

The image features a dark blue background with large, sweeping, light blue curved shapes in the upper left. A photograph of a train station platform with a train and a person sitting on a bench is visible in the lower half, overlaid with a dark blue tint.

Chilternrailways

Chiltern Railways

Annual Community
Rail Report

2025

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Foreword

At Chiltern Railways, our purpose is clear - to make every journey **easier, greener and better**, while **modernising and decarbonising this railway and our fleet**, supported by our 2030 Vision. But this vision goes far beyond our train services. It is about ensuring that this railway plays an active role in supporting the communities we serve, improving the places where our customers live and work, and leaving a lasting positive legacy across our route, helping result in a £1.5bn social value contribution in 2024.

Throughout 2025, we have continued to strengthen our community partnerships and deliver meaningful investment in local projects. Our Community Investment Fund (CIF) remains a cornerstone of this approach, enabling us to support initiatives that deliver social, economic and environmental benefits. From school-led ambassador programmes and employability training to delivering creative murals and biodiversity projects, these schemes are connecting our stations and services to the communities that we serve.

This past year has also seen continued growth in our relationships with our Community Rail Partnerships – helping us deliver projects with clear benefits for the communities across our route. Working with both CRPs and our network of station adoption groups, we have delivered tangible improvements, including youth-led murals at Oxford Parkway and new biodiversity features such as a bug hotel at Lapworth.

We are equally proud of the work we do alongside our charity partners, local businesses and our colleagues across Chiltern. This includes our new partnership with the Marylebone Project, supporting women facing homelessness, and our continued partnership working with Business Improvement Districts across the route. Whether through volunteering, fundraising or education, our team continues to show that we are a responsible neighbour and partner.

This year also marks an important milestone for the wider railway - Railway 200 - celebrating two centuries since the birth of the modern railway. As part of this national moment, we are proud to have hosted the Railway 200 'Inspiration' Exhibition Train at Birmingham Moor Street, welcoming visitors to explore the story of Britain's railways in the centre of the UK's second city. We also brought communities together through special birthday events in October at Bicester Village and Warwick Parkway, celebrating the people that continue to define this railway today.

As we look ahead to 2026, we will continue to build on this progress, and indeed this milestone, working with partners to deliver projects that reflect our ambition to be an **easier, greener and better** railway and **deliver our 2030 Vision** for our fleet, our stations and our services. From celebrating our rich heritage to promoting sustainability, inclusion and opportunity, we remain committed to ensuring this railway continues to enrich lives for generations to come.

Scott Maynard

Human Resources Director

For more information about our community work or to explore partnership opportunities, please contact our community team at community@chilternrailways.co.uk.

Community Investment Fund

Investing in communities across our network is essential to furthering social, economic and environmental development. Our [Community Investment Fund \(CIF\)](#) is key to how we do this at Chiltern Railways.

The application criteria focusses on groups operating within 5 miles of a Chiltern Railways station, with all projects required to justify how they would deliver social, economic or environmental benefits to local communities. We are excited to continue delivering these projects with our partners going into 2026 as we begin to celebrate their achievements:

Marylebone on Display (Baker Street Quarter Partnership)



An art-therapy led exhibition at London Marylebone showcasing work by women experiencing homelessness, giving them a public platform and enhancing the station environment.

Rail Roots (The Tree Council)



A biodiversity and tree-planting initiative at Aylesbury, Gerrards Cross and Stoke Mandeville, engaging volunteers in creating greener, healthier spaces around the railway and building more welcoming stations.

Welcome to Wycombe (Chiltern Rangers and Buckinghamshire New University)



A station enhancement project at High Wycombe combining new artwork and planting schemes to promote local heritage and improve biodiversity and customer experience for those travelling through the station.

Missenden Mural (Roald Dahl Museum and Story Centre)



A large-scale mural at Great Missenden co-designed by local sixth-form students and an artist to celebrate local literary heritage, and enabling young people to develop project management skills.

