

ISLE OF WIGHT CRP ANNUAL REPORT

2025



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTORS

It has been a privilege to serve as Directors of our Community Rail Partnership during such a remarkable year.

The highlight has been achieving formal accreditation from the Department for Transport through the Community Rail Network — a national mark of quality that reflects the vision, hard work, and collaboration of everyone involved.

Our Partnership has shown that the railway is more than a way to travel: it is a catalyst for connection, a driver of sustainability, and a source of community pride. As a not-for-profit Community Interest Company, we remain committed to projects that encourage greener journeys, improve accessibility, and celebrate the communities along our line.

We are especially grateful to our Steering Group — who also serve as our core funders — for their guidance and belief in our work.

Their support has enabled us to achieve so much, so quickly. Looking ahead, we are excited to welcome new partners from community organisations and local businesses who share our vision.

Together, we can ensure our railway continues to open opportunities, strengthen connections, and create lasting positive change.

On behalf of the Directors, thank you for being part of this journey.

Richard Tyldsley and Will Myles

Directors, Isle of Wight Community Rail Partnership CiC

WHO WE ARE

The **Isle of Wight Community Rail Partnership** has been connecting people, places, and opportunities for over 20 years.

Rooted in collaboration, we bring together community groups, local authorities, volunteers, schools, and businesses to ensure the Island's railway is more than just a means of travel—it's a lifeline for community, culture, and sustainability.

Our mission is built on The four pillars of community rail.

- 1. Providing a voice for the community:** Ensuring that community perspectives are represented in rail and transport development.
- 2. Promoting sustainable, healthy, and accessible travel:** Encouraging travel options that are environmentally friendly and accessible to all.
- 3. Bringing communities together and supporting diversity and inclusion:** Fostering community engagement and inclusivity in rail initiatives.
- 4. Supporting social and economic development:** Contributing to the local economy and enhancing social well-being through community rail initiatives.

We celebrate achievements both big and small: from station gardens in bloom and art created by local schools, to innovative projects that deliver lasting social value. Every step we take is about making the railway a vibrant part of Island life.

Above all, **we are a partnership**. Our strength comes from working side by side with those who share our vision of a connected, sustainable, and inclusive future. Whether you are a resident, visitor, volunteer, or partner organisation, you have a place with us.



The Isle of Wight railway carries more than passengers—it carries the spirit of community. And together, we're building a legacy that will travel far into the future.

SANDOWN YOUNGSTERS INSPIRED BY CREATIVE UNIVERSITY VISIT

On February 19th, **Julian Wadsworth MBE**, Community Resilience Coordinator for the Bay area and Youth Intervention Development Officer for Community Action Isle of Wight, together with staff, took a group of 18 young people aged 13–18 from Sandown to Portsmouth for a unique educational and cultural experience.

This exciting opportunity was made possible thanks to funding from the **Isle of Wight Community Rail Partnership (CRP)**, supported by South Western Railway's Social Development Fund. This fund exists specifically to support initiatives that broaden horizons for young people, enabling them to access experiences not usually available to them.

The group spent the day at Portsmouth University's Creative and Cultural Department, where they explored opportunities in the arts, design, and media. The visit provided many benefits, including:

- **Gaining insight into higher education and career pathways.**
- **Experiencing creative workshops and demonstrations first-hand.**
- **Developing teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills.**
- **Expanding cultural awareness and confidence through new environments.**
- **Inspiring ambition by meeting university staff and students.**

South Western Railway and Wightlink were hugely supportive, providing free rail and ferry passage for the youngsters and staff. This meant that the funding could instead be used for a well-deserved lunch outing—a real treat for this group of vulnerable young people, many of whom would not normally be able to afford what, for them, was a luxury.

The day was a great success, leaving the young participants inspired and motivated, with memories and experiences that will last long beyond the trip itself.



FOOD ON THE MOVE FINISHES AFTER 5 YEARS AND OVER £400,000 FINANCIAL SUPPORT



Food on the Move was created in 2020 by the Community Rail Partnership, just as the country went into lockdown.

The Partnership had been running Music on the Move, a community programme supported by South Western Railway and CrossCountry Trains. When lockdown restrictions meant the music events could no longer go ahead, the CRP hit the ground running and the funding was redirected to food – and Food on the Move was born.

The project aimed to ensure that no one was left in the rail corridor pockets of deprivation, without access to essentials. With additional support from the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Community Foundation, and funding from the Isle of Wight Council's Household Support Fund, it quickly became a lifeline for vulnerable families, isolated individuals, and those unable to shop for themselves.

Alison Smith, well-known as the face of the former Gaslight Community Café at Sandown Railway Station, fronted Food on the Move until June 2025. Under her leadership, volunteers prepared and delivered food packages, turning an emergency response into a long-lasting community programme.

Over £400,000 was raised, with Food on the Move winning awards and gaining national recognition as one of the most powerful volunteer-led responses to the pandemic and the ongoing cost of living crisis managed by a small organisation.



TRAVELSAFE

The history

TravelSafe began in 2007 on the Isle of Wight as a creative film and theatre project, designed and delivered by community rail manager Bobby Lock. Its purpose was to engage young people in conversations about public transport, encouraging both safety awareness and responsible travel choices.

The last film, *TravelSafe Presents*, was produced eight years ago and remains relevant today. With funding from South Western Railway's Customer and Communities Improvement Fund, the initiative partnered with theatre group The Riot Act. Together, they visited schools to screen the film and deliver interactive performances, helping young people understand the real-life consequences of unsafe behaviour around railways and roads.

