Hereward Community Rail Partnership Steering Group Meeting

Wednesday 18 November 2026 – 10am - 12noon

Online Meeting using Teams

Minutes of the Meeting

Present

Cllr Chris Seaton	Fenland District Council – Cabinet Member (chairman)
Matthew Lutz	CPCA (Vice-Chairman)
Wendy Otter	Fenland District Council – Transport Manager (Minutes)
Joanne Rose	Fenland District Council – CRP and Transport Officer
Ben Walsh	Fenland District Council – Transport Support Officer
Colin Burcombe	Community Rail Network
John Saunders	PENRUG
Cllr Gary Christy	March Town Council
Cllr Peter Bibb	Whittlesea Town Council
Kaye Robinson	EMR
Jake Orros	LNER

1. Welcome, Introductions & Apologies

CS opened the meeting welcoming everyone in attendance.

CS also welcomed Georgia House who is our new CrossCountry contact replacing David Jones. He also welcomed Steve Emery, who is returning to the CRP Management Board to represent Manea Parish Council. Steve is replacing Jan Coupland.

Apologies were received from Alan Neville, Georgia House and Steve Emery

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

Minutes of the last Meeting

There were no comments or amendments to the minutes of the last meeting.

Matters Arising

An email has been sent to Rail Future to invite them to a meeting to discuss their March Station campaign. We are waiting for a response.

3. CRP Election for 2026

In accordance with the CRP terms of reference an election was held for the position of Chairman and Vice-Chairman. As all nominations received were for the existing Chairman and Vice-Chairman. Cllr Chris Seaton (Chairman) and Matthew Lutz (Vice-Chairman) were reappointed to their positions for another 12 months.

4, AGM

The AGM documents were provided with the agenda and papers for the meeting. These include the Equality Impact Assessment; the Risk Register and the CRP Terms of Reference. Each document was updated or included additional information. For ease of reference all updates can be found in red text.

It was noted that many documents were provided with the agenda and papers. This is a significant amount of information to review and provide comment on. A discussion was held as to whether a summary document could be provided with just the changes or a changes log at the beginning of each document Some Board members welcome having the full document to review in context whilst others only want to receive summaries with changes. There was also a suggestion of a bullet point list of changes to each document.

From an accreditation perspective, CB confirmed that there isn't a right or wrong way to take this action forward. Full documents or summaries are acceptable. Host CRPs hold the full documents that do need to be available upon request.

ACTION: WO to consider how all the information is provided in the future and in what format.

CRP Equality Impact Assessment
Minor updates and scheme progress updates were included in this latest version. There were no comments or questions.

Risk Register
There were some minor updates and 3 new risks added. The new risks are Local Government Review (LGR), Climate Resilience and Cyber Security.

GC agreed with the inclusion of LGR and that the current wording reflects the ongoing uncertainty. He suggested that this could be updated as we get closer to the time of LGR and we have a clearer idea of what is expected. In respect of climate change, GC indicated that this risk should be more about climate risk exposure rather than climate resilience. The use of the word exposure more accurately reflects the CRP link to the climate change matters. GC also supported the inclusion of the cyber security item.

KR confirmed that information can be made available about the Liverpool – Norwich Service in respect of climate change.

CB confirmed that it is now a requirement of national accreditation for a CRP to have a risk register. There isn't however any guidance as to what format or approach should be taken to develop the risk register. CB like the clear and focused nature of this risk register.

ACTION: WO to update the risk register climate change item.

ACTION: WO to add the risk assessment to the agenda for the next meeting.

CRP Terms of Reference
The terms of refence are the 2022 version. There have been no changes since that time. The text in red is the last set of changes made in 2022.

GC queried section 3.3 Station Groups. It was confirmed that the CRP intended to set up Station Groups. The original quarterly meetings with the public and stakeholders were disbanded due to lack of attendance. The approach to the Station Group idea was not as well received as it might have been. The CRP now works with a range of groups and the public through Meet the Manager, events and community rail days etc. it was suggested that any approach should be flexible to allow a range of opportunities. Confirmation was given that the CRP organises 6 monthly meetings for the volunteers and adopters. It was agreed that the Terms of Reference need to reflect the actual CRP approach.