Applications for our next CIF opened in early-2025 and we announced the following organisations as successful in November 2025:

High Wycombe Year 2 (Chiltern Rangers) Continues horticultural activities and community gardening to enhance the station	Leamington Spa R200 Mural (Heart of England CRP) Creates a new art deco-inspired mural marking Railway 200.	Marylebone - A Platform for Greening, Charities and Expression (Baker St Quarter) Introduces planters and art promoting local charities.
Railway Art (Friends of Barham Library) Installs colourful new locally inspired murals at Sudbury & Harrow Road.	The Creatives of Banbury (Banbury BID) Expands community artwork and murals across Banbury station.	Thrive: from roots to results (Activate Learning) Students will transform and beautify Oxford Parkway's green space.
Tracks of our Lives (Oxfordshire CRP) Celebrates local railway stories through new displays at Bicester North.	Trails by Rail (Groundwork South) New wayfinding/information boards connecting customers to the Colne Valley Regional Park, alongside new planters.	Working with Disability (Action for Kids) Provides employability training and a rail careers insight day for disabled young people.

Funding our CIF

We secured a Community Investment Fund budget of £136,000 from the Department for Transport in 2025, with community partners across the route receiving this funding. This is in addition to a £30,000 pot specifically for Community Rail Partnership projects. Once the 2026/27 budget is confirmed, we will open the application process for a new round of funding in early 2026.

Community Investment Fund	
2023/24 (historic)	£126,000
2024/25 (historic)	£145,000
2025/26 (current)	£136,000

Community Rail Partnerships

We value the work of our Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) who do a fantastic job engaging our communities. Our two CRPs are Oxfordshire CRP covering 6 of our stations in Oxfordshire and Heart of England CRP covering 7 of our stations in Warwickshire and the West Midlands.

We reached out and asked our CRPs what their highlights of working with us in 2024 were. Here's what they had to say.



Oxfordshire CRP

Covers Banbury, Bicester North, Bicester Village, Kings Sutton, Islip and Oxford Parkway

Oxfordshire Community Rail Partnership (OxCRP) has strengthened its partnership with Chiltern Railways in 2025, delivering high-impact projects across the route. This year, OxCRP engaged more than 1,300 local people, worked with over 200 partners and involved more than 200 young people in projects that promote rail confidence, creativity and social inclusion.

A highlight was Moving Murals, the youth-led art project that transformed Oxford Parkway station with five large-scale artworks co-created by 64 young people from Oxford and Banbury. Supported by the Community Investment Fund and Community Rail Network, the project celebrated identity, belonging and sustainability while helping participants develop new skills and confidence. OxCRP also delivered a Station Adoption Integration Workshop with Chiltern Railways, Great Western Railway and Community Rail Network, creating a framework to embed adoption activity and enhance stations as vibrant, community-driven places.

Looking ahead, OxCRP is preparing to launch Tracks of Our Lives, a CIF-supported project marking Railway 200. Pop-up events in Banbury and Bicester are gathering personal rail memories, which will be transformed into an interactive display of audio, poetry and illustrated vinyl artworks at Bicester North Station.





Heart of England CRP

Covers Dorridge, Hatton, Lapworth, Leamington Spa, Solihull, Warwick and Warwick Parkway

Following the CRP's five-year anniversary - celebrating 23 completed projects and acknowledging the vital support of partners such as Chiltern Railways - the partnership used Railway 200 as an opportunity to highlight the railway's heritage and its role in local life. A major focus was the creation of two murals at Leamington Spa Station, funded through Community Investment Fund and produced with artist Katie O. One mural presents a visual timeline of railway history, while the other captures Leamington's identity through Art Deco architecture, Victoria Park's viaduct, Brunel's 1852 GWR station and Queen Victoria's 1853 visit. The murals attracted strong community interest, BBC coverage and were paired with four workshops that allowed local students to create their own history-inspired artwork.

Chiltern's support also enabled the pilot year of Wild Rails Biodiversity, an innovative project involving 55 students from two schools on the Leamington Spa-Birmingham Moor Street line. Activities included installing bug hotels to support local wildlife and producing cyanotype artwork displayed at Leamington Spa and Lapworth stations, transforming platforms into engaging spaces celebrating local nature. The project introduced young people to urban biodiversity and showed how stations can serve as learning environments and environmental assets.

