

# Community Rail Guidance

Working with Network Rail





# Welcome

*“Whether you’re a volunteer, individual or group, we hope you find this guidance useful on how engaging with us about community rail can be used to improve your local station and railway.”*

*We’re passionate about putting passengers and freight users first across Britain’s rail network and recognise that community and customer engagement forms a large part of our approach. By working together, as well as with our rail industry colleagues, we can maximise the social and economic value of the railway for the communities it serves.*

*If you’re part of an initiative on or relating to Network Rail land or property, this guidance is the place to start. We look forward to working with you!”*

**Andrew Haines,**



**Chief Executive**

**Sir Peter Hendy CBE,**



**Chair**



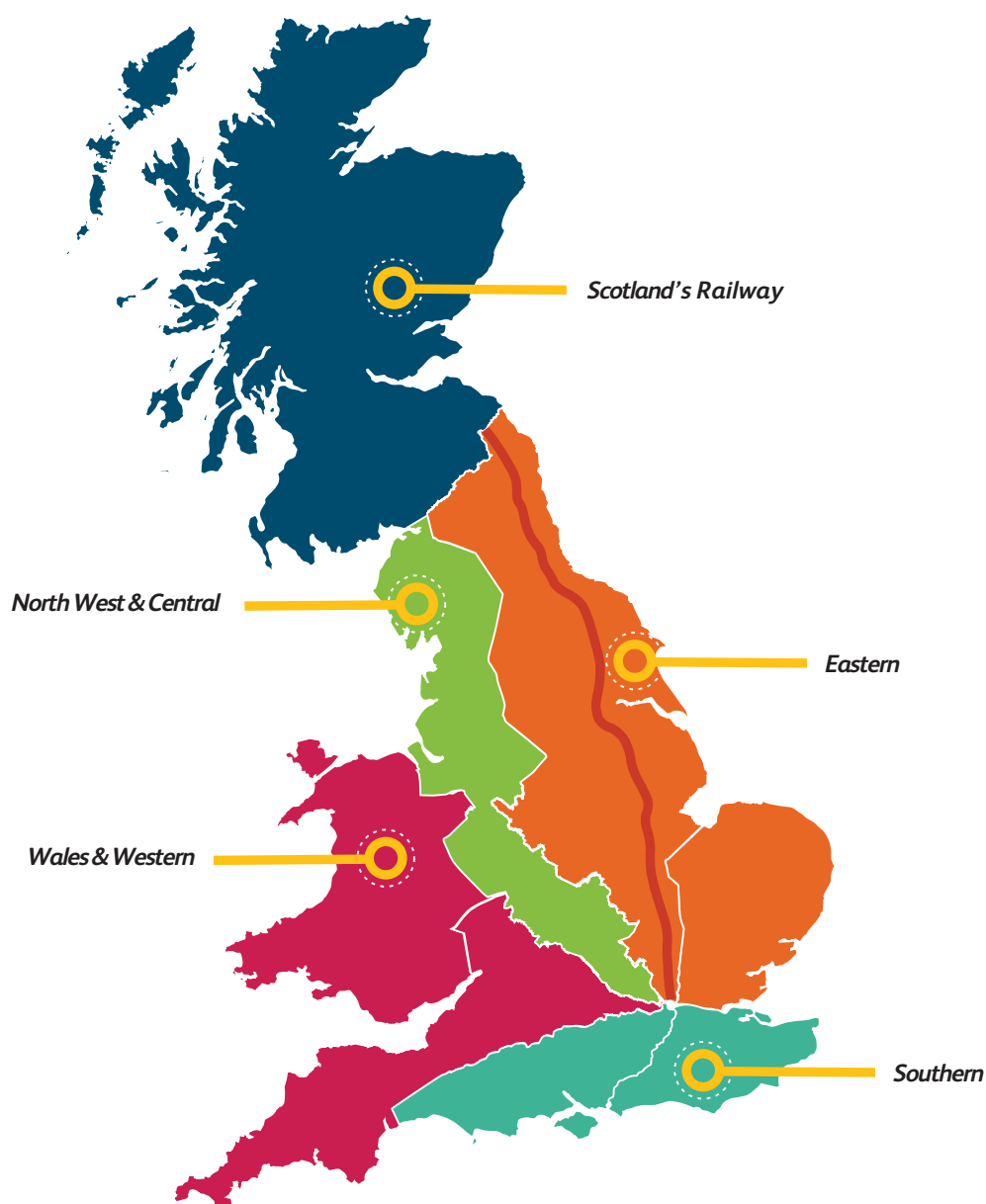
# Community Rail Guidance – Working with Network Rail