ACTION: WO to amend the terms of reference. The ToR will also be added to the agenda for the next meeting for the board to discuss the proposed amendment and any sign off.

KR referenced health and safety and an EMR review. It was then realised that a separate risk assessment should have been added to this item of the agenda.

National Accreditation

The meeting was held last week, and we are now waiting for the result following the accreditation meeting. CB referred to the fact that the CRP has had a vey challenging year due to the financial challenges following FDC restructure. He commenced the strong focus to address the issue and to ensure that all the work programme continued. The approach to use reserves last year to complete the work programme was sensible given the situation and work is ongoing to ensure that the CRP has reserves in future. All the action points from the 2025 accreditation meeting were completed by the time of the 2026 meeting.

5, Finance Update

It was noted at the last meeting that the budget position to 30 June 2026 didn't necessarily reflect the level of work undertaken in that quarter. This was largely due to a significant number of events that took place over the summer 2026. Invoices and costs associated with this work have now come through the system with significant expenditure of 349,481.83 shown for the July – September quarter.

There was also income received of £32,951. This included LNER core funding for 26/27 and project funding for the market research work, Try a Train programme and 180th anniversary events.

The core funding for the project from November 2026 onwards has now essentially been spent. FDC Transport Team has some funds that will be used to deliver the core functions between now and end of March 2027. These funds are available due to budgeting that includes a vacant post. This funding can be transferred to the CRP to cover the remaining core funding costs. The figures in the spreadsheet to 30 September 2026 include core costs coming from the CRP budget.

The tourism and merchandise project for 26/27 has now been completed.

Funding for the market research project has now been awarded from EMR and CRN. The project will be delivered between now and end of March 2027.

The total remaining budget on 30 September 2026 is £52,419.95

CB and GC raised queries on the front sheet tab of the spreadsheet. A new column will be added to show the expected outturn.

ACTION: add a new column to the front sheet.

6. Commercial Strategy

A second draft strategy document was shared with the agenda and papers for this meeting. The first version of the strategy was discussed at the last meeting where comments were raised about not for profit, partnership working and the need for an action plan to take the work forward. The original plan was for a three-year action plan to be added. Upon reflection, certain key elements need to be taken forward first and so a one-year action plan has been developed. Following successful completion of this action plan a longer-term approach can be added. This amended version of the document includes the amended comments and new sections following the last meeting.

CS supported the approach for the one-year action plan was sensible and that it would be difficult to achieve a longer-term plan without the required preparation.

GC spoke about the importance of securing grants and ensuring that we can build upon our range of work programmes including Travel Buddies to deliver social benefits. He expressed the important of the CRP being able to be independent and not completely tied to LGR.

KR referred to work EMR are piloting in the northwest of England. They are working with railway commercial suppliers linked to social responsibility requirements. KR will look to see if there are matches to suppliers in the Fenland/Hereward Line areas.

CB supported the commercial strategy stating that it was a great document. He mentioned that this is a new area for CRPs, stating the importance of good preparation. The Darent Valley Line in Kent have produced posters that are for sale. The Abbey Line have worked with a brewery, and they have their logo on a type of beer that is available for sale. Social enterprise aspects are also important, and CB has sent officers a document about this earlier today for review.

CS stated the need to ensure that the team work programme is deliverable and that staff members are not suffering burn out. There is lots of work to do to deliver this strategy.

KR also noted that a 1-year approach would give time to better understand GBR. Much more is expected to be known in the future.

7. GBR Readiness

WO attended the DFT/CRN Community Rail Conference in Derby recently. WO put forward a GBR readiness topic as part of the open forum element of this conference. In preparation for the conference and open forum WO spent time thinking about what we already know for GBR and how prepared the Hereward CRP might be against what is known. This resulted in the GBR readiness paper provided with the agenda and other information prior to the meeting.

GC commented that the this is a really good document and is pleased that the CRP are thinking about GBR now. He welcomed the element about volunteers and needing to capture information to show the value of what our local volunteers are achieving. He also stated the importance of sharing the value of our volunteers in the CRP Newsletter and annual report.

