

Growing range of projects across Britain bringing communities together through rail recognised at national awards

December 10, 2020



An inspiring range of innovative 'community rail' initiatives, delivered by community groups, partnerships, and volunteers across Britain, have been celebrated at the 16th Community Rail Awards.

This year's event recognised a diverse array of projects, including many that had risen to the challenges of supporting communities through the pandemic, continuing to build links, positivity and awareness between local people and their railways.

The awards, organised by Community Rail Network, were delivered as an online gala evening for the first time, with 550 guests, including community rail volunteers, officers, rail industry leaders and government representatives.

The awards recognise the crucial and often unsung work carried out by community rail partnerships, station adopters, and community groups, in areas such as community engagement, community-led station development, promoting diversity and inclusion, and influencing positive change and sustainable

development.

A range of speakers underlined the value of engaging communities with local railways and stations, and importance of rail to our communities, COVID-19 recovery, and sustainability. They included: Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris MP; Ken Skates MS, Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales; Bill Reeve, director of rail at Transport Scotland; Sir Peter Hendy and Andrew Haines, chair and chief executive of Network Rail; Jaqueline Starr, chief operating officer of Rail Delivery Group; and Malcolm Brown, chief executive of headline sponsor Angel Trains.

Judges praised the “exceptionally high” standard of more than 200 entries, and commended the ways community rail partnerships and groups created or adapted projects to rise to the challenges of COVID-19.

On the showcase night for the community rail movement, presented by Jools Townsend, chief executive of Community Rail Network, and Robert Nisbet, director of nations and regions at Rail Delivery Group, the Community Rail Education Network claimed the Outstanding Contribution to Community Rail Award. Coordinated by Community Rail Lancashire, with support from Northern, it enables community rail partnerships to share good practice on engaging young people and children in rail-based education projects.

This year also saw a special Railway Family Supporting Communities Award, to highlight those within rail and community rail who had gone above and beyond to help others during the COVID-19 pandemic. The award was won by auntie and niece, Christine Holland and Shellene Divall, station adopters at St Anne’s Station in Lancashire, who took the prize for their efforts in making much-needed scrubs for their local hospital in Blackpool.

Full details of all winners and highly commended entries can be found [here](#), and the winners are listed below.

Jools Townsend, Chief Executive of Community Rail Network, said: “The Community Rail Awards give deserved recognition to community rail volunteers and partnerships across Britain. We were thrilled to welcome 550 guests, and contributions from ministers, rail industry leaders, and famous faces underscored the great importance of community rail, especially as we look to build back better and greener from COVID-19.

“The array of entries defied expectations, showing how community rail has adapted and responded, supporting communities through the pandemic, maintaining positivity, and continuing to help people get the most from their railways and stations. The awards showcase community rail’s tireless work to help our communities, railways, and transport, become more sustainable, inclusive, and caring, to bring people together, enrich lives, and create a greener future – this couldn’t be more important right now. Congratulations to all our winners, and thanks to all who continue to support the community rail movement.”

Rail Minister, Chris Heaton-Harris, said: “I was extremely impressed by not just the quality but diversity of projects celebrated at this year’s awards. Local communities up and down the country have worked tirelessly to improve the railway, helping bring people closer together despite the huge challenges that

COVID-19 has presented. I would like to congratulate all of those who won awards. These inspirational projects have made a real difference to those who use our rail network.”

Malcolm Brown, chief executive of headline sponsor Angel Trains, added: “Angel Trains would like to congratulate all the winners in this year’s Community Rail Awards. During these extraordinary times, the role of community rail and those involved is more important than ever. We would also like to congratulate Community Rail Network for organising such a professional event with all the challenges they faced.”

The night’s winners across all categories were:

- **Involving Children and Young People** *sponsored by Grand Central Railway*

Kent Community Rail Partnership and Sheppey College for A Chance to Shine

- **Involving Diverse Groups** *sponsored by LNER*

Tyne Valley Community Rail Partnership for Lyric and Line

- **Community Art Schemes - Permanent** *sponsored by Abellio*

Community Rail Lancashire for Horizons

- **Community Art Schemes - Renewable & Smaller** *sponsored by Transport for Greater Manchester*

Track Record Arts for Track Record - The Soundtrack to the Severn Beach Line

- **Most Enhanced Station** *sponsored by Greater Anglia*

Haslemere Arts Society, Museum, and Town Council, with South Western Railway, Surrey County Council, and regional partners for Haslemere Community Station

- **Small Projects Award - Under £500** *sponsored by Community Rail Lancashire*

Friends of Hunmanby Railway Station for Attracting Passengers to Hunmanby’s New Hourly Train Service

- **Best Community Engagement Event** *sponsored by Rock Rail*

Community Rail Lancashire for Women in STEM

- **Best Marketing or Communications Campaign** *sponsored by CrossCountry*

The Bittern Line, Wherry Lines, East Suffolk Lines, Hereward Line, Essex and South Suffolk Community Rail Partnerships and Greater Anglia for Room with a View

- **Tourism & Heritage** *sponsored by Transport for Wales*

Wherry Lines Community Rail Partnership, Lowestoft Central Project, Lowestoft Heritage Open

Days Festival, and Network Rail for Lowestoft Signal Box Tours

- **Influencing Positive Change & Sustainable Development** *sponsored by TransPennine Express*

Community Rail Cumbria, Millom Discovery Centre, and Flimby Primary School for Better Side of the Tracks

- **Photo Competition | Community Rail in Action** *sponsored by Porterbrook*

Poacher Line Community Rail Partnership for Age is Just a Number

- **It's Your Station** *sponsored by Avanti West Coast*

Lead at Platinum level - Friends of Buxton Station

- **Outstanding Volunteer Contribution** *sponsored by Merseyrail*

Kath Warbrick of Friends of Aspatia Station

- **Community Rail Network Award for Outstanding Contribution to Community Rail**

Community Rail Education Network

- **Railway Family Supporting Communities Award** *sponsored by Rail Delivery Group*

Shellene Divall and Christine Holland for The Scrubs Project

Funds were raised for the event's two chosen charities, Fearless and The Tree Council.

Photo credit: Community Rail Partnership

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