

Heart of England CRP Annual Report 2023/24



Contents

01

Chair's Report

04

Education

06

Station & Neighbourhood
Improvements

10

Inclusivity &
Community Links

14

Sustainability

16

Upcoming Projects

17

The Year in Numbers

18

Our Area

19

Our Steering Group

Chair's Report



Welcome to the Heart of England CRP Annual Report for 2023/24. Reviewing the Annual Report prior to publication invariably has me in awe of the incredible work that has been achieved by the team in the past year. It is easy to think of the railway as something linear, a means of transport that is contained within the stations and the boundary fence. However, it is so much more than this. The railway touches the lives of people in the community it serves, and as you will see from the pages of this report, the work of Community Rail Partnerships makes a real difference in the area they serve.

4 Strands

The past year has seen a lot of development and reflection within the Heart of England CRP about how we should best serve our communities. We've taken the time to step back and reflect on the first 3 years of operation to check that our original aims and objectives are still appropriate and to really look at how our communities understand and engage with us. It's not always easy to describe the work the CRP does. Our area is wide and serves diverse communities that have different needs, and our projects reflect the huge variety across our patch. We have been working on a way to make it easier for people to understand the work we do and how they might be able to work with us.

As well as ensuring that our activities are consistent with the 4 pillars of community rail that guide the work of Community Rail nationally, we have also identified 4 key strands for HoE that we now use to plan our projects around:

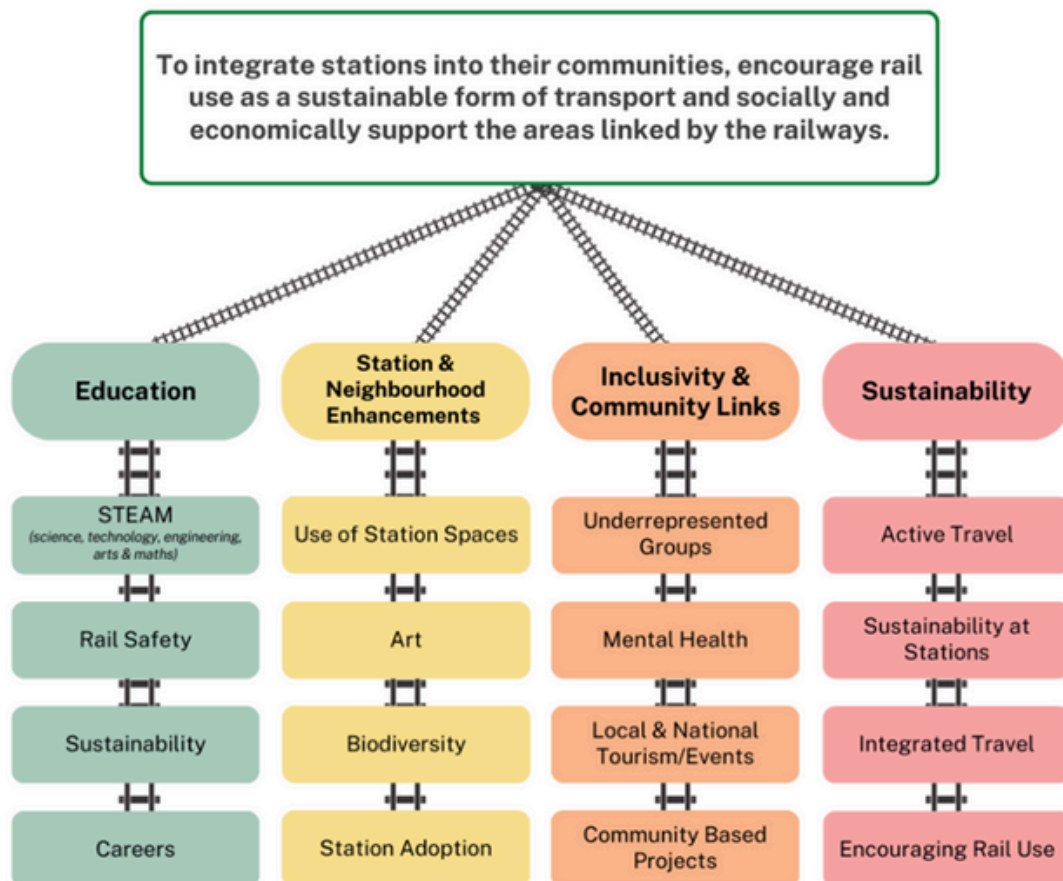
1. Education – we work on projects with schools and young people that cover topics such as STEAM, rail safety, sustainability, and careers.

