

2025-26

Community Investment Fund (CIF) Guidelines



Community Investment Fund

This handbook outlines what the Community Investment Fund is and provides guidance for groups who wish to apply. Investing in our local communities is important to us and is imperative to furthering social, economic, and environmental development across our route, supporting our £1.3bn annual social value and economic contribution.

This fund is delivered in partnership with the Department for Transport's Community Rail Strategy:

- **Providing a voice for the community**
- **Promoting sustainable, healthy and accessible travel**
- **Bringing communities together and supporting diversity and inclusion**
- **Supporting social and economic development**

Who can apply for funding?

The Community Investment Fund (CIF) is allocated to Train Operating Companies in England to support the development of Community Rail. Funding is open to not-for-profit organisations including charities, Community Interest Companies (CICs), Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs), parish councils and other community groups.

Key dates and timeline

2025-26 applications are open from **1 April** until **5 May 2025**. Chiltern Railways will then undertake an internal review of the projects according to the criteria set out in this document and we hope to be able to feedback an outcome by **1 July 2025**.

Projects must be delivered before the end of the financial year (**31 March 2026**) and groups will be required to provide regular progress and financial updates on their projects.

Eligible locations

Any groups applying for funding must be located within 5 miles of one a Chiltern Railways managed station on the next page. Successful projects will ideally relate to improvement activity at or within the community next to one of our stations. Projects should also consider incorporating the Railway 200 celebration, with more information available at railway200.co.uk.

A route map is shown on the next page.

Further questions

If you have any further questions about the funding scheme, please contact us on community@chilternrailways.co.uk, or make an application direct through our online form at <https://forms.microsoft.com/e/VvbrLQhrfw>.

Our managed stations

Only projects within 5 miles of Chiltern Railways managed stations are eligible to apply for the Community Investment Fund. A list of these stations is provided below.

- Aylesbury
- Aylesbury Vale Parkway
- Banbury
- Beaconsfield
- Bicester North
- Bicester Village
- Birmingham Moor Street
- Denham
- Denham Golf Club
- Dorridge
- Gerrards Cross
- Great Missenden
- Haddenham & Thame Parkway
- Hatton
- High Wycombe
- Islip
- Kings Sutton
- Lapworth
- Leamington Spa
- Little Kimble
- London Marylebone
- Monks Risborough
- Northolt Park
- Oxford Parkway
- Princes Risborough
- Saunderton
- Seer Green & Jordans
- Solihull
- Stoke Mandeville
- Sudbury & Harrow Road
- Sudbury Hill Harrow
- Warwick
- Warwick Parkway
- Wembley Stadium
- Wendover

Application Guidance

Project value

- Minimum project value: **£5,000**
- Maximum project value: **£20,000**
- Match funding from the application can top up the maximum amount up to **£40,000**

Application deadlines

- Applications open at **00:01** on **7 April 2025**
- Application close at **23:59** on **5 May 2025**
- Applications after this deadline will not be considered or reviewed.

Projects must

- Be within **5 miles** of a Chiltern Railways managed station
- Provide social, economic or environment benefits to local communities
- Contain a detailed plan for delivery including costings of the project
- Organisations applying for funds must have a bank account
- Outline what physical changes would need to take place if involving railway property
- Outline if permission has been granted if the project involves private/public land
- Meet one or more of the project categories listed in this document

Projects must not

- Apply for funds to generate commercial revenue for the bidding organisation, Chiltern Railways or any other third-party organisation
- Seek to top-up or replace existing public spending e.g. for education or healthcare facilities
- Require ongoing financial funding or support beyond 31 March 2026
- Require significant internal support from Chiltern Railways to deliver

Other key information

Groups that provide match funding will be prioritised as this maximises the total social and customer value that can be delivered by each project. **Groups that include the [Railway 200](#) campaign as a theme will also be considered favourably** as part of 200 years since the opening of the first railway in the UK and the world in 2025.

For successful applicants, we will provide a contract that outlines the terms and conditions of receiving the funding. This will include providing regular updates to Chiltern Railways and the Department for Transport on project progress and an overview of expenditure to date.

If a project is not delivered within the timeframe (by 31 March 2026) we reserve the right to recoup unspent funding on behalf of the Department for Transport.