*How communities can work with Network Rail to improve their local station and railway.*

## Who are Network Rail?

We own and operate the majority of railway infrastructure in England, Wales and Scotland on behalf of the nation, as a public body. That's approx. 20,000 miles of track, 30,000 bridges and viaducts and thousands of tunnels, signals, level crossings and stations across over 44,000 hectares. We also manage rail timetabling and many of the largest principal stations. We work around-the-clock to provide a safe, reliable experience for the millions of passengers and businesses using our railway each day.

We're split into geographical regions, which manage the day-to-day running of the railway, as well as engaging with local stakeholders and communities. The regions are supported by national technical specialists.



# Why do we support community rail?

*Every day, more than 4.8 million rail journeys are made in the UK. People depend on Britain's railway for their daily commute, to visit friends and loved ones and to get them home safe every day.*

Railways and stations form part of communities, and we're aware that our work impacts on passengers, communities and our lineside neighbours, as well as the natural environment. Part of how we work with local communities is through our support of community rail initiatives, projects and groups.

We recognise community rail as community-based partnerships, groups, organisations, social enterprises and volunteers seeking to benefit their local community and railway through connecting people with, and engaging them in, the railway. For more information on community rail, please visit the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP) website: [www.communityrail.co.uk](http://www.communityrail.co.uk)

As part of the rail industry, we need to play our part in delivering the Department for Transport strategy *Connecting Communities with the Railways: The Community Rail Development Strategy*, the Community Rail Partnership Designation Scheme in Scotland and support the local train operators to deliver the community rail commitments that are part of their franchise obligations.

## How do we support community rail?

We support the community rail movement as far as possible through enabling local people to make the transformation that they want to see, bringing stations and the railway back into the heart of communities in a way that can be done safely and without risk to the safe and reliable operation of the railway, to our neighbours, or to the groups or individuals themselves. Examples include:

- supporting volunteers to create gardens on land within or adjoining stations and old platforms;
- working with community groups to utilise disused station buildings for community benefit;
- installing artwork and engaging with the local train operator on community-led station enhancements and improvements

If you need to engage with Network Rail directly, we'll assign you a local community rail contact who will be your main point of contact within Network Rail – they'll guide you through our processes and work with the local train operator to support you in your activities.

There are lots of activities that form part of the community rail movement:

- **Station Adoption/Friends Groups** – volunteers develop community gardens in stations or other activities to engage the community and take care of “their” station. Station adoption schemes are largely supported and managed by the local train operator, who generally lease the stations from Network Rail. If required, the train operator will contact Network Rail to seek consent for the station adoption activity, which may include a requirement for landlord's consent/property requirements and Asset Protection Agreement, in order to keep both you and the railway infrastructure safe.
- **Community Licence Scheme** – similar activities to those listed under Station Adoption for areas of railway land that are outside the area leased to the local train operator, so are directly in our control. For groups granted community licences, we'll engage with you directly.
- **Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs)** – community focused organisations that work in partnership with Network Rail, local train operators, local councils and other groups to deliver positive change along a specific railway line or across a county or geographic region. There are currently over 60 of these partnerships across Great Britain and their focus varies depending on the needs of their local communities, but most often includes

working with schools, community groups and partners to promote sustainable travel, improving social mobility using the railway, supporting and empowering people to make a difference to their local area and the railway.

