

DfT Community Rail Accreditation – Community Rail Network post-meeting report

Accreditation Meeting Details

CRP Name:	Purbeck CRP	
Meeting Date:	14:00 on 11 th May 2020	
Meeting Location:	Zoom online meeting, organised by CRP Officer	
Present at Meeting:	Daniel Wright	Community Rail Network – Community Rail Support Officer (chair)
	Paul Webster	Community Rail Network – Community Rail Support Manager
	Bill Tritte	Purbeck CRP – Chairman
	Kelly Marshall	Purbeck CRP – Community Rail Partnership Officer
	Mick Stone	Purbeck CRP – Steering Group member
	Andy Harrowell	South Western Railway – Community Rail Manager
	Rob Hodgkinson	Network Rail (Wessex Route) – Franchise and Access Manager (Non-lead TOCs and Community Rail)
Apologies:	Mark Woolley	Swanage Railway

Background

Accreditation is formal recognition by the Department for Transport (DfT) and the Welsh Government that a community rail partnership (CRP) operates to a high standard and with objectives and activities that are supported by government. The accreditation system is administered by the Community Rail Network and applies to those CRPs operating in England and Wales. The DfT shall be the accrediting body for those CRPs based in England with the Welsh Government having responsibility for those CRPs primarily operating within the Wales and Borders Franchise.

This report is laid out by following the requirements of the ten Criteria for Accreditation and the five key Principles of Accreditation as set out in **Sections 3 and 4** of the **DfT Community Rail Accreditation Guidance (2018)**.

Comments and notes by the review team following the meeting are shown in *italics* against each of the criteria. Points highlighted in **Grey** are advisory notes for the CRP to address over the next 12 months and points highlighted in **Yellow** need action by a set date, neither will halt the accreditation process. Points highlighted in **Red** need immediate resolution and will pause the accreditation process.

Documentation and Information provided for the meeting

All evidence and documentation for the accreditation meeting was presented in time in advance of the meeting as requested. Due the period of lockdown an opportunity existed to accelerate the usual process of accreditation and the review team thanks the CRP officer for drawing together the documentation in a shorter than usual period.

Mark Woolley of Swanage Railway was contacted in advance of the meeting and although unable to attend, has expressed the view that he sees no reason why the CRP should not be accredited.

The discussions held and information presented at the accreditation meeting were sufficient to inform the summaries described below under each of the DfT Accreditation Criteria.

Accreditation Criteria

1. Show willingness to working with Community Rail Network, DfT, Welsh Government and other partners as relevant, operate within the framework of the Community Rail Development Strategy and to **resolve any issues or concerns** with these requirements.

The CRP steering group members and staff interact regularly with both the Community Rail Network staff team on day to day matters and with DfT if required. The CRP has held approximately quarterly steering group meetings which Community Rail Network is invited to attend. Wider stakeholder meetings are held approximately half-yearly and an Annual General Meeting was held in September 2019. Community Rail Network is invited to CRP community days and launch events. Meeting minutes are produced in a timely manner and circulated to all CRP partners.

NOTE – Keep dates for 2020-21 meetings under review in line with advice on relaxation of Covid-19 movement restrictions, and consider on-line meetings if necessary as an alternative to ensure that the steering group is able to guide the work of the CRP officer. It was particularly gratifying to see the effort made by the CRP chairman to attend the accreditation meeting via Zoom.

The CRP provided all relevant information for the accreditation process as requested.

2. Work with Community Rail Network to **share lessons, ideas and good practice** across community rail.

The CRP provided a Microsoft Word copy of its first annual report and talked through the contents of this document explaining the overall successes of the CRP.

Successful activities show how this unique CRP is working on community rail initiatives both on the National Rail network at four SWR stations, and on the heritage Swanage Railway, in advance of a planned public service connecting Wareham with stations on the Swanage Railway.

The annual report shows how the CRP Officer's first year in post has been spent delivering the aims and objectives of community rail as a way to connect the community with its railway. The report has evidence of delivery against the DfT's four pillars of Community Rail. For example, by bringing communities together through station-based events, and promoting social development through various initiatives around volunteering. The CRP has also produced its first line guide.

Staff at the CRP have built good links with other CRP officers on the SWR network. The CRP Officer is also developing a relationship with a local radio station, to publicise the work of the CRP.

The CRP is always willing to share their experiences and knowledge freely at DfT and Community Rail Network events and conferences and participates in TOC-led events and conferences.