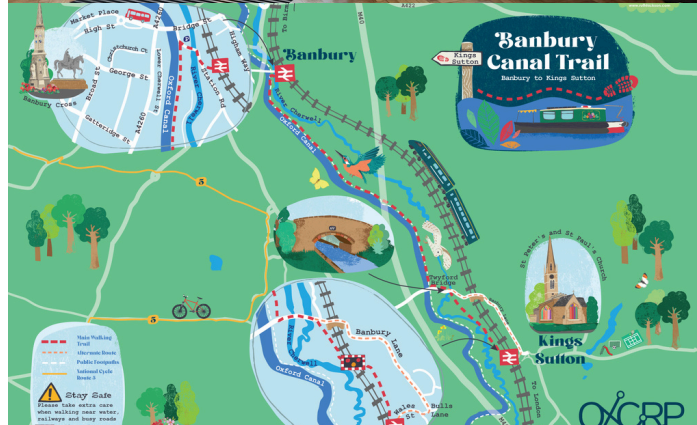
Application Categories

Upgrading Buildings or Station Enhancements

- Applicants can put forward a bid to transform or refresh buildings or assets at Chiltern Railways stations
- Applicants are required to outline how the building or space will be used and how this benefits the local community and customers
- The project could include installations to existing property such as painting, community artwork or installing murals at our stations
- Please note that internal resource to support these schemes is limited within Chiltern Railways, so the bidding group will need to manage the upgrade process with guidance from Chiltern Railways and Network Rail (station owners)
- The group responsible for delivering the project should approach Chiltern Railways to see if any consent is required for the project to take place

Wayfinding, Tourism and Rail Trails

- These projects could include adding wayfinding, artwork or creating routes to make rail travel easier for customers to understand through improved signage
- This could also include promoting local tourist attractions, business groups or community organisations accessible by rail links



Application Categories

Sustainability

- These projects could promote sustainable travel such as cycling and walking connections between our stations and town centres
- They could also include investing in green infrastructure to improve biodiversity, reduce carbon emissions and improve the overall environment for local communities
- This could include gardening or planting projects, converting spaces into new community gardens or nature based educational trips for local people

Education

- The project could contribute to the social and economic development of local communities through the delivery of projects within schools, charities or disadvantaged groups
- For example, school education programmes on rail safety, trips for unrepresented or disadvantaged social groups or the promotion of accessible transport modes

Railway 200

- The project would celebrate 200 years of the railway in the UK and around the world, integrating with at least one of the four key themes of Railway 200:
 - Skills & Education
 - Innovation, Technology & Environment
 - Heritage, Culture & Tourism
 - Celebrating Railway People
- Learn more about Railway 200 on their website at railway200.co.uk



Scoring Criteria

Chiltern Railways will score applications according to the criteria listed below. The maximum score is 5 marks per question (20 maximum score). Please outline how your project meets each of the marking criteria listed below, providing any supporting evidence.

- 1. Deliverability:** The project can be delivered by March 2026. The project has a clear plan and can be managed and delivered by a third party. Chiltern Railways will support with stakeholder management and the process of applying for permissions if the project involves railway property.
- 2. Social value:** The project can detail how they will deliver social benefits to the local community. Examples include providing economic benefits, volunteering or social opportunities and environmental benefits
- 3. Customer value:** The project can detail how they will deliver benefits to our customers locally and across the network. For example, providing customer experience benefits or improving comfort for customers.
- 4. Community support and engagement:** The project has support from a wide range of stakeholders, including local people, Chiltern Railways customers, community groups, charitable organisations or local political or business organisations



2024/25 project examples



Marylebone on Display

Artwork exhibition at Marylebone station created through art therapy sessions attended by women facing homelessness at The Marylebone Project - the UK's largest and oldest women's homelessness service



The Feathers Association

22-metre community mural on the Rossmore Road bridge behind Marylebone station, commissioned by world-renowned DJ and graffiti artist Bunny Bread, a former attendee of Feathers.



The Tree Council

A series of pop-up events and workshops for the public and staff volunteers covering tree planting at Gerrards Cross, with the intention of expanding to cover more of our network in the near future.



BNU / Chiltern Rangers

A collaboration between Chiltern Rangers and Buckinghamshire New University, involving a student-led mural and gardening in and around High Wycombe station.

Chilternrailways

