

# Community rail ready to play a leading role in promoting sustainable travel and a greener transport recovery

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Members of a national grassroots rail movement are readying themselves to play a major role in a green and inclusive recovery for the rail sector this summer. Community rail groups across Britain are set to support communities to ‘build back better’ and greener from COVID-19, helping to bring people together, rebuild confidence and understanding between communities and their railways, and put rail at the centre of a sustainable transport future.

To aid their efforts, Community Rail Network, the umbrella body for the community rail movement, are hosting two webinars focused on sustainability, emphasising the importance of community engagement in delivering local impact and behaviour change. The organisation is also producing a series of sustainability-themed reports, sponsored by Rail Delivery Group, highlighting examples of good practice in supporting modal shift from road to rail, sustainable development, and biodiversity.

This heightened focus on sustainability aligns with the findings of last month’s Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail, which spoke of the changes required if rail is to become the backbone of a “cleaner, greener public

transport network.” It also comes ahead of the planned publication of the government’s Transport Decarbonisation Plan, and COP26 in Glasgow in November, acknowledged as a crucial opportunity to enact real change across the transport sector.

The first webinar, hosted today (June 8), centred on “Promoting rail’s green credentials”, and will aim to empower Community Rail Network members to engage confidently with their communities in promoting rail travel as the sustainable option. It highlighted the building of a greater awareness around sustainable transport, give a deeper understanding of the future plans within the rail sector to prioritise decarbonisation and environmental sustainability, and look at how the community rail groups can work confidently with rail partners to support green messaging.

The second webinar, on June 28, is titled “Encouraging and enabling modal shift through community engagement”, and will explore how community rail can support modal shift from road to rail and other forms of public, shared, and active travel through effective local engagement and community-led activity. Full details on both events can be found [here](#).

The series of three sustainability-related reports will bolster confidence and share good practice on local rail-related sustainability projects, through research, expert insights, and community rail projects and case studies. The first report, due to be published at the end of June, will showcase the role community rail and community engagement is playing in encouraging and enabling modal shift, and discuss how the movement can continue to make an impact locally to support positive behaviour change.

From June 30, community rail groups are also being invited to take part in Community Rail Network’s ‘[Summer Days Out are Better by Rail](#)’ campaign, which is promoting sustainable tourism by encouraging people to (re)discover Britain’s community railway lines and stations by providing inspiring ideas and themed itineraries for days out by rail.

Jools Townsend, chief executive of Community Rail Network, said: “Community rail has a critical part to play in promoting rail as part of everyday sustainable and healthy travel, and in helping railways play a major role in bringing about a more sustainable society. The movement is already contributing to sustainable development, but there is scope for it to make a greater contribution, in decarbonising transport, nurturing environmental sustainability, and creating sustainable, greener, and more inclusive communities.

“We are at a critical juncture with transport and travel, with a chance to reset transport priorities, putting people’s communities, health and wellbeing, and our environment, at the forefront. We know that sustainability continues to be a key priority for many of our members, and hope that by offering these events and resources, we can support them to help potentially deliver far-reaching benefits in terms of sustainable travel and development.”

*Photo credit: Community Rail Network*