ACTION – Print Annual Report professionally to use as a tool to help explain the work of the CRP and engage with the public and potential partners – by September 2020

3. Having appropriate **financial controls** in place.

NOTE – Neither Community Rail Network nor the DfT conduct a full audit or independent examination of the financial statements and reports presented as part of this accreditation process. Financial information is only reviewed for its overall completeness and to confirm the CRP's general financial health and sustainability.

Accounts

Swanage Railway has oversight of the CRP's monies and receive the funding from SWR. It is the duty of Swanage Railway to ensure sufficient resources are available for the CRP to function. A financial summary of income and expenditure for the CRP to March 2019 was produced which was certified as exempt from external audit.

The employment of the CRP Officer is managed by Swanage Railway who take a small management fee (£600 p/a) from the CRP's funding to manage the income from SWR and expenditure for the CRP under a standalone element within the railway's accounts.

Budget

The projected budget for April 2020 to March 2021 was supplied which shows the CRP meeting all its core running costs and salaries for the CRP, its officer and the hosting costs needed to support the CRP in this financial year. This has partly been achieved by taking a small amount out of the reserves of the CRP, and this approach seems sensible, and has been agreed by the Steering Group.

The CRP has reserves considerably in excess of what could be considered necessary for 'rainy day' use or, in a worst-case scenario, to allow the CRP to be wound up in a timely manner while giving a window of opportunity for staff to seek new employment. Large reserves represent an opportunity cost: these are monies which are not delivering community benefit. Additionally, SWR as main funder is keen that monies it has paid in are used during the course of its current franchise, and not carried across to a subsequent franchise.

ACTION – Steering group should consider ways to reduce the level of reserves by identifying worthwhile projects which deliver on the CRP's Aims and Objectives and the four pillars of the DfT's Community Rail Strategy – **plan to reduce reserves to be produced by end of financial year 2020-21, with projects to be carried out either financial year 2020-21 or subsequently, but during the expected course of the current SWR franchise**

Year-to-date expenditure incurred is presented at each quarterly CRP steering group meeting, and discussions are held about forward budget planning, with project funding details in the CRP Activity Plan.

NOTE - The CRP should continue to investigate external sources of funding, including bids to local funds as well as national (e.g. Community Rail Network's grant schemes) for projects so that these do not impact on the CRP's core funding requirements.

All hosting amounts for the CRP, salary levels and on-costs for the CRPO are in line with those to be expected for a CRP of this size and the host organisation's costs to manage the CRP.

4. Having an **appropriate, transparent governance structure** (with an up-to-date Terms of Reference or Memoranda & Articles) and aim to ensure their governance is effective, fair and representative.

A copy of the current CRP Constitution (2019) was provided which shows the partnership governance structure, its membership and decision-making process. The governance of the CRP is representative of the partners who are members of the CRP with each having a fair share to input to the decision-making processes at Partnership group meetings.

The CRP is an unincorporated partnership with Swanage Railway acting as the employer for the community rail officer. The CRP steering group is made up of funding organisations, Swanage Railway, and other local partners.

The steering group seeks to make decisions by consensus where possible or by a simple majority vote if necessary. The community rail officer is a non-voting member of the steering group, along with Community Rail Network and Network Rail. Experience of meetings by Community Rail Network staff demonstrates a high level of procedural good practice around the taking and recording of decisions. The recent decision to reduce the numbers necessary for meetings to be quorate is welcome, and will likely improve the effectiveness of steering group meetings. The steering group meets four times per year with agendas and meeting minutes circulated to group members in a timely manner.

NOTE – The CRP Officer and Chairman should continue to keep in contact between meetings of the full steering group to ensure that the Chairman is satisfied that delivery of the Activity Plan is progressing and that the Officer has any support or advice required from the Chairman.

ACTION – The steering group is very well run, but in order to make most effective use of meeting time and that of members of the steering group, there is now a need to reduce the amount of time spent on the Wareham footbridge/foot crossing issue. It is recognised that this is an issue of considerable local concern of which the CRP is aware, but realistically the issue remains beyond the scope of the CRP to significantly influence. Unless there is something new to report on this issue, and it falls within the purview of the CRP, the CRP Officer and Chairman should now find a way to ensure Steering Group meetings focus primarily on examining progress made in delivering the Activity Plan, and any additions/alterations to the Activity Plan, as well as any updates from partners in the CRP which affect the activities of the CRP – **by December 2019**

Wider community engagement is encouraged through the stakeholder group. It is clear that the CRP Officer has been making community contacts with a broader range of organisations than has attended recent stakeholder meetings. It is important that stakeholder meetings are open to as much of the local community as possible, subject to attendees agreeing to the general principles of the CRP's work. Local Enterprise Partnerships, Chambers of Commerce, Liveability, RSPB Arne, and tourism bodies might be worthwhile invitees (this is neither a mandatory nor exclusive list).