2. Station & Neighbourhood Enhancements – our projects look at how we can improve our station spaces and the way they connect with the local community. We work on projects that bring art to stations, look to improve biodiversity, and find new ways to use stations spaces.

Chair's Report

3. Inclusivity & Community Links – a key role for us is understanding barriers that people may have to train travel and working with project partners to find ways to overcome them. We also host local events and support community-based projects.

4. Sustainability – everything we do is with the aim of encouraging people to use the railways to travel more sustainably. We encourage active travel to and from stations and aim to educate people about the environmental benefits of rail travel



As well as guiding how we plan and deliver the work of the CRP, with these 4 strands we hope to make it easier for individuals and groups to not only understand what we do, but to also approach us with ideas of how we might work together on projects that will benefit our local community.

Chair's Report

Staff changes

In June 2023 our team expanded when we welcomed Madeleine who joined us on a part-time basis. Madeleine has taken the lead with the Education strand and supported Julia with other projects and has been a huge asset to the team, leading Feel Good Field Trips, planning workshops and trips for Baginton Fields School and developing an exciting new biodiversity project for later in the year. Unfortunately, Madeline made the difficult decision to leave the CRP in March due to a move to Norfolk. We are in the process of recruiting a new officer to continue the projects that Madeleine was developing.

Community Rail Awards

We were delighted to be shortlisted for 2 awards at this year's Community Rail Awards. Our '**A Day Like This**' project was shortlisted in the 'Engaging Diverse Groups' category and our **Rail Week at Finham Park 2** was shortlisted in the 'Involving Children and Young People' category. The awards ceremony took place in Swansea in March and we were able to share the evening with our project partners from Finham Park 2, Highly Sprung and Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre. Unfortunately, we didn't win, but it was another inspirational evening hearing about the community rail projects from around the country.

Thank you to you, our partners and supporters, for all your encouragement during the past year. I'm looking forward to another exciting year of using the power of community rail to support the people we serve.



The Heart of England CRP Steering Group and Officers, June 2023

Education

SEND Rail Confidence and Travel Training

Over this academic year we have been working closely with Baginton Fields Secondary School in Coventry to develop a programme for their students with moderate to severe learning difficulties to help them build independence and confidence with travelling on the train. We worked with two classes over three sessions, doing journey sequencing, learning about who you can ask for help at a station, learning how to buy a train ticket and more.



Just before Christmas we went on a trip to Coventry station where the students learnt how to use the ticket machines and how to stay safe at the station. We also had some great fun in the Community Hub creating rail themed Christmas decorations for their upcoming school Christmas grotto event!

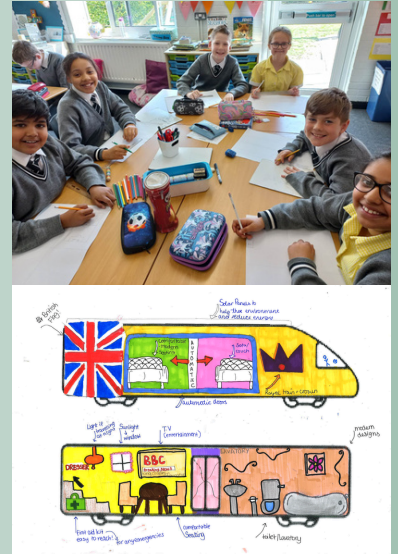


At the end of February, we took the students to Warwick Castle on the train from Coventry station. This offered some great practice at changing trains, with travel supported by West Midlands Railway and Chiltern Railways. The students had a fantastic day out, learning Sword and Battle Skills from a knight, watching a birds of prey show and exploring the castle.

