

# HEART OF ENGLAND COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP



Community Rail

Accredited Partnership  
2021-22

ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 2021





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# CHAIR'S REPORT



I welcome you to the Heart of England CRP's 2nd Annual Progress Report which, once again, showcases the fantastic work undertaken across the Partnership.

Whilst the pandemic has continued to impact on our rail services, the year has seen an increase in volunteer activity at our stations and we're delighted to report the adoption of an additional 3 stations in 2021 - Lapworth, Claverdon and Coventry Arena - meaning only one station in the patch remains to be adopted .. Thanks go to all the volunteers who continue to give up their time to make a difference to their stations and wider communities.

Our CRPO officer, Julia Singleton-Tasker, has enjoyed getting out and about across the network, meeting with volunteers, stakeholders and hosting various events. I've been impressed with the diverse nature of projects, from those focusing on education and training to highlighting the importance of the environmental side of rail travel and its positive role in helping to address the climate crisis.

Julia has also showcased the work of the Partnership on a national stage, presenting at various conferences and being shortlisted for a National Community Rail Award - an impressive achievement in the first year of the Partnership and with the pandemic as the backdrop!

I am delighted to announce that this year saw the accreditation of the Heart of England CRP. The accreditation is formal recognition by the Department for Transport that the Partnership operates to a high standard and with objectives and activities that are supported by Government.

The year ahead continues to provide a diverse range of projects and activities and some of these are highlighted in this report. We're especially excited to welcome the Commonwealth Games to venues across the area in Summer 2022 and can't wait to extend a warm welcome to visitors arriving by train.

**MARGARET SMITH**

Heart of England Community Rail Partnership Chair



# ABOUT US



The Heart of England CRP is now in its third year of operation. Covering 36 stations, the CRP looks for opportunities for the railways to support the communities they serve through a variety of projects and initiatives.

Our aims are:

To identify suitable projects, and where agreed by the Heart of England CRP, develop them and prepare funding bids to relevant bodies.

To work with the franchise companies West Midlands Railways, Chiltern, Avanti West Coast, CrossCountry and Network Rail to maximise utilisation of their property portfolios and explore new and appropriate uses for railway buildings as well as improving existing facilities at stations, including bicycle storage, passenger information and waiting facilities.

To identify areas that are high suicide risks and develop a programme for prevention.

To involve the community in the work of local user groups, station partnerships, arts initiatives and improving links with local schools and colleges.

To raise awareness of, and to promote, the rail services of the Heart of England CRP as a sustainable way to access the towns and cities within the Heart of England CRP for employment, education, leisure and tourism and as an access point onto the wider UK rail network.

To encourage and promote integration of the rail service with local bus services and links to the stations for walking and cycling, working in partnership with relevant providers and local authorities.

To actively involve children and young people by promoting rail as a safe environment through work in schools and the community.

Meet the objectives set out in the Department for Transport Community Rail Development Strategy 2018.

The CRP Officer is Julia Singleton-Tasker.

Network Rail and the Community Rail Network support the work of the partnership

The CRP would like to thank all its partners for their contributions and continued support in 2021 to make this partnership a success.



