



Station Adoption Guide

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So, you've adopted your station. What now? South Western Railway is delighted to have you on board as a station adopter, and you can start work on some actual projects at your station. You probably already have a good idea for your first project, but what about after that? While you're delivering your first idea for the station, you can be planning what to do next.

Some types of schemes will be more difficult to deliver than others because they will need more permissions from the rail industry. Other types can usually be delivered much more easily.

This guide aims to give you some inspiration for the future with ideas of projects that station adopters commonly get involved with. It also aims to highlight which ones are 'quick wins' and which ones might need a longer lead-in time while we consult internally and give you the necessary permissions.

A note on Community Rail Network

Unless you told us you didn't want us to, we are paying for your membership of Community Rail Network. That allows you to access advice from their local support officer, who can also put you in touch with other station adopters who have done similar projects to ones you might be thinking of. It's good to get hints and tips from others who have already done the work.

Being a member of Community Rail Network also allows you to bid for money to support your projects. They administer two funds:

1. South Western Railway Station Adoption Fund. This is only open to station groups on the South Western Railway network, and can fund or part-fund projects up to £250.
2. Small Grants Fund (England). This is open to any Community Rail Network member, and can fund or part-fund projects up to £1,000



Where to begin - quick wins

Book swaps

Book swaps in waiting rooms or ticket halls are easy to organise, once you have the agreement of your local station manager. All we ask is that you keep the bookshelves clean and tidy and the stock looking presentable. In the event of further pandemic restrictions, we may have to ask that books are temporarily removed.

Cleaning/tidying

Cleaning and tidying areas of the station like verges and car parks can be really helpful in enhancing the appearance of the local environment, especially at our smaller stations between visits from our own cleaning teams. You will need to have had your plans agreed through your site safety briefing and ensure you wear your hi-vis tabards while you do the work.

History/interpretation boards

Boards like this are a great way of celebrating the history of your local area. We will need to approve the content and arrange for the installation of the boards – we do not allow anyone other than SWR to drill into walls of stations.

Art frames

Frames to display art from local artists (whatever their age) must be lockable and vandal resistant. We will arrange their installation. After that, you are free to display the talents of your local artists (please try to avoid anything that might offend public decency though) and all we ask is that you make sure looks tidy and are refreshed regularly.

Local area leaflets

This is something you can get on with quickly and easily, promoting your station and the local area. If you use the SWR logo on any leaflet, you must let us see it before it is published. You will also need to agree with us that the leaflet can be stocked at the station, if that is what you want to do. You may consider putting any local information onto the local Community Rail Partnership website for people to download. We can support you with posters with QR codes to make this easier.

Tending existing flower planters / flower boxes / station gardens

Once you have received your safety briefing from the station manager you are free to go! Planted areas will require regular maintenance: weeding throughout the year and watering in the summer. You could add moisture-retentive materials in the bottom of planters which will release water slowly and reduce the need for frequent watering, or you could consider drought tolerant plants which require less watering in the first place.

Website / social media

This is an easy project to get underway as you can manage it all yourself. By setting up a website or Facebook page, or creating a Twitter or Instagram account, you can publicise the existence of your group, show off your work, and attract new volunteers to help.

Spread the word

We want to shout about all the good things our Community Rail Partners and adopters are doing across the network, but we need your help too.

Here's how you can help:

- Tweet us @SW_Help with the hashtag #SWRCommunityRail
- Share your good news with our team: Paula.Aldridge@swrailway.com
- Sign up to our press release mailing list press@swrailway.com

More Challenging Projects

Planting / flowers / veg in new locations

You will need to agree with us where any planters are being installed, which might take a few weeks (we need to make sure that minimum platform widths are maintained and that any planters do not interfere with pedestrian or vehicle access around the station). But once we've done that, you can create beautiful flower beds, create bee-friendly planting, or grow herbs/vegetables/fruit that train passengers could pick up on their way through the station. Planted areas will require regular maintenance: weeding throughout the year and watering in the summer. You could add moisture-retentive materials in the bottom of planters which will release water slowly and reduce the need for frequent watering, or you could consider drought tolerant plants which require less watering in the first place.

Events

Events at stations are a great way of connecting with your communities. You will need to agree with us what the event is and how it will be managed on the day, as we need to make sure that events don't have any impact on the safe operation of the station. That might take a few weeks to organise – please give us as much notice as possible.

Murals

Because murals are permanently attached/painted onto our property, we will need to get our property team to agree this process. We will also need to approve the design of the artwork.

Wildlife boxes

If bird boxes / bat boxes are being attached to buildings, we will need to check with our property team and also arrange for installation. Ground level, or near-ground level boxes (for small mammals, hedgehogs etc) will need to be assessed to ensure they are out of the way of passengers, and do not attract the wrong sort of wildlife.

Painting

We will need to make sure that any plans you might have for painting are consistent with our own painting regime and can be carried out safely. We will also need to confirm that the things you want to paint are the responsibility of SWR rather than Network Rail. If it is the latter, we can introduce you to Network Rail's relevant contact.

