

2023

Chilternrailways

ANNUAL COMMUNITY RAIL REPORT



Introduction

The Chiltern Railways Community Rail Report provides you with a comprehensive overview of the community rail projects delivered across our network in 2023. Led by the Chiltern Railways Corporate Affairs team, this report dives into the activities that have delivered social, economic, environmental and sustainable value across our communities.



Welcome from Vanessa Russell, HR and Corporate Affairs Director

A warm welcome to the 2023 Chiltern Railways annual Community Rail Report. Despite a challenging year for the railway with repeated industrial action and infrastructure disruption, we are proud of the projects we have delivered in conjunction with our Community Rail Partnerships, Station Adoption Groups and wider community partners.

Over the past year, we've witnessed excellent progress in relationship building and increased engagement across our network. A key highlight for us here at Chiltern Railways was the launch of the Oxfordshire Community Rail Partnership, covering 7 of our stations in the county. We're delighted to welcome them on board, supporting the shared goal of making the railways accessible to all and to boost leisure and tourism across Oxfordshire.

Another key achievement for us this year was the launch of the Community Investment Fund. Funded by the Department for Transport, this scheme is dedicated to supporting community groups, our partners, and local organisations including Business Improvement Districts and Community Interest Companies. The fund's primary focus is to deliver projects that enhance the social and economic well-being of the residents along our route. In 2023, we funded 12 innovative projects from rail confidence sessions for refugees and survivors of modern slavery, to station garden expansions and the creation of new active travel maps to better connect our stations to local communities. We look forward to seeing these projects delivered over the first half of 2024.

Moving forward, we have ambitious plans to encourage more local communities to adopt their local stations, particularly across Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire. Delivering more community rail activity is core to our vision of achieving an easier, greener and better railway for everyone.

Meet the team



David Heathfield - Head of Corporate Affairs

David has been a dedicated member of the Chiltern Railways team for 9 years since joining as a graduate. As Head of Corporate Affairs, David is responsible for our internal and external communications functions, including our stakeholder engagement and media teams.



Zach Bailey - Stakeholder Manager

Zach joined Chiltern in early 2022 following previous roles managing station operations at MTR Elizabeth Line and Transport for London. Zach is responsible for delivering our stakeholder engagement strategy, working with MPs, Local Authorities and community groups to deliver social value for our communities.



Misbaah Akhtar - Stakeholder Executive

Misbaah has been with Chiltern for 2 years and manages the day-to-day relationships with our Community Rail Partnerships and Station Adoption Groups. Misbaah has led the delivery of our new Community Investment Fund, working with new and existing partners to expand Chilterns community links.

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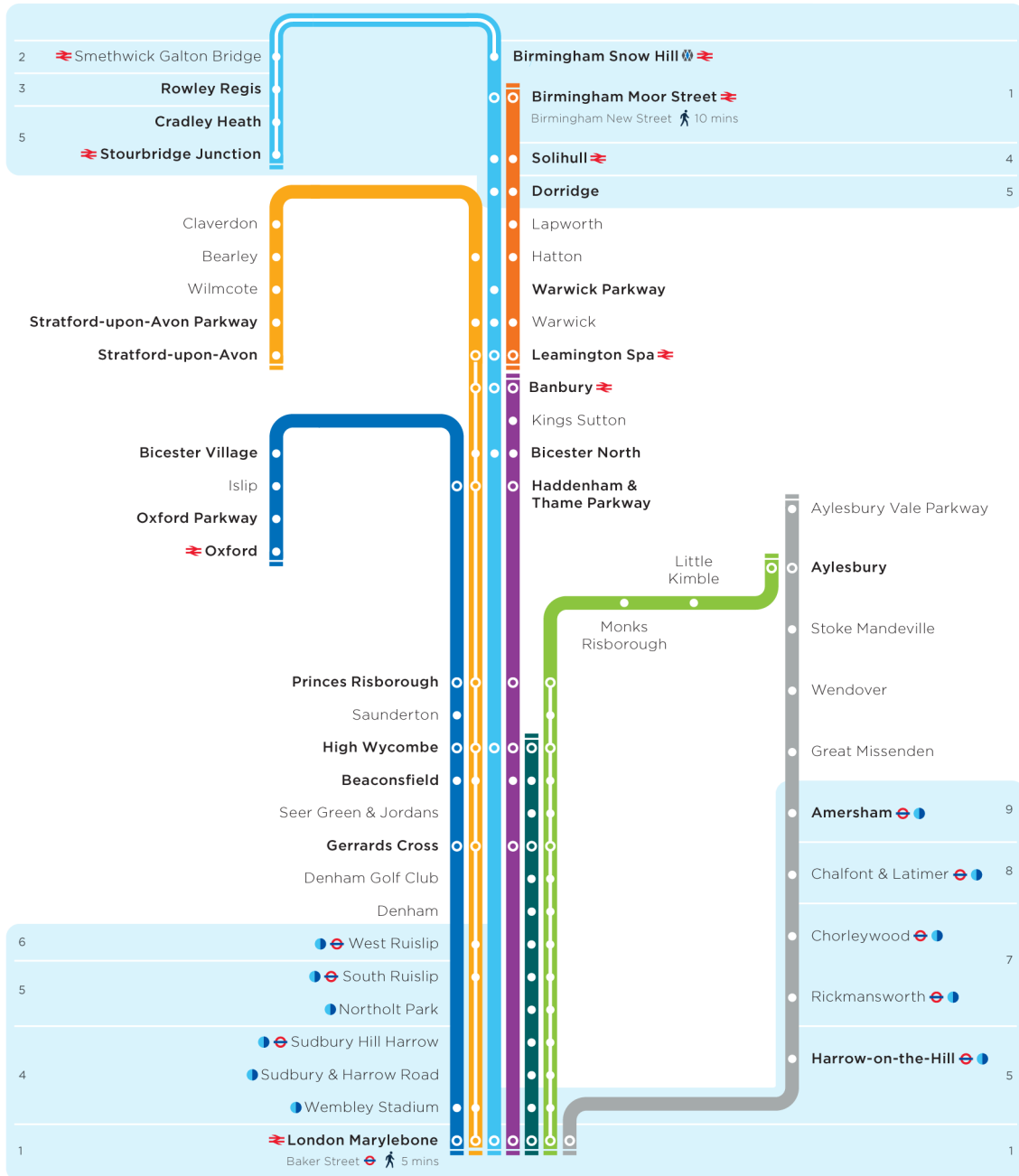
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Chiltern Railways Network