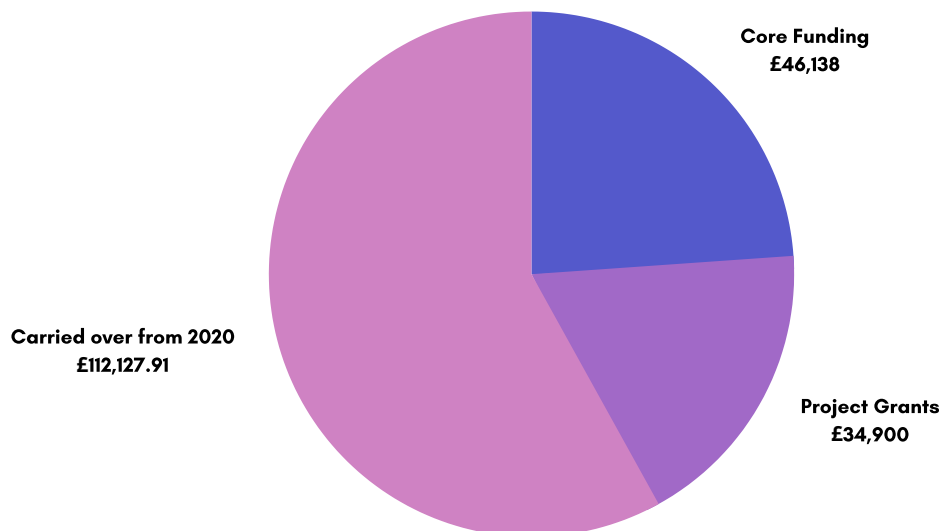


# FINANCIAL REPORT



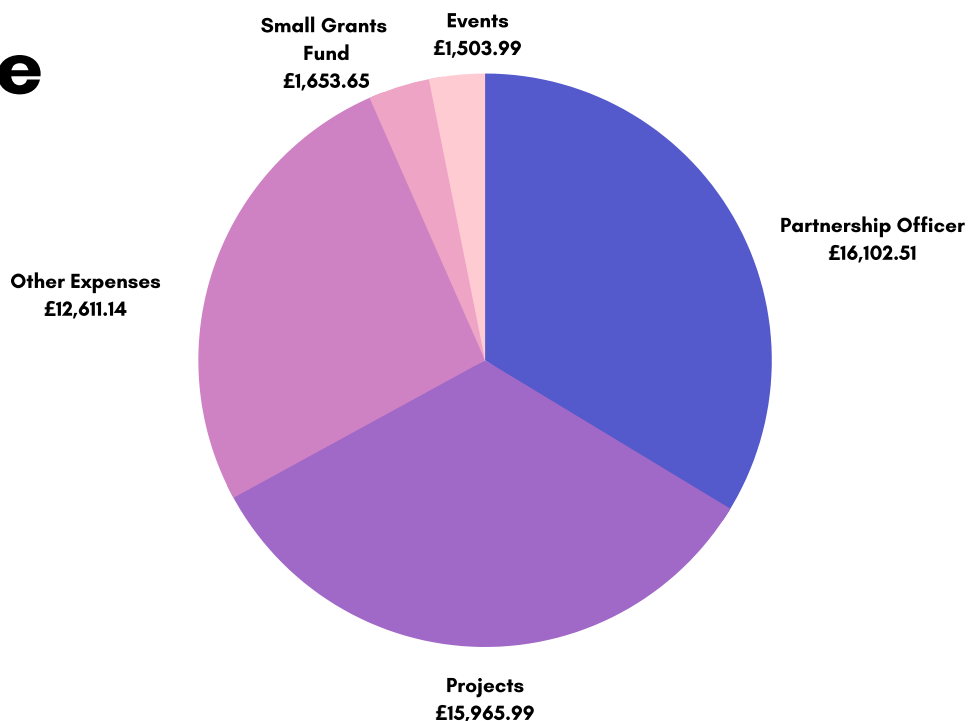
## Income

**TOTAL £193,165.91**



## Expenditure

**TOTAL £33,758.60**



**Carried forwards to 2022: £160,353.07**

**Projected core funding for 2022: £64,343.82**

**Projected planned project outgoings for 2022: £116,537.21**

**Projected planned CRP Officer outgoings for 2022: £18,000**

# 2021 ROUND-UP



As well as continuing to support **Women in Community Rail South's** Breathing Space Sessions, we started 2021 by hosting one of the session discussing the work/life balance.

The CRP was invited to host a virtual exhibitors booth at **Warwick District Council's Spark 2021** event in February. The event showcased a wealth of creative talent in Warwickshire. We hosted a meeting room about creativity and the railways and were over-whelmed by the suggestions of how we can use our stations to represent our local artists. Since the event, we have teamed up with several local artists to deliver various projects.



In March, **Community Rail Network** asked us to be a part of their national campaign to promote the vital contribution community rail makes to the recovery of rail. Our **Coventry Acts of Kindness** was featured as well as our positive approach to using social media and our website to communicate with communities. The full report and more can be found [here](#).

In May, we were proud to be accredited by the DfT. **Accreditation** is formal recognition by the **Department for Transport** and the **Welsh Government** that a CRP operates to a high standard and with objectives and activities that are supported by Government. More about the accreditation process and what it means can be found [here](#).



