

## Community Stations Initiative (Central Stations Initiative)

### Concept

The Community Stations Initiative is based on community and not-for-profit use of empty station premises which are no longer needed by the rail industry and deemed to have no commercial value. Piloted in the East and West Midlands from 2005, this initiative has since been accepted as national policy -

- Linking the railway into the community
- Assisting and supporting rural communities and market towns
- Revitalising stations with additional non-railway related activities
- Enabling community groups to offer a wide range of social benefits to their communities.
- Adding value to the rail services and station facilities

Providing a feeling of safety and well-being to passengers  
The key to leasing the empty station premises for Community use is the **Tri-partite lease** which extends beyond the term of the station lease.

Time was taken to adapt a lease that can be used on a national basis and meet the needs of the voluntary sector while dealing with the issues of railway safety and control.

The premises are let at a **peppercorn rent**. Community tenants would be expected to renovate the premises to meet their needs and at their cost. Many have received major grants from a variety of sources including the Railway Heritage Trust.

The Community Stations Initiative is managed by ACoRP, who can provide help to TOC's with empty underutilised premises and to communities that want to see their local stations regenerated.

### Overview

Network Rail owns the infrastructure of the national railway system including, buildings, land and track. In the main, the use of these facilities is leased to regional Train Operating Companies (TOC's) who operate a range of stations on a franchise basis for varying periods of time to provide the requisite rail service and station facilities.

Whilst seeking to maximise the commercial return on their property portfolio for the wider benefit of the railway, Network Rail and the TOC's have some properties on their books that are simply unattractive to commercial tenants.

The new use of empty stations premises is bringing a wide range of social benefit to:-

**Communities**  
**The Environment**  
**Transport**  
**The Arts**  
**Education and Training**  
**Market Town Regeneration**

### National Policy

Community and Not-for-Profit use of station buildings.

An extract from the Network Rail Utilisation Strategy - Investment in stations - a guide for promoters and developers **June 2008**.



#### Community and Not-for-Profit use of station buildings

*Occasionally, there are buildings on stations which are no longer needed by the rail industry but could be of use to other organisations. If the alternative use is for commercial purposes (e.g. offices for an estate agent or local authority, or a commercial restaurant) normal lease arrangements may be possible and promoters should initially contact the relevant TOC. Where the proposed use is for a community/not for profit purpose, then special arrangements may be possible depending on whether there is an alternative commercial use and other local factors.*

*A standard tri-partite lease arrangement has been developed to cover the relations between the not for profit organisation, the train operator and Network Rail (as freehold owner of the station).*

*This is intended to allow organisations which provide benefits to the community to take on property which would otherwise lie idle. Uses to date include a youth/community development charity and an arts project using station property with little commercial value.*

*In order to reduce costs to all parties, the scheme relies on using the templated contract and there is little room for bespoke arrangements which would drive up the costs to all parties. It is also likely that the community/not for profit organisation will need to raise some funds to cover legal costs and allow for the refurbishment of the property as the railway will not be able to provide this funding - in return, the rent is potentially on a peppercorn basis.*



## Innovative Tri Partite Lease

The key to leasing the empty railway premises for community use is the Tri-partite lease which extends beyond the term of the TOC's franchise (the station lease).

Made between Network Rail (the superior/reversionary landlord), the TOC (the landlord) and the Prospective Tenant, the lease deals with the tri-partite lease structure and with the issues of railway safety and control which cannot be changed. It has been tailored to meet the needs of the voluntary sector and is essentially non-negotiable.

It is likely that the community/not for profit organisation will need to raise some funds to cover legal costs, including the Landlords' legal fees and for the refurbishment of the property as the railway will not be able to provide this funding.

Where the TOC agrees to use the same solicitor as Network Rail considerable savings have been made on legal fees.

ACoRP is grateful to Wragge & Co, Solicitors, who have acted on their behalf for community tenants on a pro-bono basis.

**Wragge & Co**

With the agreement of the Landlord, the Tri-partite lease can be for a term of 25+ years if required. This security of tenure could attract major capital grants from a range of funders.

Tenants cannot sublet the property; however consideration is given to those who wish to offer a shared use of the premises to another organisation to provide additional services and extend the opening hours of the premises.

At the appropriate time, a copy of the Tri-partite lease can be obtained through ACoRP together with detailed explanatory notes which have been prepared by Wragge & Co, Solicitors, to support this complex document.

## The premises and improvements

The premises have been identified as surplus by the TOC, the size and condition vary and they are, in the main, let as viewed. Any improvements to the premises will be carried out by the community tenant at their expense, to meet the needs of their use.

- **WHY ARE THE STATION PREMISES EMPTY?**
- Not required for rail service provision
- Unused in recent memory
- Deterioration of the premises
- Previous lettings not succeeded
- Not viable for commercial use
- Footfall Insufficient Parking Renovation Costs Fees

Tenants have attracted support and funding from other sources including local development agencies and strategic funding, local authorities, local charity funding, the National Lottery and the Arts Council.

