

Community-led project connecting people with rail along the Cambrian Line scoops coveted UK award

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The **Cambrian Railway Partnership** has received a coveted national Community Rail Award in recognition of its work to help communities engage with their railways.

Fighting off stiff competition, the partnership was named winner of the Tourism and Leisure award for the Cambrian Line Window Seater Audio Guide at the 19th national Community Rail Awards, organised by Community Rail Network.

This year's awards, jointly sponsored by Transport for Wales and Great Western Railway, recognised a wide range of projects across Britain and beyond. Nineteen winners were chosen from 180 inspiring entries, all demonstrating how the community rail movement builds positivity and awareness between local people and their railways.

The Cambrian Line Window Seater Audio Guide provides passengers with geolocated, localised audio stories as they travel along the route from Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth and along the Wales Coast to Pwllheli.

The Window Seater app connects rail travellers to the world outside their window with place-based audio guides that draw on stories from communities along the line. Guides cover a wide variety of subjects from history and geography to art and culture – always focused on the local area.

The Cambrian Line Window Seater Audio Guide enhances passenger experience in a fun and engaging way, making for a more satisfied and sentimental journey. The guide is available in English and Welsh, promoting our region's culture and identity.

The Community Rail Awards were held at Swansea Arena on 18 March. More than 430 guests including senior rail and transport leaders and community rail officers and volunteers. It recognised projects supporting diversity, accessibility and inclusion, sustainable travel and tourism, youth and schools engagement, community-led station improvements, empowered communities and influencing positive change.

The Awards recognise the crucial, often unsung work of community rail partnerships, station friends and other community rail groups, which continue to grow in number and impact, under Community Rail Network's umbrella. There are now 77 CRPs and an estimated 1,200 station groups spread across Britain (and now a few beyond too).

Claire Williams, Cambrian Railway Partnership Development Officer said: "We are thrilled and immensely proud to be recognised with this esteemed Community Rail Award in Tourism and Leisure. This recognition is a testament to the dedication and collaborative effort of the Cambrian Railway Partnership and the communities we serve, who have been instrumental in bringing these stories to life, preserving history, promoting our rich culture and creating memorable journeys along the Cambrian Line."

Jools Townsend, chief executive of Community Rail Network, said: "Our Community Rail Awards give deserved recognition to community rail partnerships, groups and volunteers across Britain. The awards ceremony showcased the great value of community rail, helping to build stronger, fairer, greener communities, served and connected by their railways and wider sustainable transport network. Our congratulations to the Cambrian Railway Partnership and to all our winners, and thanks to everyone who supports and champions community rail, helping the movement to go from strength to strength."

Rail Minister Huw Merriman MP said: "The Community Rail Awards are important in recognising the incredible work of volunteers and community groups improving our rail network. I was lucky enough to see first-hand the difference these projects are making when I met with some of those taking part including during my rail tour last summer.

"Whether it's improving accessibility in stations or engaging with young people about rail, I'd like to thank each and every one for their contribution and the impact they've made."

Marie Daly, chief customer and culture officer, Transport for Wales, said: "We were thrilled to co-sponsor this year's awards in beautiful Swansea and celebrate the amazing work being done across the UK and particularly across our own network.

"We're so lucky to be able to work with so many amazing communities and organisations through our

Community Rail Partnerships and really believe that by connecting and encouraging collaboration among businesses and organisations in local communities, we can empower those communities to work together on a whole range of social, economic, cultural and environmental issues, as well as showcase the best our network has to offer.”

The Cambrian Line Window Seater Audio Guide project has been funded by the Community Rail Development Fund, Transport for Wales Challenge Fund and the Cambrian Railway Partnership.