

Measuring the impact of GTR's social value 2023

Building thriving communities



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Front cover image: GTR worked with artist Alice McCabe to create a temporary train station especially for bugs at London Blackfriars station in April 2023 to mark the completion of 100 landscaping and rewilding projects.



Foreword

Govia Thameslink Railway's (GTR) purpose is to bring people together, and help communities thrive. Our colleagues, and partners in our communities and industry make that happen every day through their commitment and collaboration.

Our customers complete journeys with us, typically within 60 seconds of schedule, safely and in the greenest possible way. Making sure they have a good journey is really important as I know they rely on us to connect, meet loved ones, earn a living, develop with education or at work, and explore the wonderful places in the south and east of England.

Customers and stakeholders tell me that GTR contributes to their communities through its services and the wider initiatives we run. They are ambitious for the future, as are we.

This report shows the impact of our services and how the initiatives we've selected in this report spread opportunity. We have a variety of programmes aimed at recruiting and upskilling, through work experience, employability schemes and apprenticeships programmes. We also focus on giving people the confidence they need to use public transport, to connect them to society as we know just how important it is to take down those barriers. Our industry-leading Try A Train programme and Mobile Assistance Teams have helped people grow in confidence to use rail and have proven to be an efficient route for colleagues to provide assistance at smaller stations.

We know from testimony, from experience at stations, from our partners' feedback, and social value data, that our services and initiatives have a profound impact on the lives of the people involved. It inspires us to better understand our impact and to do more of what works best so we operate as a responsible and effective community player.

At GTR, applying social value to our decisions or evaluation builds on a continuous commitment to our colleagues, communities and the environment. Our focus in 2024 will be to test ourselves against the BSI social value standard and widen the application of social value to more operational functions.

I'm looking forward to growing our collaboration with colleagues, customers, the rail industry and beyond so customers and communities get the most from every pound invested in rail services.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Angie Doll'.

Angie Doll
Chief Executive Officer
Govia Thameslink Railway

Executive summary

This report describes the progress Govia Thameslink Railway has made between October 2022 and December 2023 in measuring the social value of our specified projects, including 35 with monetised social value.

Social value has various definitions but we use it to mean the wider social, economic or environmental benefits of an activity. We use a mix of qualitative and quantitative data to describe the impacts of a range of projects across the different themes of social value such as the environment, training, safety, or community. One recurring quantitative measure is a monetised estimate of the impact that a project – or more accurately an output or outcome of the project – has made.

These estimates are produced by the Rail Social Value Tool (RSVT). This is the first full year we have used the RSVT and described our social value. We have worked closely with the RSVT's developers, the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB), Network Rail and Loop, alongside others in the industry as it's an emerging discipline and we are learning all the time. While we also report on projects with just qualitative data, we selected and reported 35 initiatives for measuring monetary value through the RSVT.

Our total reported monetised social value for the whole reporting period from October 2022 to December 2023 is around £480million.

The dominant areas of social value return reflect core areas of business activity, for example providing assists to passengers, staff taking life-saving actions, investments through our supply chain and apprenticeships.

Rail accessibility

The single largest contributor to the financial estimate of social value derives from the assistance we provide to our disabled and older customers (£415million). The section on rail accessibility also points to the importance we place on the training to make that happen.

Workforce Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, and Employment Training and Skills

We know the significant benefits of an inclusive culture as an employer, in the community and for our customers. GTR needs a diverse workforce and diversity of thought to tackle innovatively the complex challenges the sector faces.



To the extent that we are a mirror to the wider community, we are better placed to provide the services the community wants, in the way they want them. This is supported by growing awareness of rail as an employer and encouraging applications. As in the previous section, the financial estimates of greatest social value come from activities that support customer services today. Apprenticeships and other training put GTR in a better place to deliver the brilliant basics our customers deserve.

Environmental impact

Rail is the greenest way to travel and we are keen to build on this competitive advantage. Our core focus is attracting more passengers to use our services. However, reductions in energy use (generating social value of over £5 million) are good for the environment and our competitiveness. Investments in better monitoring of energy, water and ancillary vehicles will, in the coming years, produce demonstrably better resource efficiency and social value.

Safety, health and wellbeing

Safety of staff and passengers will always be our first priority. With a powerful case study, the report shows how investment in staff training (completed by 70% of staff in the period) contributed to over 300 life saving interventions. Moreover, £550,000 of social value generated by our trauma risk management programme underlines the priority we give to colleagues' wellbeing, who too often have to confront the sharpest of trauma within our communities.

Community and charity, educational attainment, and economic impact

Our Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) team remains an engine of social value across the organisation. They create and direct partnerships to strengthen our communities. With Community Rail and charity partners, the projects undertaken by the CSR team encourage community action, like volunteering, educational attainment and increasing access to rail. The new Your Station Your Community projects are built on previous partnerships with groups like Autism Bedfordshire, and new ones. While the Your Station Your Community projects finish in 2024, we highlight two in this report: a programme to find Missing People; and, a project to create more social opportunities for people with autism (estimated at £3.6 million social value). These early results bear out our confidence that these new partnerships will contribute substantially to our communities.



Supply chain capacity

We are adapting our systems to better measure, and ultimately increase, social value derived from our relationships and investments with suppliers. It benefits our communities and the quality and range of services. We reviewed our systems to report on the award of contracts to small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and Voluntary and Charity organisations. In 2023, we spent £28 million across 220 such organisations. This represents three in five of our suppliers and two percent of spend.

