

PM considers the contribution of community rail

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Prime Minister Boris Johnson has heard about the work carried out by community rail partnerships and groups in Britain.

Whilst visiting Yorkshire, he heard how they engage local communities, give people a voice on transport, and promote green and inclusive travel by rail.

Mr Johnson visited the region for the launch of the Department for Transport's Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands (IRP), which outlines £96bn investment in rail upgrades, local transport connectivity and electrification, to be delivered over 30 years.

Jools Townsend, chief executive of Community Rail Network, spoke to Mr Johnson at Huddersfield station. They discussed the work of the growing community rail movement, which now boasts 74 community rail partnerships and 1,000 station friends volunteer groups. She highlighted projects and progress in areas including engaging children and young people, promoting sustainable leisure travel by rail, social inclusion and wellbeing, and integration between trains, buses, walking, and cycling.

Mr Johnson also had the chance to meet volunteers from the Penistone Line Partnership, which covers the line from Huddersfield to Sheffield, via Barnsley, running activities including schools engagement, 'Try the Train' trips, and 'Dwell Time', an art and writing project promoting mental wellbeing.

The Prime Minister also held up a pledge to 'Go Green by Train', the tagline for the first ever 'Community Rail Week', held last month in the build-up to COP26, and involving community rail partnerships and station groups across the country, supported by Rail Delivery Group.

Jools said: "Community rail partnerships and station volunteers work tirelessly to help communities, railways, and transport, become more sustainable, inclusive, and caring, to bring people together and enrich lives. This was a brilliant opportunity to speak to the Prime Minister to inform him of the fantastic work going on across Britain, aligning with government objectives of adding social value, levelling up, and helping communities to build back better and greener. The PM seemed really impressed with the efforts being made by station volunteers and community rail partnerships to involve local people and ensure everyone can benefit from the rail network."

On the Integrated Rail Plan, Jools said: "We welcome the focus on local communities within the Integrated Rail Plan, and its commitment to enabling modal shift and more integrated local transport. There are some promising commitments that will increase rail capacity and reliability across the North and Midlands, delivering benefits to many communities, and putting rail at the heart of a wider sustainable transport network. We and our members in community rail will continue to work with national and local government, and our rail and transport partners, to ensure communities have a voice and can shape these changes, so everyone can benefit."