On Monday 11 May, we held our first **AGM**. We heard from our Train Operating Company partners as well as from the Community Rail Network. Our guest speakers were from the **Friends of Henley Railway Station**, the **Friends of Stratford Parkway Station** and the **Friends of Kenilworth Station**, discussing community engagement and how to adapt to their unique station environments.

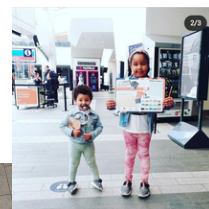
We were given another opportunity to promote the work of the CRP by the **Strategic Director for Communities at Warwickshire County Council**. Mark Ryder invited the CRP Officer to the weekly briefing to share with colleagues across the council our last annual report and to talk about projects for the future. We had great feedback from this and were able to successfully raise the profile of community rail within the County Council.

**Avanti West Coast** invited the CRP to speak at their **Annual Community Rail Conference** at the beginning of June. We were asked to talk about how our **Coventry Acts of Kindness** project from 2020 was designed to restore confidence in using the rail, support local businesses and link with a mental health charity so should customers feel so overwhelmed or anxious about travelling we were able to signpost them to services that could support them.



In partnership with **Community Rail Lancashire**, we presented a 'Community Rail' introduction to **Young Rail Professionals** on the 15th June. **Young Rail Professionals** were established in 2009 and bring together those with fewer than 10 years of experience within the rail industry to inspire, support and develop their potential.

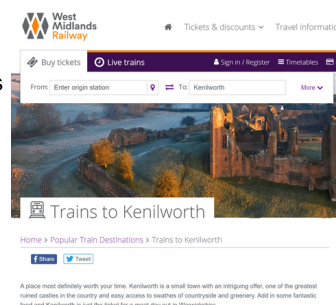
We were proud to be a Gold Sponsor and support 2021's **Backtrack** competition. Launched in 2020, **Backtrack** asked anyone aged seven or over to create a simple but powerful message, created at home or at school to promote the anti-trespass message. Thanks to **Network Rail** and **Southeastern Rail**, we were able to go beyond our CRP area and promote Backtrack at Birmingham New Street, Bromley South and London Bridge Stations.



# 2021 ROUND-UP CONTINUED



The Heart of England CRP has been involved in various groups throughout the year, including the **Coventry Station Joint Working Group**, the **Transport Innovation Group** and the **Kenilworth Tourism Working Group**. The CRP Officer also established and chaired the **Kenilworth Recovery Group**, which is made up of local authorities, tourism bodies, councillors, West Midlands Trains and local residents. The group is focussed on improving the station's link with the town and how we can promote the railways as a way to access all that Kenilworth has to offer. It also looks at how to improve the station environment and wayfinding. So far, we have had extra bins installed at the station, facilitated a working relationship between the marketing team at WMT and the Visit Kenilworth team that has resulted in Kenilworth featuring prominently on the [WMT Destinations web page](#), identified a potential Visitor Information Point that could be a part of the town's wider wayfinding scheme, and started looking at how the station can support local events with the re-establishment of the regular train service.



In July, the **Community Rail Education Network**, of which we're a member, unveiled a brand new logo. Monthly meetings continued throughout the year for CRPs across the country and we're looking forward to some in person meetings in 2022.

In the summer of 2021, Community Rail Network launched their **Days Out By Rail** campaign. It was aimed to inspire and encourage day-tripper and leisure travellers to jump aboard a train, for exciting, fun, eco-friendly outings. The eight-week initiative raised awareness about rail as one of the greenest ways to travel, while enabling exploration of lesser-known spots as part of a day out, short break or staycation. We supported the campaign through our social media feeds with inspirational ideas for places to visit by rail in the West Midlands as well as supplying our own **Scenic Rail Britain Listing**.



We were honoured to be shortlisted for a **Best Community Engagement Project** for our **Coventry Acts of Kindness**, at the **Community Rail Awards**. The award ceremony took place in Southampton in December and, although we didn't win, it was a wonderful occasion to catch up with colleagues and friends and celebrate the amazing community rail achievements nationwide during another difficult year.