Chiltern's core funding also underpins a range of wider community initiatives, from work with adults with learning disabilities to supporting the White Ribbon campaign and delivering rail safety education for young people. These programmes illustrate the breadth and impact of the partnership. From public art and hands-on environmental projects to general community support, Chiltern's backing is creating positive change across the route.



Funding our CRPs

This table outlines the funds distributed and projected for our CRPs for 2025 and the next three years. This was increased in 2024 to deliver more community projects and enhance resourcing.

Both CRPs have agreed that they have engaged with us to provide appropriate funding to support the aims and objectives of the CRP, and we can confirm that the distribution of funds takes account of the Department for Transport Community Rail Strategy.

Community Rail Partnership Core Funding					
	2024	2025	2026* (forecast)	2027* (forecast)	2028* (forecast)
Oxfordshire CRP	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000**	£15,000**	£15,000**
Heart of England CRP	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000**	£15,000**	£15,000**
Total	£30,000	£30,000	£30,000 + inflation	£30,000 + inflation	£30,000 + inflation

*subject to DfT approval
**funds will be increased by an inflationary amount, to be determined each year

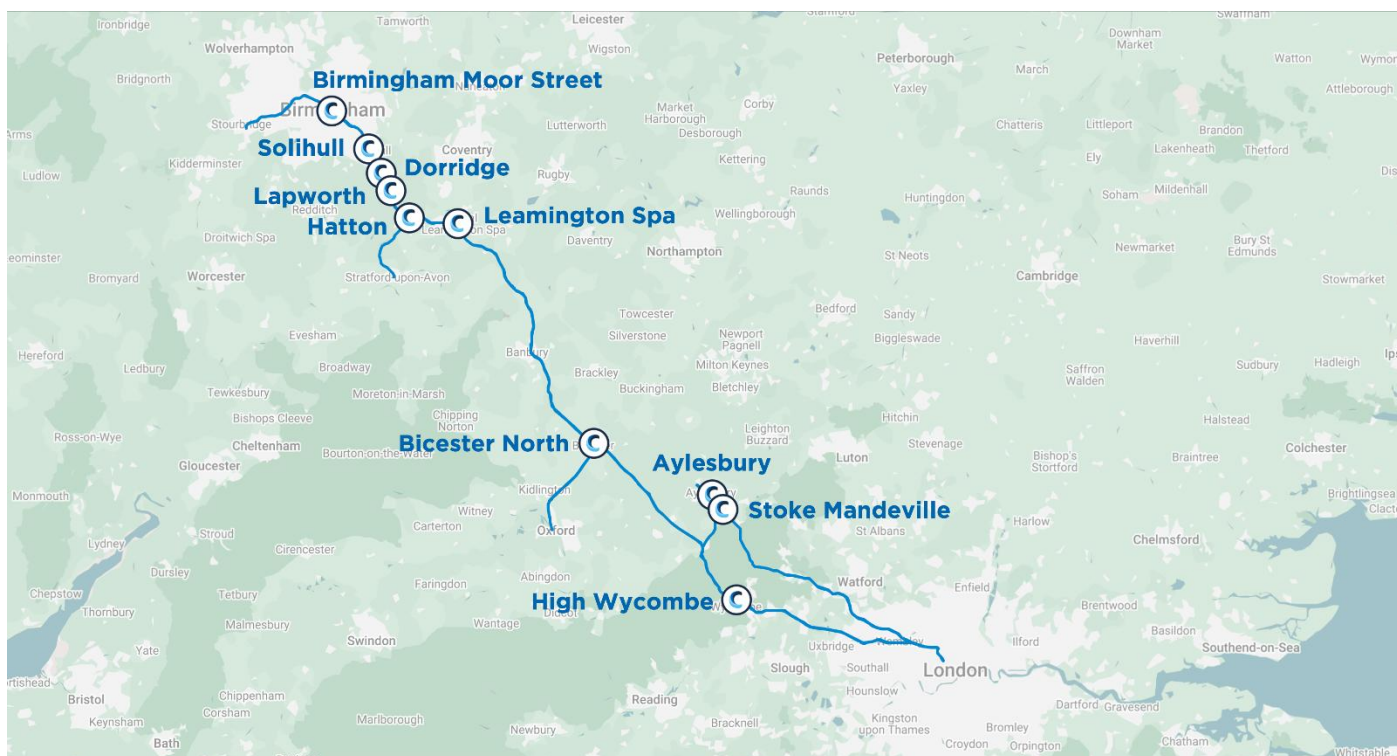
“Our relationship with Chiltern Railways continues to be collaborative as we work together on the growth of community rail across the network. We have discussed the funding of the Community Rail Partnerships together and are pleased to see that sufficient account of our views has been taken as an inflation-based increase in core funding is provided for the two funded CRPs.”



