



**North Staffordshire
Community Rail
Partnership**

www.northstaffsrail.org.uk

**MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT
GROUP MEETING ON THURSDAY 17TH
JULY 2025, 10:00-12:00 ONLINE VIA
TEAMS**

Present: David Dowbenko (Chair) [DD], Emma McIntosh (CRPO) [EM], Charlotte Eccles [CE], Ian Clark (IC) (Vice Chair). Sam Smith [SS], Mark Osborne (Avanti West Coast) [MO], Jody Ball (XC), Cara Higgs [CH], Ian Tamburello (Stoke-on-Trent City Council) [IT], Rowley Osbourn (Staffordshire County Council) [RO] Rachel Selby (RS) (Volunteer Member), Luke Tinning (LT) (Volunteer Member), Becky Styles (Northern) [BS].

		Action
1.	Apologies for Absence: Paul Webster (CRN), Marianne Flint (NR), Rob Goulding (NR).	
2.	Minutes of last Management Group Meeting (10th April 2025) The minutes were agreed. SS reported that the new EMR SST, George, is now in post.	
3.	Welcome to new members DD introduced Charlotte Eccles, new Community Rail Partnership Officer. Charlotte started on 14 th July. DD welcomed Becky Styles from Northern. BS was invited to attend by the Management Group and will determine how the NSCRP links with her role before taking a view whether to attend future meetings.	BS
4.	CRPO's Report and update on the Action Plan EM reported that Stone Station volunteers won London Northwestern Railway's Stations in Bloom 2025 competition. The updated NSCRP line guided has been printed thanks to funding from Community Rail Network. These have been distributed to stations and community venues and is available online. Contact EM if you would like copies. The Volunteer Spending Policy was implemented on 1 st June and appears to be working well. Days Out by Rail. Due to the disruption at Greek Street during August, EM asked all TOCs for their views on promoting leisure travel during this time. It was agreed that it would be best not to take part in the campaign this year.	

	IT asked if the Pottery Plates competition could be linked to organisations offering activities over the summer. EM to send template to IT to circulate. EM updates on the Action Plan. • SI3 - Volunteer day at Stafford Station with Network Rail and Avanti to build planters and bird boxes out of pallets took place during Community Rail Week. EM trying to organise a second date with NR to finish making the planters. EM thanked all those involved. • SI7 – Two new volunteers recruited for Crewe Station. They will be attending the station next week for their safety briefing. • SI11 – Overdue - Kidsgrove Planters. Budget of £313 remaining to build one or more planters from sleepers. Dimensions have recently been provided to EMR SST so that he can advise if he can complete the build. Delay due to SST availability. • SI14 - Derby Station Planter. Cladding now in place. • SI15 - Derby Station Underpass Repaint (NEW). Paint the underpass at Derby Station in heritage British Rail colours in celebration of Railway 200, funded by EMR. • SI16 - Derby Station Replant (NEW). Replant Derby station planters to improve station environment, funded by EMR. • MP1 – Stafford Bee Friendly Project. Avanti confirmed funding for the project which includes murals and 3D artwork at Stafford Station plus planting in the Scout gardens. Meetings with the artists have been arranged to agree a timescale for delivery. • MP7 - Foxfield Railway200 Crewe - Derby line Knotty history booklet (NEW). Sixty-page A4 booklet, funded by EMR, featuring the history of the Crewe – Derby line. The project is a partnership with Foxfield Railway and the content was written by the Rail Study Group. The booklets will be available in the next few weeks and will be taken to the Greatest Gathering and HOD events. • EV1 - Community Open Day held at Stone Station on 2nd July celebrating station projects, work of the volunteers and Railway 200. Event went well with very positive feedback from attendees. Estimated that around 90 people attended. • EV2 - NSCRP annual volunteers thank you lunch held on 24th April, attended by 26 volunteers plus partners. The lunch went well and included the traditional quiz which featured some history themed questions linking with Railway 200.	EM/IT SS
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	• EV3 - Six different walks/tours/talks arranged during Heritage Open Days to celebrate Railway200. History of the Trent Valley Railway (Stafford), Quest for Speed on the UK's Railways (Stafford), Behind the scenes tours of Crewe Station (Crewe), History of the Railway through Poster Art (Crewe) walk and talk from Stone Station to Stone Heritage Centre with a return along the canal featuring the history of Stone Town and the railway, including a stop at Stone Heritage Centre where there will be a special exhibition for the event and a further talk (Stone) and station tours at Stoke Station (Stoke). All events being delivered by historians, volunteers and/or TOC staff. • EV4 - Foxfield Summer Event funded by Cross Country taking place over 4 Wednesdays in August. The project will engage 360 children on free school meals. • EV7 – Tracks Through Time (NEW). Tracks Through Time exhibition at Stoke Station during Heritage Open Days (September) featuring diverse communities in Railway History to celebrate Railway 200 with funding from Avanti. It will be a drop-in exhibition over a week featuring the stories of women, disabled workers and diverse heritage staff past and present in shaping the railway over the last 200 years. It will be led by New Vic Theatre's Borderlines, and co-created with the University of Portsmouth as well as involvement from Foxfield Railway. There will be photographs, artwork, sound recordings, costumed characters giving oral histories and there will be interactive elements. EM shared the finance report. Spend will now be reported against each grant funded project. The report shows income and expenditure for the four quarters up to 31st March 2025. The report will be sent out with the minutes.	
5.	Community Rail Network Items (PW) PW sent his apologies. EM to contact to ask if there is an update that can be circulated with the minutes. DD reported that he had attended a CRN organised Parliamentary Reception with MPs, aimed at celebrating the achievements of Community Rail in the UK and had made a number of contacts with local MPs'. IC reported that CRN had requested volunteers to support their stand at the Greatest Gathering and IC had volunteered for the Friday. IC offered to report back at the next meeting. JB advised that entries for the CRN awards open on 1st September.	EM IC