2024

Looking to 2024, we have three substantial structural focuses to embed social value. Firstly, we will use the BSI social value standard to quality assure our processes and demonstrate improvements in outputs. Secondly, we will reflect social value criteria in selected tenders, policies and our standard tender questionnaire. Thirdly, we will integrate social value measurements into selected large-scale operational projects. Together, these changes will be good progress towards the goal of the Go-Ahead CEO, Miguel Parras, that, "in every decision we make, whether it's in a railway station, an office or in the boardroom, it's crucial that we consider the environment".



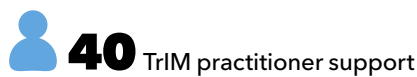
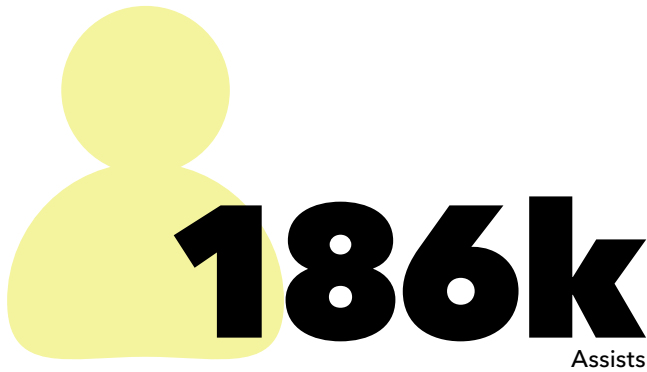
Summary charts

The chart below reflects the distribution of RSVT estimates of social value across the common social impact framework categories.

£419m
Rail accessibility

- **£28m** Supply chain capacity
- **£18m** Employment, training and skills
- **£5m** Environmental
- **£4m** Educational attainment
- **£3m** Safety, health and wellbeing
- **£2m** Community and charity
- **£1m** Economic impact
- **£411k** Workforce equality, diversity and inclusion

Number of measured beneficiaries per project



Charts in the report are illustrative and are not to scale.



Social Value: an emerging discipline

Social value has various definitions, we use it to mean the wider social, economic or environmental benefits of an activity. For example, GTR runs two projects where people in the community can get training on employability skills. This has social benefit – education – and an economic benefit – increasing the prospect of finding a job. But, assessing social value is an emerging discipline and such benefits can be difficult to measure.

So, in this report we use a mixture of evidence. Qualitative evidence includes description, case studies and quotes. Quantitative evidence is based on counts, such as the number of people who have benefited or tons of carbon emissions saved. Another common quantitative measure estimates the equivalent financial impact that a project – or more accurately an output or outcome of the project – has made. These estimates are produced by the Rail Social Value Tool (RSVT). The RSVT is an online tool to forecast, monitor and measure the social value of a specific activity. It has been developed by Network Rail, RSSB and Loop, a leading social value consultancy.

As far as possible the RSVT estimates have been developed alongside standards Government uses to “appraise policies, programmes and projects”, and other industry standards. With changes to evidence or how a benefit is defined, these estimates will, and should, fluctuate.

Measuring social value in this way is a new process for GTR. It supports our purpose to bring people together and help communities thrive. Across the whole reporting period, more GTR colleagues and functions understood the business plan requirement and the relevance of social value to their function. We rolled out the social value tool by prioritising the schemes for which data was readily available.

As part of our commitments to the Department for Transport (DfT), this report covers the period of October 2022 and December 2023. Some of the activities we describe will cover this whole period, some will have occurred for a shorter period within it. We have explained where this occurs with each project.

The report is broken into sections that reflect different themes of the Common Social Impact Framework. Naturally, the benefits of any project can cut across several of these themes so we have grouped them where appropriate. Similarly, a project reported in the community section can have an accessibility benefit.



Rail accessibility

GTR is fully committed to creating a more accessible and inclusive railway. We want all our customers to have the confidence to travel on our network.

Of particular note, this section includes a financial estimate of the social value of the assistance our colleagues provide to disabled and older customers, the largest of any element in this report. It also describes the training provided so we can meet the commitments of our Accessible Travel Policy, the single largest training programme within this report.

While the monetised value of accessibility projects is centred on passenger assistance, other projects inform how that assistance is provided

£415m

Assists

- **£858k** Staff disability awareness training
- **£616k** Try-a-train
- **£160k** AAP Consultations
- **£85k** Aira app

Number of measured beneficiaries per project

186k

Assists

- **5k** Disability awareness training
- **210** Try-a-train
- **185** Dementia Friends
- **40** Aira app



Team member John Francis is ready to assist passenger Gio Strawbridge at Downham Market

Between October 2022 and December 2023, GTR provided 186,272 successful booked and recorded assists (estimated social value of £415 million) to passengers requiring assistance. This testifies to the personal and professional commitment colleagues provide to all customers. Despite this huge number of successes, we know that our service, systems and infrastructure also fall short on occasion. We are focused on not letting a single customer down through our 'Zero Failed Assist' approach.

During the reporting period, GTR extended the roll out of Mobile Assistance Teams to 30 new unstaffed or partially staffed stations. They now cover 51 stations across the network. Between October 2022 and December 2023, the teams covered stations at Sandy, Biggleswade, Arlesey, Downham Market, Littleport, Watlington, Welwyn North, Bayford, Watton-at-Stone, Hadley Wood, Welham Green, Cuffley, Belmont, Carshalton Beeches, Epsom Downs, Ewell East, Hackbridge, Kingswood, Tadworth, Tattenham Corner, Waddon, Chipstead, Coulsdon Town, Haydons Road, Kenley, Mitcham Eastfields, Mitcham Junction, Reedham, Whyteleafe and Whyteleafe South.

A vital ingredient to the zero failed assists goal is the disability awareness training provided to all staff, part of our Accessible Travel Policy. With many colleagues' training successfully completed, the reporting period captures the end of the training roll out and a move to focus on refresher courses and new starters. Over 5,000 people – 70% of the company – did the training (estimated value of £850,000) in the reporting period.