Paul Webster
Community Rail
Network

Station Adoption

We have 10 active station adoption groups across our route in the West Midlands, Warwickshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, bringing local ownership to their stations.



Above: Map of adopted Chiltern Railways stations

Updates from our Station Adoption Groups

Here are some key updates from a selection of our station adoption groups across the network. Over the past year, volunteers have continued to make a real difference at their local stations through gardening, community engagement, biodiversity projects, cultural initiatives, and heritage preservation.

Friends of Birmingham Moor Street Station

It has been an especially busy year at Moor Street Station, marked by the arrival of the Railway 200 Exhibition Train. The group played a key role in preparing the station for this high-profile visit, which saw over 1,200 people pass through. The adopters also welcomed international volunteers, expanding their reach and bringing new perspectives to the work. Improvements to the station's visual appeal included planting additional flowers and clearing overgrowth to showcase newly installed historic-style running-in boards.



Friends of High Wycombe Station

The group has continued to collaborate closely with Chiltern Railways, delivering a series of well-attended community engagement and biodiversity sessions. These included hands-on activities with local school pupils and corporate volunteers, helping to improve planting areas and create habitats for wildlife. Notably, a sighting of a female Common Blue butterfly suggests the beginning of new wildlife activity at the station.



Friends of Lapworth Station

This year, Lapworth Station saw the installation of a large bug hotel, created in partnership with local schoolchildren, Network Rail, and regional organisations. The project was part of the wider 'Wild Rails' initiative, aimed at boosting biodiversity in station environments. The group continues to work closely with partners, including schools, to develop the leased land adjacent to the station, promoting community involvement.



Friends of Leamington Spa Station

The Friends have had a productive year, receiving a Bronze Award at the Community Rail Awards for their station gardening efforts. They also prepared the station gardens for the annual Britain in Bloom judging, working alongside Network Rail volunteers to tidy and enhance the grounds in challenging summer heat at times. Earlier in the year, they planted a memorial tree and carried out further maintenance across the garden areas, reinforcing their long-standing commitment to the station's heritage.



Friends of Solihull Station

The Solihull Station adopters have continued to engage deeply with the local community, partnering with a local arts society to curate displays for the station waiting room. They also helped a school pupil through their Duke of Edinburgh Silver Award service project, involving them in planting and station enhancement tasks. The group's work was recognised by the Mayor of Solihull, who welcomed them to the Council chamber in appreciation of their contribution.



Friends of Stoke Mandeville Station

The group has spent the year highlighting and protecting the station's cultural heritage. A key achievement was the installation of an informative plaque telling the story behind the beloved lion statues that have stood in the station garden since the 1980s. Alongside preserving this piece of railway history, the group continued practical conservation work such as maintaining bird boxes installed the previous year, supported by the Chiltern Society.



Developing new Station Adoption Groups

This year has also seen progress in expanding our station adoption network, with three new groups being explored. Discussions are under way with a variety of local community partners, including town councils, college groups, and independent organisations, to establish volunteer teams at each station.

These partnerships aim to build sustainable adoption groups that can bring fresh energy and community pride to their local stations, helping to enhance the passenger experience and strengthen local engagement across the network.

Funding our Station Adoption Groups

This year, we increased group funding in bands dependant on station footfall, creating a fairer funding blueprint for station adopters, and providing an increase to all compared to 2024. The table below also shows forecast station adoption group funding spend for 2026/27 considering three potential new groups across our route.

Station Adoption Group Funding	
2024 (historic)	£2,500
2025 (current)	£4,350
2026 (forecast)	£5,850

Community Rail Network

Community Rail Network (CRN) serves as a catalyst for the community rail movement, collaborating with train operating companies and community rail partnerships across Great Britain alongside corporate partners to actively engage communities.



