics of their local area. However, they stated that they would welcome support in identifying whether the particular make-up of rail users and people working in community rail were representative of the make-up of the local community they served. Rail North suggested that community rail partnerships would benefit from toolkits and training on how to engage with communities, targeted at different levels of experience of community rail partnerships. Abellio suggested that ACoRP and the DfT could support this work by helping community rail organisations measure their impact on local diversity and inclusion issues. Virgin Trains felt community rail can help train operating companies to understand the needs of hard to reach groups in the communities they serve.
- 2.3 A number of community rail partnerships, including the Poacher line, the Hereward line and Derwent Valley, offered practical suggestions on how community rail partnerships could work to improve diversity and inclusion on the railway and in community rail. Suggestions included:
- The need to overcome the rigidity of fares to help reach out to communities;
 - Working with homeless people, ex-offenders and people returning to work after illness to help build confidence and develop new skills; and
 - Identifying specific funding for diversity and inclusion work.
- 2.4 At the London consultation event, attendees highlighted some of the work currently going on in community rail to help develop social inclusion, such as working with children and young people on a range of issues, including those with special educational needs, and producing leaflets in different languages to support diverse local communities.

- 2.5 Abellio suggested that train operating companies could use their own corporate structures and practices to support community rail organisations in improving diversity and inclusion. Other suggestions included supporting community rail apprenticeships and North East Lincolnshire Council proposed requiring equality impact assessments of community rail plans.
- 2.6 Respondents also highlighted community rail projects that have resulted in reductions in anti-social behaviour alongside their primary purpose. The Severnside community rail partnerships highlighted work that it has undertaken to address poor behaviour on the line by local school pupils, and a variety of community rail partnerships and station adoption groups highlighted local community work (such as artwork and events) which have helped to reduce vandalism and anti-social behaviour on trains and at stations.

Supporting an accessible railway

- 2.7 Respondents to the consultation and at the consultation events felt that community rail already plays an important role in supporting an accessible railway. As well as ongoing support for the physical accessibility of the railway, train operating companies and community rail partnership respondents highlighted the need to ensure that the railway was accessible for those with hidden disabilities and other special travel needs. At the York event, attendees highlighted current work in the community rail world including working with young people, the elderly, disadvantaged groups, people with mental health issues and disabled people to improve access to and confidence in using the railway.
- 2.8 The Cambrian Railway Partnership highlighted work that it is already doing with the Alzheimers Society to encourage dementia friendly travel. Brighton and Hove City Council suggested encouraging community rail organisations to engage with local specialist representative groups to open up the railway to people with specific needs.
- 2.9 ACoRP and the Esk Valley Railway Development Company suggested that making the railway more affordable plays a significant role in creating an accessible, inclusive railway.
- 2.10 Respondents suggested that community rail-led improvements to accessibility could help to reach underrepresented groups and encourage them to use the railway as an effective means of accessing employment, education and health services. Respondents also identified the need to work with other travel providers, including community transport providers and local bus operators, to ensure that the benefits of accessible transport are felt beyond the station boundary.

Case Study: The Bentham Line - Dementia-Friendly Travel

Community rail colleagues on the Bentham Line recognised the role that community rail can play to help the growing number of UK residents living with dementia.

The community rail partnership and train operator understood that individuals living with dementia are still the independent, proud people they always have been but that they needed some additional help to carry out their daily activities. They knew the social and cognitive benefits to these individuals of still participating in society, and sought innovative ways to support their travel needs.

Working in collaboration with Alzheimer's Research UK and Arriva Rail North Ltd, the community rail partnership aimed to make the Bentham Line a centre of excellence in demonstrating how community rail can assist those living with dementia. It did this through training customer-facing staff and volunteers, providing Dementia Friends training and appointing dementia champions. They supported this with materials such as leaflets setting out suggested walks and other activities with the aim of encouraging safe tourism and group travel.

The Bentham Line is well placed to host such an initiative as the line's historic links to seaside holidays in Morecambe can provide the nostalgia of long term memories of childhood holidays that can help those living with dementia to feel good about themselves.



Case Study: Kent Community Rail Partnership's 'Smarter Journeys' Programme

'Smarter Journeys' is an inspiring schools programme run by Kent Community Rail Partnership which aims to enable and encourage young people to choose to take more journeys by walking, cycling and public transport.