- **Community Building (Re-)Development** – this is where community groups develop ideas to revive unused or underutilised railway buildings, to bring them into community use and develop community hubs. This includes:
  - **Community Stations** – this is where community groups look to utilise empty space within station buildings, bringing them into community use and/or to develop community hubs.
  - **Non-Station Buildings** – this is where community groups look to utilise assets such as disused signal boxes, bringing them into community use.

## If you want to start a community rail project...

*We recognise that the rail industry and its regulatory framework can appear complicated, so we'd suggest starting your community rail activities with the support of your local train operator.*

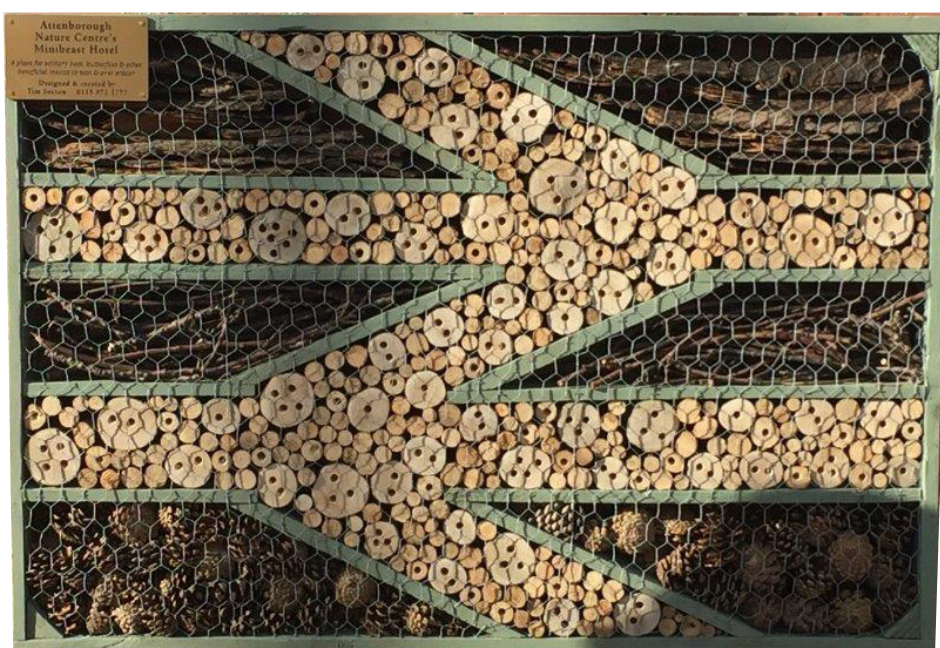
To get in touch with your local train operator, start by finding out which company runs the trains to your local station. Please visit the operator's website for a communities/community rail page or contact the operator directly and ask to speak to your local communities' manager.

For groups based in England and Wales, ACoRP (Association of Community Rail Partnerships) can provide additional supporting guidance - you can find out more on their website:

[www.communityrail.org.uk](http://www.communityrail.org.uk)

If this is your first time engaging with Network Rail on a community matter, you'll need to call the **Network Rail National Helpline** on **03457 11 41 41**. They will take initial information from you. If it falls under the remit of community rail (e.g. if you've spotted an area of railway land or building you'd like to look after), they'll put you in touch with your local community rail contact to discuss your ideas further.

Your local community rail contact will aim to get in touch with you within 20 working days asking for some more information about what it is that you'd like to do.