A **Coventry Way Association** invited us to speak at their AGM in December, to talk about our 2022 **Rail Trails** project and their members have been kind enough to share some of their walks for us to use.

Our last project for the year was with another fantastic local artist, **Nicky Bagga**. Using the stations in the Heart of England CRP area, Nicky has created bespoke drawings for our **Heart of England CRP Colouring Book**. As well as providing a calming activity for children travelling on the railways, it also encourages them to think about things such as rail safety, sustainability and art at stations. We will be giving out the colouring books at future events.





# STATION ADOPTION



2021 was another great year for the volunteers in the Heart of England. We are blessed to have outstanding station adopters, some established for many years, some new to the world of community rail. At the start of 2021, we established a **Small Projects Fund** to offer all station adoption groups the opportunity to receive a small amount of money from the CRP to help with costs such as extra tools, CRN membership, basic supplies.

Station volunteers do vital work in linking their stations to the local community. They are ideally placed to respond to their communities needs and inject personality into otherwise purely functional spaces. There are on-going costs involved with station adoption and the adoption groups in the CRP area can now apply for up to £175 a year to help with these.

We were delighted to welcome 3 new station adoption groups in 2021. **Lapworth**, **Claverdon**, and **Coventry Arena** have all been adopted. The wonderful guys at **Dhillon's Brewery** adopted **Coventry Arena** and have now worked with local artists to capture Coventry's diverse culture and to promote sustainable travel in a piece of art that brightens up the station and reflects the city it serves. After approaching **Lapworth Parish Council** at the end of 2020, members of the council and local community have started volunteering at the station and train drivers have already commented on how much they've improved the look of the station. Adopters at **Claverdon** have embraced the rural location of their station and have worked hard to clear undergrowth and to provide a haven for wildlife.

At **Widney Manor**, the **Soroptomists**, who've adopted the station, celebrated their centenary by creating special planters to commemorate this milestone. **Kenilworth** adopters have continued to increase biodiversity at the station with bug hotels and the **Friends of Olton Station** were able to install new planters thanks to West Midlands' Trains Your Community, Your Fund.

The Heart of England CRP has continued to build a strong working relationship with the **Friends of the Shakespeare Line (FoSL)** by co-creating a document that clearly sets out the roles of each organisation and how they work together. There has been a huge amount of activity along the **Shakespeare Line** with Heritage Poster boards being installed at every station, garden planters built and installed, with the FoSL facilitating, supporting, leading and engaging with the adopters on the line.

Our quarterly **Stakeholder Newsletters** had a revamp this year and we've used them to share information about courses, funding opportunities and to highlight the amazing things that are happening at stations in our area. One of these opportunities was offered through the **Samaritans**, who were kind enough to invite our volunteers to join their Managing Suicidal Contacts Course for free. The course is a 3 hour online course and aims to equip delegates with the skills and confidence to approach someone who is emotionally vulnerable on the railway and help them to safety and to further outside help. Several of our volunteers chose to attend and one commented:

*The course was very well managed by a skillful trainer who did a very effective job of including everyone involved. He clearly had an extensive knowledge in the field of managing suicidal contacts and delivered the material in a sensitive way.*

As Covid's impact on our day-to-day lives hopefully decreases in 2022, we can't wait to see the results of all the volunteers hard work at the stations. We know it's been difficult with plans having to be put on hold or delays with projects due to the pandemic, but the resilience and the determination of this army of volunteers is inspirational and they continue to be the heart of our railways.



*The Soroptomists Centenary planters at Widney Manor*



*Artwork at Coventry Arena*



*Olton Celebratory Planters Project*

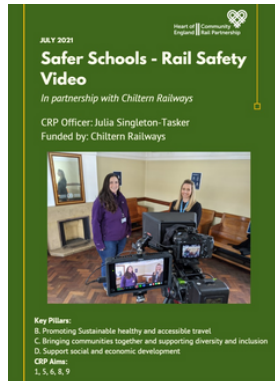


*Adopters at Lapworth ready to start work*



*Planting begins at Claverdon*

# 2021 KEY PROJECTS



## Rail Safety Programme

Early in 2021, Chiltern Railways approached the Heart of England CRP to partner with them on producing a new rail safety programme for schools. The safety programme, aimed at KS2 primary pupils, includes a video – filmed by Leamington Spa-based videographer Jam-AV, lesson plans and activities featuring key safety messages from Chiltern Railways, Network Rail and the British Transport Police (BTP). We launched the programme with an online rail safety lesson to the Year 5 class at Kingsway Community Primary School, delivered by the Heart of England CRP Officer and Chiltern Railway's HSSE Manager. As a thank you, we also invited 5 students and their teacher to visit Leamington Spa Railway Station where we spoke more about rail safety, shared our experiences of rail travel and had a wander around the Friends of Leamington Station's beautiful garden.

