
Subject:	COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP
Date:	20 July 2020
Decision to be taken by:	Mike Davis, Strategic Director (Corporate Resources)
Report of:	Shaun Taylor, Community Services Manager
Decision Type:	Executive Non-Key Decision
Delegated Authority:	Delegation No 45 to the Section 151 Officer under Section 6C (Scheme of Officer Delegations) of Part 3 (Responsibility for Functions) of the Constitution, as follows: 'To make application for and to accept grants or other assistance on behalf of the Council.'
Classification:	Unrestricted

Purpose of the report:	Dover District Council has been awarded a grant of £60,000 and needs authority to accept the funding.
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Recommendation:	To authorise the Council's Community Services Team to accept a grant of £60,000 over two years from South Eastern Railway to facilitate acting as the co-ordinating body for a Community Rail Partnership project.
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1. Summary

Establishing, administering and becoming the lead partner in the White Cliffs CRP (Community Rail Partnership) would give DDC the ability to link CRP projects to the Council's strategies (including the green agenda, sustainable travel, post-Covid-19 recovery and the growth strategy for tourism and the visitor economy), plus all the other benefits a CRP can bring to an area (accessibility, connectivity, education). There is huge positive community involvement potential (social value) and a conduit to attract further funding to benefit the district.

2. Introduction and Background

Across the UK, CRPs bring an annual value of £5.6m (from 8500 volunteers giving 390,000 hours of time) with an added social value to the volunteers of £27.6m. Passenger numbers on community rail lines rose by 42% between 2008/9 and 2018/19 (higher than the overall increase of 35%). CRPs exist to:

- Promote sustainable, healthy and accessible travel
- Provide a voice for the community
- Bring communities together supporting diversity and inclusion, building community cohesion
- Support social and economic development

Southeastern is committed to widening the pool of CRPs across its network and announced a £400,000 fund in late May with a deadline of 19th June. Due to the short timescale available DDC researched the benefits a CRP would bring to the district, liaised with interested groups and submitted a proposal for a new (first) CRP for the local area – The White Cliffs Community Rail Partnership – for the rail line from Westenhanger in the west to Sandwich in the east. The proposal was successful and

Southeastern awarded DDC £60,000 (£30k in 20/21 and £30k in 21/22) with the proviso that the new CRP is fully set up by 31 March 2021.

Early informal discussions have already been held with Folkestone & Hythe District Council who are in support, as are town councils, community groups and others community organisations.

The CRP will help provide an exemplar of partnership working across the area with the following objectives:

- To facilitate community-led partnerships and bring people together to support diversity and inclusion, particularly socially disadvantaged groups and those with special needs.
- To support social and economic development through collaborative working.
- To implement projects and support the work of others to improve community safety, reduce crime and the fear of crime on local lines.
- To encourage and implement the integration of other forms of sustainable transport.
- To develop close working relationships with transport providers and other relevant organisations.
- To coordinate and develop improvements to train services and station facilities via various activities.
- To educate and inform the public about the work of the CRP and integrated transport.
- To coordinate and develop resources to achieve the objectives.
- The community services team has in-depth experience of delivering partnership collaboration and externally funded projects.

3. **Outline plans for White Cliffs Community Rail Partnership**

Community – the CRP will inspire and coordinate efforts to bring stations back to life at the heart of their communities. It will work with local schools and voluntary groups to develop, for example, station-adoption schemes where volunteers enhance run-down railway property. With many secondary schools within walking and cycling distance of several stations, there is potential for more children to travel to school by train. The needs of children with special needs, the elderly and disabled people will be identified to enable them to make best use of the railway. The CRP will seek to identify problems in accessing stations and using trains and develop projects accordingly.

Sustainable travel – the CRP will work to improve and waymark safe and sustainable routes from stations, working with local countryside projects, National Trust, English Heritage, hospitality businesses and voluntary cyclists' and walkers' groups.

The CRP will help promote the Dover Fastrack Bus Service linking Whitfield with Dover Priory train station and work with partners to improve walking and cycling routes connecting other new housing areas and business areas to stations and to upgrade and waymark walking and cycling routes between station in and around the towns.

Tourism and the Visitor Economy – the new CRP would help us maximise the opportunities for this area by:

- working with Southeastern to develop a distinctive brand for the line to complement and develop local tourism promotions (including DDC's 'We'll Meet Again' campaign)

- increasing footfall, dwell time and spend across our destinations, attractions, places of leisure, hospitality providers and town centres from each station
- Developing ‘travel, stay and experience’ opportunities to new potential markets along the trainline; and extending the tourist season, year-round
- linking the use of the train to other green forms of transport (walking, cycling and buses), working with residents, visitors, local bus companies, cycle hire businesses and taxis to identify and address ‘first/last mile’ issues, starting with station access and signage and mapping of routes to key destinations.

The green agenda – in the context of widespread concerns about climate change, the CRP proposes to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the electrification of the Kent Coast Lines, which reached Deal in 1962, providing a legacy of clean, quiet, energy-efficient transport. The CRP will maximise sustainable use of railway property and encourage sustainable travel.

The impact of Covid-19 – as the lockdown eases, more people will start to use public transport, but local businesses will continue to be hard hit by public confidence and social distancing measures. Where possible the CRP will promote online information about which businesses have reopened, such as country pubs, cafes and shops and tourist venues, supporting local economic recovery.

4. **Resource Implications**

There are no additional resource allocations for DDC. The £60k external funding being received will cover any additional costs incurred including staffing for project co-ordination.

5. **Corporate Implications**

5.1 Comment from the Section 151 Officer: “Accountancy have been consulted on the financial matters in this report and have no further comments to add. (LS)”

5.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Solicitor to the Council was consulted in the making of this decision and made no comments or observations. (HR)

5.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer (KS):

It is encouraging that the project specifically identifies that the grant funding will promote and enable better use of the railway by improving accessibility specifically for children with special needs, the elderly and the disabled. In discharging their duties members are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>.

6. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Detailed partnership proposal/synopsis

Appendix 2 – Costings for the proposed projects

7. **Background Papers**

None.

Contact Officer: Shaun Taylor, Community Services Manager