Education

A Very Royal Train

To celebrate the coronation of King Charles III, we worked with students at St Alphege C of E Junior School to design A Very Royal Train of the future. We looked at the history of the royal trains, linking into discussions about sustainability and how train travel can contribute to a greener future. Students were then encouraged to unleash their creativity whilst thinking about how to make their trains sustainable and stylish. Close to 300 students took part and, with thanks to Chiltern Railways, their designs were exhibited at Solihull Station.



Rail Safety

This year we have recruited the help of LearnLive through their Rail Safe Friendly program, to expand our offering of rail safety education to 45 more schools in our area. Through participation schools can earn rail safety awards at different levels: bronze, silver, and gold. Since 2019 LearnLive has reached over 19 million young people, and so far 10 of sponsored schools have achieved Bronze level, with a total viewer number of 10,128.

Alongside starting our partnership with LearnLive, we have continued our work delivering face-to-face rail safety education to schools. At the beginning of 2024 we visited three classes at Newdigate Primary School in Bedworth, teaching early years about the importance of staying safe near the railways. We have also continued incorporating rail safety into many of the other projects we have been working on such as the Feel Good Field Trips we have supported and our Railway Explorations project.

Feel Good Field Trips

We have continued supporting Community Rail Lancashire's Feel Good Field Trips, funded by Avanti West Coast, which bring fantastic days out on the railways to students who might



not otherwise have the opportunity. This year we have been to Soho Sonic Studios in London, the Guardian Offices, the Houses of Parliament and to the Herbert Art Galley and Museum in our home patch of Coventry, helping teachers guide students on and off the trains and delivering vital rail safety education.

Station & Neighbourhood Enhancements

Rugby Colour Palette

Following the hugely successful Royal Leamington Spa Colour Palette and Warwick Colour Palette, developed by Stacey Barnfield in collaboration with Warwick District Council, the Heart of England CRP applied to Avanti West Coast's Project Fund to develop a community-inspired Rugby Colour Palette at Rugby Railway Station. Alongside the public consultation, the CRP commissioned Ruby Road and Jo Chalkblack to develop and deliver school and community workshops as part of the project.

We also developed an activity book for children to access so that more young people could get involved in the project. This activity book is still available to download from the project webpage:

www.heartcommunityrail.org.uk/rugbycolourpalette

After attending events, an online social media campaign and working with 5 schools and a community art group, we had over 200 unique suggestions for inclusion in the colour palettes. Working with our project partners, Stacey has created three colour palettes with the themes History and Heritage, Creativity and Culture, and Industry and Innovation. The colours chosen are a mix of direct references to suggestions from the public and more cryptic choices designed to encourage thought and provoke conversation around the palette. Explore the Rugby Colour Palette and discover the inspiration behind the colours on our **website**.

"The colour palettes are all about celebrating their local area and I hope the three Rugby designs do exactly that.

It's been so interesting to hear from the people of Rugby through the consultation process and to learn what they think makes the town so special, all of which feeds the three palettes to make them bright, bold and help tell the story of the area.

I do hope rail travellers enjoy the colour palettes and spot something special to them as they pass through."

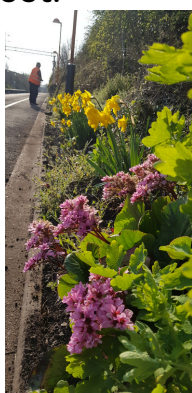
Stacey Barnfield, The Colour Palette Company



Station & Neighbourhood Enhancements

Kenilworth Visitor Information Point

At the start of 2022, Kenilworth Town Council approached the Heart of England CRP as they were looking to launch a Wayfinding Strategy that would see the installation of 12 new signposts to key spots across the town centre including at the Railway Station. The CRP agreed to fund and work with the council and West Midlands Railway to facilitate the design and installation of a Visitor Information Point and finger post at Kenilworth Station. Both were installed in 2023 and have been a great addition to the station, sign posting visitors to key attractions through the vibrant High Street.



"Friends of Solihull Station (FOSS) have six large raised planters on the platform and two at the entrance to the station. We try to have some winter colour in these during the dark, cold months but go to town on our summer planting which lasts until the first frosts in autumn.



The cost of these summer annual plants is usually manageable but after Covid prices rocketed. The plants usually cost us £150.00 but last year it came to over £250 and we were struggling to afford that. Thankfully the Small Grants Fund came to our rescue and we were able to put on our usual floral display."

