North Downs Rail Line Gets Community Platform

Following from a grant from the Great Western Railway (GWR) Communities and Charities Improvement Fund, a community rail partnership is being formed along the North Downs Line, which runs from Guildford to Gatwick.

This will bring the local community together with local authorities, GWR, education, business and environment representatives who will work to improve the value of the line to the local community and visitors. This underpins the economic development and community support objectives of partners and will enhance the accessibility of the railway, the quality of the stations and the train services that operate along the line, to increase use by visitors and the local communities.

The partnership will be managed by the long established Sussex Community Rail Partnership, (SCRP). Patrick Warner, the chair of the SCRP Strategy Board, explained: “This is great news for the North Downs Line, and we are very grateful to GWR for their support. The intention is to have stations adopted by local community groups and for partners to work more closely to improve facilities and the environment at stations, improve access by public transport, walking and cycling, to provide better car parking and improve rail services.”

Gatwick Airport Ltd. welcomed the formation of the community rail partnership. A spokesperson said “Gatwick is very keen to improve accessibility to and from the airport for passengers and staff. Any move directed towards more rail connections with Reading and the Midlands, which improvements along this line would bring about, are very welcome. We already work closely and successfully with SCRP along their other community rail lines serving the airport.”

GWR Regional Development Manager Tom Pierpoint said: “GWR have a great track record in supporting Community Rail Partnerships. Seven of the fastest growing community rail lines in the UK are operated by GWR and last year we were the overall winner at the Association of Community Rail Partnerships annual awards.

We are delighted to be able to support the bid, and look forward to working with Sussex Community Rail Partnership, the local authorities, Gatwick and the very many community groups on the North Downs line to improve services for our customers.”
Community Rail Partnerships exist across England, Scotland and Wales, bringing together communities and their railways to improve accessibility and quality of train travel and services. They are part of the Department of Transport’s current rail policy and are built into all new rail franchises.

Sussex Community Rail Partnership (SCRP) has, over a period of 14 years, developed five rail partnerships (CRPs) along 6 lines in Surrey, Kent, East and West Sussex along with over 50 station adoption partnerships. SCRP is supported by a not for profit company, SCRP Ltd., whose Board of volunteer directors manage line development staff and the finances and projects of the line CRPs.

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