Defibrillators

We are happy to consider requests for defibrillators at stations. However, they cannot be connected to stations' power supplies (so the defibrillators will need to be the type with internal power supply) and ongoing maintenance arrangements must be in place: SWR cannot maintain such equipment itself.



Significantly Challenging Projects

Freestanding poster frames

We understand that it is helpful to you sometimes to have freestanding poster frames in prominent positions. However, anything that involves digging into the ground requires us to make sure we are not digging through cables or services which can be time-consuming and costly. There might be times when we have to say no, based on local ground conditions.

Onward signage

Onward walking and cycling signage can be really helpful for visitors and the promotion of sustainable onward travel from the station. As with freestanding poster frames, signposts that involved installation into the ground can take time to agree and install, and there might be times when we have to say no.

Cycle parking

If you would like to fund additional cycle parking at a station, we are happy to discuss suitable facilities and locations. Such equipment will have to meet railway standards and will need to be installed by us. Anything that involves digging into the ground can be time-consuming, as explained above.

Using redundant rooms

If there is a redundant room at your station that you would like to use on a permanent basis for the benefit of the community, we can assist. You will need to take on a lease, or find someone to take on the lease on your behalf, unless your group has its own legal identity already. Community Rail Network can advise you further on the process and help you think about taking such a project forward.

We're sorry, but no

There are some schemes which our rules mean station adopters cannot do. Talk to us and we will try to find a way for you to get the same result in a different way.

Water butts

SWR does not allow the installation of water butts at stations. However, if there is a mains water supply at the station, we can investigate the provision of a lockable external water tap. We ask you to fund this, but you could bid to Community Rail Network for the money.

Trees on stations

Because trees can shed leaves or needles onto the railway track, which causes safety issues, we will not approve any schemes for trees on stations.

Digging

We will not allow you to dig directly into the surface anywhere on or around the station, as there are many hidden high voltage cables. Plant in pots and containers to be on the safe side.

Mowing/strimming

We do not allow the use of powered tools including lawn mowers and strimmers by volunteers on station property. If you have concerns about the appearance of vegetated areas at a station that cannot be dealt with by yourself using hand tools, please let us know and we can speak to the maintenance team.

Who do I contact?

We have lots of enthusiastic and willing people to assist you at SWR. Paula Aldridge is your dedicated Community Rail Manager paula.aldridge@swrailway.com who can advise and support you with most of your queries.

Get to know your local station manager - they can talk to you in the first instance about your plans

There are three Regional Development Managers, who can give you more information about the infrastructure and operational workings of the railway. They are:

- Phil.Dominey@swrailway.com - who covers the South region
- David.Wilby@swrailway.com - who covers the Metro region
- Andrew.Ardley@swrailway.com - who covers the West region

Community Rail Partnerships Contacts

For all community related enquires please contact Paula Aldridge your Community Rail Manager or for any support or new ideas contact any of the Community Rail Partnership Officers.

Caroline Rowland - Blackmore Vale Line CRP - blackmorevalecrp@gmail.com

Bobby Lock - Isle of Wight CRP, New Forest CRP - solentcrpbobby@gmail.com

Steven Booth - Purbeck CRP - steve.booth@purbeckcrp.org.uk

Lucy Lomax - Wey Valley CRP, Hills to Harbour CRP - lucy@hampshirecommunityrail.co.uk

Richard Burningham - Devon & Cornwall RP - R.Burningham@plymouth.ac.uk

Sandy Mahon - Windsor to Reading CRP - sandy@southeastcrp.org

Himali Patil - Community Train CRP - himali@thecommunitybrain.org

Chantelle Bacon - South Wessex CRP - chantelle.bacon@southwessexcrp.org.uk

Mark Miller - Three Rivers CRP - info@threeriversrail.com

Michael Olden - Hounslow & Richmond CRP - hounslowandrichmondcrp@gmail.com

Finally, to help you understand whose responsibility lies where...

Different parts of railway stations are the responsibility of different organisations. The entire railway infrastructure in Britain (that's the track, signals, bridges, tunnels and stations) are owned by Network Rail. However, train operators like South Western Railway lease the bits of railway stations that allow us to provide a service to passengers. That's usually the station buildings, the platforms and the car parking areas. The rest is managed by Network Rail. We can only give you permission to undertake activities on the parts of the station we lease from Network Rail. We can check on the maps we hold of each station, to see which bit of the station is whose responsibility.

If you want to undertake any activities on a part of your station which South Western Railway does not lease from Network Rail, you will need to seek permission from Network Rail itself. This generally means non-operational areas such as disused platforms, disused areas of land within the railway boundary, and operational parts of stations which are not directly South Western Railways' responsibility, such as footbridges and platform canopies. Network Rail has a scheme called "community licences" which allows station adopters to access some of these areas for community schemes. We can help you contact Network Rail so you can discuss your ideas with them.

Finally, there might be areas immediately in front of a station where the land is owned by the local highways authority (usually a county council or unitary council). If your ideas include land owned by the highways authority, we can support you in approaching them – our Regional Development Managers work with many councils across the South Western Railway network.