Chris Warne, Chair of FOSS

Small Grants Fund

Our Small Grants Fund has provided three stations financial assistance this year. We were delighted to help the Friends of Solihull Station bring vibrancy and colour to their platforms with a contribution to their Summer bedding plants. Canley Station have used our fund to vastly increase the variety of plants and shrubs, including ornamental cherry trees, a variety of herbs to appeal to the senses and bulbs that will bring pops of colour to the long platforms. Lastly, the Friends of Hatton Station took on the task of replacing some of their older planters in 2023 and they used our Small Grant Fund to partly fund an additional planter on Platform 1 at the station. Our Small Grants Fund remains open for the next financial year and station adoption groups can apply for up to £175pa.

Station & Neighbourhood Enhancements

Coventry Station Adopters

A new group joined the Community Rail family in September 2023. Citizens from the Life Path Trust, a charity that supports people with learning disabilities and autistic people in the Coventry and Warwickshire area to be valued, develop, and achieve, met with our Lead CRP Officer to plan how they would like to work at the station. The group have been meeting almost every week since and have created art, hosted a Christmas party and have begun planting at the station. In March, we were joined by a team of 10 volunteers from the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) who spent several hours preparing two large beds and 5 small planters for the group ready to plant up for the summer.

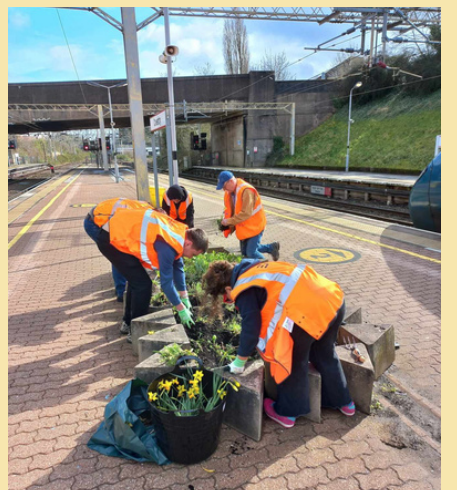
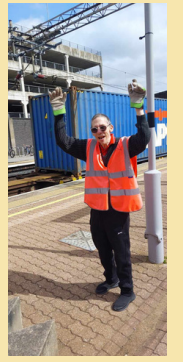
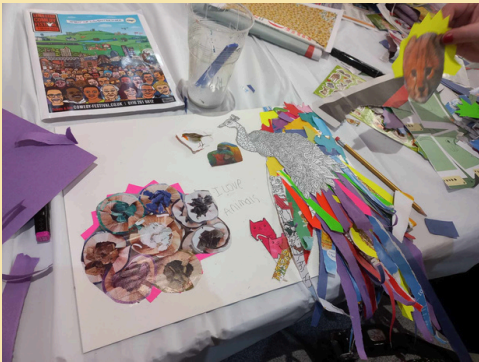
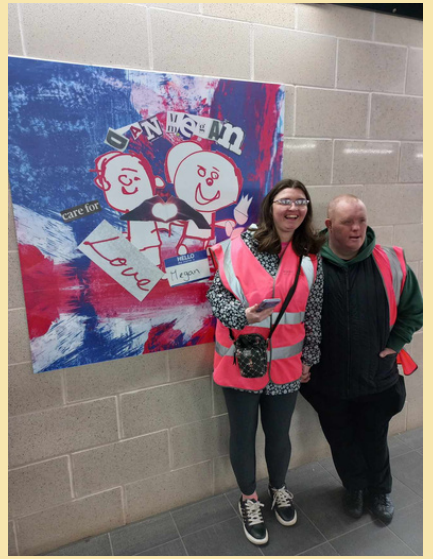
Thanks to the Avanti West Coast we have had funding to work in partnership with Coventry Artspace on a brand-new exhibition at the station. Featuring 10 unique pieces of art created by the volunteers with local artist Donna Preece-Jones, the CONNECTIONS exhibition in the tunnel connecting the station to the bus interchange, celebrates the things that connect us to each other and the world around us and is on display until October 2024.