# Safety

*Safety is at the heart of everything we do at Network Rail and in the wider rail industry. We have strict safety requirements, as do train operators, and we expect all community rail initiatives and participants to adhere to these safety standards.*

Here is a summary of common requirements (this is not intended as an exhaustive list):

- Do not go on or near the railway line under any circumstances – this includes working within 2m of the platform edge.
- Zero tolerance for drugs and alcohol whilst doing work – this includes not working in the licence area if you have consumed alcohol in the previous 8 hours or if you may be impaired by alcohol, drugs or medication.
- Do not do anything which may damage or interfere with cables, electrical cabinets, signalling or other railway equipment – you (and your equipment) need to be a minimum of 2m away.
- Attend, understand and sign for safety briefings given to the group.
- Work to the risk assessment, method statement and licence restrictions applicable to your activity - this may limit what tasks you are able to do and what equipment you can use.
- Work within the area designated within your community licence and use the access/egress points within the plan.
- Wear appropriate clothing such as high-visibility clothing, safety boots and safety gloves as directed in your safety documents and safety brief.
- If a train driver sounds their horn, it means they have seen you. You must acknowledge this by raising one arm above your head.
- If you think something is wrong (e.g. with the running line or if you see someone in danger/trespassing), do not intervene yourself. Either tell a member of railway staff or call the **Network Rail National Helpline** on **03457 11 41 41** as soon as possible. If you think it is an emergency on the railway line or near it, start your message with “this is an emergency call.”
- Accidents, dangerous occurrences and near-misses need to be reported – how to do this will be covered in your safety briefing.
- Please be aware that acting in a manner that is unsafe or not in adherence to our safety requirements for your activity may result in agreements or permissions being withdrawn.

## **If you have seen something on the railway that you’re worried about...**

If your query relates to a safety issue or general maintenance of the railway (e.g. litter picking, graffiti or vegetation management), this should be raised using the **Network Rail National Helpline** on **03457 114 141**.

This is available 24 hours a day and safety issues will be dealt with as a priority.

# Supporting Diversity and Inclusion in Community Rail

*We know that by becoming a more open, diverse and inclusive organisation we can deliver a safe, accessible railway for everyone. We are supportive of the activities of ACoRP and Women in Community Rail (WiCR) in building an inclusive culture within community rail.*

We subscribe to the Women in Community Rail Code of Conduct and expect those we work with to adhere to the same behaviours:

## **I/We will at all times**

- Promote positive relationships to deliver positive outcomes and discussions
- Champion diversity and inclusion, aiming to ensure that community rail is welcoming, engaging and respectful for everyone
- Value others by listening and not making assumptions
- Challenge bullying, harassment, intimidation and report all negative behaviour
- Never act in a manner that could bring community rail into disrepute





# If you're thinking of becoming a station adopter...

*For the majority of national railway stations, the train operators are the tenants of Network Rail, so they'll lead on initiatives like station adoption and supporting groups through the industry processes that apply, providing the activity is within their lease area.*

If you get in touch with Network Rail and it sounds like your idea would come under station adoption arrangements (or within land operated by a train operator), we'll refer you to the relevant train operator, as you'll need to make your arrangements with them directly.

You can find out more about Station Adoption in England and Wales on the ACoRP website:

[www.communityrail.org.uk/community-rail/station-adoption](http://www.communityrail.org.uk/community-rail/station-adoption)

If you are thinking about adopting a station in Scotland, please get in touch with your local train operator in the first instance.

It is worth being aware that the leasehold boundaries mean that some stations are split between the train operator and Network Rail (most commonly in the case of disused platforms). In this case some, or all of your activity, may come under our community licence scheme.

## Friends of Spondon Station





# If you're thinking of joining our community licence scheme...

*As a publicly owned body comprising a nationally significant infrastructure, which can be a hazardous environment, we must make sure our land is used in the right way and that the people working on it are protected.*

If you want to carry out community rail activity on land that sits outside of the train operator's leasehold area, we will need to grant you a community licence, to help keep your group safe and control access to specific areas to carry out the desired environmental improvements.

There are two types of community licence:

## One-off

- Valid for a short period e.g. 1 day
- The group will be supervised throughout by us and we might be able to find volunteers from within Network Rail to support you in the activity.
- Network Rail must give all group members/participants with a safety briefing before you can start work.

## Annual

- Renewed annually
- The group members will usually be allowed to go and work on the licence area at any time, without direct supervision from us (but we may visit your group and the site at any time to carry out assurance checks).
- Network Rail must be informed of the names of all group members and give an initial safety briefing to everyone before they can start. For new members on existing schemes, please get in touch with your local community rail contact to make arrangements for them to be appropriately safety briefed.