Updated May 2023

Transport for West Midlands Fare Zones



London Travelcard Zones

- Typical calling points on this line. Check timetable for details
- Stations recommended for connections between lines
- ⊕ London Underground interchange
- ⊕ Midland Metro interchange
- ⊕ National Rail interchange
- Pay as you go with Oyster or Contactless
- London Marylebone to Oxford
- Leamington Spa to Stratford-upon-Avon
- London Marylebone to Birmingham
- London Marylebone to Banbury
- Leamington Spa to Birmingham
- London Marylebone to High Wycombe
- Princes Risborough to Aylesbury
- London Marylebone to Aylesbury via Amersham
- Limited service route

Chilternrailways

Not all trains call at all stations shown.

Community Investment Fund

Supporting and investing in our local communities is important to us and imperative to furthering social, economic, and environmental development across our route. Our Community Investment Fund is designed to support the development of Community Rail. Applications opened in Spring 2023, with groups being required to operate within 5 miles of a Chiltern Railways station. The application criteria focused on projects that deliver economic benefits to local people, social benefits such as volunteering and environmental benefits such as promoting active travel links or biodiversity.

For further details please visit: www.chilternrailways.co.uk/sustainability/community

In 2023 we successfully funded 12 organisations in our local communities:

- **Achieving Results in Communities**
Foundry Wood project in Leamington.
- **Baker Street Quarter Partnership**
Westminster Wheels bike repair workshops in London.
- **Banbury Business Improvement District**
Community artwork project in Banbury.
- **Catch22 Jams**
Musical performances for charity at London Marylebone.
- **Friends of Leamington Station**
Coronation Garden development at Leamington Spa.
- **Friends of The Shakespeare Line**
Artistic development at Birmingham Moor Street.
- **Heart of England Community Rail Partnership**
Rail confidence sessions for refugees in Solihull.
- **The Jericho Foundation**
Rail confidence sessions for survivors of modern slavery in Birmingham.
- **Lindengate**
Making their community garden accessible in Wendover.
- **National Literacy Trust**
Delivering literacy programmes to schools in Buckinghamshire.
- **Oxfordshire Community Rail Partnerships**
Creating active travel maps for Bicester North and Banbury stations.
- **Sustrans**
Supporting the new Misbourne Greenway active travel route near Great Missenden.



Oxfordshire Community Rail Partnership (Ox CRP)

This year alongside Oxfordshire County Council, Great Western Railway and CrossCountry, we have established a new Community Rail Partnership in Oxfordshire. This will support existing groups such as our Station Adopters at Bicester North and Junior Citizens school education program, as well as expanding our community activity to new stations in the county.

The four primary aims of the Oxfordshire CRP are:

Access and Inclusion:

Enhancing accessibility and inclusivity for rail users. OxCRP will deliver a series of rail confidence trips for under-represented groups across Oxfordshire in 2024, funded by Chiltern Railways Community Investment Fund.

Social Value:

Maximise the social value created by the railway through initiatives that positively impact well-being and quality of life. This will include education and volunteering schemes.

Leisure and Tourism:

Encouraging communities and visitors to explore the region. OxCRP will create new active travel maps for Banbury and Bicester North stations in 2024.

Station Spaces:

Transforming and creating community hubs that bring people together through station adoption. Key stations for 2024 include Banbury, Bicester Village and Oxford Parkway.

These objectives reflect a comprehensive approach to community development and engagement supported by Chiltern Railways along with Oxfordshire County Council, Great Western Railway and CrossCountry.

In September, we hosted a successful launch event at Oxford Parkway station, attracting over 60 attendees from various organisations, including local councils, Rail User Groups, Community Rail Partnerships, and neighbouring train operators. The event provided a platform for networking, sharing ideas, and learning more about the newly formed Oxfordshire CRP. The diverse representation showcased a strong network of stakeholders interested in contributing to the success of the Oxfordshire CRP. We look forward to sharing more detailed plans of OxCRP's activities in 2024.