Donna worked with the adopters over a series of 4 sessions to create these beautiful pieces of art. The sessions were designed to encourage connection through the creative processes of painting and collaging. The participants shared what they loved and personally connected with in their work, whilst also connecting with the people in the overall process in the space. Adam Hives, Life Path Trust CEO commented:

'This exhibition not only showcases the artistic skills of our group but also highlights their strong ties to the Coventry community. Through this project, our team has forged meaningful relationships and showcased their pride in enhancing the local environment.'

All the group have enjoyed the weekly trip to the station. They have made lots of new friends and have loved seeing people admiring all their hard work. We look forward to nurturing and growing these relationships in the future, continuing to spread positivity and creativity throughout Coventry!'

Visit the project blog at www.coventry-artspace.co.uk/blog



Inclusivity & Community Links

Photos by [Mandip Singh](#)
[Seehra](#) LRPS Photography

Coventry Station Community Day

Thanks to funding from Avanti West Coasts CRP Project Fund, we have been able to run 2 community events at Coventry Station over the past year. Our first was our Coventry Station Community Day that took place in September.

Despite it being the hottest day of the year, we were joined by local community groups, cultural organisations, and local charities to celebrate and promote the fantastic work done by these groups and volunteers in Coventry. Coventry Transport Museum, the Herbert and Highly Sprung provided entertainment for all ages, Urban Goodies CIC gathered donations for their foodbank, whilst Men's Shed and Creative Kindness provided crafty activities for members of the public to get involved with.

Coventry Urban Eden had plants for sale and were showcasing their plans to turn Coventry Green, whilst the Curious Boys and Girls Club were capturing the thoughts and feelings from men of colour in relation to mental health through the photographic lens. CW Mind provided information about mental health support in Coventry, and we had the Broom Wagon ready to help with any cycling repairs. We were delighted to once again be able to offer Learn to Ride sessions with Ride better.

The second event was with a Christmas Young Enterprise Trade Fair in December where we supported 10 teams from local secondary schools taking part in the national Young Enterprise Scheme. The teams battled the elements to showcase their companies and sell various items that included Christmas cards, and decorations, fidget toys, sustainable jewellery, eco-friendly stationary, pamper boxes, a date night in a box, beeswax wraps, chalk board plant pots and seed bombs. Although the fair had to close early due to the bad weather, all the students were able to either sell items or conduct market research into the types of products that their target market would be interested in.

Julia, Lead Officer for the CRP has also been asked to be a judge at this year's Warwickshire Young Enterprise Awards so is delighted to be able to keep supporting these young entrepreneurs!



Inclusivity & Community Links

Curious Trails

Curious Trails was a collaborative project between the Curious Boys & Girls Club and the Heart of England CRP. The CBGC is dedicated to empowering men of colour with improved mental well-being through creative tools and peer support, striving to eliminate discrimination and providing a brighter future for all. The focus of Curious Trails was to encourage men to connect with others, build relationships, and explore their creativity through photography and illustration. Through taking a train journey outside of their city, the aim was for them to slow down, engage with their surroundings, and take moments to rest, reflect, explore, and talk with one another. An exhibition installed from September 2023 – March 2024 in Coventry Railway Station showcased some of the captured moments of the men as they walked through both urban and green spaces.



Creative Platforms

In the summer of 2023, we welcomed the return of our Creative Platforms programme. Working with local artist, Emily Pettitt, and CW Mind, we focussed on teaching people who have anxiety around travelling on trains and being in stations, a toolkit of artistic techniques that they could use in any anxiety-inducing situations. Our first session was a 'grounding' session based at Coventry station where participants could become familiar with the sights and sounds of the station without the worry of taking a train. The second 'journeying' session took us on a short train ride to Leamington where we spent time practising the techniques we'd learnt in the beautiful Jephson Gardens. Following these sessions, Emily produced a downloadable booklet and accompanying videos highlighting some of the grounding techniques we used in the sessions. They are available to download from www.heartcommunityrail.org.uk/cp and we worked with the Cultural Health & Wellbeing Alliance to have the resources sent to over 300 attendees at their national conference in October 2023.

Inclusivity & Community Links

White Ribbon Day, Christmas Tree Festival, Take A Moment

Throughout the year we aim to support local and national events and projects in our communities.