This year, we have taken part in several activities in partnership with CRN, such as:



Attendance at Community Rail Network events, webinars and awards

Including the Community Rail Awards in Newcastle and Community Rail Conference in Nottingham



Engagement in the wider community rail movement across TOCs

Engaging with TOCs to build a sustainable future for community rail under Great British Railways.



Speaking at our Community Conference

Paul Webster of Community Rail Network gave an update on the work taking place at CRN at our Community Conference in Birmingham.

Our ongoing collaboration with CRN continues to strengthen Chiltern's role within the wider community rail movement. Through attendance at key events, such as the Community Rail Awards in Newcastle and the Community Rail Conference in Nottingham, we have celebrated best practice and shared insights with partners from across the network.

At our own Community Conference in Birmingham, we were pleased to welcome Paul Webster from Community Rail Network, who provided an update on national initiatives and the important role of collaboration in connecting communities through the rail network.

“Over the last 12 months the increased number of station adoption groups also shows a strong local focus on connecting communities to the railway. We were delighted to speak at the 2025 Chiltern Railways stakeholder conference linking together Community Rail Network and Chiltern Railways activities as set out in the Secretary of State's Community Rail Strategy as part of the local, regional and national rail landscape.”



Paul Webster
Community Rail
Network

Charity Partnerships and Collections

Our charitable activity this year has been driven by a commitment to social value, using our network as platforms for positive social impact. Through a combination of longstanding partnerships, new initiatives and regular fundraising opportunities, we have helped raise awareness and vital funds for a wide range of causes.

Charity Collections

Over the past year, we have enabled more than 100 scheduled charity collections across our stations, providing valuable opportunities for organisations to engage directly with passengers.

One highlight was a collaborative collection at London Marylebone in support of City Harvest, delivered in partnership with our colleagues at Arriva Rail London. Held on World Food Day in October, the event raised funds for the charities mission to redistribute surplus food to those in need, helping to tackle food poverty and reduce waste in the capital.



The Marylebone Project



In May, Chiltern Railways launched a new charity partnership with The Marylebone Project, a London-based organisation supporting homeless and vulnerable women, following a shortlisting and colleague voting process. Running from April 2025 to March 2027, this partnership offers customers the chance to donate their delay repay compensation and proceeds from unclaimed lost property auctions directly to the charity.

This new partnership, worth £30,000 over two years, builds on our collaboration for the 'Marylebone on Display' exhibition in 2024,

which helped raise awareness of the challenges faced by women experiencing homelessness. We also seek to support the charity's wider operations. This includes hiring meeting space through their Space in Marylebone project and utilising their in-house catering service, Munch in Marylebone, which provides training and employment opportunities for the women they support.

Other Charity Partnerships

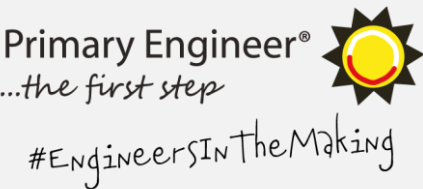
National Literacy Trust



We are proud to continue our partnership with the National Literacy Trust, focused on improving literacy levels in areas where children have limited access to reading opportunities. As part of this work, volunteers from Team Chiltern have taken part in rail-themed literacy sessions in schools along our route, reading with pupils and bringing the railway to life through storytelling.

We have also supported station visits - notably at London Marylebone - allowing children to experience the railway in person and make direct links between what they read in class and real-world environments. In addition, we have funded donations of STEM-themed books to support not only literacy, but also to inspire early interest in STEM, that underpins the railways.

Primary Engineer



Our partnership with Primary Engineer continues to support the next generation of thinkers and problem-solvers by bringing STEM education to life in classrooms along our network. Primary Engineer helps schools connect the curriculum with real-world engineering - and our role ensures that railway-themed challenges and learning opportunities are part of that experience.

Chiltern Railways contributes core funding to make this possible and supports delivery through Team Chiltern volunteers, who help run interactive sessions and workshops. From designing and building model vehicles to solving practical transport-related challenges, pupils are encouraged to develop creativity, teamwork and critical thinking - key skills for future careers in engineering and beyond.