6.	East Midlands Railway (SS) SS thanked EM for supporting the Knotty booklet, Derby underpass repaint and planting projects as well as the development of activities within the Action Plan. EMR will have a Greatest Gathering fringe event with Derwent Valley CRP. There will be a community rail stall on the bridge at Derby Station during the event. EMR CRPs have been invited to support. EMR are the headline sponsor for the next CRN Awards and are keen to create fringe events. Funds remain in the Community Fund but SS encouraged early applications as the fund is being used. There is a technical pause on new station adopters and DBS checks are now required for new adopters. SS advised that Longport Bridge will be closed from 26th July – 14th September for bridge renewal, diversionary routes will be in place. EM requested further information on the diversionary route and a map. SS to send. UPDATE – SS provided updated dates to be circulated with the minutes. Work will now take place from 4th August – 10th October with the footbridge closure throughout this time. Greek Street closure will impact on services. Advised to check EMR website for further information. IC raised a query about a notice at Peartree that suggests tickets must be purchased in advance before boarding the train. There aren't facilities for purchasing tickets at Peartree Station. SS advised it is not a penalty fare route currently so can purchase on board. IC to send SS a copy of the notice. EMR slides to be circulated with the minutes.	SS IC
7.	London Northwestern Railway (CH) CH advised that works will be taking place on the line during the summer. Further information is available on the LNR website.	

	The Station Adoption fund is open, £2,000 has been allocated for Stone and Penkridge and discussions for projects have taken place with EM. Holding first Adopter Day on 23rd July for volunteers to meet with stations and properties teams and share best practice. Penkridge volunteers are attending. The Annual Adopters Survey will be circulated in August. This will include questions around safety and what support adopters would like. CH reported that we are moving forward with the issue of water butts at Stoke and Penkridge. This has taken longer due to the size of the water butt required. Working with safety team to pilot a scheme for safety talks in schools. Schools have been identified but CH will pick up with EM in their next meeting where there may be local schools that could be engaged. Some delivery will be through the Rail Safe Friendly Programme. CH shared information regarding an incident with station adopters in another area, who went on to the tracks to retrieve a water trolley despite being told not to. This is being investigated. CH expressed the importance of keeping pushing trespass and rail safety messages.	CH/E M
8.	CrossCountry (JB) JB advised that the Community Engagement fund is still open but it is being spent rapidly. JB updated regarding the Greek Street engineering works 2nd to 22nd August. Further information is available on the CrossCountry website. JB also updated on Sunday services where the frequency will be revised, but overall passenger capacity will be increased. There is an RMT ballot that closes on 21st July.	

9.	Avanti West Coast (MO) MO advised that performance had improved over the last 24 months. Stoke 100. MPs travelled up to Stoke Station on 5th June for an Avanti organised reception to mark the 100th centenary. The City of Stoke-on-Trent Pendolino's unit nameplate has been updated to include "1925 – 2025" to recognise the centenary. Avanti will hold their fifth annual stakeholder conference on Monday 22 September 2025 in Birmingham. MO updated on Feel Good Futures, Avanti's project for secondary school pupils that includes a train journey and visits, educating about the rail industry and career opportunities. As part of this, pupils from Stafford had met with Ministers to better understand the railway. Avanti update to be sent out with the minutes.	
10.	Any Other Business DD asked if BS had any comments to share regarding the meeting. BS commented that her interest would be to see if there was scope to work together on projects on the line between Cheadle Hulme and Stoke, as that line is not adopted. CH updated on White Ribbon. WMT have developed a three-year action plan. This year they are looking to increase the number of stations involved beyond CRP areas, particularly in the South; as there was lots of work in the West Midlands last year. CH is applying for funding for station toolkits for stations. CE commented that Soroptimist, a global volunteer movement that works to improve the lives of women and girls, might be able to support with funding. EM updated that Alison Cotterill, Network Rail, will be returning to her substantive post this month.	ALL

	LT asked if there were any resources for adopters about water saving given the heatwaves. EM commented that this links with a wider CRP aim of sustainable planting and using drought tolerant plants to respond to increasingly warm summers. Options to be explored.	
11.	Dates and times of forthcoming Management Group Meetings: • 23rd October 2025 11am Management Meeting, 12.30 AGM potentially followed by a talk - to be confirmed	ALL