In 2023 we were proud to be able to support White Ribbon Day at Birmingham Snow Hill with our colleagues at West Midlands Rail, where over 200 signatures were collected on 22 metres of white ribbon from members of the public pledging to #makethepromise and #changethestory and support the work of White Ribbon UK. More importantly, we were able to raise awareness and have in depth discussions about the campaign to end violence against women and girls.

At Christmas we were delighted to be asked to not only sponsor a Christmas tree at the Leamington Tree Festival, but to also sponsor the People's Choice Award. The festival not only brings people together to look at the fabulous Christmas trees, but it also demonstrates the incredible community spirit in Leamington with businesses and organisations coming together to bring people joy over the festive period. To do all this and to be able to raise for the Helping Hands Charity is a real testament to the hard work and dedication of the organisers and all those who contributed to make the festival such a success. The festival attracted over 3000 visitors and over £1,300 raised for the Helping Hands Charity.

In Nuneaton, we were successful in our application to CrossCountry's Community Engagement Fund for a joint project with Escape Arts, called Take a Moment. Take A Moment is Escape Arts newest piece of public art at Nuneaton Station, commissioned to demonstrate how taking a moment out of our daily lives to appreciate nature can help enhance our wellbeing. The work was taken in photographic workshops led by Maxine Tuffin with a variety of community groups across Nuneaton, using smartphones and macro lenses to create a series of close-up photographs. As part of the installation and launch in March there was an exhibition at Escape Art's community arts hub, the Station Gallery at Nuneaton Station, including work produced through the workshops.



Sustainability

NuCKLe Line Naming

Early in 2023, the Heart of England CRP discussed how we could increase patronage on some of our lines. The Nuneaton – Leamington Line, known as the NuCKLe Line, had been severely affected during Covid, so, with the agreement of West Midlands Railways who manage the trains on the line and most of the stations, we launched a public vote to find a new line name to encourage people back on to the line. Schools across the line were also invited to take part with a programme of workshops designed to support the National Curriculum targets for English and Geography. Aimed at KS2, the 2-hour workshop looked at what makes the line special and then there was the options of free class trips out on the rails for schools that took part.

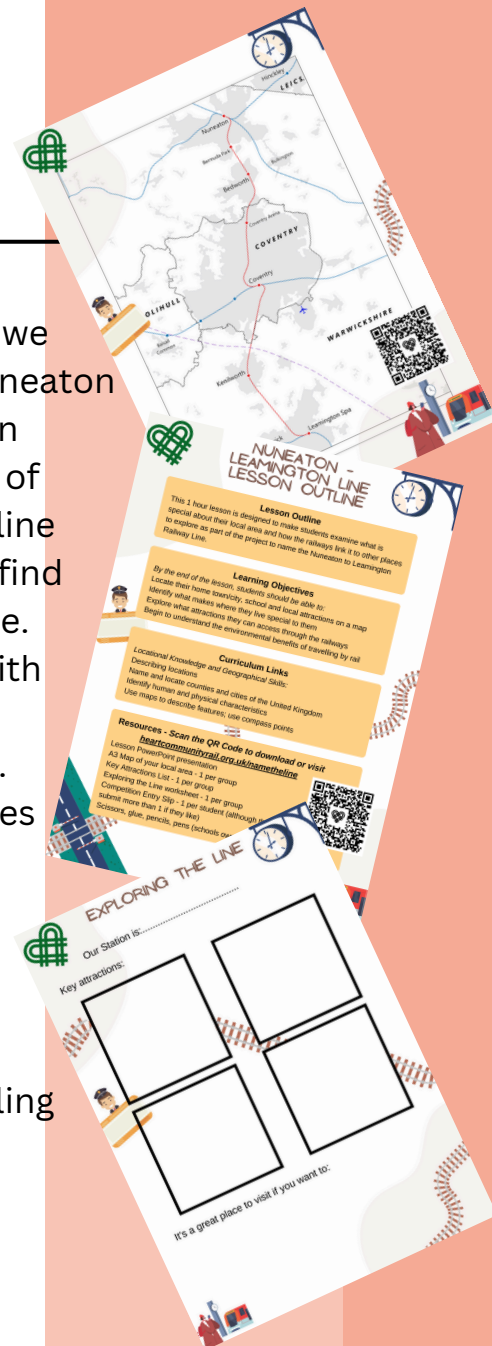
Over 1100 people took part in the vote to give the Nuneaton – Leamington Railway Line a new name. A panel of industry experts had the difficult task of whittling over 200 suggestions to a shortlist of 3:

Coventry & Warwickshire Line
Elephant & Bear Line
Pioneer Line

Members of the public were then invited to vote for their preferred name. Although it was close to start, the clear winner was:

Elephant & Bear Line

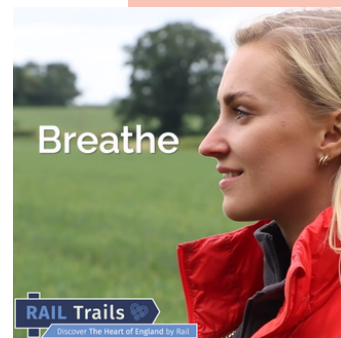
This name refers to the symbols of Coventry and Warwickshire. This is the only railway line that only serves the two areas and the elephant and bear have cultural and historical significance along the line. West Midlands Railway have produced special running in boards with the line name and line logo for each of their stations on the line and we are developing ideas for artwork along the line. We will be using the new line name to promote the amazing places along the Elephant & Bear Line in 2024 and encourage people to travel by rail to access them.



Sustainability

Rail Trails

In 2022 we had developed a series of Rail Trails from all 36 stations in the CRP area. The walks were devised by volunteers from the Ramblers, the LDWA, the Millennium Way Group and by local Blue Badge guide Verity Tiff. Whilst the leaflets have been well received, the feedback was that not many people knew about them, so the CRP worked with social media influencer Danielle Wilson and BA Events to create 2 social media videos as well as a longer promotional Rail Trails video. The CRP has also designed a more comprehensive social media campaign that includes working with BA Events to create downloadable walking badges for people completing the routes, reaching out to podcast communities, and creating a stakeholder engagement kit for places highlighted along the routes.



Promotional Events

Throughout the year we have been able to promote the work of the CRP at various events. The Abbey Line CRP invited us to share our A Day Like This project with their stakeholders and we also shared the project at a Hub for Education for Refugees in Europe (HERE) meeting, which led to an article on their website. Our Train Operating Company partners have provided us opportunities to share our projects at their community rail conferences with our officers speaking about our STEM projects at the CrossCountry Conference and to give an overview of the work of the CRP at the Chiltern Railways Community Conference.

We held our own stakeholder event in September where we were joined by station adopters, project partners, train operating company partners, local authority partners, and local councillors to update on our activities and to launch our 4 strands of activities. Throughout the event we asked for feedback and ideas from those that attended on how we could continue to improve and build upon the work we've done so far, and we look forward to implementing the suggestions made over the next few years.

Upcoming Projects

Wild Rails

Wild Rails is an exciting project we have upcoming for the 2024/2025 academic year that aims to improve biodiversity at stations in our area by getting young people involved at their local stations. We are starting with five stations and five schools on the line between Leamington Spa and Birmingham Moor Street stations, with the hope to expand the project along the line in future years.

Railway Explorations

Chiltern Railways announced their first Community Investment Fund in 2023 and we were fortunate enough to be awarded funding for our Railway Explorations Project. This is an ongoing project that is due to finish later this year and it builds on the success of A Day Like This from 2022. Working with Coventry Refugee and Migrant Centre (CRMC), Positive Youth Foundation (PYF) and the Refugee and Resettlement Team at Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, we have developed a rail familiarisation workshop where participants build confidence navigating railway stations, know how to buy tickets, read timetables, and know who to ask for help if they need it. These are followed up trips that not only offer a variety of different experiences, but also the opportunity to explore different areas along the railway network. So far we have worked with young people and families in Coventry who have now had trips to explore ThinkTank in Birmingham, find their feet ice skating at Warwick Castle, and explore the Market Hall Museum in Warwick before our CRP Officer Madeleine led a botanical art workshop. This year we will be doing more workshops and trips, not only in Coventry, but also with asylum seekers in Solihull.