Heart of England Community Rail Partnership

Founded in 2019, the Heart of England Community Rail Partnership brings together Warwickshire County Council, rail operators in the region and community groups with the shared mission to make the railways accessible, champion sustainable travel and deliver community engagement.

Heart of England CRP supports Chiltern Railways, rail users and local residents in shaping the future of rail connectivity between Birmingham Moor Street and Leamington Spa, fostering a sense of shared responsibility and community cohesion. This is done in a number of ways including developing artwork for stations, supporting adoption groups with gardening projects and providing opportunity for unrepresented groups to access and experience the railways in different forms.

- In 2023, the Heart of England CRP have introduced four key pillars outlining their community engagement goals and priorities. With an additional Community Rail Officer as part of the team, they are expanding their outreach to a diverse audience, ranging from young children to the elderly. This includes organising trips for students, providing many with their first train experience, and conducting rail confidence sessions for refugees. These initiatives aim to show alternative transportation methods that carry broader social, educational, and economic benefits—from education and exploration to employment opportunities.
- The 'Very Royal Train' project at St Alphege School, Solihull, in celebration of the coronation of King Charles III. With support from Chiltern, Heart of England delivered a two-day workshop inspiring over 200 pupils to create royal train designs. The open-mindedness of these children showcased their creativity, and the top ten designs were displayed along the passage at Solihull station for a two-week period. To celebrate the occasion, the Friends of Solihull and the CRP spent the morning handing out coronation themed colouring packs at Solihull Station and decorating the station with bunting.



Heart of England Community Rail Partnership

- Working in partnership with Chiltern's Community Investment Fund, the CRP has arranged diverse rail trips for refugees from Syria, Ukraine and Hong Kong. These initiatives not only introduce them to the basics of using ticket machines and reading timetables but also addresses aspects that might not have been considered in their country of origin. This approach aims to empower refugees with the skills and confidence they need to navigate the railways safely and swiftly. Groups have been on exciting visits to destinations including the Think Tank Museum in Birmingham and the Warwick Castle ice rink!
- The CRP actively supports adoption groups and supports the improvement of station environments with artwork and offering additional funding to enhance their initiatives. This collaborative effort contributes to the commitment to enrich community spaces through creative methods and small grant funds. An example of this is the installation of community artwork created by local schoolchildren at Lapworth Station.
- Heart of England CRP continues to encourage people to explore the outdoors and uses a diverse range of promotional methods to boost leisure travel. Posters advertising attractions and hidden gems along the railway corridor have been displayed between Birmingham Moor Street and Leamington Spa. A fantastic example of these 'Rail Trails' is the countryside walk arranged for Community Rail Week in May. The adventurous trek began from Leamington Spa station and headed to the village of Offchurch where all those who participated had the chance to pass by many historic and green sites.

Plans for 2024:

Looking ahead, the CRP is developing a biodiversity project, working closely with young people and adoption groups to deliver sustainable initiatives for our stations. This involves activities such as building planters from recycled materials, creating wildlife habitats and educating groups on water conservation.

The CRP is also joining the Rail Safe Friendly initiative, targeting rail education programmes at 45 schools in the West Midlands and Warwickshire. This initiative is crucial for educating young people on rail safety, addressing the high level of trespassing and anti-social behaviour among young people who may be unaware of the dangers. The CRP aims to prioritise safety awareness, ensuring the well-being of both individuals and the community involved.



Community Rail Network

The Community Rail Network (CRN) serves as a catalyst for the community rail movement, collaborating with national train operators and corporate partners to actively engage communities.

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CRN played a key role in the development of the Oxfordshire CRP, our second CRP. They were able to advise on best practice and introduce new partners which help deliver wider community benefits and will enhance community engagement across Oxfordshire.

The theme of Community Rail Week this year was #ConnectingCommunitiesByRail and we can say it was a huge success. In partnership with Banbury Improvement District, the launch of the community gallery at Banbury station showcased the town and key spots along the stairs of Platforms 1&2 and Platforms 3&4. We were joined by local photographers who were thrilled to see their work displayed. These posters have brightened up the staircase and promote local attractions. Those passing through the station were given some tasty bakes to mark the launch.

Our Heart of England Community Rail Partnership arranged a 7-mile countryside walk bringing together people from the community. Young Rail Professionals hosted a careers stall at Birmingham Moor Street to promote careers in the railways. It is important to tackle barriers and provide opportunity for all and Young Rail Professionals want to inspire the next generation by showcasing the opportunities created by rail careers.

We are pleased that Community Rail Week was such a success, and we are delighted that we can support such rewarding programs. We look forward to working with the Community Rail Network in 2024, as we seek to expand our community initiatives into Buckinghamshire.



Young Rail Professional Career's Stand, Moor St Station



Community Gallery, Banbury Station

Business Community Engagement

In 2023, we partnered with various organisations near our railway, ranging from Business Improvement Districts to Tourism Boards.

