

Community Rail Partnership Meeting

**13 January 2021
14:00 – 15:30
Via Zoom**

MINUTES

Present:

Councillor John Blundell (JB)	Cabinet Member for a Thriving Economy, Rochdale Council (Chair)
Councillor Jane Scullion (JS)	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member - Regeneration & Strategy, Calderdale Council
Harry Aldritt (HA)	Friends of Mills Hill Station
Councillor Billy Sheerin (BS)	Friends of Castleton Station
Richard Lysons (RL)	Chair, Friends of Littleborough Stations
Sheila Greenwood (SG)	Todmorden Station Partnership
Martin Whitell (MW)	Chair, Friends of Hebden Bridge
Geoff Mitchell (GM)	Chair, Mytholmroyd Station Partnership
Lauren Brundell (LB)	Secretary, Friends of Sowerby Bridge Station
David Bedding (DB)	Chair, Friends of Brighouse Station
Richard Greenwood (RG)	Chair, Support the Oldham Rochdale Manchester (STORM) Rail Lines Group
Stephen Waring (SW)	Chair, Halifax and District Rail Action Group (HADRAG)
Chris McLaughlin (CM)	Community Safety Manager, Network Rail
Colin Hill (CH)	Town Clerk, Todmorden Town Council
Steven Lee (SL)	Assistant Director – Strategic Infrastructure, Calderdale Council
Mary Farrar (MF)	Corporate Lead Transportation, Calderdale Council
John Lewer (JL)	Calderdale Council
Mark Robinson (MR)	Assistant Director – Economy, Rochdale Council
Richard Chapman (RC)	Senior Transport Strategy & Project Officer Rochdale Council
Dawn Sexton (DS)	ELR Trust Officer, Rochdale Council

1.	Welcome and apologies
	<p>JB welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the idea for a community rail partnership (CRP) had originated in the community. JB said initiatives work well when members of the community bring ideas to councils.</p> <p>No apologies received.</p>
2.	The aims of the community rail partnership
	A copy of the draft CRP Prospectus had been circulated to attendees before Christmas. JB asked for views, particularly regarding the aims of the CRP.

	<p>RL thanked the authors for recognising the good work that station adoption groups do along the line. He said it was an excellent document and presented a collaborative opportunity to build on good practice. HA seconded this.</p> <p>SW said it was a good document but needed tweaks. He supported a CRP and said it could bring something new, promote the surrounding area to attract more visitors, give the line an identity as well as attracting people away from their cars.</p> <p>RL added that train passenger numbers had reduced significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic and Transport for Greater Manchester forecast it will take three years to return to previous patronage levels.</p> <p>A discussion about promoting off-peak travel took place. JB said commuters will still be important to the Calder Valley Line.</p>
3.	How groups may like to be involved in the community rail partnership
	<p>SL and LB said it was important to reach into communities, for example, by involving young people and children.</p> <p>JS gave an example of the trend of young people buying low priced older cars to indicate how important it is to involve as many people as possible. Recovery will take a considerable time and we should work together.</p> <p>JB suggested thinking about what people are interested in relating to their station, as a way of engaging them in the CRP. For example, in Rochdale people want better cycling infrastructure.</p> <p>BS said the CRP should help to make our section of the Calder Valley Line special.</p> <p>CM said he values the links to Victoria Station for work and leisure. He would like to be involved as part of his role to work with schools to promote safety (anti-trespassing) and career opportunities.</p> <p>RL said Friends of Littleborough Stations had seen the value of CRPs by working with them, such as Community Rail Lancashire. They offer continuity with paid officers (as some volunteers don't return) and can apply for grants which can't otherwise be accessed. Mid-Cheshire Line Marvellous Days Out was given as a good example of work which had received support from the Community Rail Network.</p> <p>JW said all the station adoption groups are different and play to their different strengths. There is no intention to add bureaucracy with a CRP nor to oversee the good work already taking place.</p> <p>DS added Rochdale and Calderdale Councils would like to help to establish a CRP and the quickest way to do this is for one council (Rochdale) to become the accountable body. However, the intention is to work towards making the CRP an independent, community-led initiative.</p> <p>HA asked what other community rail partnerships have done in order to inspire ideas. MF said council officers had spoken to a number of other CRPs. JB added that many CRPs had promoted tourism.</p>

	ACTION: Dawn Sexton to circulate examples of other CRPs' activities
4.	Next steps
	<p>JB asked officers how they saw the CRP working in future. MF said it was envisaged there would be a core steering group which would be a smaller group that met approximately every six weeks. There would also be a larger stakeholder group which would meet twice yearly (or when there were issues to discuss). SW and BS agreed this was a good suggestion.</p> <p>JB said he would like to be a member of the core group. JS would like to be a member too for the initial setting-up period. RL also volunteered and suggested it would need to be balanced in terms of Calderdale and Rochdale members. SW suggested the Chair could alternate between the two districts.</p> <p>JB asked that if anyone would like to join the core steering group she/he should contact DS by the end of January 2021.</p> <p>RL also said a paid, part-time CRP officer in the medium-term would also help to kick-start activity.</p> <p>MW said Friends of Hebden Bridge had 22 members on its circulation list, including seven elderly people, so to do something else may be difficult.</p> <p>BS said there is a common aim to benefit people via rail.</p> <p>RG said reliability was a key issue. To attract patronage, reliability needs to improve, for example, the line at Walsden has been blocked six times in the last two years.</p> <p>GM asked what will the CRP do and said he was concerned it would just lead to more bureaucracy. (* DB agreed with GM via the comments facility in Zoom*)</p> <p>JB said promoting the tourism opportunities along the line and lobbying for infrastructure can't be done on a station by station basis and more funding is available to CRPs.</p> <p>GM said that national Government is likely to make budget cuts. JB pointed out that CRP funding will come from multiple sources.</p> <p>SW stated that station adoption groups can carry on with the work they are successfully carrying out: a CRP would not interfere. A CRP would present the line as a whole and give it an identity.</p> <p>JS said we should developing the CRP should be done at a steady pace, so that it is done right and with mutual respect.</p> <p>LB said there will be many benefits of involving the school groups and the wider community which will also help Friends of Groups.</p> <p>BS said the CRP should not be seen as a hierarchy, but just as a joining up. We are</p>

all part of the same line.

ACTION: Anyone who would like to join the CRP Core Steering Group to contact DS by 31 January 2021 to express their interest