

National recognition for Essex community rail projects

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Efforts to bring Essex communities together through rail station projects have been tipped for several national awards.

The Essex & South Suffolk Community Rail Partnership has been nominated in four categories at the Community Rail Awards for their work to support communities, encourage sustainable travel and enhance public spaces.

Their work with Refugee, Asylum seeker & Migrant Action to help refugees and asylum seekers adapt to life in Essex through helping them to use public transport has been nominated for 'Involving Diverse Groups'.

They are also shortlisted for 'Best Community Engagement Project' for organising East Anglia's first 'dementia-friendly' day out by train where 40 people with dementia and their carers enjoyed live music on board, and, along with The Friends of Rayleigh station, 'Most Enhanced Railway Spaces' for the creation of a new community garden at Rayleigh station.

In addition, they organised a special train to run through Essex to raise awareness of the climate emergency with support from Greater Anglia, Essex Path to Prosperity, Essex County Council and The Essex Forest Initiative which is nominated for the 'Influencing Positive Change & Sustainability' award.

A tree was planted for everyone who travelled, and the trip included a guided walk through the Blue House Farm Nature Reserve and around the Sea Wall and a display by the Essex Climate Action Commission to show people how they can work together to tackle climate change.

Wrabness station adopter, Julia Prigg, has also been shortlisted in the 'Outstanding Volunteer Contribution' category for her dedication to caring for Wrabness station garden for more than 10 years, creating a wildlife haven and community garden that has been used by residents and schoolchildren for all sorts of community activities.

Essex and South Suffolk Community Rail Partnership Engagement Officer, Jayne Sumner, said: "Our aim is to build positive relationships and mutually beneficial links between rail branch lines in Essex and the communities they serve so we were absolutely delighted to see our efforts, and the benefits they have delivered, nominated for these national awards."

Alan Neville, Greater Anglia customer and community engagement manager, said: "We are really proud of our community rail partnerships and amazing station adopters and are thrilled that the work that they do across the region to support communities, promote sustainable travel and help our region's branch lines to thrive has been shortlisted for so many awards."

The Community Rail Awards, now in its 18th year, recognises the important work carried out by an army, often of volunteers, who work across Britain's rail network to make stations welcoming spaces for passengers and visitors alike. Alongside this, many of the groups carry out vital community engagement work with schools, colleges, and other local groups to help educate and secure passengers of the future, which is critical to ensuring railways are an inclusive, sustainable, healthy way to travel.

The winners will be announced at a ceremony in Manchester on 5 October.