

South Western Railway welcomes aboard new community rail partnerships and station adopters

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South Western Railway (SWR) has announced the formation of two new Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) which will serve stations on the SWR network from Alton to Wanborough (including Ash Vale) and within the southern part of the London Borough of Kingston.

CRPs are not-for-profit organisations that help connect SWR with the communities it serves. Connecting people and communities is at the heart of SWR, and CRPs focus on a wide range of projects which aim to:

- promote sustainable and healthy travel
- bring communities together
- support social and economic development

The new CRPs work with their local communities and community groups to build an understanding of the importance of local railways, whether it be improving mobility and sustainable travel or community cohesion and wellbeing or even social and economic development. The funding from SWR is invested in

both projects and employing an officer for each CRP, who delivers the community activity. SWR is actively involved with each CRP, working in partnership with them to deliver outcomes that benefit as many people as possible.

SWR also works closely with more than 80 Station Adoption Groups. Station adoption provides an opportunity for individuals to volunteer to make a difference to their local areas, helping communities to get the most from their stations. This could be through an established group taking on a new role, or like-minded locals coming together to do something specifically to improve their station with. Adoption groups have recently opened at Ashurst and Havant in Hampshire; Bookham, Effingham Junction, Egham, Milford and Witley in Surrey; St Margarets, Barnes, Putney and Richmond in London and Hamworthy in Dorset

Robin Hutchinson of The Community Brain, who will be overseeing the new CRP within the London Borough of Kingston said: "The Community Brain has worked with our friends at South Western Railway since 2018 when we adopted Tolworth station as part of our SHEDx programme. We're very pleased to be extending that relationship into a Community Rail Partnership, which will allow us to work together to provide community projects and social action across more of the south of Kingston Borough."

Mark Millar, Chair of the Wey Valley CRP said: "We are delighted to be working with South Western Railway to expand community rail in Hampshire with the forthcoming creation of the Wey Valley Community Rail Partnership between Alton and Guildford (including Ash Vale). This will be the fourth Community Rail Partnership in Hampshire and it will seek to promote the beautiful Wey Valley, build volunteer groups around the stations, improve station environments and enhance opportunities to travel by train to and from local tourist attractions.

"It is an exciting opportunity to develop our railways and design specific community projects which benefit the whole area. Should any resident, business, community group or organisation wish to become a partner with us, we would be pleased to hear from you!"

Paula Aldridge, Community Rail Manager, South Western Railway added: "South Western Railway is delighted to be supporting two new Community Rail Partnerships, and 12 new Station Adoption Groups. We look forward to seeing them start to make a real difference in their communities, showing people what their local station has to offer and encouraging them to make full use of their facilities."