Where station buildings are listed or within a conservation area, several have been supported with a grant from the Railway Heritage Trust.

The initiative has also attracted a considerable amount of "in-kind" support.

## ACoRP Advice and Support

ACoRP provides help and support to **TOC's** who have empty, underutilised, station premises available; **communities** that want to see their stations regenerated; and to show **funders** what enormous benefit their funding and support could make.

### Help and support available -

- Negotiating legal and property matters
- Establishing a support team
- Finding 'in kind' support
- Inspection of premises
- Marketing the premises
- Arranging tenants' viewing days
- Tenant assessment & recommendations
- Project planning & consents procedure
- Preparation and dissemination of information
- Arranging launches and celebrations

**The Community Stations Initiative** stems from the Central Stations Project which was piloted in the West and East Midlands in 2005. Managed by ACoRP, the Pilot Project saw the leasing of empty station premises at a peppercorn rent for community and not for profit use through a specially formulated tripartite lease which can extend beyond the TOC's franchise.

Oakham was the first station to be let and renovated by its tenants, *StudentForce for Sustainability*. To mark this, a plaque was presented to their Chief Executive, Adam Cade by Jonathon Shaw MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (The Minister for Rural Affairs).

The Pilot Project was a partnership funded by East Midlands Development Agency and Advantage West Midlands and included Network Rail; Central Trains; ACoRP; Passenger Focus and The Countryside Agency.

The new use of empty stations premises is bringing a wide range of social benefit to:-



**Communities**  
**The Environment**  
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**Market Town Regeneration**

Please click on the station locations on the left for more information on a selection of station regeneration project nationwide.

### **Project Stations**

#### **Location Oakham Station Rutland**

Two Units Let to **Studentforce for Sustainability Training and the Environment**

**Oakham Station** has provided Studentforce with a range of space from which they enable young people to learn, develop, work and volunteer with people in the workplace and wider community, so they can learn together and boost their own futures as well as the local economy, community and environment.



*“StudentForce has benefited from the lease at Oakham Station in several ways. We now have a secure base for the next 25 years with a peppercorn rent and no threat of large rent increases or having to relocate to new premises. More of our staff are now travelling by rail which reduces our Carbon Footprint and we are also encouraging our visitors to use the train as well.*

*Our position at the station in the centre of Oakham has given us a higher profile in the local community as we are visible to all users and passers by. A LocalCheck Centre (based in the old parcel office) funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, is now open to the public. Visitors can pop in to learn about sustainability, local heritage and our CommunityCheck service.” [www.studentforce.org.uk](http://www.studentforce.org.uk)*



Oakham before



Oakham after

**Location:- Worcester Foregate Street Station**  
**Yoke and Zoom - Movement - Contemporary Art Gallery**

It has been said that "Yoke and Zoom make playful and poetic interventions into the fabric of urban and rural life."

Their recent chosen task has been to convert the station's disused urinals into a contemporary art gallery and **one new child, new contractors and a new electricity supply later**, Alex Johnson and Nina Coulson, Yoke and Zoom, are 'flushed with success'.



*"Leased through the Community Stations Initiative at a peppercorn rent, we feel this opportunity will enable us greater interaction with the public, enabling us to share our resources on contemporary art with the public in a more accessible location."*

**The gallery at Platform 2...**

An American artist, has launched his first exhibition in the UK in a converted gents' toilet on Platform 2 at Worcester Foregate Street station. Our (BBC Radio 4 This Morning) reporter Phil Mackie was among those invited to the launch.

Jacob Feige, a 31 year-old Colorado-based New Yorker, has travelled a long way for his latest exhibition and those coming to see his work will be preparing for journeys of their own.

The appropriately named **Movement Gallery** was opened by the Mayor of Worcester, who cut the ceremonial red ribbon, while puzzled commuters looked on.



*More loo than Louvre: the Platform*



The gallery has been set up by local artists Nina Coulson and Alex Johnson, with help from **The Association of Community Rail Partnerships**, an organisation which tries to find uses for empty railway premises that have little or no commercial value.

The old toilet block next to the waiting room had been boarded up for years. So it was offered up with a peppercorn rent to non-profit making groups.



"We are going to bring such vibrancy to this little room" said Susan Mills, ACoRP's project officer. Inside, it is still possible to see evidence of the plumbing for the old urinals, but otherwise it has been completely transformed. Fresh paint, new windows and better lighting means that it is possible to forget that this is no ordinary small art gallery. But the station announcements and the drone of the diesel engines as trains arrive and depart are hard to ignore.

## Installed in the stalls

Nonetheless, Alex Johnson, the gallery's co-director, believes that it might encourage an interest in contemporary art in those who are intimidated by more traditional galleries.