GTR's Access Advisory Panel (AAP) provides ongoing advice and insight, initiating improvements, reviewing proposals and evaluating GTR's performance in all aspects of accessible travel. We held regular meetings through 2023 with the AAP, returning a value of £160,000. This is in addition to ad-hoc conversations throughout the year, which have not been factored into the RSVT.

GTR published a series of 'Easy' guides in 2023. The Easy Ticket Guide and Easy Train Travel Guide aimed to provide autistic people, and those with learning disabilities, practical travel advice. The guides were co-designed with the Grace Eyre charity and AAP member, Josh Puglia. Josh explained: "If it's really busy and there's a queue behind me at the ticket office or it's noisy then it makes me really anxious and I can feel overwhelmed. This guide will help others with autism see how they too can buy tickets and travel by train. And, hopefully, World Autism Acceptance Week will help other people understand my autism and give me the space that I sometimes need." Another example of the AAP's insight was the Aira app trial. This initiative has also been supported by the Thomas Pocklington Trust and the Sight Loss Councils (see case study below).



For the first time, we ran an event to show adults with learning disabilities how to make a journey using both bus and train, working with sister company Brighton and Hove Buses and the Grace Eyre charity. This was a development of our well-established Try A Train programme. Try A Train aims to build independence and confidence in using rail services. They are aimed at disabled people (both visible and nonvisible disabilities) and those who may encounter other barriers to travelling e.g. senior citizens or non-English speakers. The events are always tailored to the group's specific needs and cover aspects such as how to navigate stations, to travel safely, get assistance and ticketing. Across the reporting period, there were 20 such sessions and 175 people attended (with an equivalent of £616,000 of social value). Other new uses of Try A Train included a partnership with Whizz Kidz and the ongoing partnership with the Sight Loss Council, below.



Members of the Sight Loss Councils joined GTR Accessibility Manager Antony Merlyn to trial the Try A Train scheme adapted to blind and partially sighted people

GTR partnered with the Alzheimer's Society to help employees understand dementia, and how to offer assistance. 185 colleagues signed up to become a dementia friend as a result of this initiative.

Case study

Using technology to improve passenger assistance

GTR is trialling the Aira app

This technology connects blind and partially sighted people to a remote advisor able to use the passenger's smartphone camera to guide them around a station or member of staff. The trial at Stevenage, Blackfriars, East Croydon and Brighton stations launched in June and is free to customers. It's so far assisted 35 people with an estimated social value of £78,000.

Bedfordshire Sight Loss Council volunteer, Paul Day, is a retired RNIB advice worker from Biggleswade and praised the app: "For me it's complementing what I am already doing with my cane, finding the exact location of somewhere or navigating me through a very busy environment."

He said the app could lead him to a member of staff. "The station staff are very well trained. It's not just the assistance they offer but the way they provide it; they are very empowering. They will introduce themselves and ask what they can do to help and they do it in a very polite and natural way."

"We believe everyone should be able to travel independently and safely, and live the lives they want to lead. We are proud of our ongoing work with transport providers to make this happen through developing new ways of working and trialling new apps."

Sam Leftwich

Sight Loss Council Engagement Manager



Workforce equality, diversity and inclusion, and employment training and skills

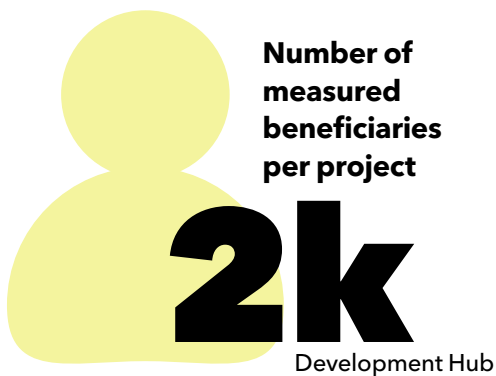
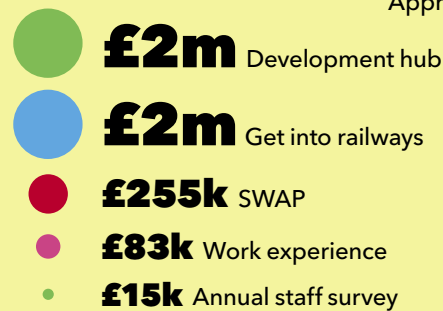
We recognise the significant benefits of an inclusive culture as an employer, in the community and for our customers.

GTR needs a diverse workforce and diversity of thought to tackle innovatively the complex challenges the sector faces. This section focuses on steps we are taking towards a more inclusive culture, including better promoting recruitment opportunities, as well as how we invest in our people. As in the previous section, estimates of monetised social value underline the community benefit of operational activities.

New routes of recruitment raise awareness of railway careers but investment in training unlocks our potential for customers today

£14m

Apprenticeships





Workforce equality, diversity and inclusion

In October 2022, we were proud to become the first transport operator to secure the National Equality Standard. It is the UK's leading diversity assessment framework which was developed by government alongside Ernst and Young (EY). Building on this achievement, we began an independent review of our organisational culture. 1,600 colleagues responded to a survey run by EY on our organisational culture. EY ran 18 focus groups to explore the findings with suggestions emerging on clearer goals, policies and learning and development. The review's recommendations and subsequent actions will report in 2024. Another improvement following the National Equality Standard was our Respect @ Work e-learning module. It sets expectations for an inclusive organisation – and was introduced to management and administrative staff in December 2023.

Our annual staff survey, Your View, was run in Autumn 2022 and Autumn 2023, with the net promoter score – colleagues that would recommend a friend or family member to join GTR – rising from 54% to 55%. To encourage participation, we offer a donation to charity for every completed survey, raising almost £15,000 over the two editions. Participation in the survey has increased from 47% to 52% since 2021.