We worked closely with the Banbury BID (Business Improvement District) and amateur photographers to capture the essence of Banbury in an aim to encourage passengers to explore local sights, boosting the area's economy. With our Community Investment Fund, the BID has delivered successful art workshops involving over 100 individuals to help transform disused spaces with vinyl artwork for Community Engagement around Banbury. These initiatives help create a welcoming atmosphere and foster a sense of safety on the walk between the station and town centre.

Throughout the year, the Baker Street Quarter Partnership has actively engaged with the Marylebone community, building stronger relationships with local groups and organisations while enhancing ties with the railway. Marylebone station is used by many business and leisure travellers, and the partnership focuses on improving the overall customer experience through strategic and community driven engagement.

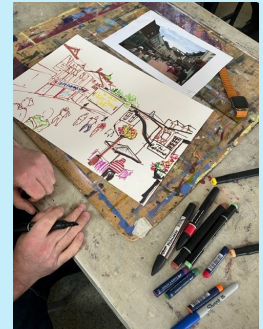
The Community Investment Fund has allowed Baker Street Quarter Partnership to sponsor free bike repairs outside Marylebone station, promoting sustainable travel and ensuring the safety of commuters who travel to and from the station by bike. Westminster Wheels who support young people's skills development, will be hosting the pop-up twice a week until March 2024. In preparation for the 125th anniversary of Marylebone station, Baker Street plans to use the investment fund to transform the Harewood Avenue entrance. Collaborating with local organisations such as Westminster University, the artwork will

narrate the history of Marylebone station, showing how railway colleagues and the community have shaped the station's identity over the years. In the spirit of the season, Baker Street Quarter have also worked with us to deep clean pavements near the station and have decorated the station's entrance canopy with lights to create a festive experience for both passengers and the local community.

In a collaborative effort with Solihull and Banbury Business Improvement Districts we have also jointly funded Christmas trees for Solihull and Banbury stations, creating a warm and festive feel for customers attending events on the network.



Westminster Wheels Bike Servicing Station, Marylebone Station



Banbury Business Improvement District Art Workshops



Christmas Decorations at Marylebone and Banbury Station



Station Adoption

With over 120 volunteers, we have nine active Station Adoption groups across West Midlands, Warwickshire, Oxfordshire, and Buckinghamshire.

We aim to expand station adoption further in Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire in 2024. Their creativity and dedication is instrumental in improving station spaces and enhancing the environment for our customers.

Station Adoption Groups

- **Friends of Moor Street Station**
- **Friends of Solihull Station**
- **Friends of Dorridge Station**
- **Friends of Warwick Station**
- **Friends of Lapworth Station**
- **Friends of Hatton Station**
- **Friends of Leamington Spa Station**
- **Friends of Bicester North Station**
- **Friends of Aylesbury Station**



Friends of Moor Street Station

Following their achievements during the Commonwealth Games, the Friends of the Shakespeare Line adopted Birmingham Moor Street in January 2023.

Their transformative efforts have enhanced the station further, with 28 vibrant planters adding life and colour, and not forgetting to mention the tropical garden between platform 2 and 3, providing passengers with a unique experience.

Despite facing challenges due to the lack of sunshine at times, the Friends of Moor Street maintain a positive attitude. Their commitment goes beyond planting, with plans to introduce bookshelves and further decorate the station to create a welcoming space.

As we celebrated the Coronation of King Charles III, volunteers at Moor Street dressed the station with bunting and pictures of the Royal Family. Their efforts marked the historic moment and created a joyful atmosphere for our customers passing through. The Chiltern team worked

hard to manage excited crowds during the Coronation weekend and offered free flags and colouring packs for children to mark the occasion.



Friends of Solihull Station

The Friends of Solihull Station have been actively engaged in a variety of creative and community-focused activities, transforming the station into a vibrant and welcoming space.

In celebration of the Coronation, the Friends of Solihull Station and Heart of England CRP distributed Coronation themed colouring packs as we displayed the Royal Train designs created by local students, adding colour to the station environment. The friends also planted red, white and blue flowers to mark the coronation. This initiative not only celebrated a historical event but also brought the community together.

Their book swap scheme is proving to be successful, with 500 books distributed already this year!

The diverse group have recently added a display feature to the waiting room, showcasing the history of the station. This creates a unique and educational experience, providing waiting passengers with interesting facts about the station's

history. The display reflects the group's commitment to enhancing the station's atmosphere and offering valuable information to the community. The Friends work closely with local organisations and ensure their work is community-driven and transformative for the station.

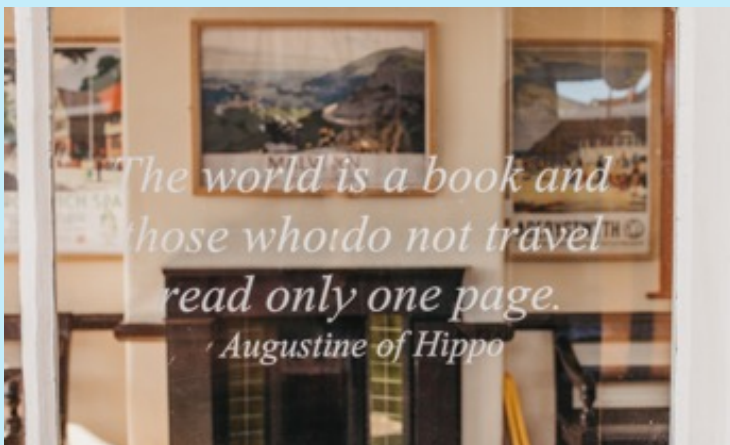


Friends of Dorridge Station

In the heart of Dorridge, the 12 dedicated members of the Friends of Dorridge Station have come together with a shared commitment to maintain the historic charm of the station. Their collaborative efforts focus on maintaining planters and ensuring the iconic waiting rooms retain their immaculate historic style, giving passengers a glimpse of the past. These waiting rooms also feature destinations accessible by train, prompting greener travel choices and encouraging new visitors to attractions across our route.

