

The Parish has been asked if we wish to adopt the Robertsbridge Station as volunteer partners.

This would be a formal adoption and require us to help enhance the station and the services that are offered. The funds for any project would be available as a grant from a central rail fund, as would any specialist labour, dependant on the project.

Station adopters and small groups membership (£25 +VAT per year)

Station friends and adopters, together with local community rail groups, all make a vital contribution to their communities and help to make stations welcoming, safe and interesting.

Community Rail Network supports these groups to be effective and sustainable – this includes expert advice and information, sources of funding, and more in-depth support for groups taking on projects such as developing station property for community use.

Members will receive:

Our expert advice (provided within reason, usually by phone and email, but may include a visit if you are undertaking a major project) on issues and work you are delivering, to help you to be effective. This includes signposting information and putting you in touch with other members who have experienced similar issues. Where relevant, it may also include direct advice from our in-house experts on community rail planning and delivery, communications and marketing, tourism promotion, station buildings development, community engagement and social inclusion.

Free places at Community Rail Network events sharing advice and good practice. This includes one place per membership at our annual Community Rail Conference run with the Department for Transport, as well as workshops and webinars on key topics. Additional places may be available at cost price by prior arrangement. Free places are not available at our Awards, but there is a low-cost sliding scale tariff.

Access to (and the invitation to contribute to) our monthly bulletin and a range of resources, reports, tools, and templates, including a hardcopy of our station adoption handbook, and advice and signposting from our expert team to help you put this information into practice.

Access to relevant grant schemes managed by Community Rail Network and support accessing other funding opportunities. Community Rail Network members in England can access the Department for Transport's small grants scheme (up to £1,000 for station friend's groups or £2,500 for CRPs and community station groups).

Access to the Impact activity reporting tool, which allows groups to track and record their activities and assess their outcomes and impact.

A say in Community Rail Network's work, through our members' survey or giving us your views at other times, including directly to our board members with responsibility for station groups.

Suggested suppliers to help you find services that suit your needs and budget.

Resources available to the partner include the following list of documents and guidelines:

- National landscapes and community rail: working with National Parks, AONBs and other outdoor spaces.
- Data Protection Guidance for community rail groups
- Marketing and communications: advice for community rail partnerships and groups
- Community rail artistic projects: advice on creative rights
- Engaging local media: a guide for community rail groups
- Social value: a briefing for community rail partnerships and groups
- Railway200 briefing sheet for members.
- Guidance for submitting Community Rail News stories.
- Considerations for community re-use of redundant railway stations and buildings
- Station adoption and community projects: using an outcomes-based approach.
- Social media guidance for community rail partnerships and groups
- Insurance – a guide for community rail groups
- Promoting positive and inclusive conduct: guidance for community rail partnerships and groups
- Developing partnerships with the tourism sector: advice for community rail partnerships and groups
- Identifying your tourism offer: advice for community rail partnerships and groups
- Station adoption: a guide for the local community
- Tourism and leisure audit template
- Constitution template

Summary

This is a good example of how a Working Group should be configured to involve the community in steering and developing key areas in our Strategic Plan and would encompass all the area identified in the 2023-2024 Strategic Plan. The opening of the Rother Valley Railway to Tenterden would put Robertsbridge on the tourist map as a final or starting destination. By enhancing the visitor experience in a controlled way will benefit the economic and wellbeing of our community. We will have a say in how this is managed and controlled.

I suggest we, The Parish Council, enter this adopting partnership for the long-term benefit of social and commercial commuters. As Parish representative on the Southeastern 1066 Line Steering Group, I would be happy to take the lead in setting up this group.

Cllr Roger Palamarczuk