Employability and diverse recruitment

A stronger culture is complemented by initiatives to diversify recruitment, such as work experience programmes. We also support people to develop the professional skills and appetite to pursue roles in rail and customer service.

Our partnership with Prince's Trust on the Get Into Railways programme began in 2014. In the whole reporting period, we ran two further programmes with some twenty five people benefitting from taster sessions, training and interview support. Three people were recruited from the first cohort and, so far, one person has been recruited in the cohort run in December 2023. In total, the project had an estimated social value of £1.9 million. This is largely due to the ongoing employment of almost 60 Get Into Railways graduates through the period. Get Into Railways participants are typically chosen from young people at risk of economic exclusion or who had not previously considered a career in rail. We cannot estimate the social value to participants of the programme who were not recruited but who left with greater training, knowledge and confidence to enhance their prospects. See more in our case study.



Wioletta Kuszyk recently qualified as a train driver after a career swap at 39

Similarly, we ran our fourth sector-based academy work programme (SWAP) in the period, with eight people participating and two people being recruited. It has similar goals as Get Into Railways. But the SWAP serves communities along the South Coast, and is open to all ages over 8 years old. The SWAP is a partnership between GTR, East Sussex College and local Jobcentre Plus centres. Over the life of the programme, 40 jobseekers gained new skills from the programme and six participants continue to work with us. Our fifth SWAP was launched at the time of writing, based at the Lewes campus of East Sussex College, and will feature in next year's report.

21 young people participated in our work experience programme in the spring and summer of 2023, generating an estimated £83,000 of social value. Aimed at 14-18 year olds, we open doors to our offices, engineering sheds, stations and depots to show the range of skills needed in the rail industry, and the future they can shape.

Our Careers Returners programme in 2023 aimed to diversify the talent applying to our driver apprenticeships. Career Returners targeted women who'd been absent from work for at least eighteen months. The scheme encouraged five women – from 1,000 initial applicants – to join Southern's driver apprenticeships programme. They benefited from an additional fifteen hours of additional coaching across five sessions to support their return to work. The RSVT estimate of social value is captured within the wider apprenticeship measure.



"I originally went to university to study law, but a year into the degree, I realised it wasn't for me. I was working as a bartender in London and felt at a crossroads with my future, I didn't know where to go next; I just knew I wanted a rewarding career. If it wasn't for the 'Get into Railways' scheme, I probably wouldn't have ever considered working in this industry. It really helped to propel me into a fulfilling career, and I'd recommend it to anyone."

Ephraim Tshola

○ Case study

Our employability programmes continue to unearth talent

GTR started working with the Prince's Trust back in 2014 to add to the charity's 'Get Into' offering of courses.

The courses are completely free and support young people into work, no matter their background or experience.

The Get into Railways programme takes place over a four-week period, which consists of classroom learning and hands on field-based experience. Individuals are also supported with pastoral and financial wrap-around care provided by The Prince's Trust.

Candidates joining Get Into Railways take part in a taster day at GTR, followed by an induction into the business before embarking on the four-week programme. As part of the experience, each candidate has the opportunity to carry out a mock interview, which mimics the questions and formalities of a real job interview at GTR. Many candidates that come through Get Into Railways have never sat in a formal interview, so this part of the course really helps to build confidence of the individuals and prepare them for what is expected when they come to do the interview for real.

Thanks to a successful long-term relationship, just over 200 people have taken part in the programme at GTR across nearly 20 different cohorts. Just under 30% are still with GTR, in roles including train conductor, customer service, train dispatch, revenue protection, IT and on-board supervisor.

Ephraim Tshola was 24 when he started working for Southern Rail after impressing managers through the Get into Railway's programme.

"Candidates that come to the Prince's Trust are often from ethnically and socially diverse backgrounds, who wouldn't normally find their way to the railway through the traditional avenues. It's a fantastic way to find talented and motivated individuals and this partnership has brought some stellar talent into the business over the years. These are young people who add so much value through their diverse skills and perspectives. It's an award-winning programme for a reason."

Dante Frederick

GTR's Diversity and Inclusion Partner

○ Case study

“This job changed my life”

Gateline Assistant Paul Bull, 62, joined the team at Barnham station a year ago. His route into GTR was through a ‘sector-based work academy programme’ (SWAP).

In partnership with East Sussex College and the local Jobcentre Plus, the SWAP provided a three-week pre-employment course which included interview skills, shadowing staff at Chichester station and a guaranteed job interview with Southern.

Paul said: “They taught us how to prepare for an interview and I was happy to be one of two people who were taken on, out of around 10 on the course.”

“This job changed my life. I hadn’t worked full time for a while and my mental health had not been good. I just felt

like I needed a break. I worked as a car park steward in the summer, and I enjoyed meeting people so when I was told about the course aimed at a job in the railways, I thought it would be interesting. It would be sociable.”

Paul is pleased to share his success with his daughter and his baby granddaughter. He says: “We have a good bond – she lives local to me, and she can see the difference this has made.”

When asked what he thinks he’ll do in future he says: “I love the job – I’ll probably still be here when I am 75.”



“The job is perfect for me. I’m cheerful with people as they go through, and I’m happy to help with whatever they might need.”

Paul Bull

Professional development

While improving recruitment is vital to the future performance of GTR, training existing staff is essential for today.

Apprenticeships give colleagues the opportunity to develop their careers at GTR. We offer 14 high-quality apprenticeships covering areas such as customer services, engineering, management, train driving and business administration covering qualification levels 2–7. At the end of 2023, over 500 colleagues were on an apprenticeship with us, with the whole programme achieving an equivalent of £13.6 million of social value.