Before we grant a community licence, we have to perform a number of checks. This includes making sure that the land is not earmarked for future use by one of our teams; and the proposed land-use or activity does not interfere with operations of the railway. We may also have to implement additional safety measures to enable a licence to be granted; such as erecting fencing to keep you safe from moving trains, which might mean you need to get your own padlock for access.

We know that each project, activity and group is different, so we'll need to get the application reviewed by various internal teams before we can grant permission. Due to the strict safety standards required for running the railway, including the need to keep you and others safe, even for a relatively simple project, we'll probably need to get permission from our engineers, maintenance team and property teams as a minimum. We may also need to discuss your request with the train operator or other external bodies that could be impacted.



# Getting your Community Licence scheme...

*We'll work with you throughout this process, as well as advising you if you need to engage with your local train operator. As each project, activity and group is different, the timescales are given as a rough guide, and we will try to let you know if there is a delay.*

1. Your local contact checks whether the proposed scheme looks feasible, e.g. is it Network Rail owned land? This will usually take around 15 working days.

**Note**, if the land/building you've identified is within the station lease area of your local train operator, we'll refer you to them as you'll need to have a licence or sub-lease with them directly. They will be able to advise you further on the feasibility of your request and the sort of arrangements you'll need to have with them. If the scheme does not look feasible, we will let you know and discuss further with you if there are any changes or alternatives that might mean the scheme could go ahead.

2. Providing your scheme idea looks feasible initially, we'll organise a meeting on the site with you to assess what safety measures might be needed and to agree the next steps. We'll aim to do this within 30 working days of agreeing to meet in person.

3. You'll need to write a risk assessment for your activities which includes all the safety measures you talked about on the initial site visit. You send that to your local community rail contact and we'll review it to make sure the controls meet with our safety standards. This will usually take around 15 working days.

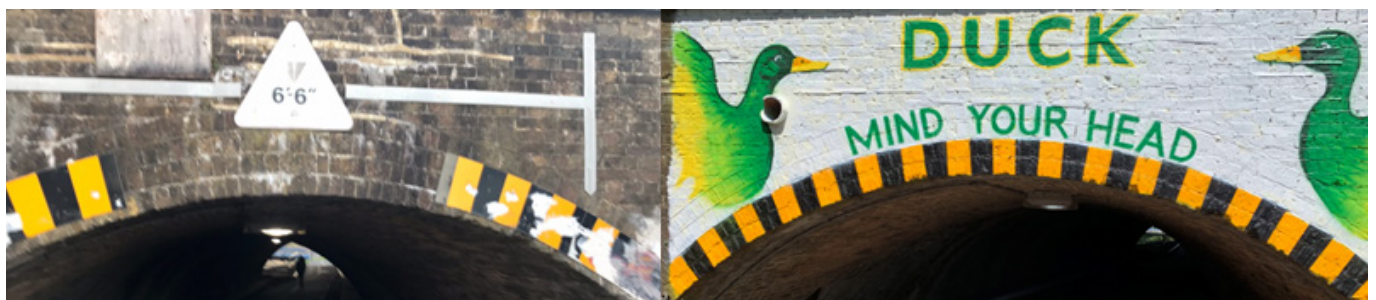
4. We'll advise if we need to carry out a 'Business & Technical Clearance', as well as 'Buried Service' request. This is our way of making sure that your proposed scheme will not impact on the operational needs of the railway or any known future plans. This can take up to 8 weeks to be processed.

5. We'll decide on whether to grant you a community licence. Depending on the complexity of the scheme, you may be referred to a Community Rail Panel so that we can discuss your ideas further with our Engineers, Asset Managers, Legal and Property Teams. At this point, we'll give you an indicative timescale for the rest of this process based on the individual needs and circumstances of your proposed community licence activity.