ACTION – Over the next **12 months** invite as wide a range of stakeholders as possible to stakeholder meetings, to demonstrate effective community engagement, and ensure they have a chance to feed in their aspirations for the work of the CRP (to be sifted subsequently by the steering group into a deliverable Activity Plan) – **by May 2021**.

5. Produce an activity plan which is in line with the requirements set out in the DfT Community Rail Development Strategy and is responsive to suggestions and ideas put forward by CRP members and communities (**First Principle of Accreditation**). The DfT and Welsh Government recognise and respect the independence of CRPs and therefore do not seek to determine what a CRP's priorities or objectives should be. Instead they wish to confirm that the CRP is going about its objectives in a way the DfT can support.

The CRP Activity Plan, in the requested format and detailing the relationship of activities to the four pillars of the community rail strategy was provided, listing all activities and projects the partnership will aim to deliver in the period May 2020 to April 2021. It is recognised that this period is highly unusual in terms of the imposition of Covid-19 mitigation measures which will affect delivery, and the CRP is aware that the Activity Plan is a living document which will have to be updated accordingly.

The plan shows the CRP is active along its lines developing links with the communities it serves. The CRP is listening and responding to suggestions and ideas put forward by local communities and station adopters. There are also 'line-wide' activities planned, including engagement events with schools promoting the importance of the line and its communities as part of the national rail network.

The current and planned activities each cover at least one of the four themes of the Community Rail Development Strategy. In relation to the Strategy a sample activity against each of the four pillars is:

Pillar 1 – Providing a voice for the community. *The CRP is responsive to the needs and requests of the local community and plans to bid for local funding for projects as and when such funding becomes available, taking note of local aspirations.*

Pillar 2 – Promoting sustainable, healthy & accessible travel. *The CRP has been working with RSPB Arne to ensure the effective delivery of a shuttle bus between Wareham and Arne and its connection with train services. This has been postponed until 2021 due to Covid-19*

Pillar 3 – Bringing communities together, supporting diversity & inclusion. The CRP has done considerable work on volunteer engagement by supporting the development of facilities at volunteer hubs on the Swanage Railway, and working with young people who are volunteering.

Pillar 4 – Supporting social and economic development. The CRP has a Service Level Agreement with SWR to promote the mainline railway to additional passengers, and has been working on promotional activities, which will bring extra passengers to towns along the line. The development of the website will also publicise local attractions close to stations on the CRP's route.

For each activity the plan shows the scale of the project, member of staff responsible, delivery dates (though it is understood that these are subject to change, particularly this year), resources required and current progress. It is noted on the plan where an activity will require additional external funding and the potential source of this funding (e.g. TOC or Community Rail Network).

ACTION – remove 'explanatory notes' sections from the Activity Plan – by end June 2020

ACTION – over the next 12 months, ensure that section 3 (Good News Stories) is filled out as activities are completed, and that section 4 (recording approval of the Activity Plan by the steering group) is updated at/after each steering group meeting – by end April 2021.

NOTE – Potential projects for inclusion on the Activity Plan include:

- a Jurassic Coast promotional video which could be delivered in partnership with Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership
- Network Rail funded/part-funded local community murals at/near stations
- Network Rail schools safety initiatives via staff at Basingstoke

These should be added to the Activity Plan when relevant.

6. Transparency, openness, and ease of contact (**Second Principle of Accreditation**).

The CRP Officer is easily contactable and responsive to phone and e-mail contact.

The CRP does not have a website although one is in development. This is important as a channel for members of the public to find out about the work of the CRP and its contact details.

ACTION – Over the next 12 months, the CRP website should be launched and developed, and must include contact details for the CRP – by end April 2021

NOTE – ensure the website is also updated regularly with news of CRP activities to demonstrate that the CRP is making a difference locally.

The CRP is active on social media with a presence on Twitter at @PurbeckCRP and Facebook at www.facebook.com/PurbeckCRP

7. Have a **Code of Conduct** and provide appropriate **policies and procedures** of the CRP's accountable body which ensure the partnership are holding themselves to high standards in their organisation, working in a safe, responsible and ethical manner and are compliant with all relevant rules and regulations. (**Third Principle of Accreditation**).