For GTR, newly trained colleagues ensure that we meet critical standards and we are more strongly placed to serve our customers. More than a third of our 176 new apprentices since January 2023 were women. This includes the five trainee drivers entered through the Career Returners programme.

Training need not always be an apprenticeship to have a big impact for our customers. GTR colleagues benefit from a variety of other training opportunities. These include mentoring and coaching, classroom or virtual classroom training and on-line resources.

Our mentoring and coaching programmes typically involve four to eight 90-minute monthly meetings aimed at helping people develop into a new role or more broadly reach their potential. 45 new mentors were trained in 2023, joining GTR's mentoring community spread throughout the organisation.

The Development Hub is an online learning platform including mandatory and self-led training. It ranges from short-and-sweet e-briefings, to the online modules of the Tutorial Programme and the deeper Certificate Programmes. Over the whole reporting period, an equivalent of 7,500 continuous professional development (CPD) hours were logged on CPD accredited courses on this system alone with over 2,000 people using the system in each of the last three quarters of 2023. While this doesn't account for all the training colleagues have completed, this measure online generated an equivalent of £1.6 million in social value.

GTR's Learning Centre focuses on people and management skills and guides colleagues to the support that is right for them. Further updated throughout 2023, it signposts internal and external resources like e-learning modules, classroom learning, reading and podcasts.



Case study

Apprenticeships – “Mind the opening doors”



Rezwana Khanom, 30, started training to become a driver through Southern's apprenticeships scheme in November 2022.

"Prior to joining the railway, I had heard positive things about career opportunities in the industry, so I was keen to try it out for myself. I initially joined London Underground to work in customer service in 2017 and then got experience with MTR Elizabeth Line in the ticket office. I quickly set my sights on becoming a train driver because I want more women to be visible in these types of roles, so what better way to make a change than becoming part of it yourself!

"The first six months of the course is classroom-based and I feel like I've learnt so much already. We cover lots of topics, such as how to respond in an emergency, which is really important as anything could happen when you're in control of the train. We also have to learn the rulebook cover to cover off-by-heart, which is pretty daunting because it's not a light read!

"It's great to be going through the driver apprenticeships programme with others because there's lots to get your head around, so it's nice that we have each other to lean on."

"I couldn't recommend apprenticeships enough and I always encourage people, including my younger brothers, to think about doing one. If there's a big part of you that wants to build a long-term career, or wants a taste of that sector, then an apprenticeship gives you a huge opportunity to do that."

Rezwana Khanom

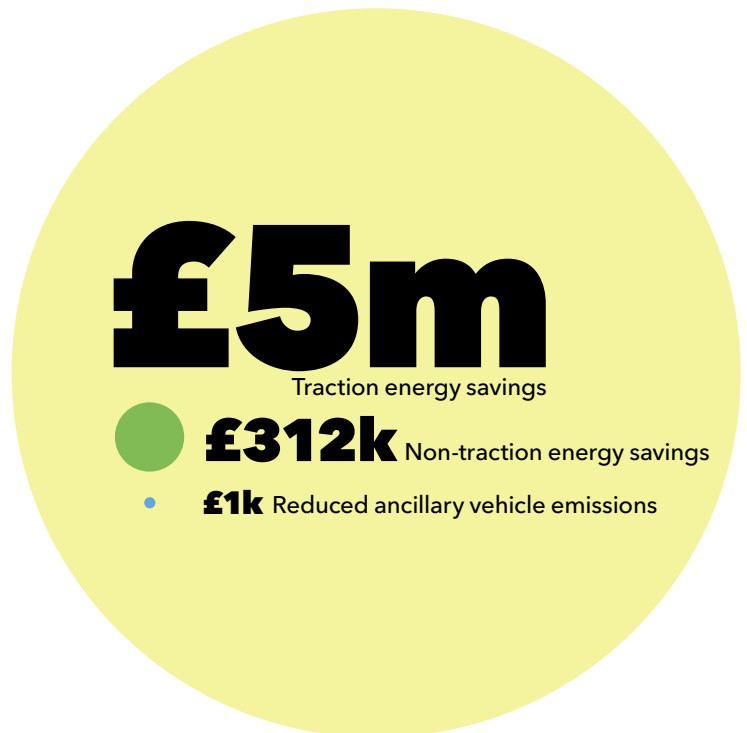
Environmental impact

Rail is the most sustainable way to travel, responsible for just 1.4% of the UK's transport carbon emissions in 2021.

This section shows our own commitment to produce net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and how we are taking a holistic approach to sustainability aiming to reduce negative impacts, like emissions and waste, and maximise its benefit in society and the natural environment, such as biodiversity and water use.

We can have our biggest impact on the environment by encouraging more people to use our services more often. We were pleased to serve 17.5% more passenger journeys in the year to September 2023 than in the previous twelve month period, despite ongoing industrial action.

Measured environmental projects focused on energy reductions and carbon savings October 2022–March 2023



Using energy more efficiently

In the period, we developed our Decarbonisation Roadmap, published early in 2024. This section describes steps we are taking towards net zero, notably by reducing energy use, improving efficiency and installing renewables.

GTR produced amongst the lowest of emissions per vehicle or passenger in the sector, in the year to March 2023. GTR produced 20.7 grams CO₂e by passenger kilometre, compared to an industry average of 33.0 grammes CO₂e, a 41% reduction on the previous year.

In the six months from October 2022 to March 2023, GTR reduced its traction energy greenhouse gases by an equivalent of 21,000 tonnes (CO₂e) generating an equivalent social value of £5 million. Data for the final three quarters of 2023 will be published in the next report.

