

Winner of CILT award for best practice in passenger transport (2013)

promoting quality public transport.....

Kulvinder Bassi
Department for Transport
33 Horseferry Road,
London, SW1P 4DR

26th January 2018

Dear Kulvinder

Community Rail Consultation

TravelWatch NorthWest (TWNW) is an independent Community Interest Company representing all public transport users in North West England. We are pleased to give our views as follows on the above consultation.

Question 1a: What role can Community Rail play in improving end-to-end journeys?

This is primarily the responsibility of the TOCs, Network Rail and DfT. However, CRPs can add value to journeys as on the Settle-Carlisle line and they can lobby for timetable, rolling stock improvements along with other stakeholders.

Question 1b: How can Community Rail help to: Make journeys more sustainable? Encourage more healthy travel? Reduce the environmental impact of travel?

Promoting the service in all possible ways to encourage a switch to rail. CRPs will, we are sure, provide many examples in their responses.

Question 2: How can Community Rail help: Communities have a voice in influencing the provision of rail? Complementary transport services and development of the rail network?

CRPs can channel feedback from communities to the rail industry and can help bring together existing and potential complementary transport service providers. Again there will be good examples of this.

Question 3: Where should the Government encourage Community Rail to develop on other parts of the network currently without active CRPs or other community participation

There is a particular neglect of urban areas. There should be a focus on widening CRPs to include more urban lines and stations e.g. in the Salford area serving the route to the west of Manchester's city centre. CR should also be promoted on main through lines For example long distance passengers using the Settle – Carlisle line benefit from Community Rail input in enhancing their journeys.

**Question 4: What is the role of Community Rail in supporting: Community cohesion? Promoting diversity? Enabling social inclusion
Question 4b: How is this best achieved?**

Brings together all groups, minorities and specialities to promote the area and the railway. Achieved by bringing all parties together with the railway industry. Franchise agreements are important in this context.

Question 5: How can Community Rail help to make sure that the railway is accessible to as many people as possible

By bringing the poor access facilities at many stations to the attention of the industry and other stakeholders, who should then react appropriately. There is a real issue with bringing stations up to compliant standards for the disabled.

Question 6: How can Community Rail support local economies and railways grow through: Increasing employment? Education and training opportunities? Supporting small businesses? Social enterprise development

The Settle-Carlisle Railway Development Company is a good example of contributing to the growth of local economies through creating employment and supporting local businesses. Helping to increase footfall at stations and promoting the rail network all helps the local economy.

Question 7: What role can Community Rail play in making best use of: Station buildings? Railway land?

CR already has many ideas on these subjects, but the schemes need to be progressed in an efficient and timely manner by the rail industry, especially Network Rail. There is too much bureaucracy with regard to the latter and its letting agents and a radical re-organisation is needed, involving true partnerships with CRPs and local authorities so that stations can better serve their local communities.

Question 8: How can Community Rail be best supported to act: Innovatively? Effectively?

Support from the rail industry and local authorities is crucial, also from business interests and other stakeholders. There are some rail activities that would benefit from more local control but there are issues surrounding the scale of volunteer involvement (see also below).

Question 9: What opportunities are there to secure a: Diverse income base for Community Rail? Sustainable income base for Community Rail?

The base income should be provided via the railway network/ local authority but there is scope for commercial activity on some lines as is demonstrated on the Settle - Carlisle line. Guidance is useful (especially for some of the smaller groups) on how to access third party funds.

Question 10: How can Community Rail designation be developed to more fully realise its potential?

Non-designation may/should not hinder the work of many CRPs. In practical terms there appears to be no difference in the pragmatic approach of both categories of CRPs. All CRPs and groups should be treated equally.

Question 11: How can Community Rail: Support the development of rail line and stations improvement? Contribute to the development of rail line and stations improvement? Make greater use of heritage railways?

The development of the line/station is central to the role of community rail and there is a very wide scope of activity that CR can contribute to. Unused station buildings can have great potential for community use but the whole process of facilitating this has to be overhauled and made much more workable. There are often difficult problems with providing services for the local community on heritage railways which mainly cater for the visitor/leisure market. Having said that there are parallels in use of volunteers, marketing techniques etc., which can be drawn on.

Question 12: Do you have any other comments on how Government can best support the future of Community Rail?

Strengthening Community Rail is an initiative to be welcomed. However we believe there is a concern that many partnerships rely on the energy of volunteers and so there is a patchwork of coverage and individual CRP performance. From some experiences there has been a lukewarm level of support from business communities and an expectation from Local Authorities that CRPs can take on some of their responsibilities. For example in Cumbria there is a perception that cutbacks by the County Council in its transport budget has led to an expectation that the CRPs will take up the slack. However relying on a basically volunteer set up can be fraught with

inconsistency. CRPs require support to be effective. Limitations in the scope of volunteer activity have to be recognised.

On another issue we feel that those TOCs that serve CRP lines by connections, (TPE and Virgin in the North West for example) should contribute more as they can provide a significant "feeder" service into those lines. In respect of support from TOCs in South Cumbria for example it was noticeable that after the franchise which transferred TPE services to Northern, TPE quickly disappeared from the scene although continuing to operate connecting services. Currently TPE provides very little support and even refuses concessionary travel on its services to officers of the CRP carrying out their roles.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond

Yours sincerely

John

John Moorhouse
Company Secretary