

## South Western Railway first train company to assess and publish “social value”

July 28, 2021

# South Western Railway

South Western Railway (SWR) has published its first Social Value Report, becoming the first train operating company to do so. The **report** is a summary of the impact that SWR has on society, the environment, and the economy, from delivering improvements for its customers every day, to supporting local communities of the South West, and helping build the economic and social prosperity of the UK.

The Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) Research identifies 10 key areas of social impact for rail: community safety, accessibility, employment and skills, social inclusion, diversity and inclusion, health and wellbeing, employee engagement, customer satisfaction, local and sustainable procurement, and regeneration.

To provide a common, consistent basis for understanding and measuring social impacts across Great British rail industry organisations, projects, and programmes, RSSB Research established the Common Social Impact Framework (CSIF), soon to be known as the Rail Social Value tool. SWR commissioned independent experts from Larch Consulting to assess its social impact both quantitatively and qualitatively, using the RSSB Rail Social Value tool.

Whether it's supporting people with non-visible disabilities gain more confidence when travelling, or mentoring local young women from disadvantaged backgrounds, launching our new online mental health hub for colleagues, or making redundant spaces available for community use, SWR, its colleagues, and partners work hard to ensure that the people of the South West get the most out of life.

Key achievements include:

- Supporting 215 people to complete an apprenticeship
- Procuring 7.5% of all spend from small and medium-sized businesses
- Providing £10.7 million worth of training courses
- Appointing and training 82 mental health first aiders
- Increasing the proportion of step-free access stations to 68%
- Investing £1.03 million in the Customer and Communities Improvement Fund
- Preventing 175 incidents through interventions from frontline teams
- Limiting colleague turnover to 5.6% through colleague engagement
- Donating £259,316 to charities
- Dedicating 117.5 hours of colleague time to the delivery of health and wellbeing courses
- Establishing five key networks to help achieve greater diversity and stronger inclusion
- Achieving a 4 or 5 out of 5 rating for station experience from 76% of respondents to the customer survey
- Introducing a passenger assistance satisfaction survey
- Developing a network for apprentices

Going forward, SWR will focus on improving the practice of recording of social impact data in all areas, while continuing to work with the RSSB to improve measurement of social impact. SWR plans to publish a social value report every year.

Amy Dickinson, SWR's Head of Sustainability, said: "South Western Railway works hard on delivering improvements for our customers every day, but our responsibilities go beyond our customers, to the communities we serve, and helping build the economic and social prosperity of the UK.

"As one of the busiest networks in the country, we inevitably have an impact – on society, the environment, and the economy – and it is our responsibility to achieve maximum social value, taking every opportunity to have positive impacts, while mitigating the potential for disbenefits.

"As our first report of this kind, we know that it is not perfect, but to know where we are going, we had to know where we were coming from – and so, we are proud to share it. It serves as a benchmark from which SWR can build this year, and every year.

"Our stakeholders, customers, and communities should consider it an invitation. Whether you have a great idea, an exciting new project, or simply just want to find out more, we would love to hear from you. Together, we can ensure that the people of the South West get the most out of life."

Michelle Papayannakos, RSSB's Sustainable Rail Programme Lead, said: "Rail Safety and Standards Board

is proud to work with South Western Railway as one of the first rail operators to apply the Rail Social Value tool and the first to embrace public social impact reporting.

“We hope to continue to collaborate with SWR to develop consistency in reporting across railway organisations, and ultimately champion and document at an industry level the wide social benefits and opportunities Britain’s railways bring.

“We believe the railways should be valued not only as a mode of transportation of people and freight, but also for the greater social goods that they deliver.”

The RSSB Social Sustainability Team has released a new Social Value Competency Guide on how individuals and organisations can evaluate their own competency levels with regards to social value.

The guidance is set out as a competency matrix, allowing users to determine their current level of competency, whilst also identifying what additional skills and development are needed to reach the next level of competency. It includes a range of resources to help individuals and organisations in this journey, and can be found [here](#).

*Photo credit: South Western Railway*