Funding our Charity Partnerships

This table outlines the grant funding allocated to our two charity partners who work on STEM projects closely with schools across our network.

Charity Partner Grant Funding			
	2023 (historic)	2024 (historic)	2025 (current)
Primary Engineer	£4,445	£5,250	£10,000
National Literacy Trust	£5,635	£10,000	£10,000
Total	£10,080	£15,250	£20,000

Colleague Engagement

Our people play an essential part in delivering impact across the communities across our network, not only through their daily roles but also through volunteering and fundraising efforts. We are proud to support staff-led initiatives by offering paid volunteer days and by managing a colleague community fund.

Volunteer Days

Each year, we offer colleagues the opportunity to take part in company-supported volunteer days, providing paid time off to contribute to community projects and personal causes. This year, our colleagues have used their volunteer days in a fantastic range of meaningful ways, from hands-on practical support to youth development and skill-building activities.

A standout example was a week-long scout camp supported by one of our colleagues. The camp introduced young people to new skills and outdoor activities, with scouts planning, cooking, and organising their own sessions - helping to build confidence and independence.

Colleague Community Fund

Our Colleague Community Fund empowers staff to support the causes that matter most to them, with a particular focus on grassroots initiatives that make a meaningful impact in the communities we serve. Over the past year, we've provided £3,000 in funding to a diverse range of local groups and charities - supporting everything from youth sport and outdoor activities to health charities and mental wellbeing services.

The fund has enabled colleagues to back community projects that promote healthy lifestyles and inclusion, such as youth football and cricket clubs, helping young people develop teamwork, resilience, and confidence. It has also supported uniformed and activity-based groups that give children and teenagers a chance to learn hands-on skills, spend time outdoors and connect with their peers.



Beyond this, funding has helped to strengthen local support networks by contributing towards charities that address health challenges and mental wellbeing, including those offering peer support, advocacy, and confidential assistance to people in crisis.

Funding our Colleague Community Fund

This table outlines the funding provided to colleagues for charitable donations through our Colleague Community Fund.

Colleague Community Fund	
2024 (historic)	£3,000
2025 (current)	£3,000
2026 (forecast)	£3,000

Community Conference



On 21 October, Chiltern Railways held its annual Community Conference at the Symphony Hall in Birmingham, a 15-minute walk from our Birmingham terminal, Moor Street. From business improvement districts and local authorities to station adopters and CRPs, we had a wide variety of passionate guests and speakers in attendance which enabled an engaging and diverse discussion.

Chiltern's Customer and Commercial Director, Michael Stewart, opened the event, outlining on our plans to introduce newer and additional (Mark 5A) trains from early 2026, with 10,000 additional seats being provided for customers each weekday from December 2026.

Guests then heard about the progress being made to deliver the Midlands Rail Hub scheme from Midlands Connect, and Chiltern Rangers demonstrated their collaborative community work to improve High Wycombe station, including adding planters, wildflower meadows and artwork from students at Buckinghamshire New University.

Paul Webster from the Community Rail Network shared a national update on CRN's activities, and Harry Burr, Stakeholder Executive & Community Rail Lead at Chiltern Railways, highlighted our community engagement achievements over the past year, focusing on Railway 200 and project delivery through our Community Investment Fund.

We also launched our annual stakeholder survey, inviting feedback from partners and community representatives to help shape our priorities for the year ahead and continue building strong, meaningful relationships across our network.



We were also delighted to announce our 2025 Community Award winners:

Outstanding Personal Contribution

Sarah Davison, Heart of England CRP



Sarah has shown exceptional dedication throughout the year, often working independently across a wide stretch of our network. She led and delivered the Leamington Spa Railway 200 mural project, contributed to the Railway 200 banner at London Marylebone, and supported the Wild Rails initiative to boost biodiversity at stations from Lapworth to Leamington.

Station Adoption Group of the Year

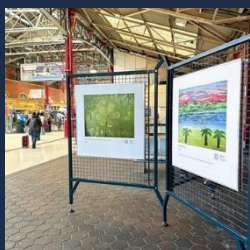
Friends of Lapworth Station



Despite their small size, this group has gone above and beyond in their efforts. They've engaged closely with the local primary school and transformed disused railway land, in partnership with Network Rail, into thriving habitats for wildlife. Their new heritage information boards on the platforms celebrate the station's history and enhance the experience for customers.