6. We'll draw up a community licence for your activities, which will govern use of the land. You'll need to sign this and keep your local community rail contact informed if any of the group contact details change or if you gain any extra members who will need a safety briefing. The licence and safety arrangements will need to be renewed annually.

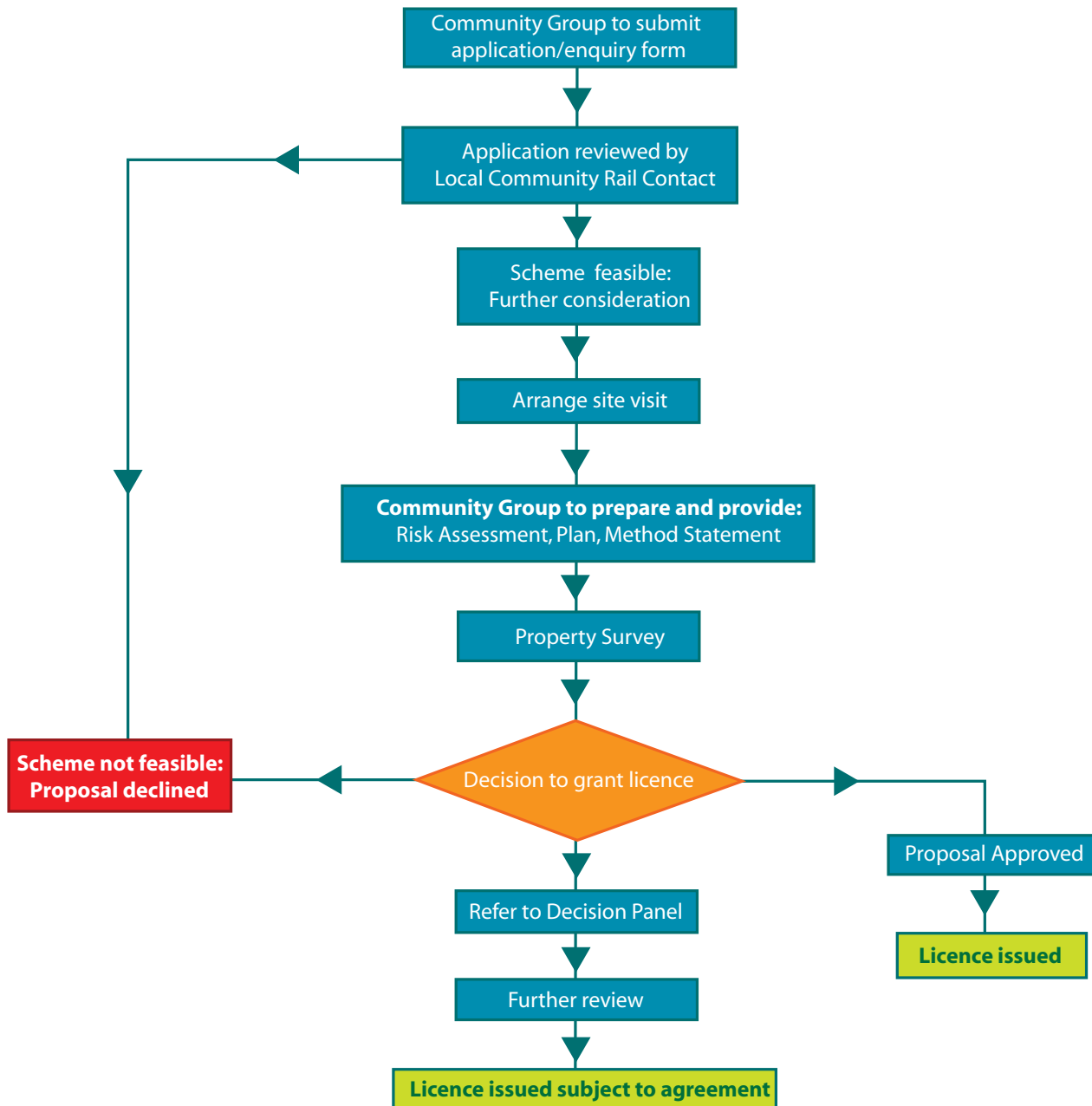
7. Appropriate fencing may be required to keep you safe before you can start your activity. In some cases, we may have to ask for your support seeking funding for this, e.g. from a local council or local train operator.