Across the 12 months to March 2023, emissions across GTR's fleet (per passenger vehicle kilometre) fell by 9%. The electric fleet emissions (per passenger vehicle kilometre) are 9% lower than the average. In May 2023, GTR replaced its 50 year old Class 313 trains with newer and more efficient trains. The diesel fleet emissions are 8% higher than average, reflecting their very limited use on the network.

We were pleased to announce in 2023 the extension of our partnership with Energy Garden to install 6,000 solar panels on shed roofs at Bedford, Selhurst and Three Bridges depots (see case study). Building on this partnership and previous iconic projects at Blackfriars and Denmark Hill, GTR and Network Rail are assessing options for further renewable energy installations across the estate.

Monitoring our environmental impact

Increasing the use of live data across the business improves the efficiency of our operations, saving money and reducing our operations' effect on the environment.

We rolled out telematics to one third of our ancillary fleet of cars and light goods vehicles as part of a multi-year programme to increase the efficiency of our ancillary fleet. It will also inform the roll out of hybrid or zero emission replacements. Our first electric car joined the fleet towards the end of 2023. Replacing the 9,000km driven by a conventionally-powered vehicle, the RSVT indicates a social value of £910.

In a project due to complete by 2025, a new generation of data loggers continue to be rolled out across our sites to measure water use, identify leaks and allocate responsibilities.

GTR has installed gas and electricity smart meters across almost all of its sites. In future, this will enable swifter action to benchmark and reduce use.

GTR's reduction in non-traction energy use between October 2022 and March 2023 (compared to the same period in the previous year) prevented the equivalent of 1,260 tonnes CO₂e (with a social value of £312,000). Data for the remaining three quarters of 2023 will be published in our next report. Our non-traction electricity is provided via green energy tariffs. We have decided against reporting all non-traction energy as a carbon saving as it would encourage energy use. In 2023, we also began a programme to identify locations where there are opportunities to replace conventional gas usage, such as where use is minimal or only heats water.





Waste

GTR joined a partnership with Marine Conservation Society to clean a 100 metre stretch of Brighton beach as part of its litter survey. Clare Trotman of MSC said:

"We wouldn't be able to do the work we do at the Marine Conservation Society without the support of our volunteers heading out to the coast to collect vital information on what's polluting our seas. A massive thank you to the Thameslink team for joining this year's Great British Beach Clean and protecting our coasts and sea from pollution."

Biodiversity

GTR commissioned London Wildlife Trust Consultancy to survey the ecology at Shoreham, Battersea, Luton Airport Parkway and Hertford North. GTR will review its recommendations, identifying how it can improve local biodiversity. Alongside this project GTR installed 35 Homes for Nature in 2023, 20 in partnership with the Bee Friendly Trust. The Homes for Nature ranged from bug hotels and log piles to mini meadows and hedgerows.



○ Case study

Solar panel partnership accelerates GTR towards a net zero future

The trial of GTR's partnership with Energy Garden at Streatham Hill depot exceeded expectations in year one.

In 2023 GTR announced the expansion of its partnership, committing to install 6,000 solar panels on depot roofs at Bedford, Selhurst and Three Bridges. These new projects are expected to generate 42.6 gigawatt per hour (GWh) of electricity over 20 years (saving 9,000 tonnes of CO₂e). GTR takes half of the energy generated, with the remainder sold to other businesses, and profits invested in community development.

"The partnership between GTR and Energy Garden has changed the UK railway for ever."

Agamemnon Otero
Founder and CEO of Energy Garden

Safety, health and wellbeing

We put safety at the heart of everything we do. Our Zero Harm strategy reflects the needs of colleagues, customers and vulnerable people in our communities.

Measured and monetised social value reflects priority placed on initiatives to support safety and health



ZERO HARM

Be safe. Feel safe. Travel safe.

Number of measured beneficiaries per project



Suicide

Our long-term partnership with the Samaritans underlines the sad reality of suicide on our railways. GTR takes a variety of approaches to reduce incidents. We offer a Samaritans course on Managing Suicidal Contacts and 402 people participated between October 2022 and December 2023, estimated to have £67,000 of social value (see case study).

In a survey carried out six months after the training 95% of respondents said the course had increased their confidence in engaging with potentially suicidal people, as more than one in five had done. Over the whole period, staff reported 305 such interventions. We have not included the monetised value in our reporting.

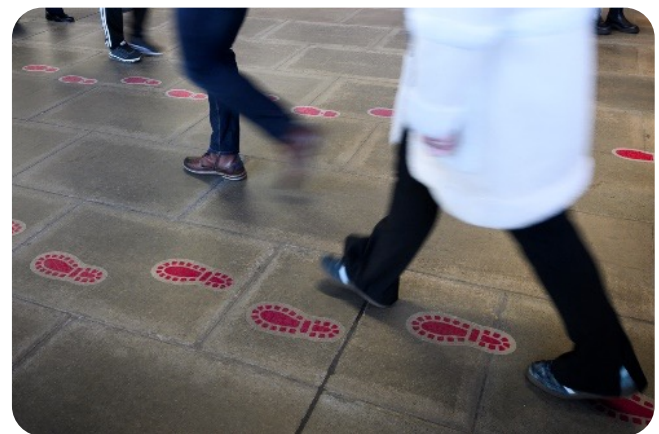
Each incident can have a substantial effect on the people involved. This is why we offer support through our Trauma Risk Management (TRiM) programme and Care First. 40 people used the TRiM service over the whole reporting period. Care First is an external employee assistance programme which helps people manage home- or work-related issues. Between September 2022 and August 2023, there were 100 new cases and 450 structured sessions across phone, video and in person. Given the confidential nature of both of these interventions, it's not possible to describe the outcomes but the intent is to support staff welfare and mental health. These two programmes generated an estimated social value of £550,000.