The programme supports Year 5/6 pupils who are preparing for the transition to secondary school. Its aim is to provide them with skills so that they can make active and sustainable travel journeys to secondary school.

Pupils take part in a number of activities over one year, with most taking place before or after school or during assembly time, reducing the impact on Year 6 curriculum time.

Activities include:

- Free train ride & station visit
- Visit to school by Dr Bike, a local bike mechanic
- Cycle training
- Cycling and walking national competitions
- Rail safety lessons
- Street/rail station surveys
- Travel planning

Kent Community Rail Partnership has been working with pupils from Aylesford Primary School for the past three years. The pupils take part in a number of challenges over the course of Year 6 that help them develop confidence to travel independently and safely to secondary school.

Pupils took part in Bikeability cycle training where nearly 90 % of pupils passed. They also had a visit from Dr Bike from Cycles UK Maidstone, who helped them fix up their own bikes in readiness for their Bikeability training.

They also took part in the Big Pedal Competition - a cycle to school competition organised by Sustrans. The five-day challenge saw around a third of pupils cycling to school, up from 4% on a normal day. Pupils also took part in an initiative called the Big Street Survey where they surveyed their journey to school and made recommendations to the Headteacher about how they could improve their journey, resulting in the provision of a new bike shelter.

In 2017, all 26 pupils from Year 6 were awarded a 'Superheroes' certificate & badge by the Deputy Chair of Kent Community Rail Partnerships.



Key messages for the strategy

The Government considers that the following issues should be addressed in the new community rail strategy:

- Support community rail's role in promoting and developing an accessible railway.
- Support community rail in engaging young people as the next generation of rail users and members of the community rail sector.
- Recognise and support for the vital role of volunteers in community rail.
- Encourage effective cooperation between train operating companies, Network Rail, community rail partnerships and other groups (including through third-sector partnerships) to develop and promote an accessible, inclusive railway.
- Identify practical measures to support community rail in gathering evidence and understanding its impact. Where possible this should link with the RSSB's developing framework for assessing the social value of rail.
- Help community rail act as a facilitator of increased confidence in rail users.
- Support community rail in helping those returning to the workforce after an absence.
- Work with the rail industry, the British Transport Police and other partners to identify where projects may help tackle anti-social behaviour.
- Support provision of affordable travel to improve social inclusion and access to education, employment and recreation.

3. Supporting local and regional economies

Supporting growth of local economies and the railway

- 3.1 As set out in previous sections, respondents felt that community rail can support access to employment and education through extending the reach and accessibility of rail travel. Rail North and the Poacher Line Community Rail Partnership also suggested that community rail could work with schools to help promote the rail industry as a positive employment option for all genders. Respondents felt that this should be supported by the use of gender neutral language in marketing and advertising material to help make the railway more inclusive. ACoRP also proposed supporting community rail linking with wider skills development opportunities to broaden career pathways, including through the use of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Ambassadors.
- 3.2 Common across all themes, respondents again highlighted the need for community rail organisations to work with charities and other delivery bodies to help to improve, in particular, education and employment opportunities. This could take many forms. For example, the Heart of Wessex Rail Partnership set out how it had worked with educational establishments to ensure that services ran at appropriate times for students. Other suggestions included encouraging staff in train operating companies and in community rail partnerships to undergo unconscious bias training and to help link community rail opportunities to the national curriculum and volunteering opportunities.
- 3.3 Community rail partnership respondents were clear that, whilst a national strategy is important, it must reflect the diversity of ownership and management models within the community rail movement. Respondents felt that there was opportunity to tailor interventions, such as training and development, to different levels of community rail expertise and sophistication, but that the important thing was to ensure that community rail partnerships could adopt the approach best suited to the needs of the community rail partnership and the local community.
- 3.4 A number of respondents highlighted effective cooperation between community rail and local businesses, charities and attractions to support business development in their communities. This included the promotion of tourism and working with local small businesses on special events designed to highlight the range of businesses and products on offer.
- 3.5 Attendees at both the York and London seminars highlighted the positive role for community rail in promoting tourism and sustainable leisure travel. For example, the South Downs National Park Association referenced work that it undertook with a local community rail partnership to encourage more National Park visitors to travel by rail. Attendees at the Shrewsbury seminar suggested that improved access to leisure by rail could be enhanced by ensuring that community rail had a say in the provision of appropriate rolling stock.

