



COMMUNITY RAIL: CONNECTING PEOPLE, PLACES AND OPPORTUNITIES

20th November 2025

WHO ARE WE ?



Essex & South Suffolk Community Rail Partnership

• THE SUNSHINE COAST LINE •

Colchester - Walton-on-the-Naze

• THE FLITCH LINE •

Witham - Braintree

• THE GAINSBOROUGH LINE •

Marks Tey - Sudbury

• THE SOUTHEND LINE •

Wickford - Southend

• THE CROUCH VALLEY LINE •

Wickford - Southminster

• THE MAYFLOWER LINE •

Manningtree - Harwich

- Established in 1998
- Partnership between Essex County Council, Suffolk County Council, Greater Anglia, and district / borough councils
- **130** volunteers, **6** branch lines and **42** stations
- **Brings railways and local communities together to improve access, inclusion, and sustainability – delivering projects that enhance stations, promote rail use, and create social and economic benefits for the places they serve.**

WHAT DO WE DO?

Key Priorities

Increase patronage –
“getting bums on seats”

Community engagement
– working with the local
community and getting
them on board

Tackle social exclusion –
working for total
inclusion

How We Do It

Support and recruit
station adopters and run
event trains

Produce promotional
materials e.g. history
boards, line guides /
activity packs, and walks
booklets

Partnership work with
tourism groups, councils,
colleges, schools.
Everyone!

Improve infrastructure at
stations e.g.
defibrillators, benches,
water dispenser

Community Rail Network
accredited Annual
Activity Plan

Work with excluded
groups / diversity and
inclusion in everything
we do

1. ENGLISH LESSON ON THE TRAIN FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS



- Improved English language skills and cultural integration through practical, real-world application during the journey.
- Participants gained **confidence in independent travel**, - one woman who now feels able to travel alone in a wheelchair.

2. REFUGEE TRAIN & WALK

- Participants from refugee, asylum seeker, and migrant groups experienced a day of freedom, nature, and cultural engagement, **reducing isolation and improving mental health**



3. CREATING PLACES: HARWICH TOWN COMMUNITY GARDEN



PARTNERSHIP

SENSE OF BELONGING

WELCOMING

4. DEMENTIA TRAIN



Mum has Dementia.

We have spent over a year trying to convince our independent (stubborn) Dad that he needs to get networking with relevant groups to help him as well as Mum.

Today was a massive turnaround. For an event so simple, they had the best day out they've had in a few years, and they are both **like excited toddlers** this evening. He couldn't wait to call and tell me all about it. His sister has rung me in **tears of joy**, she can't believe how **happy** he is, and how **positive** he is having met people who offer dementia **support**. This one event has been a massive turning point for our whole family. So a **huge thank you from us all!**



5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Positive, fun experience using the train and railway stations for everyone

Event trains

Activity packs

Actual pirates....



Essex & South Suffolk
Community Rail Partnership

COMMUNITY RAIL CREATES BIG IMPACT

Connection

Social Inclusion &
Wellbeing

Health

Physical & Mental
Health Benefits

Environment

Sustainable
Transport

Economy

Increasing
economic growth

Confidence

Empowerment &
Independence



For every £1 spent it produces **~£18** in social value

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE LOOK LIKE FOR

Top priority

Continue to deliver impact

Support station adopters

New initiatives to encourage train travel on branch lines

LGR / devo / GBBR impacts

Integrated transport modes

Place focus: disused station buildings, art

Community engagement

Look for new partners - is your district a partner?



**Essex & South Suffolk
Community Rail Partnership**

SHARING LEARNINGS



**INVOLVE THE COMMUNITY AT AN
EARLY STAGE TO HELP SHAPE
YOUR ACTIVITIES AND GET A
BIGGER IMPACT**



**JOIN THE PARTNERSHIP
CONTACT: INFO@ESSCRP.ORG.UK**