Staff wellbeing

Our Good to Know and On Track roadshows take health checks – and advice on pensions, IT, uniforms – to sites across the network. Since October there were Good to Know Roadshows at Finsbury Park (November 22), Hitchin (March 23), St Albans (June 23), Kings Cross (October 23). At our King's Cross event alone, 104 people attended and 24 medicals were carried out (equivalent social value of £62,000). These sessions and other safety and health features appeared on average once every other day in the all staff bulletin, the Daily Rail, gaining 48,000 views.

Community Action

GTR ran a three month campaign with Missing People, funded through the Your Station, Your Community fund, until January 2024 to raise awareness of people who are considered long-term missing. It aimed to engage the customers who use GTR's WiFi networks each week in the search for missing people. Three million people saw the people on WiFi, there was a 78% increase in the number of visits to the Missing People website and a 5% increase in calls from areas served by GTR. Paul Joseph, Head of Helpline at Missing People: "Our collaborative campaign with our brilliant partner GTR was both innovative and highly impactful."



Case study

“Some of the best training I’ve ever had”



Paul Boylin, East Croydon Platform team leader recalls...

“A couple of months ago, I was on shift and my colleague alerted me to a woman who was clearly in distress in one of the toilets. After realising she was attempting to cause herself serious harm, I made the decision to approach and intervene. She was agitated and wanted to be left alone, so I made sure I spoke to her softly and calmly and asked if she was OK.”

Paul noticed that the woman was wearing a heavy metal t-shirt and started a conversation about music to help break her out of that negative mental state by chatting about a common interest.

“After 20 minutes of talking, she started to calm down. At this point, a colleague of mine had arrived with a first aid kit. While I was helping her, she apologised that I had to see this and explained that sometimes she has some down days. I tried to reassure her and kept chatting to her before the paramedics arrived and took over.”

“I’ve worked in the rail industry for 20 years and the [Managing Suicidal Contacts] training provided by the company and the Samaritans was some of the best I’ve received.

“It teaches you the signs to watch out for if someone is feeling suicidal and how to safely intervene. It’s important that we look out for each other. A simple question or conversation could be enough to save someone’s life.”

Paul Boylin

East Croydon Platform team leader

Community and charity, educational attainment and economic impact

The three of the RSVT themes above have been predominantly measured in projects managed by our Corporate Social Responsibility team with Community Rail Partners and charity partners.

Measured monetised social value for community projects

The Go-Learn (SCRIP) programme is the biggest contributor to monetised social value among our community projects

£8m
Go-Learn (SCRIP)

£4m
Autism Beds

£1m SCRIP

£126k Beds & Herts CRP

£121k Meldreth, Shepreth & Foxton CRP

£112k Darent Valley

£231k Bike recycling schemes

£207k Aldingbourne Trust

£49k Luton Town FC

£47k Stevenage FC

Number of measured beneficiaries per project

4k

Go-Learn (SCRIP)

437 Aldingbourne Trust

300 Autism Beds

200 Wonderpass

200 Luton Town

200 Stevenage

60 Bike recycling



Members from South Albans Signal Box Museum gathered to celebrate the 50th anniversary

Community Rail Partners (CRPs)

Volunteers donated almost 14,000 hours with the Southeast Communities Rail Partnership (SCRP) – equivalent to 133 days each month of the reporting period. The SCRP volunteering was spread across its large network of lines: Sussex Down, Sussex Coast, Arun Valley, Uckfield to East Grinstead, Tonbridge to Reigate and the Marshlink. This has an estimated social value of almost £200,000. The volunteering is unlocked by line officers funded by GTR (which the RSVT estimates generates £1 million of social value).

A further element of our collaboration with SCRCP is the Go-Learn project. Southern's Rail Enforcement officers teach Year 6 pupils about railway safety as part of a wider Junior Citizen event. They can also benefit from classroom workshops that help them use timetables and maps, and a station visit and train ride. Across the whole reporting period, 1,334 children benefited from activities that increase pupils access and almost 4,000 benefited from school safety talks, though they were shorter than the 10 hours assumed by the RSVT.

We also worked closely with three further CRPs on our network, Bed and Herts, Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton and Darent Valley. Our investment also supported employment of line officers generating over £100,000 each, according to the RSVT.

Bed and Herts CRP ran an event to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the modernisation of St Albans City station with new a new mural, nameplate and photo exhibition. Local groups supported adults with additional needs also participated to produce new 'fantasy' station names.

"This is an excellent example of how Community Rail brings together various local stakeholders, Station Friends and staff in an event providing items of interest at the railway station that we hope will be appreciated by many other visitors."

Andy Buckley

Line Officer Beds and Herts CRP



Sarah Grove of the Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton CRP brought together a coalition to turn an underpass plagued by antisocial behaviour into the Meldreth Wonderpass. Together with the Police and Crime Commissioner, councils and the Community Rail Development Fund, Grove's work led to the refurbished Wonderpass being opened in May. Youth engagement was at the heart of the project and 100 young people participated in six days of painting in Easter, joined by a further 100 from across the community. The project was celebrated locally, has been shortlisted for a Community Rail Award, and – ten months later – the new artwork had not been vandalised.

Station Partners

Station volunteers work with us help improve individual stations. They provide wonderful opportunities to meet new people, form friendships, tackle loneliness and learn new skills.

Station partners undertook a vast range of projects, examples include:

- Planting and gardening
- Litter-picking
- Reporting signs of trespass or vandalism
- Providing support for special projects or events
- Transforming spaces into colourful works of art

We work with around 120 fantastic station partners across our network ranging from station cafés, local charities (such as the Aldingbourne Trust in the case study), Community Rail Partnerships, local businesses, local Society Groups, Women's Institutes and enthusiastic individuals.