A distinctive feature of the Friends' initiatives is their vegetables and herb beds. Passengers are invited to pick fresh vegetables and herbs, creating a unique and interactive experience that makes the station environment feel both welcoming and community oriented.

Working closely with Chiltern, Friends of Dorridge Station have plans in place to upgrade the ticket hall. Aiming to preserve Dorridge's historical charm, their vision is to enhance the booking hall's appearance making it a more welcoming place for customers.



Friends of Warwick Station

As Warwick Station undergoes maintenance and the installation of new lifts, the core of their efforts is the commitment to creating an accessible station that serves the needs of the entire community. The installation of lifts at Warwick Station represents a step toward enhancing accessibility for all passengers, creating an inclusive and welcoming environment for everyone. Network Rail have also installed some community artwork to enhance the platform areas at Warwick.

Recently, our Project Management team collected a National Railway Heritage Award 2023 recognising the Great Western Railway style furniture restoration in the Warwick station booking hall.

We look forward to the step free access project being completed and the Friends of Warwick getting back to delivering projects in 2024.



Friends of Lapworth Station

In an effort to integrate Lapworth Station with the local community and embrace nature, the Friends of Lapworth have taken on transformative projects throughout the year. Their vision goes beyond a functional railway station; they aspire to create a welcoming space that reflects a sense of community.

This year, Lapworth Primary School students designed community themed artwork which was proudly displayed along the railings by the Friends of Lapworth. The eye-catching art brightens the station environment and portrays community cohesion.

With support from Network Rail, the Friends of Lapworth wanted to attract more wildlife to the station and requested bird boxes to be put up on trees alongside disused land next to the station. These additions not only enhance the station's aesthetic appeal but also contribute to creating a wildlife-friendly environment.

Volunteers continue to engage in planting activities, ensuring that the station remains a pleasant and spotless environment. Recognising the importance of ongoing maintenance, the Friends are exploring innovative ways to make planting more successful, which includes Chiltern and Network Rail working on a project to deliver a new tap for watering the station planters in the Summer.



Friends of Hatton Station

The Friends of Hatton have been very keen on creating a vibrant and welcoming station environment. Through a combination of planting initiatives and collaborative partnerships with local businesses and organisations, they are actively shaping Hatton station into a lively and attractive place for the growing number of passengers. The Friends recently installed some new planters at the station, which have delighted customers with floral displays this summer.

Friends of Hatton Station gather regularly, and as neighbours of our railways, they love spotting freight trains as they pass through. Engaging with villagers, the friends have a close relationship with the residents who live right next to the station who are very supportive of what the friends do to improve Hatton Station.



Friends of Leamington Station

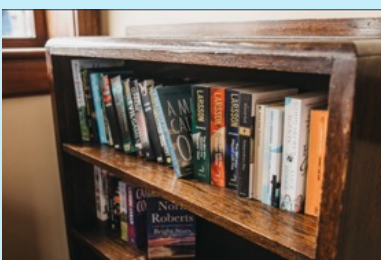
Friends of Leamington Station come together weekly to tend to the magnificent garden that contributed to the station earning second place in the national World Cup of Stations competition.

Hosted by the Rail Delivery Group in partnership with the Community Rail Network, this recognition highlights the outstanding achievements of the Friends of Leamington Station nationally. The garden, a source of local pride, has become a haven for wildlife, birds, bees, and ladybirds which grace the station garden. The addition of bird feeders adds a charming touch to the garden.

The Community investment Fund has allowed the group to brighten the blank space between the existing garden and station building. This extension, the Coronation Corner, is the group's wish to create an inviting space. From installing new planters to adding replica GWR benches, the goal is to provide passengers with a welcoming spot to enjoy while waiting for their train.

The Friends of Leamington Station not only continue to transform the station but also foster community connections and contribute to the station's role as a welcoming and engaging space.

Chiltern Railways would like to acknowledge Archie Pitts, the former chair of the Friends of Leamington Station, who sadly passed away this summer. Archie worked closely with the volunteers on many projects aimed at enhancing the station environment, his great leadership played a huge role in the success of these initiatives. Archie and his team of dedicated volunteers, received multiple awards over the years he led the group. Archie will be fondly remembered for his kind nature and leadership.