8. We'll meet you and your group on site to give you all a safety briefing. At this point you'll usually be able to get started on your activity.





# Community Licence scheme application process



# If you are from a community rail partnership...

*If you are from an existing community rail partnership, you'll have a Network Rail local community rail contact who covers your area. They work closely with their counterparts in the local train operator to support community rail activity.*

If you need help identifying your local Network Rail contact, please email the National Community Rail Lead on [CommunityRail@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:CommunityRail@networkrail.co.uk)

Please be aware that all our Network Rail local community rail contacts are involved with community rail as part of a wider remit, so we'll need your cooperation and input to help you better. This includes:

- Being really clear what your expectations are from Network Rail — for example, if you are inviting a Network Rail representative to a meeting or making a request, please set out why you need our involvement or what help or input you need. This is so we can make sure we have the right person attending.
- Giving your local community rail contact plenty of notice of meetings and their agendas. We may only be able to make it to one high-level meeting a year. Please make sure any actions are clearly agreed with the Network Rail representative on the day or through email, rather than relying on minutes.
- Understanding that most of our funding comes from taxpayer money – we are therefore heavily restricted on what we can support financially.
- Demonstrating that you have a clear focus on safety, including adhering to the strict safety requirements of the rail industry to keep you, passengers and members of the public safe.
- Being aware that each activity is unique so may need multiple permissions internally. This can take time and we will keep you informed with indicative timescales.





# If you want to redevelop a station or railway building for a community use...

*As with the community licence scheme, we have to make sure our land and assets are used in the right way. This becomes particularly important for redevelopment of stations and railway buildings, because these schemes can take a lot of investment and time to be sustainable for all parties.*

For empty space within station buildings, this will usually be managed by the local train operator, who generally lease the stations from Network Rail. If required, the train operator will contact us to seek consent for community use of the station building, which may include a requirement for landlord's consent/property requirements; an Asset Protection Agreement (arrangements to keep both you and the railway infrastructure safe); give consent for the grant of the licence or lease; or be party to special arrangements if the projects will run beyond the franchise term granted to the train operating company.

For non-station buildings (e.g. disused signal boxes), these assets are usually managed by us, and we will consider the grant of a licence or lease depending on the nature of the community project. We are likely to require a property agreement and may require an Asset Protection Agreement depending on the nature of the works, the terms for which will be negotiated.

We recommend engaging with Network Rail and the local train operator as soon as possible if you are considering redeveloping station or railway buildings for community use.

You can do this either by calling the **Network Rail National Helpline** on **03457 11 41 41** or by contacting your local community rail contact. If you are not sure who this is, please email [communityrail@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:communityrail@networkrail.co.uk)

You should be aware, though, that these projects can take many years to come to fruition, and sometimes initial ideas may turn out not to be viable. For initiatives based in England and Wales, support and advice is available from ACoRP and its network to help these projects get off the ground and achieve positive results (see [www.communityrail.org.uk](http://www.communityrail.org.uk)).

We know that each project, activity and group is different, so we'll need to get the application reviewed by various internal teams and do a number of checks before we are able to enter into discussions about potential lease arrangements.

For schemes like this, you will most likely enter into a lease arrangement – either directly with Network Rail, via a sub-lease arrangement with the train operating company or via a tripartite lease including the local train operator. However, please keep in mind that station buildings can also be third party owned, in which case you will need to understand the property document position – we recommend speaking with legal/land advisors for clarity on this.

Redevelopment schemes will require several in-depth checks on the condition of the building by our engineers, particularly if the building has not been used for a long time, and you will be required to appoint a solicitor and work with our surveyors. We will advise you which arrangement is most appropriate for your scheme and whether regulator consent will be required under Network Licence Condition 17 (disposal of an interest in land).