Making the best use of station buildings and railway land

- 3.6 A number of respondents stated that community rail groups could act as catalysts for station regeneration and promoting effective use of redundant railway buildings. The Bricket Wood Station Heritage Trust pointed to projects on the Marston Vale and Abbey lines as examples of community rail partnerships effectively bringing unused station buildings into community use. Attendees at the York consultation event suggested that access to kick starter money to get station projects underway and further funding to help to deliver the final station improvements would help to speed up station improvement works.
- 3.7 Train operating company and community rail partnership respondents agreed that major station redevelopment proposals from community rail partnerships should be backed by effective business cases. Community rail partnerships also highlighted the need for Network Rail to be adequately resourced to deal with proposals from community rail partnerships and station adopters in a timely and constructive way. This would help with accessing and managing third-party funding, particularly local authority funding.
- 3.8 A number of community rail partnership respondents felt that community rail partnerships should be more regularly and extensively consulted about the disposal of railway land. For example, Devon and Cornwall Community Rail Partnership suggested that community rail partnerships should be statutory consultees whenever Network Rail proposed to dispose of railway land. Tonbridge Line Commuters suggested that community rail partnerships should be given first refusal when Network Rail was considering disposal of relevant railway land.
- 3.9 Respondents also noted that stations could offer significant benefits to local communities as flexible spaces which could be used for both community and commercial use. Devon and Cornwall Community Rail Partnerships, for example, reflected that stations should be dynamic environments that should be used to reflect local need. Abellio proposed that funding should be made available for the conversion of unused railway buildings for community use and that there should be some form of audit introduced to ensure that these buildings remained in good condition. Community rail partnerships, including the Poacher line and the Hereward line, stated that there should be some form of national plan, but that this should be flexible enough to recognise local need.
- 3.10 Several community rail partnership respondents also commented on the role of Network Rail in the regeneration of station buildings. Proposals included:
- Requiring Network Rail to advise local authorities of available land;
 - Reducing the Network Rail bureaucracy for community rail development projects; and
 - Ensuring that Network Rail and train operating companies introduce and maintain reduced rents for community rail projects.
- 3.11 Network Rail suggested a number of ways that community rail groups could access and occupy station buildings for community or local business use, including through agreements with the franchisee at the station. They also suggested that, on railway land, community rail groups could receive a licence or lease to improve the aesthetics of the area through garden and arts projects, improving the impact on passenger and non-passenger perception of their local railway and station.

3.12 Finally in this section, respondents highlighted the benefits of aligning community rail projects with local planning priorities and processes, both in terms of spurring wider regeneration and in attracting funding. Attendees at the London and Shrewsbury seminars identified a need to align community rail developments with local authority development plans, which could help to secure long-term funding for community rail partnerships.

Feedback from the consultation workshops

Key messages for the strategy

The Government considers that the following issues should be addressed in the new community rail strategy:

- How to support a broad range of people to access employment and education through the provision of locally-focused, affordable and convenient rail travel.
- Use training, volunteering and work experience in rail and community rail to help people develop skills and confidence to access employment.
- Connect community rail projects and opportunities to national opportunities, for example through the national curriculum, apprenticeships and volunteering opportunities.
- Recognise that commercial and community use of station land and buildings are not mutually exclusive.
- Support community rail organisations to engage effectively in rail and town planning.
- Support community rail groups in working with train operating companies and Network Rail to bring unused or underused railway land and buildings into community use.
- Encourage and support community rail groups to use evidence to develop effective business cases.