Restoring abandoned bikes

GTR continued its innovative bike partnerships where abandoned bikes are given to charity partners to train people to fix bikes and bring them back into use. 20 people participated with Sustrans. 19 ex-offenders participated in Onwards and Upwards' programme in Lambeth and were able to begin an apprenticeship. Five volunteers participated with Community Cycleworks in Southwark. Twelve people joined Stonepillows' programme in Chichester, gaining useful employability training.

The schemes were a relatively smaller component of GTR's total CSR activity in the whole reporting period than in the six months of 2022. However the total value of donations increased (£10,600k of value compared to £9,200k) and more people benefited from training (61 compared to 57). Measured monetised social value was £231,000.



We teamed up with Stevenage FC and its charity foundation in December 2022 to organise a toy donation drive

Your Station, Your Community

Our 'Your Station, Your Community' Improvement Fund supports local groups, charities, our customers, and the communities on our line of route.

The fund supports causes important to local communities and to us. They reflected our CSR strategy key themes: mental health, education, and employability skills amongst marginalised groups, as well as diversity and inclusion and environmental sustainability.

2023 was the grant's first year and we funded 19 projects with a grant value of £338,818. The projects run until March 2024 and with a variety of positive benefits expected, we are excited to share further news on these next year.

GTR have worked with Autism Bedfordshire for a number of years, holding Try A Train days and station planning days with people with autism in Bedford. In 2023 we provided them with a CCIF grant to run daytime and evening social and wellbeing groups to meet the growing demand from autistic young people and adults looking for more structure and social opportunities in their lives.

In the first nine months alone, the grant funded 84 social and wellbeing group events, 60 walking and exercise sessions supporting over 300 people with autism in the area. The groups provided opportunities for autistic young people and adults to socialise and exercise regularly with the support of trained staff, to develop social skills and healthy lifestyles and gain confidence and self-esteem independently from their family unit. 91% of the participants reported that the sessions had helped them feel less isolated, improved their self-esteem and reduced their stress levels and generated a social value of £3,578,892.

Football club partnerships

The partnership with Luton Football Club's Academy generated an estimated £49,000 of social value by providing tickets to allow their Academy players to travel to the training academy. The travel also enabled them to study towards a BTEC in sports science, worth over £100,000 of social value. Our investment plays a small – but important – role in that achievement. 21 members of Stevenage Football Club Academy also benefited from free travel, equivalent to £47,000 of social value, to sporting and education activities. Reported benefit from our football club partnerships fell for two reasons. Participation in the Stevenage scheme fell by a quarter and we no longer attribute the social value of the training to GTR.

In addition to the Academy tickets, we work with the clubs on community activities and link with their charities of the year. For instance, we hosted station collections for Luton charity NOAH and we joined Stevenage FC players at the Hospice for a Christmas fundraiser.

Case study

Aldingbourne Trust

In 2023, the Aldingbourne Trust partnership delivered an equivalent of £207,000 of social value, largely from the almost 12,000 volunteers hours it delivers.

Other benefits include helping people access the railways and work experience opportunities.

Since 2007, the Aldingbourne Trust has partnered with Southern Railway to implement the "Adopt a Station" project. It aims to beautify 20 railway stations in Sussex and Portsmouth. A team of adults with learning disabilities and autism, supported by volunteers create and maintain stunning floral displays, hanging baskets, and window boxes at these stations.

The team includes people like Ben Skeel. Over 13 years, Ben's confidence has grown alongside his responsibilities. He now covers all stations, regularly represents the Aldingbourne Trust at the Arun Valley Line Meetings, helps new team members settle and reports any issues to the station team.



"Ben has acquired valuable life and work skills such as teamwork, time management, independent travel, and a strong work ethic. These skills have not only improved his employability but have also significantly enhanced his overall quality of life. Ben's story exemplifies the positive influence community partnerships can have on individuals with learning disabilities and autism."

Aldingbourne Trust



Social Value Plan 2024

The dominant areas of reported social value return reflect core areas of business activity, for example providing assists to passengers, staff taking life-saving actions, investments through our supply chain and apprenticeship training. Much more is left unreported; our biggest contribution to social value is our core service. But it makes clear the important role of the railway in adding value to communities and helping them thrive.

There are three substantial structural focuses for 2024/25. Firstly, we have invested in the BSI social value standard and are aiming to achieve it by March 2025. Alongside our existing active participation in the RSSB social value community, this will help ensure that our understanding, application and evaluation of social value is robust. It will help ensure best practice management and durable improvement in outputs.

Secondly, we will reflect social value criteria in selected tenders, policies and our standard questionnaire, as well as developing our engagement with SMEs. Thirdly, we will integrate social value measurements into selected large-scale operational projects. Together, these changes will be good progress towards the goal of the Go-Ahead CEO, Miguel Parras, that, "in every decision we make, whether it's in a railway station, an office or in the boardroom, it's crucial that we consider the environment".

At the beginning of 2024 GTR agreed a new Corporate Social Responsibility strategy built around GTR's purpose of 'bringing people together and helping our communities thrive'. Social value is at its centre. Its four pillars are: Positive mental health, diversity and inclusion, employability and confidence building, and environmental sustainability.

We will engage partners more deeply in our social value reporting. Evaluating projects' impact will support partners' ability to raise external funding or in-kind support so that public investment in such projects goes further.

Further changes are expected to the Rail Social Value Tool with a refresh due in April, including substantial refinements to the monetised values.

We will measure projects based on the annual business plan. For instance, we are planning to include social value measurement within initiatives to reduce anti social behaviour. Other notable community projects anticipated next year include the Talent Foundry, a station take over day with MIND, and encouraging more people to take the train.





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