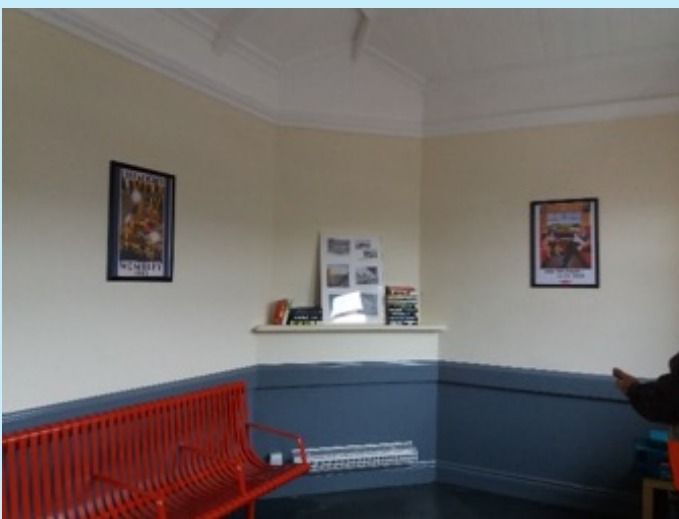


Friends of Bicester North Station

The Friends of Bicester North are a tight-knit group and have a regular get together through station visits and meetings where earlier this year, a new chair was elected. These gatherings highlight the strong sense of community and shared commitment among the volunteers.

The group's dedicated efforts on the impressive 90m x 5m flower bed continue to capture the attention and appreciation of passengers. The lush plants and well-maintained trees, tended to by the Friends, have become a delightful feature at Bicester North. The involvement and support of Chiltern colleagues further underlines the collaborative spirit that thrives at the station. During the Coronation celebrations, the Friends of Bicester North

dressed the station in bunting to mark the occasions. More recently, they put up two Christmas trees and held a small tea party to celebrate the chair of the group's birthday. Their efforts create memorable moments for passengers and volunteers. Their commitment to making Bicester North a welcoming and lively station is something close to their heart, and to make the waiting room feel cosier, they've added some books and destination posters to give customers a better experience.



Friends of Aylesbury Station

The Friends of Aylesbury have embraced a creative approach to station adoption, continuously working in innovative ways to make Aylesbury Station a distinctive and welcoming space. Their collaboration with various organisations reflects a commitment to involving the wider community in their initiatives.

Beyond their station-focused activities, the Friends of Aylesbury actively support and encourage individuals to get involved in station adoption.

One of the stand out features at Aylesbury Station is the herb bed, where passengers are invited to pick herbs on their way out, providing passengers with a unique and engaging experience.

The Friends of Aylesbury have been busy working on the station beds with the support of many local organisations and authorities including; Aylesbury Garden Town (AGT), Buckinghamshire Council, volunteers from Pebble Brook School and the Community Payback Scheme. The small team of volunteers have even added a unique Japanese water feature to the flower beds to give customers something nice to look around whilst waiting for their journey to begin.



Junior Citizens Programme

Chiltern colleagues, alongside partners like the British Transport Police regularly volunteer at Oxford Fire Station, delivering crucial rail safety talks to small groups of pupils from schools across Oxfordshire.

The Junior Citizen's program is a rail safety and education initiative aimed at teaching and educating young people about the importance of good behaviour around the railways. Pupils are encouraged to make a mock call to emergency services to test out their response if they ever encounter an emergency situation. These efforts collectively contribute to our goal of enhancing community involvement and ensuring the well-being and safety of people on the railway. Over 1000 children took part in 2023.



Charity Partnerships - National Literacy Trust

The National Literacy Trust is an independent charity that empowers children, young people, and adults with the literacy skills they need to succeed.

In Spring 2023, six volunteers from Chiltern joined 30 pupils from Lighthorne Heath Primary School in a program led by the National Literacy Trust.

This experience aimed to foster literacy and communication skills in the students while providing them with the invaluable opportunity to interact with working adults from diverse backgrounds.

The event featured a station tour of Leamington Spa, where students learnt about the roles of Chiltern colleagues including meeting train managers, engineers, performance experts, and members of our fleet maintenance team. Engaging in a railway themed word hunt, students actively participated while volunteers later read a train-themed book and answered career related questions in small groups. For many students, this marked their first visit to a train station and will build their confidence to use the train to get to and from school.

The station visit was followed by a celebratory event at the school, where volunteers guided students to build railway bridges using Lego. This activity helped develop problem-solving, teamwork and communication skills. A lot of positive feedback was received including teachers saying that the program enabled them to introduce the children to new careers that could be of interest to them in the future.