CIF Project of the Year

Marylebone on Display



Delivered by the Baker Street Quarter Partnership through Chiltern's Community Investment Fund, this exhibition was inspired by art therapy sessions with women supported by The Marylebone Project. It helped participants express themselves and support their wellbeing. Displayed on Platform 3 at Marylebone, the exhibition has reached millions of people with its meaningful artwork. We're delighted that the series will continue into 2026!

Overall Project of the Year

Chiltern Rangers



High Wycombe Station has received a much-needed transformation through this community project. Students from Buckinghamshire New University collaborated with Chiltern to bring artwork to life on the station overbridge, adding colour and creativity to the space. Chiltern Rangers complemented this with outstanding gardening work to enhance biodiversity and delight passengers. The result is a welcoming, revitalised station that reflects the power of local partnership and pride.

Railway 200

This year marked a historic milestone for Britain's railways as we celebrated two centuries since the dawn of the modern railway. Chiltern Railways proudly played a key role in commemorating this bicentenary through a range of events and initiatives that brought communities, colleagues, and partners together to reflect on the past, celebrate the present, and inspire future generations.

'Inspiration' at Birmingham Moor Street

One of the highlights was hosting the 'Inspiration' exhibition train at Birmingham Moor Street. The four-carriage train, attracting over a thousand visitors during its stop in the city, offered a journey through rail history and innovation. The exhibition included interactive displays highlighting engineering, careers, and the vital role of rail in the West Midlands.



Leamington Spa Railway 200 Mural

At Leamington Spa, we celebrated the bicentenary by unveiling a series of custom murals designed in partnership with local schools and a community artist. Funded through our Community Investment Fund, the murals brought together historical characters and creative interpretations from young people, adding vibrancy and a local touch to the station environment.



Station Birthdays

Further commemorative events took place across the network in October:



175 Years of the Railway in Bicester

In Bicester, a plaque was unveiled to mark 175 years of rail services in the town - a timely celebration as we look ahead to significant service developments, including new trains and an Oxford-Milton Keynes connection.



25 Years of Warwick Parkway Station

Meanwhile, at Warwick Parkway, 25 years of the station were celebrated with a community-led event recognising both its success and its continuing importance as a transport hub in rural Warwickshire.

Concluding Thoughts

It is important to reflect not only on what has been achieved, but on the values and partnerships that continue to shape our journey. Throughout 2025, Chiltern Railways has demonstrated the critical role a train operator can play in strengthening community relationships in the places they serve. Our community work has remained rooted in belief that rail is not just a service - **it is a shared resource that has the power to connect communities.**

From the delivery of inspiring projects through our Community Investment Fund to the continued growth of our Community Rail Partnerships and station adoption groups, we've seen first-hand how local passion can strengthen connections. The Railway 200 celebrations reminded us not only of our heritage, and our future, but of the role we continue to play in bringing people together and connecting places.

Our colleagues have also been instrumental this year, taking part in volunteering, fundraising and youth engagement to extend our reach far beyond the platforms. Their efforts show how the values of community and care run right through our internal culture.

Looking ahead to 2026, we are focused on turning this momentum into even more impact. We plan to welcome new station adoption groups to the network and continuing to evolve our funding model to reflect the needs and ambitions of each group. We'll also begin delivery of the next round of Community Investment Fund projects, supporting ideas that champion community enrichment across the route.

Alongside all of this, with new Mark 5A trains entering service and increasing capacity across all of our routes, we are entering a transformative period for the Chiltern network. These developments not only strengthen our offer to customers but also create exciting chances to deepen our place-based work, connect with new communities, and ensure that the benefits of this railway are felt far and wide.

All of this activity contributes to one shared ambition: **making Chiltern Railways an easier, greener and better railway.** Easier through accessible and welcoming stations, greener through environmental and biodiversity projects, and better through lasting social value in the communities that we rely on, and that rely on us.

For more information about our community work or to explore partnership opportunities, please contact our community team at community@chilternrailways.co.uk.

Chilternrailways