The lesson plans, video and resources can all be downloaded and used by schools directly from our [website](#) and we have additional sessions to offer schools, such as 'How to be a good railway citizen', and our Sustainable Stations workshops.

To read the full report on this project check out our [Community Projects page](#)



## Community Rail Week - Go Green by Rail pledge day.

Between the 18th – 24th October, the Heart of England CRP joined other community partnerships and volunteer groups across Britain to spearhead a national campaign highlighting sustainable travel as a key factor in tackling the climate crisis, in the build up to COP26 and as part of the first Community Rail Week.

We organised a Go Green by Rail Pledge Day at Coventry Station where we could provide information as to the benefits of travelling by rail and ask rail users to sign the 'I'm Going Green by Train' pledge. We were joined by representatives from our funding partners as well as by the Young Rail Professionals and CRN, who supported us throughout the event and we were honoured to be joined by the Lord Mayor of Coventry, the Mayor of Nuneaton and Bedworth, the Deputy Mayor of Warwick and the Executive Director of WMRE.

The images were made into a Pledge Card video, now on our website homepage and everyone who wrote a pledge, received a Bird and Butterfly seed packet with the CRP logo on them. The first 125 people also received a cookie from Wicked Cookies.

Warwick District Council organised as part of their Better Points scheme, for participants to earn extra rewards for hopping on the train in Warwick district throughout Community Rail Week.

To ensure we continue to engage with people regarding sustainability, we have a new [Sustainability](#) page on our website where we highlight the CRP's Sustainability Statement, the sustainable practices our partners are adopting, and where people can make their own sustainable pledge. See page 12 for our statement.



The Heart of England Community Rail Partnership cordially invites you to

### Go Green By Train Pledge Day

WEDNESDAY 20TH OCTOBER  
Coventry Station  
Station Square  
Coventry CV1 2GT





# 2021 KEY PROJECTS



## Sustainable Stations

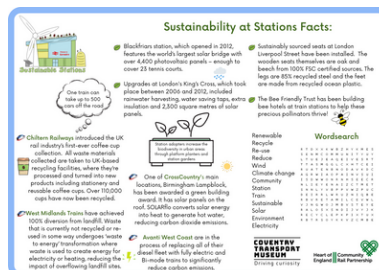
As part of our Community Rail Week activities, and in the lead up to COP 26, we wanted to work with families and young people to educate and develop ideas about sustainability and how our stations can become more sustainable. On Saturday 23rd October, in partnership with Coventry Transport Museum, we hosted the first Sustainable Stations Drop In Session for families at the museum. The session was free of charge and staff at the museum signposted visitors to us. We created resources to show public buildings that had embraced sustainable practices and a worksheet with facts about how the railway industry in the UK is becoming more sustainable. Families were able to use these resources to create their own Sustainable Station and station garden out of recycled materials. There are plans for more Sustainable Stations workshops at Coventry Transport Museum in 2022 and we are working with the Coventry Museums Learning Team to adapt the sessions into set lessons that can be offered in schools.

*"Working together with CRP on the Sustainable Stations workshops has opened up new ways to think about transport and how transport is evolving. The workshops, and partnership, are a perfect opportunity to add to the Coventry Transport Museum's story of transport as well as bringing the Museum's story and family workshops out into Coventry's community."*

**Anja Keitel-Campsal**

**Learning Officer - Families**

**Culture Coventry / Coventry Transport Museum**



## 2021 Social Media Summary



**Tweets 453**

**Impressions 309,729**

**Profile Visits 8,728**

**Followers 477**



**Posts 118**

**Accounts Reached 1,131**

**Content Interaction 567**

**Followers 173**



# THE YEAR AHEAD



Going into 2021, there were still a lot of uncertainties and we found that a few of our projects that had been scheduled to take place, had to be delayed until 2022. Fortunately, we now have start dates for the majority of our delayed projects as well as many new ones to focus on over the next year.