CB also welcomed the checklist, and the approach officers are using. He confirmed that there is much we do not know at the present time. There is some awareness that the GBR integrated business units will allow with regional mayoral areas. It is right to try and prepare as much as possible though and to justify how we make a difference. We should keep moving forward with the central element of what we morally deliver. This needs to be on the agenda for future Management Board meetings.

ACTION: WO to add GBR readiness as a standing item to the agenda for all future meetings.

8 Marketing and Tourism Strategy Update

A draft agenda for the workshop to be held in January 2027 was provided with the agenda and papers for the meeting.

CS expressed the importance of all Management Board members attending the workshop which is face to face in Fenland Hall. This workshop is the opportunity for everyone to influence the approach for the next three years.

Management Board members supported the approach and the draft agenda.

There was a discussion about whether other stakeholders and train company colleagues with experience of marketing and tourism should attend the workshop. It was noted that the CRP has significantly delivered in this area in recent years with the current strategy. It might be helpful to understand what others are doing and how we might be able to assist them but also build on our current approach. It was suggested that outside input might help with this. If more people attend additional space might be needed for the workshop and possible breakout groups. There was also discussion about a team's option although it isn't clear how practical or achievable this might be in terms of making the meeting work.

ACTION: WO consider outside input to the workshop including colleagues from Peterborough and Ely.

ACTION: Book an additional meeting room at Fenland Hall to cover break out space.

The importance of links to active rail was also raised and their own going promotion. All the existing CRP resources are helpful in this respect, but the Board could consider how we can do more with what we already have available. CS noted that FDC has a Walking, Cycling and Mobility Aid Strategy covering the whole of Fenland.

8. Project Updates

JR provided a range of updates as follows:

- Community Rail Awards – 6 bids were submitted in total. 3 for the photo competition, creative projects and station arts category for the Railway 200 Poetry Train, best community engagement project in partnership with Friends of March Station for the Railway Memories Film and Championing Tourism by Rail for the Days out by Rail flyers
- Events – the team attended the Belton Festival at Belton House hear Grantham. There was attendance of around 5,000 people with lots of comments and feedback. A Community Rail Day was held in Leicester
- Rail Safe Friendly – this project will work with 10 local schools across the 5 station areas. Steering Group meetings have been held and initial work has commenced
- Activity Book – the activity book has been completed and launched with excellent feedback. Large numbers of copies are already in circulation with many more expected in the coming months particularly as part of the 180th Anniversary celebrations
- Song – working in partnership with 20Twenty Productions and New Road School in Whittlesea. Two lessons have been held in school to write and record the song, along with production of a video. Around 60 children will be attending the 180th Anniversary event to sing the song as part of its launch
- Art and National Year of Reading trip – children from All Saints School in March went on the train to Ely and completed an Art project, also in partnership with 20Twenty Productions and artist Ric Savage. The library created a train display that the children completed artwork was slotted into. The art worm was also on display at March Station. Feedback from both libraries confirmed that they had lots of visitors to view the artwork
- Love Local, Shop Local Guide – the guide has now been written with shops included from all five places along the line. The guide is currently being designed and is expected to be available in December
- Try a Train – a trip with FACET to Peterborough for independent shopping and glo golf is taking place later this month
- Ale on the Rails – this guide is currently in production. Work with CAMRA at Peterborough and Ely has proved very successful. They have been giving lots of input and are assisting to see if they can arrange discounts for the booklet.
- Santa Train – around 85 people are booked on the train which is taking place this Saturday
- Music Train – around 30 people have booked tickets so far
- 180th Anniversary – the main event is on 14 January at March Station. There will also be a Peterborough and Ely Meet the Manager Day covering both centres. Easter trail events are to be held in March 2027 at Manea and Whittlesey. On 1 May 2027 a family day will be held at March Station in partnership with the Friends of March Station. The community rooms will be open, stalls and stands with an environment sustainability theme are also in the early stage of being organised with Greater Anglia.
- CRP 15 Year Anniversary – this is due in October 2027. Initial discussions are taking place to develop a plan for celebrating the CRP anniversary next year

CS confirmed the very comprehensive nature of the report by JR and thanked her for all the excellent work

JO confirmed that LNER also have important anniversaries at Grantham and York Stations in 2027. He is keen to co-ordinate plans for events and promotion and publicity

ACTION: JO and JR to co-ordinate approaches for the station anniversaries

10. Partner Organisation updates

PENRUG

Performance issues are key and are severely affecting services. Along with Liverpool – Norwich it might also be worth monitoring Birmingham – Stansted services. Last week the 07:30 to Cambridge was cancelled and the 08:30 to Birmingham. It isn't clear as to what extent this is an issue, but it might need monitoring.