4. Suggesting innovative ways to improve the way the railway works

Innovation in community rail

- 4.1 In the consultation, we asked how community rail could support innovation in the railway, what we should do with line designation, how the strategy could support sustainable funding for community rail and how we could work best with the heritage rail sector.
- 4.2 Respondents of all types stated that community rail has an excellent track record for innovation and that this should be supported in the new strategy. ACoRP stressed the need to consider 'innovation' as involving any alternative approach that is more constructive and community-based, not just looking at technological or infrastructure development. They highlighted the need to support and empower community rail organisations to help them to reflect local needs and explained that ACoRP is currently undertaking work to support community rail groups, including: supporting effective planning; accessing funding; and developing effective community engagement, influencing and delivery skills.
- 4.3 A number of respondents, including ACoRP, the Penistone line and the Poacher line, underlined the importance of ensuring that community rail partnerships remained independent of train operating companies control in order to help foster innovation and effective performance. Respondents of all types noted the need for ACoRP and the Government to play a role in defining what an effective community rail organisation looks like and ensuring that community rail operates to a high standard. Business in the Community highlighted the opportunity of using corporate expertise in local organisations and supporting community rail to find expert board trustees and other advisers to help - this could be a blend of retired professionals and emerging talents. Community rail partnerships stressed the need for ongoing guidance and support from ACoRP, in particular around supporting the transfer of ideas between community rail partnerships. Great Western Railway, a train operator, went further and urged Government to act to share best practice from other industries.
- 4.4 Community rail partnership respondents highlighted the key role of community rail in understanding local needs and being able to propose effective, innovative and, importantly, deliverable projects. Respondents to the consultation, including attendees at the York, London and Shrewsbury seminars, pointed to rail industry bureaucracy as a barrier to innovation. Attendees at York asked Network Rail to develop more community rail friendly processes and that community rail should make more use of local suppliers to carry out works, rather than national contractors. The Hereward line community rail partnership suggested that it would be good to have a procurement framework to support community rail partnerships and station adoption groups to access trusted local skilled workers.

- 4.5 Respondents to the consultation and attendees at the York event highlighted some of the innovative work currently going on in the community rail world including:
- The use of modern technology to make travel easier and improve wayfinding;
 - The use of mobile phones and tablets to record public attitudes and perceptions of journeys: and
 - The installation of wifi at stations and on trains on community rail routes.

The next generation of community rail

- 4.6 The role of the next generation of rail users featured in a number of responses. The Penistone line and Rail North both suggested that engaging young people would be a good way to increase innovation. Suggestions included a proposal from Rail North to establish a National Community Rail Youth Board and the greater use of technology to engage with young people.

Funding community rail and community rail designation

- 4.7 Respondents noted the need for ongoing support from train operating companies and local authorities in order to provide baseline funding, certainty and sustainability for community rail, but also highlighted the need to establish a more varied funding base for both core funding and projects. The Rail Delivery Group felt that where possible there should be businesses or enterprises at stations owned by community rail schemes, and any surplus to be reinvested by the partnership for community/station projects.

Case Study: Heart of Wales Line Development Company (HoWLDC)

The Heart of Wales Line Development Company Ltd (HoWLDC), which incorporates the previous community rail partnership, has well-established relationships with local tourism providers and promotes holiday opportunities along the line. A Heart of Wales Line Walking Trail has been launched, which selected, and where needed upgraded and waymarked, existing footpaths to produce a reliable route which gives access to many of the line's stations. A new 48-hour Rover ticket has been developed in collaboration with Arriva Trains Wales and is being launched as part of the line's 150th anniversary celebrations this year.

HoWLDC is currently in discussion with Arriva Trains Wales to take over operation of a vacant kiosk at Llanelli station which will sell light refreshments and other goods and to provide other services when the new franchise comes into operation. It also manages the innovative community rail hub at Llandeilo which is used by an organic vegetables box supplier and the use of the station cafe and gallery at Llandovery which is operated by the volunteer group, Friends of Llandovery Station.

- 4.8 A number of respondents, including the Hereward line community rail partnership, stressed the need for long-term planning, including thinking beyond annual line plans. Some community rail partnership respondents noted the need for flexibility in the structure of community rail partnerships to allow them to meet local needs and aspirations.
- 4.9 Community rail partnerships and train operating company respondents suggested that there is a need for a variety of Government and train operating company-led funds from which community rail groups can access funding for specific projects. Proposals included a dedicated innovation fund, replicating GWR's Customer and Communities Improvement Fund (CCIF), and the creation of a national small stations development fund. There was support for the retention and development of the Designated Community Rail Development Fund (DCRDF).
- 4.10 Respondents of all types felt that there was benefit in retaining some form of designation for community rail partnerships. This ranged from retaining the current line and service designation, but with amended objectives, to moving towards community rail partnership or regional designation. Rail North suggested that there should be some form of accreditation associated with designation and the Poacher line suggested stronger powers for designation in order to give it more status with train operating companies.
- 4.11 Respondents felt that designation played an important role in setting and maintaining standards for community rail partnerships and that this should be better explained and publicised. GTR suggested that designation should not lower the standard of works on community rail lines. Severnside Community Rail Partnership felt that more should be done to publicise the good work achieved through designation and to explain the benefits that designation brings. Respondents argued that doing so would help to demonstrate the long-term viability of community rail which would in turn help to secure third-party funding. ACoRP suggested that there is merit in maintaining some form of designation but, that if this did not realise sufficient benefits, it could be phased out and replaced with a simple certification scheme.
- 4.12 Train operating company respondents highlighted a need for more clarity on how community rail will be taken forward by the devolved administrations. They also felt that there needed to be a greater focus on community engagement alongside operational requirements.