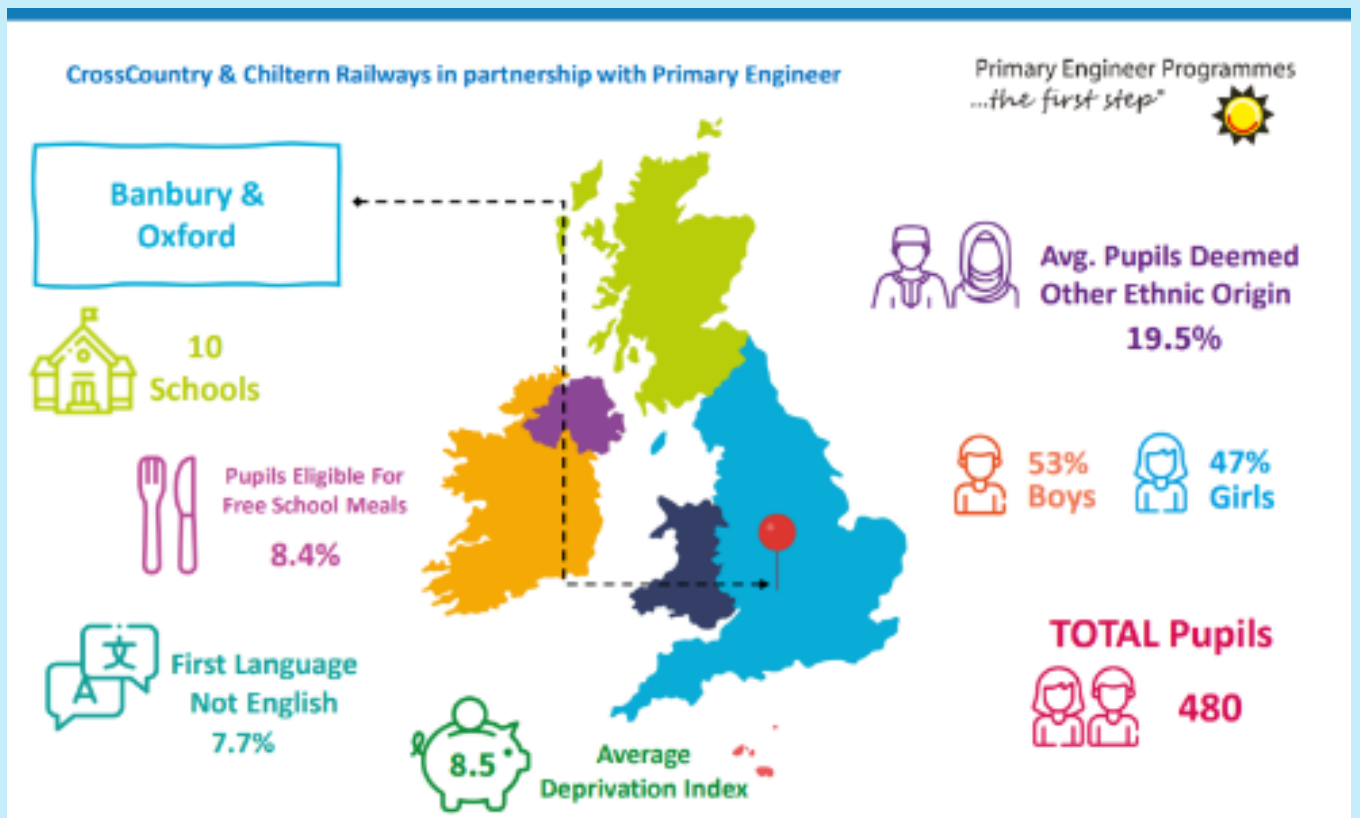


Charity Partnerships - Primary Engineer

Primary Engineer®, since 2005, have developed an engineering curriculum that spans Early Years, Primary, Secondary and Further Education institutions. Its core aims include; the development of children and young people through engagement with engineering, the promotion of engineering careers through inspiring programmes and competitions, the development of engineering skills for teachers and practitioners addressing the inequalities in engineering

During the summer term, in collaboration with Primary Engineer's, volunteers from Chiltern Railways and CrossCountry were paired up with 10 schools across Oxfordshire on a Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) related educational program. The project engaged with 480 students and supported them to build trains from shoe boxes and wood. This initiative helped to build aspirations amongst the students and gave the opportunity for teachers to learn more about STEM careers.

School sessions were followed by a celebration event at St Swithun's Primary School in Oxford where 3 schools attended with a total of 60 pupils. A competition was held, and the trains were put to the test. The students thoroughly enjoyed the event and our volunteers who have left a lasting impact.



Internal community engagement

Chiltern Railways Community Fund Volunteering days

Our commitment to community engagement extends to our colleagues and their links into our communities. Our Sustainability Fund empowers colleagues to request funding for organisations and charities close to their hearts. Recently, we proudly supported and contributed to diverse organisations along the route, including:

Bourne End Juniors kit sponsorship

An under 10's football team near High Wycombe have had a new football kit provided for the 2023/4 season.

Wing Village Bowls Club

Our community fund helped to fund new scoreboards at the Bowls club located near Aylesbury.

Oxford Wheels Project

The charity provides free BMX and Skateboard facilities at Meadow Lane in Oxford. The organisation aims to improve the quality of life for those living there of all ages and backgrounds. Chiltern have funded some of their operating costs for 2023

We believe that giving back to our communities is a powerful way to create a positive impact on the world around us. As part of our community rail initiatives, we are thrilled to announce the relaunch of 'Staff Volunteering Days'. This initiative is aimed at supporting causes which are closest to our hearts.

With 30 days of volunteers leave available, we encourage staff to take these and support organisations and charities close to their hearts.

We understand that finding time to give back in our fast paced environment is difficult, which is why we have implemented this program to provide flexibility and support for our colleagues.