'We had a highly successful event, with the railways team proving to be invaluable in their assistance. The youth participants thoroughly enjoyed the experience and eagerly anticipate future opportunities for similar outings. It's noteworthy that all the young individuals who took part in the trip are from the BNO community. For them, engaging with members of another community in their new country, the UK represented a significant challenge and a novel experience.'

CRMC

We will be continuing our STEM 5, Feel Good Field Trips, Rail Trail promotion as well as planning more projects for this year and next year's special Railway 200! Find out more about projects for the year by signing up to our quarterly newsletter. Simply email HeartCRP@warwickshire.gov.uk with the subject 'Subscribe'.



THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

36

STATIONS

10

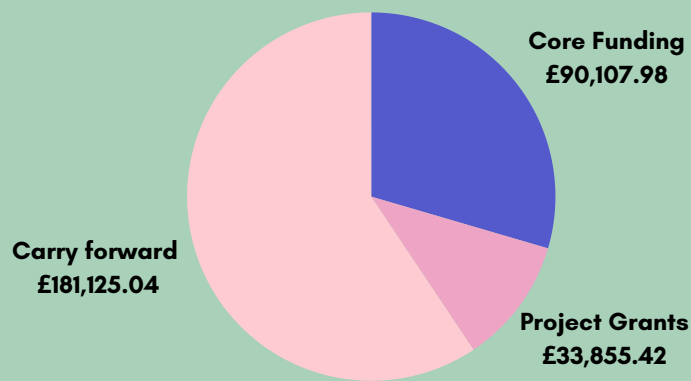
FUNDING PARTNERS

31

PROJECT PARTNERS

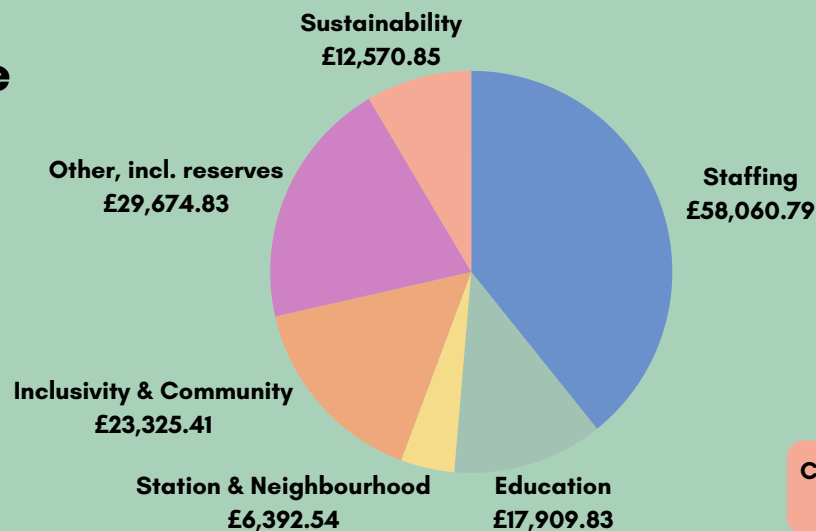
Income

TOTAL £305,088.44



Expenditure

TOTAL £147,934.25



CARRY FORWARD TO FY 24/25: £157,154.19

IMPACT SNAPSHOT - JANUARY 2023 - MARCH 2024

20

Schools worked with the CRP

1592

Students received workshops or assemblies from the CRP

604

People received free train trips as part of projects organised by the CRP

Our area



Our Officers



Julia Singleton-Tasker
Lead CRP Officer
 Julia has worked for the CRP since January 2020.



Madeleine Snowdon
CRP Officer
 Madeleine worked for the CRP from June 2023 - March 2024.

Our Steering Group

The Heart of England CRP has core funding provided by the following organisations, who make up the foundation of our steering group:



The steering group is also supported by:



Thank you

Thank you to our steering group members for providing not only the financial support that enables us to deliver our projects, but also for the unwavering support of the CRP and it's officers.



**If you have been inspired by the
work of the CRP and your
organisation would like to get
involved with ideas or as a
supporter then please contact us.**

CRP Contact Details:

HeartCRP@warwickshire.gov.uk
www.heartcommunityrail.org.uk

01926 412 085
@HeartCRP