The CRP steering group adopted the WiCR Code of Conduct in 2019 and all CRP partner members are required to abide by this in meetings and when conducting the business and representation of the partnership. It is included in the constitution of the CRP.

As the CRP Officer is hosted by Swanage Railway all their requested policies governing staff employment and health & safety were provided and accepted.

All volunteers taking place in activities organised by the CRP are expected to receive suitable briefings based on the policies provided by the Swanage Railway. Station adopters on the National Rail network are inducted into the South Western Railway Station Adoption scheme and are therefore not the responsibility of the CRP for health & safety purposes.

8. Use an effective **review and planning cycle**, using Community Rail Network's support and advice through its annual planning process to review progress and priorities and discuss the next year's plan engaging and consulting rail industry and other local partners (**Fourth Principle of Accreditation**).

Opportunities to suggest new project ideas and hear feedback on current work is built into the CRPs activity review process through quarterly steering group meetings and twice-yearly stakeholder meetings. The CRP has a Service Level Agreement with South Western Railway setting out the outcomes the train operator expects in return for its contribution, and this is subject to an annual review process.

The Network Rail regional representative is also consulted over project ideas and is co-operative and pro-active, which is very welcome.

Show activities to be undertaken support the strategic aims of the CRP, including desired outcomes of the activity, and how this will be assessed; how the activity will be delivered and resourced to maximise the benefits for the community and timescales for delivery.

The plan shows some details of the expected outcomes for each activity together with how it will be judged as successful.

NOTE – Detail around the outcome of activities to clearly show the lasting benefit or the change that will occur as a result of delivering that activity, and measurement of activities, will be a key issue during 2020-21. This is still relatively new to most of the Community Rail movement, and Community Rail Network can provide ongoing advice on linking activities to measurable outcomes.

Resources required to deliver each activity are shown alongside the member of the team who will deliver it and any additional resources that will be required.

Show how the CRP will develop itself in the coming year, including relevant staff/board training and professional development, volunteer recruitment and promoting involvement to wider audiences.

The plan shows details of activities and training opportunities which will help develop the skills and knowledge of the community rail officer.

NOTE – this should be kept under continuous review and committed training like attendance at the Community Rail Network Awards Entry training webinar recorded.

Future developments for the CRP once accredited could potentially see it expand its sphere of operations, or undertake more expensive projects that would previously have been impossible to consider, with bids to Community Rail Network's Community Rail Development Fund (CRDF). No specific changes to area of operation or project types have been given detailed consideration so far.

ACTION – Over the next 12 months, steering group to consider whether to expand the CRP's route coverage, and whether it has desire/capability to bid to CRDF for larger projects – by end April 2021

Ensure the work of the CRP considers diversity within local communities, and strives to contribute to more inclusive, cohesive communities. (**Fifth Principle of Accreditation**).

We are satisfied that there are a good range of activities on the plan that include work with the local community and encourage those communities to travel by train through supported journeys or get involved with activities at their local stations..

This is a small CRP with an enthusiastic CRP Officer, keen to make a big difference to the passenger experience along its lines, as well as supporting local communities more widely. The likely delay to the public service between Wareham and the Swanage Railway stations is disappointing but will provide an opportunity for the CRP to promote sustainable access into the Isle of Purbeck when it happens. In the meantime there is plenty of opportunity to improve passenger perception and interest in the mainline stations, as well as carrying out community activities in the area served by the Swanage Railway.

9. Adherence to the five principles of accreditation

*The CRP is locally enabling community rail to flourish and is upholding the **five key principles** of accreditation in all activities shown on the CRP's annual activity plan and by how it operates as noted in the above sections.*

10. Be a **member of Community Rail Network** and display its membership on its website

*The CRP is a full member of Community Rail Network and membership subscription payments for the April 2019 to March 2020 period have been paid. **ACTION** - The "Community Rail Network Member" logo should be displayed on the Purbeck CRP website - **when the website is launched.***

NOTE – Links to the Community Rail Network's and DfT's Community Rail websites and the DfT Accreditation logo should be included on the CRP's new website when it is launched.

Summary

There no items for immediate attention marked in **red** and a small number of items to be resolved by a specific date noted in **yellow** as part of this accreditation process. Items marked in **grey** with an advisory note should be reviewed over the next 12 months.

Subject to these being addressed, we recommend that Purbeck CRP should be approved for accreditation by the DfT for a period of 12 months.



Department
for Transport



Daniel Wright
Community Rail Support Officer

XX May 2021