"It's not heavy abstract expressionism where you have to sit and contemplate for hours. You can come in and have a look at some wonderful landscapes from Jacob, and keep an ear out for the tannoy when your train comes in"

Jacob, who is best known for painting American landscapes with a contemporary twist, seemed somewhat bemused by all of the attention. A shared interest with Nina and Alex in the sixties' artists' community in Colorado - Drop City - led to the collaboration. He brought all eleven paintings from the States in his suitcase, and was pleased to see them on the walls of the gallery.

"I'm not someone who likes a perfectly sterile environment that's completely removed from the rest of the world, I like my work to be in the world as much as possible".

He admitted that he had never exhibited his work anywhere quite so unusual. Nor has the station, which recently celebrated its 150th anniversary, ever seen anything like it..

## Location:- Great Malvern Station, Worcestershire - Whistle Stop Stores

*A sympathetic restoration of the Grade II listed building*

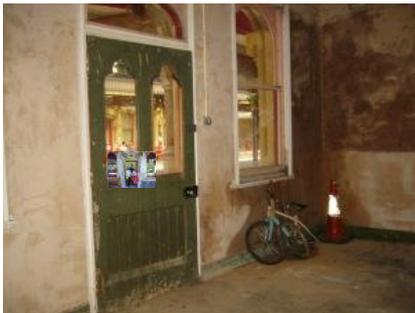
The disused waiting room on platform 2 at Great Malvern Station now houses **Whistlestop Stores**

Whistlestop Stores is staffed by service users of Malvern Social Education Centre (SEC) with the support of council staff. It sells craft materials and office goods and also has a second hand book stall.

The Grade II listed building at the station became available to Malvern SEC in October 2005. The premises are let to Worcestershire County Council at a peppercorn rent through the Community Stations Initiative with the specially formulated tri-partite lease.

Working through Landlords' consents, careful restoration of the building has taken place by the tenants. Consents, planning matters, consultation and contracts were managed by the Council's property services for a sympathetic restoration. When the shop was completed, fitted out and stocked, the service users at the centre were asked to name the shop and **Whistle Stop Stores** was opened.

Exciting and ambitious times have been taking place with the display and sale of other items, including hand painted glass, beautiful framed original pictures, celebration cards, bird boxes and pottery goods. All of the items display the abilities and workmanship of people who have a learning disability.



*Above Great Malvern before the project*



*Right Great Malvern after the project*

**Location:- Northwich, Cheshire**

**Community Rail Awards 2007  
New Uses for Station Buildings - Sponsored by Network Rail**

**2nd Place Northern Community Stations – Northern Rail**

Northern Rail manages 471 stations, of which about two thirds are unstaffed. In a number of cases station buildings have survived, but some are either disused or partly used. Based on the experience of the **Community Stations Initiative** and the work at Northwich and Edge Hill Stations, Northern are developing a co-ordinated approach to community use of station buildings. Each project is different but will bring major benefits to local communities as well as rail passengers.



**Location :- Edge Hill Station  
Metal - Exhibition, Performance and Workshop Spaces.**

An exciting and ambitious art space that is attracting national and international exhibitions.

**A tribute to what can be achieved.**

In October 2009 Metal launched the newly renovated Edge Hill Station building with a huge celebration of art, local heritage and culture. With a performance space on Platform 4, the original Engine Room, Boiler House and Accumulator Tower (dating from 1836) on Platforms 1 & 2 have been transformed from disused space into inspiring rooms for the development of artistic ideas in all discipline

“METAL is the artist’s laboratory space set up by Jude Kelly OBE in 2002 to create space for artists and thinkers to develop their ideas and further the philosophy of their work. We are committed to supporting artists from all disciplines through residencies, commissioning, producing, debate and discussion, touring and publishing. We work internationally, from bases in Liverpool and Southend – contexts which inform the artists and people we choose to work with and how we communicate our ideas.”

<http://www.metalculture.com>

Metel at Edge Hill - Left before - right after



**Location:- Sleaford Station, Lincolnshire**

**Ten Start Up and Enterprise Units.**

ACoRP brokered a new aspect to the Central Stations Initiative which has seen all the available space at Sleaford Station leased and regenerated to provide a base for 10 small enterprise units.

This scheme could be replicated elsewhere to be of mutual benefit to communities and the rail industry



**Location:- Llandoverly, Wales**

The Heart of Wales Development Trust has completed the impressive transformation of Llandoverly Station with an equally impressive official opening by their Royal Highnesses The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall.



The grade II-listed building became an “unmanned halt” in 1992. Today it boasts a new waiting room and cafe; houses local and railway artefacts, and space to include bicycle hire for tourists. The regeneration of the station attracted funding from the Welsh Government through Carmarthenshire County Council and from the Railway Heritage Trust, together with the support of local people.

The premises have been leased from Network Rail and Arriva Trains Wales using the specially formulated tri-partite lease which extends beyond the lease of the Train Operating Company.

ACoRP have worked closely with all involved and are grateful to Wragge & Co, Solicitors, who have acted for Heart of Wales Development Company, on a pro-bono basis through the Community Stations Initiative.