## A Day Like This

Having been put on hold while the Community Room at Coventry Station was finished, this is a project that will be delivered by **Highly Sprung Performance Co** for the Heart of England Community Rail Partnership. It is designed to promote the safe and accessible use of travel by rail for underserved audiences. With funding from CRN and CrossCountry it is a project which documents, celebrates and shares the experience of young people experiencing their first day trip by train. Families will be participating in workshops designed to familiarise them with stations and the opportunities that they can access through the railways, before moving onto digital performance making workshops to create a digital installation at Coventry Station.

## Careers, Creativity, and the Commonwealth

Funded by Avanti West Coast through their CCIS scheme, this project has two parts. The first is to work with **Brink Contemporary Arts** to create a mural on Platform 1 at Birmingham International Station. The mural will embody a subtle sense of movement whilst reflecting how the railways have connected Coventry with Birmingham and it will create an impact for those arriving at the station for the Commonwealth Games.



The second part of the project is focussed on developing a coaching, mentoring and employability programme linking to the railways with the **New Leaf Initiative CIC**. Trainees will spend two weeks with New Leaf where they will learn functional skills such as how to write a CV, and get ongoing support to help them gain meaningful employment. The CRP will be organising a third week of Careers Experience Days, so participants will be able to explore careers in the railway industry and opportunities that can be accessed via the railways. After the course, New Leaf will continue to provide support for the trainees through finding them work placements or helping them with further education.



## Creative Platforms

Creative Platforms will build confidence in rail travel and provide artistic and social confidence to young people that have been impacted by Covid-19. It aims to break barriers with travel and art, as well as encouraging participants to explore the opportunities they can access via the railways. Working with **Katie Jones** and **Emily Pettit**, Warwickshire-based artists, the project aims to provide a creative focus for young people who have anxieties about travelling on the railways. We have partnered with **Coventry and Warwickshire Mind** to identify those who have specific anxieties to travelling by train and the tools they will learn through Creative Platforms, will be transferable to any other situations that they may find stressful or overwhelming.



## Rail Trails

Working with the **Rambler's Association**, the **41 Club - Millennium Way** and the **Long Distance Walker's Association (LDWA)**, the Heart of England CRP has commissioned **Black Spiral Design Ltd** to design Rail Trails leaflets and posters.

These trails will be displayed at stations and available to download from the CRP website and will highlight hidden gems and attractions in the area. There will be a variety of walks, from peaceful countryside jaunts, to historical urban tours, and, with varying trail lengths, there should be something for everyone to enjoy.

# THE YEAR AHEAD



## Commonwealth Games

The Commonwealth Games is a major event for the West Midlands and we will be looking at how the Heart of England CRP can encourage visitors to use the railways to access games events, use the opportunity to showcase the other attractions that are accessible through the railways in the regions and work with station adopters, local authorities, and train operating companies to create welcoming station environments. As part of this we're looking to launch a **Commonwealth Games: Small Stations Projects Fund**. This fund will be for station adopters to apply for funding for projects at their stations in the lead up to the Commonwealth Games. Working with TOC partners and the CRP, volunteers will be able to apply for funding for projects in the lead up to the Commonwealth Games. Although the CRP's main function isn't to act as a funding provider, we realise the importance and the impact that the Commonwealth Games will have on the area, and therefore this investment into our stations and communities will have a continuing legacy after the games have ended.

## STEM+ Challenge Days

Working with the **Smallpeice Trust**, we will be holding 4 STEM+ Challenge days plus an additional 30 minute follow up session led by the CRP Officer, in schools across the CRP area. Key themes such as sustainability, rail safety, rail engineering and engagement from the rail industry will be explored by Secondary School students. In addition to this, the Heart of England Community Rail Partnership and **CrossCountry** have collaborated on a project to educate and inspire young people to consider a career in rail. Focussing on different pathways into the industry including engineering roles, our Engineering and the Railways day will be a mix of hands on activities, virtual tours, and an opportunity to talk with rail industry colleagues including live Q & A's. Initially, we will work with the Smallpeice Trust to trial this day long event with their Arkwright Scholars, but we are hoping to engage with 16 - 18 year olds across the area in the future.