Our colleague Laura Swindells completing the three peak challenge and raised £1,371 for frontline aid in Sudan

Community Rail Conference

We held our annual Community Rail Conference at the St John Paul II Centre, Bicester, on 19th October. It was fantastic to see many of our dedicated community rail volunteers and partners coming together to celebrate achievements from 2023 and discuss future objectives for the coming year.

Presentations were given by several of our Station Adoption Groups, Heart of England CRP and Oxfordshire CRP, as well as the Community Rail Network.

We also launched our first Chiltern Community Rail Awards. This year's winners are:

Gardening Hero Award

Sandra Hateley, Friends of Moor Street Station

Individual Recognition Award

Bea Foster, Friends of Bicester North

Group of the Year Award

Friends of Lapworth

Outstanding Achievement Award

Friends of Leamington Spa



Finances

Being able to support the development of communities along our route is beneficial for our rail users, partners and people who live locally. In line with our obligations to the Department for Transport, we are transparent about our spending on community rail projects. We have outlined our historic and anticipated future spending on Community Rail activities in the table below.

This table outlines the funds distributed and projected for our Community Rail Partnerships for 2023 and the next three years. We have increased our contributions in line with other Train Operating Companies to our Community Rail Partnerships. This will help to account for inflationary pressures and enable us to deliver more community projects in the future.

Community Rail Partnership	2023	2024	2025	2026
Oxfordshire Community Rail Partnership	£7,500	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000
Heart of England Community Rail Partnership	£7,500	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000

The proposed increased funding aims to support Oxfordshire Community Rail Partnership to expand its outreach to a broader community. It will also contribute to expanding their team and invest in additional projects for 2024 including promoting the growth of rail to access leisure and tourism opportunities in the region. For Heart of England CRP the additional funding will support the newly appointed 2nd Community Rail Officer, as well as deliver the biodiversity corridor project between Birmingham Moor Street and Leamington Spa.

Comment from Paul Webster Support and Development Manager at Community Rail Network

Community Rail Network (CRN) confirms that Chiltern Railways have met with us to discuss the allocation of the 'CRP Amount' to the listed Community Rail Partnerships. We have also discussed how CRP core funding for 2024-25 should be protected at current levels and ideally increased in-line with the real costs and overheads incurred by the CRPs and we are satisfied that Chiltern and have taken sufficient account of our views and those of the CRPs receiving the funding.

We welcome the forward-thinking approach of Chiltern to support the formation of a new CRP in Oxfordshire and the collaborative regular meetings held with CRPs and Station Adopters to discuss their aims and help develop their projects. We are very satisfied with the level of engagement between the community rail team at Chiltern and Community Rail Network and also through our input to the 2023 Chiltern Community Rail Conference at which we were pleased to deliver a presentation.

Finances

Project funding.

We received a Community Investment Fund from the Department for Transport in 2023 with 12 community partners receiving funding. We have applied for another round of funding for 2024.

Community Investment Fund 2023	
2023	£126,000

Charity Partners.

This table outlines the finances allocated to two of our Charity Partners who work closely with schools across the network.

Charity Funds	2023	2024
Primary Engineers	£4,445	£5,250
National Literacy Trust	£5,635	£5,817
Total	£10,080	£11,067

Internal colleague Community Fund:

We intend to retain this in 2024

Sustainability Fund 2023	
For colleagues	£3000

Station Adoption Groups:

We intend to give a £250 grant per group in 2024

Station Adoption Groups 2022	
Friends of Moor Street	£250
Friends of Solihull Station	£250
Friends of Dorridge Station	£250
Friends of Lapworth	£250
Friends of Hatton station	£250
Friends of Warwick Station	£250
Friends of Leamington Station	£250
Friends of Bicester North Station	£250
Friends of Aylesbury Station	£250
Total	£2,000

Our plans for 2024:

Looking ahead to 2024, we are excited about advancing and expanding our community engagement initiatives across the network. Increased funding is proposed, empowering Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) to undertake a broader range of project in various areas, facilitating connections with more communities. Collaborating with CRPs, our focus extends to promoting rail trails, encouraging outdoor exploration, and supporting the local visitor economy.

As part of our 2024/25 annual business plan, we have submitted a proposal for a Community Investment Fund. This initiative enables partners, organisations and not for profit organisations to submit proposals, developing stakeholder relationships and delivering social value for our communities. The fund is a crucial tool to enhance community engagement.

Expanding our station adoption scheme is also part of our 2024 plan, seeking volunteers for Banbury, Bicester Village, and potential expansion in Buckinghamshire, including Stoke Mandeville, Gerrards Cross, and High Wycombe. This initiative aims to enhance local involvement and improve station environments. Programmes led by our Charity Partnerships continue, with three outlines planned with Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire schools. Volunteers from our business will have opportunities to get involved in exciting station tours and reading activities.

As the 125th anniversary of Marylebone approaches, plans are underway to create a memorable celebration. This is being done in close collaboration with stakeholders and community partners in marking this milestone with a community celebration at the station. Beyond these efforts, we look forward to collaborating with Business Improvement Districts, supporting the economic and social development of local areas. From rail trail maps to art-related projects, we aim to contribute to the growth of our communities.

Chiltern Railways would like to thank all our partners for their hard work and dedication in delivering community projects this year and we are excited to collaborate with partners and communities in 2024.