JS confirmed the points raised earlier in the meeting about climate change and journeys times, comfort and perceptions. PENRUG are aware that some journeys have caused upset to passengers as they have been very rough. JS stated that in his view the Liverpool – Norwich class 158s as the older trains are more comfortable than the class 170s. JS asked KR about updates from EMR or Network Rail as to when improvements will be made to the line.

ACTION – JS to provide an email to KR setting out all the detail on the above. KR will then investigate to get a response.

Community Rail Network

This is a summary of Community Rail Network news, **but for the very latest news** visit **https://communityrail.org.uk/category/community-rail-news/ and subscribe to our fortnightly bulletin here - http://eepurl.com/gAKbKH**

We are pleased to announce the **2027 Community Rail Awards** will be on **Thursday 4th March 2027** at The Royal Armouries in Leeds. Joint headline partners for this inspiring and prestigious event are Northern & TransPennine Express. Booking opens on **1st September** with full details on our Awards Hub - https://communityrail.org.uk/events-and-campaigns/community-rail-awards/. The shortlist of award nominees will be announced on **9th December**. Be inspired by the 2026 winners & shortlisted entries https://communityrail.org.uk/hall-of-fame/2026/

The **Small Grants Fund** (England) & **Community Rail Development Fund** (DfT accredited CRPs only) are open for applications. CRDF grants can be for up to **£25,000** (subject to match funding). See - https://communityrail.org.uk/member-services/grants-funding-and-bursaries/funding-available-through-crn/ There have been changes to the amounts, forms and processes based on feedback from members so check the latest guidance. Local funding is also available for SWR and TfGM members.

We have agreed with DfT that **accreditation** for high-performing CRPs can now be awarded to cover a two-year period. Regular checks of actions identified will still take place throughout the extended period.

The **training & events** section of the website lists **many** learning opportunities for **our members** (https://communityrail.org.uk/events-and-campaigns/training-networking-webinars/). These include:

- A range of specialist on-line networks with their next meeting dates shown, including:
    - Integrated Sustainable Transport – **15th December**
    - Education – **18th November** and **16th December**
    - Tourism – **15th December** (joint session with Integrated Sustainable Transport)

If you miss any public webinars, the recordings can be found by following the links from our website.

Each CRP has a page on https://scenicrailbritain.com/, so please check your page on Scenic Rail Britain and contact us with any revised inks, new pictures or text you'd like including. We also have other tourism related resources here https://communityrail.org.uk/member-services/tourism-network/.

Tracks & Trails campaign – 26th October to 8th November. Our walking, wheeling and cycling campaign returns this autumn, showcasing community-led initiatives that encourage sustainable travel by train. We are keen to highlight existing trails, accessible routes and active travel projects delivered or supported by community rail. If you would like your work to be featured and it is not already **included in our campaign content**, please **share it with our team**. To help you get involved, we've created a **campaign toolkit** with useful promotional resources.

Bespoke training for **members** is available – recent sessions have helped CRPs think about their governance structure, overall aims and visions and their marketing & communications messages. Members can also apply for **Training Bursaries** of up to £200 for courses of their own choosing that will help CRP Officers in their role. Contact training@communityrail.org.uk first for more details.

Our **2026 annual members conference** took place this year in Derby on **19th & 20th October.** A copy of all the presentations from the 10 showcase sessions, resources and speaker talks can be download from https://communityrail.org.uk/past-event-materials/community-rail-conference-2026/

Our 2026 AGM takes place on-line on **4th November** at which members can attend and vote – further details are here - https://communityrail.org.uk/events-and-campaigns/agm-and-board-elections/

Share your stories for White Ribbon Day. Ahead of White Ribbon Day on **25th November**, we're looking for stories from across community rail that support the safety, inclusion and wellbeing of women and girls. Whether through projects, partnerships or awareness-raising activity, we'd love to showcase your work. Send your stories and initiatives to **news@communityrail.org.uk**.