## Leamington Pedestrian Subway Engagement

**Warwick District Council** have launched a public consultation to inform a new piece of artwork for the Leamington Station Pedestrian Subway by artist Stacey Barnfield. The Royal Leamington Spa Colour Palettes art piece will be made up of a variety of colours and each one representing one of seven themes relating to the town. As part of the public consultation, we've teamed up with local artist **Melissa Keskinkilinc** to offer Leamington-based primary schools, workshops to develop their own colour palettes. These workshops will be taking place in February and we are looking forward to seeing what colours the students feel represent their home town.



## Positive Youth Foundation

We are delighted to be a part of **Positive Youth Foundations'** "Involved" program in 2022. PYF work closely with newly arrived young people and support them with their integration in Coventry. They have regular arrivals coming into the UK through various resettlement schemes and PYF work with newly arrived young people between the ages of 11-22 on their induction program. The "Involved" programme includes 10 information sessions to young people, which would include civic orientation that relates to their information session. As part of this, the Heart of England CRP is hosting a railway information session at Coventry Station. We will be sharing the opportunities that are accessible via the railways, as well as looking at the logistics of how to book tickets, check timetable etc. Participants will be planning their own trip for later on in the programme.

At the Heart of England Community Rail Partnership, we recognise that environmental protection is one of the most important issues facing the world today. We're committed to working in environmentally sustainable ways, applying the principles of sustainable development for the benefit of current and future generations, both locally and globally.



We will be mindful of sustainability principles and strive to reduce the environmental impact of our activities.



We will work with partners to increase biodiversity at our stations.



We will reduce the amount of waste we produce by reducing, reusing and recycling items whenever possible.



We will source items and resources from local independent businesses and organisations when reasonably possible.



We will encourage CRP Officers and partners to apply sound sustainability practices at home and within the wider community as well as at work.



We will promote the benefits of the railway and how it helps individuals to lead a more sustainable life.



We also work to raise awareness of environmental issues and the need to move towards a more sustainable future among partners and other stakeholders. To this end we encourage sustainability research and education, through workshops, education programmes and collaborative work with community partners.



# USEFUL LINKS



**Heart of England CRP website:** [www.heartcommunityrail.org.uk](http://www.heartcommunityrail.org.uk)

**Avanti West Coast:** [www.avantiwestcoast.co.uk/where-we-go/community-hub](http://www.avantiwestcoast.co.uk/where-we-go/community-hub)

**Chiltern Railways:** [www.chilternrailways.co.uk](http://www.chilternrailways.co.uk)

**CrossCountry:** [www.crosscountrytrains.co.uk/xc-community-hub](http://www.crosscountrytrains.co.uk/xc-community-hub)

**West Midlands Railway:** [www.westmidlandsrailway.co.uk/adopt-station](http://www.westmidlandsrailway.co.uk/adopt-station)

**West Midlands Railway Executive:** [www.wmre.org.uk](http://www.wmre.org.uk)

**Coventry City Council:** [www.coventry.gov.uk](http://www.coventry.gov.uk)

**Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council:** [www.solihull.gov.uk](http://www.solihull.gov.uk)

**Stratford District Council:** [www.stratford.gov.uk](http://www.stratford.gov.uk)

**Warwick District Council:** [www.warwickdc.gov.uk](http://www.warwickdc.gov.uk)

**Warwickshire County Council:** [www.warwickshire.gov.uk](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk)

**Community Rail Network:** [www.communityrail.org.uk](http://www.communityrail.org.uk)

**Network Rail:** [www.networkrail.co.uk](http://www.networkrail.co.uk)

**Department for Transport:** [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-transport)

**Scenic Rail Britain:** [www.scenicrailbritain.com](http://www.scenicrailbritain.com)



**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:  
[HeartCRP@warwickshire.gov.uk](mailto:HeartCRP@warwickshire.gov.uk)**

**CRP Contact Details:**

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