The 2025 Project

From 4–13 March 2025, The Riot Act, in collaboration with the Isle of Wight and New Forest Community Rail Partnership and the Isle of Wight Council, visited 16 schools, reaching



3,859 Year 9 and 10 students. Using live drama, video, and interactive discussion, the programme delivered powerful safety messages while promoting sustainable travel.

Impact and Feedback

Feedback from teachers and students was overwhelmingly positive, praising its relevance and engaging style. Evaluation showed increased understanding of railway hazards, improved confidence to influence peers, and better tools for managing impulsive behaviour in dangerous situations.



SUIT YOURSELF – EMPOWERING WOMEN ON THE ISLE OF WIGHT

Now in its 25th year, *Suit Yourself* is a free 12-week course designed to help out-of-work women with low confidence and self-esteem move back into employment or education.

For the past six years, the Isle of Wight Community Rail Partnership has worked closely with the dedicated team behind the course, securing funding and bringing in partners to deliver practical sessions – from makeovers and mock interviews to CV writing and job applications.

The results speak for themselves: on average, 7 out of 12 participants successfully move into work or adult education, gaining improved income, housing stability, and life choices. These outcomes not only boost self-esteem but also have a positive impact on mental health. Many women also form lasting friendships and support networks through the programme.



With funding from South Western Railway's Customer and Communities Improvement Fund (CCiF), two courses ran this year. Additional funding from SWR's Social Development Fund will allow a further two courses to run through from September to March 2026. Island Line supports the project with transport and mock interviews, while Southern Vectis provides free travel for all women enrolled, ensuring attendance is never limited by cost.

Recognised for its impact on individuals and the wider community, *Suit Yourself* is helping to build stability, opportunity, and connection across the Isle of Wight – one course at a time.





Community Rail is a growing grassroots movement made up of community rail partnerships and groups across Britain.

They engage communities and help people get the most from their railways, promoting social inclusion and sustainable travel, working alongside train operators to bring about



Minister of State (Minister for Rail) Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill CBE

PALACE OF WESTMINSTER SUMMER RECEPTION

On Monday 7 July, we were delighted to attend the Parliamentary Reception at the Palace of Westminster, joining our MP for West Wight, Richard Quigley, in celebrating the achievements of community rail and the role it plays in supporting sustainability.

The event, hosted by Helena Dollimore MP and attended by Rail Minister Lord Hendy, brought together nearly 200 guests, including MPs, rail industry partners, and community representatives from across England, Scotland, Wales, and even the Netherlands.

It was an inspiring opportunity to showcase the breadth of projects delivered by Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs), and to highlight how grassroots initiatives are making a tangible difference—particularly in promoting greener travel, strengthening local economies, and enhancing social inclusion. For East and West Wight, the four pillars of community rail is at the heart of our ambitions, and this gathering reinforced the importance of partnership working in ensuring long-term impact.

We are grateful to our hosts and to the many supporters who make community rail possible. Most importantly, the event reminded us that collaboration across regions, sectors, and communities is key to building a transport system that works for everyone and helps meet our climate commitments. We look forward to continuing this journey with renewed energy and support.



DOVER PARK PRIMARY PUPILS ALL ABOARD FOR RAIL 200 MURAL PROJECT

On 17 July, thirty Year 6 pupils from Dover Park Primary School in Ryde enjoyed a special trip to Havenstreet with Island Line's "Try the Train" programme. The day began with a safety briefing to prepare pupils for using the train as they move on to secondary school.

Then, the group travelled from Smallbrook Junction on the Isle of Wight Steam Railway to begin an exciting mural project that will be unveiled later this year in the Los Altos underpass at Sandown. The artwork will mark 200 years of rail nationally as part of Rail 200, while also celebrating the Island's unique railway heritage, as well as its rich plants and wildlife.

A central theme of the mural is how seeds travel along railway corridors, taking root in unusual places. This natural movement creates new habitats and helps local wildlife thrive—an idea the children explored throughout the day.

The creative session was led by artist Nigel George from Artecology, alongside Island Line manager Bobby Lock, who encouraged the pupils to sketch seeds, plants, and the creatures that depend on them. The visit concluded with the popular "Rail Story" museum tour, which brought the Island's rail history to life.

This project will continue with the involvement of other local young people and is supported by the Bay Resilience Project, Community Action, Artwork, and Community Murals.





Today marks exactly twenty years to the day—September 5th, 2005 to September 5th, 2025—since I began my journey as a Community Rail Manager. Reflecting on two decades in this role, I see not just the passing of time but the transformation of communities, stations, and countless partnerships that have made the railway more than a transport system—it has become a lifeline and a source of local pride.

From the very beginning, the focus has been on people: working with volunteers, schools, local authorities, and train operators to ensure stations are welcoming, accessible, and reflective of the communities they serve. Projects have ranged from creating greener, safer spaces to fostering art, heritage, and education initiatives that connect people of all ages with their railway.

Encouraging sustainable travel and linking rail to wider community aspirations has been central throughout. Perhaps most rewarding has been engaging young people, helping them see the railway not just as a service but as part of their future.

As I celebrate this milestone, I feel proud of the partnerships, the friendships, and the resilience built along the way. Twenty years on, the railway continues to inspire and connect, with more still to come.

Ms Bobby Lock
Community Rail Manager



Manager@iowcommunityrailpartnershipcic.co.uk | <https://www.facebook.com/bobbyiowCRP> | Registered address: Building 41 Newport Road, Northwood, Cowes, Isle Of Wight, United Kingdom, PO31 8BX

Community Interest Company (Company Number 15751063 registered in England and Wales)