Working with heritage rail

- 4.13 In relation to working with heritage rail, respondents told us that the most obvious link was in encouraging crossover between passengers using heritage and community rail lines. Respondents felt that there was scope for more productive working with heritage railways on fares and marketing, and that there was a need to be more imaginative on scenic or 'heritage' community rail lines to meet customer expectation and maximise impact. Rail North felt that this could be supported by grant schemes to develop 'heritage aspects' of community rail lines.
- 4.14 ACoRP and the Swanage Railway Company (SRC) highlighted the inclusion within the Purbeck Community Rail Partnership of the SRC. They both highlighted the benefits that this brings in terms of transfer of skills and volunteering opportunities and the improved business case that can be put forward for line and station reopening when community and heritage rail work together. Respondents also highlighted the positive role that community rail can play in station and line re-

openings. For example, Railfuture felt that greater use should be made of the heritage rail network as part of the public transport network.

Key messages for the strategy

The Government considers that the following issues should be addressed in the new community rail strategy:

- Encouragement for the rail industry to be more receptive to and act on ideas put forward by community rail. This should include encouraging the rail industry to work with community rail organisations to ensure that the needs of the local community are reflected in the provision of services.
- Encourage rail processes that support, rather than frustrate, community-led innovation in rail, for example the Network Rail Governance for Railway Investment Projects process.
- Support access to sustainable funding for community rail, recognising that there are many different, effective approaches to ownership, management and operation.
- Provide support for community rail organisations to act innovatively. This could include encouraging more young people to engage with community rail and using community rail's independence and community focus to deliver effective innovations for the communities they serve.
- A better focused community rail designation process to support access to funding and to provide confidence across the rail industry that community rail organisations are effective delivery partners.
- Support for mutually beneficial relationships between community rail and heritage rail.

5. Next Steps

Developing the new strategy

- 5.1 This document is intended to give a sense of the issues which the Government believes should be included in the new Community Rail Development Strategy. The proposed key messages included are not exhaustive.
- 5.2 The DfT will now work with ACoRP, other Government Departments, the Welsh Government and the National Community Rail Steering Group to develop the new strategy, taking into account responses to the consultation and the information provided at the consultation events. We will also consider issues raised and suggestions made during our ongoing engagement with the community rail sector and the rail industry.
- 5.3 We expect to publish the new strategy in summer 2018.

Annex: Consultation Questions

5.4 In its consultation document, the Government asked the following questions:

Question 1a: What role can community rail play in improving end-to-end journeys?

Question 1b: How can community rail help to:

- Make journeys more sustainable?
- Encourage more healthy travel?
- Reduce the environmental impact of travel?

Question 2: How can community rail help:

- a. Communities have a voice in influencing the provision of rail?
- b. Complementary transport services and development of the rail network?

Question 3: Where should the Government encourage community rail to develop on parts of the network currently without active community rail partnerships or other community participation?

Question 4a: What is the role of community rail in supporting:

- Community cohesion?
- Promoting diversity?
- Enabling social inclusion?

Question 4b: How is this best achieved?

Question 5: How can community rail help to make sure that the railway is accessible to as many people as possible?

Question 6: How can community rail support local economies and railways grow through:

- Increasing employment?
- Education and training opportunities?
- Supporting small businesses?
- Social enterprise development?

Question 7: What role can community rail play in making best use of:

- Station buildings?
- Railway land?

Question 8: How can community rail be best supported to act:

- Innovatively?
- Effectively?

Question 9: What opportunities are there to secure a:

- Diverse income base for community rail?
- Sustainable income base for community rail?

Question 10: How can community rail designation be developed to more fully realise its potential?

Question 11: How can community rail:

- Support the development of rail line and stations improvement?
- Contribute to the development of rail line and station improvement?
- Make greater use of heritage railways?