Our Motability Foundation **Travelling with Confidence** project led by **Ellen Cameron** with four CRPs is engaging and empowering disabled people, promoting independent mobility to use rail and other modes.

The **Railways Bill,** a major step towards establishing Great British Railways (GBR) is currently progressing through parliamentary review stages. This will create a more integrated, accountable and community-responsive rail system, better serving people and places. The timetable of the bill stages and policy publication dates are here. Alongside this, there is a new **Accessibility Roadmap**, setting out commitments making rail more inclusive and accessible for all.
Our briefings on these important documents are here - https://communityrail.org.uk/railways-bill-consultation-response-and-accessibility-roadmap-welcomed-by-community-rail-network/ and we continue to share your views with GBR, DfT Operator, Network Rail and others to ensure community rail is understood, respected, supported and embedded in the new rail landscape. See our recommendations for the role of community rail in rail reform - https://communityrail.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Rail-reform-Community-Rail-Network-core-policy-asks-Jan-26.pdf and as a handy **'Policy Asks'** postcard covering integrated transport, station buildings and inclusion - https://communityrail.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/CRN-policy-asks.pdf. Other policy documents https://communityrail.org.uk/resources/policy-papers-and-consultation-responses/

The Bill highlights the central role that **Mayoral Strategic Authorities (MSAs)** will play in GBR - the theme of a webinar on how community rail can engage with regional leaders, influence transport planning and ensure community voices shape rail and integrated mobility – Watch here https://communityrail.org.uk/past-event-materials/devolution-and-opportunities-for-community-rail-webinar/ During 2026/27 we are holding region specific member only sessions to explore these subjects further.

Alongside this, we're pleased to share our **Community Rail Network five-year strategy** as an empowering organisation leading a thriving community-driven movement that delivers evidenced social, environmental and economic value from the railway and drives progress towards sustainable, inclusive transport. Find out more - https://communityrail.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are/

Further resources such as **'Community Rail: placemaking and local identity'** and our **2024-25 Impact Report** are available at https://communityrail.org.uk/resources/reports-and-research/
If you need any guidance or have questions, your regional **Support and Development contact** will be able to assist. These are Colin Burcombe (East, South-East and Midlands), Jenni Jones (South), Ian Davis (North) and Rhiannon-Jane Raftery (Wales). Paul Webster leads the regions team and provides support for members in the East Midlands. Specialist member support is provided by Gary Shipp (Projects development and Integrated sustainable transport), Karen Bennet (Education & youth engagement) and our Training & Development team of Alex Peel and Allison Hughes.
Specialist support and advice is also available for CRPs and station adoption groups through our rail industry **Corporate Partners.** These organisations can provide help for station garden action days, media support, pro bono buildings support and extra board capacity. See their offers here https://communityrail.org.uk/member-services/how-our-corporate-partners-support-our-members/
Our **Value & impact of Community Rail** report and summary fact sheet shows through research and case studies the social value of community rail activities. https://communityrail.org.uk/community-rail-movement-delivering-social-return-on-investment-of-nearly-18-for-every-1/. Headline figures include: • A social return of **£17.89 for every £1.00 invested** • An annual social value of **£129 million from funding of £7.2 million** • Each year **8.250 volunteers give 380,000 hours** of time with a social value of **£30.9 million**
We always like to know what our members are doing and to amplify and inspire a wider audience, so please send your **good news** stories to us at news@communityrail.org.uk. These will be shared through our social media channels or twice monthly e-bulletin **'Community Rail News'** which reaches over 1000 subscribers. **Sign-up here if you don't already receive it.**

Greater Anglia

AN provided an update prior to the meeting which is as follows:

- **Performance / Punctuality and Reliability** – still very good, and most weeks we are just below Merseyrail in the ratings! However – the summer took its toll, and there are several speed restrictions on the routes – although many have been taken off. (Soil Moisture Deficit issues on parts of the c2c route, and on the Southminster line is causing issues still – caused by the underlying geology.)
- **Marketing** – very strong – and focused on the UnLondon campaign to encourage people to travel into East Anglia, and joint marketing with c2c with the ROBOT TV advert.
- **Community Rail** – the line between Cambridge and Ipswich is now the St Edmund's Line CRP – and several stations just south of Cambridge are now incorporated into the Cam Valley CRP
- **Station Adoption** – Successful awards session on 13/10/26 and we have 340 adopters – a net increase on the previous year.
- **New stations** – Cambridge South opened in the summer and proving a big success. Beaulieu Park has just celebrated its first birthday. Passenger numbers exceeded expectations at both.
- **Station improvements** - rebuild nearly complete at Wickford. Major work has now started at Witham
- **Timetable changes** – minor tweaks in December to the GEML timetable which will be published very soon. Major changes to the regional timetable in May have bedded down well.
- **Public ownership** – One year on now!
- **GBR Anglia** – The future operating model for the railway in East Anglia has been announced and GBR Anglia will be the new name. GBR is not formed yet however, and Royal Assent is the next stage. The new identity for our region will be developed in the next 12 months. – Key priorities remain, which are providing excellent service for customers and communities across the region and using the opportunities presented by the unified railway to improve services still further.

East Midlands Railway

CUSTOMER SERVICE	We are restoring our intercity service further on 14th Dec increasing seats by 17k in time for Christmas, communication has been sent out to customers via press, emails etc.
FLEET	The Auroras are still going through training, with more units coming into service and training progressing. The refurb programme is still going well with further units being completed.
GRANT FUNDS (available to EMR funded CRPs)	**Community Fund** The fund is open and available for bids, I have approx. 40k left and would welcome some large bids if you have some meaty projects or need a reprint of any leaflets etc. So long as the work is started by March 2027 then we are happy to support. I have requested the RPI increase for each CRP for the next financial year.
STATIONS	We are introducing In Post lockers at some stations across the network in the next few months – these are increasingly popular and add a good revenue stream for the business.
TIMETABLES	Timetable change comes in on Sunday 13th December, this sees a new service direct to Sleaford from Lincoln – and there is aspiration to extend this to Peterborough, but nothing has been tabled yet. Network Rail are doing a safety awareness stand at Metheringham to highlight the new services and staying safe.
ANY OTHER BUSINESS	**White Ribbon** Sheffield is the White Ribbon launch city and tomorrow we are unveiling a statue made by NEET students and Engineered Learning. We are looking to move the statue around stations and support White Ribbon as an ongoing campaign. We have safe spaces at our stations for those fleeing domestic violence and support with travel. **Team news** Tom Cable has now joined the team covering the East. He comes from a community engagement background with a specialism in History. Please say hi when you see him. **Careers** We have a new colleague Wykeham Bosworth-Nightingale who is our Early Years Career lead and we are relaunching the rail safety booklet with added careers focus. These can now be distributed to all let me know if you need some. We are the first train operator to launch a brand new Rail Foundation apprenticeship – which offers an overview of all aspects of the business not just on train activity. **Christmas shut down** Our team will fully shut down for Christmas this year, with extremely limited contact available between Friday 18th Dec and Monday 4th Jan. We will communicate this with everyone in advance.

<u>CrossCountry</u>

This update is based on recent information provided by Georgia House:

- 8 more voyager trains are joining the XC fleet in 2027
- XC have some surplus 55inch TV screens. JR has managed to secure one of these for the Friends of March Station Community rooms
- There are new features in the XC app relating to seat selector, cancelling and rebooking and passenger assistance
- Voyager refurbishment tours are being held in Derby. Two volunteers from the Friends of March Station are attending the tour.

- XC are looking to make changes and improve their community hub. This is an area of their website featuring CRPs and community events.

11. CRP Action Plan Update

The latest version of the draft action plan was provided with the Agenda and Papers for the meeting. Key updates were provided earlier in the meeting. There were no other comments or questions.

12. AOB and DONM

AOB

There were no items of AOB.

DONM

The next meeting was due to be the Marketing and Tourism workshop on 26 January which is face to face in Fenland Hall. The next main meeting is 23 February 2027 at 10am via teams.

Future meetings to be held via Teams

- 13 May 2027 at 10am
- 12 August 2027 at 10am
- 10 November 2027 at 10am

As there was no further business the meeting was closed.