

Poacher Line Annual Report



2021

Foreword

I would like to welcome you to our 2021 annual report. While the year started off with our third lockdown period we still managed to engage with our communities and complete some amazing projects. Our adopters continue to grow in numbers, and we now have 90 wonderful volunteers looking after our stations with many ideas planned or completed (see page 10). I am extremely blessed to be able to work with such a group of dedicated people who are committed to improving things - thank you!

I particularly enjoyed being able to return to educational settings and work with our young people, whose reliance and positivity have been inspiring during these uncertain times. Together we have created some super artwork and delivered vital Rail Safety presentations (see page 4).

One project I am immensely proud of is the imminent development of The Old Waiting Room at Sleaford station. This is the biggest project to date for the Poacher Line and will see the creation of an education & community room and the entire station being painted in heritage colours. We are ready to start the development in January 2022 (see page 7), and I look forward to reporting on the progress.

Despite the challenges which we all faced in the past year, activities of all kinds continued along the Poacher Line, as you will see in this report. The enthusiasm and energy of our volunteers is unmatched: the success of their endeavours was demonstrated by winning three awards at the annual Community Rail Network event in December.

Our partnership officer Jo, with her boundless energy and enthusiasm, is an inspiration. With our new promotional video and project funding confirmed for innovative projects like the repainting of Sleaford station in heritage colours, we look forward to more activities, improvements and successes in the coming year.

Thank you everyone - stakeholders, funders, station adopters, volunteers - you all contribute to the continued success of the Poacher Line from year to year.

I was delighted to hear that the 2021 annual Community Rail Awards would be a hybrid event with both physical and virtual attendance. We were shortlisted in five categories, and I am pleased to report we were successful in three; congratulations to all the shortlisted and winning entries (see page 14).

I hope you enjoy reading this report as much as I've enjoyed completing the projects. The Community Rail Partnership (CRP) has had another successful year and I would like to say thank you to all the supporters of the Poacher Line who continue to be a huge source of help and guidance to me. You can stay up-to-date and read more about our projects on our website: poacherline.org.uk



Jo Andrews
Community Rail Officer

Jo Andrews



Peter Roberts MBE
Chair, Poacher Line Community Rail Partnership
Chair Emeritus, Community Rail Network

Peter Roberts

The Poacher Line

The Poacher Line is a Community Rail Partnership which runs from the bustling city of Nottingham to the traditional seaside resort of Skegness. It is an accredited line supported by the Department for Transport (DfT) working with East Midlands Railway (EMR) as the main train operating company and other partners. The CRP follows the Community Rail Development Strategy working on the four pillars as follows:

1. Provide a voice for the community
2. Promote sustainable, healthy & accessible travel
3. Bring communities together to support diversity & inclusion
4. Promote social & economic development

The partnership is supported by Lincolnshire County Council as the host partner, DfT, EMR, CrossCountry Trains & London North Eastern Railway.

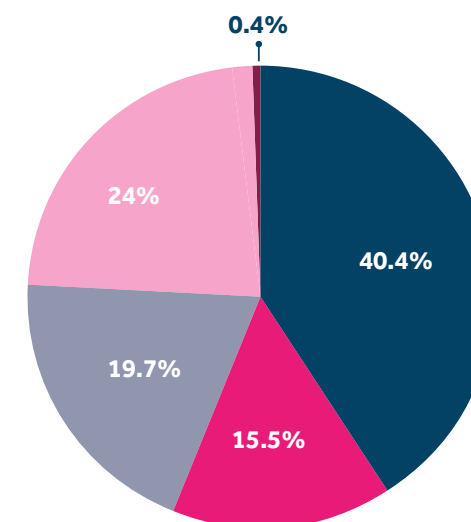
East Midlands Railway

East Midlands Railway (EMR), owned by Abellio, is the main train operating company in our region. EMR is committed to working closely with Community Rail lines across their network; with nine CRPs currently they are looking to expand this over the course of the eight-year franchise. As part of their committed obligation to the Department for Transport there are several funding options for CRPs and station adoption groups to bid in to, to supporting projects along their lines.

eastmidlandsrailway.co.uk

Financial statement 2020-21

INCOME

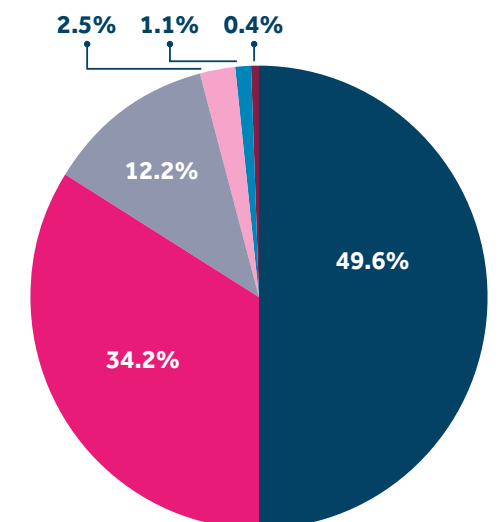


Brought forward from 2019/20 (inc 20K res) £31,746.01

East Midlands Railway	£26,171.50	LNER	£10,000
CrossCountry Trains	£12,736.54	Funding Grants	£15,545
CRA2020	£250		

Total £96,449.05

EXPENDITURE



Carried forward to 2020/21 £49,761.60

Officer Salary	£23,158.47	Project Outlay	£15,985.77
Pension & NI	£5,699.39	Officer Travel	£1,168.88
Boston Food Bank	£500	Misc.	£174.94

Sub total £46,687.45

Engaging with young people

With the continual easing of restrictions it was wonderful to be able to re-engage with the younger members in our communities and work with them to complete some super projects, educating them with some important Rail Safety presentations.

National Citizen Service: Sleaford subway art project

We were approached by the National Citizen Service (NCS) in association with Notts County Foundation to deliver a project, which fell under the volunteering element of their scheme, to a group of 14 students from Nottingham College. The students, all aged between 16-18 and from the English Speakers of Other Languages course, had resided in the UK for varying lengths of time from three months to three years. The students had never been on a train in the UK or been to the seaside and some admitted to being nervous about using the train.

The following three-day programme of events was designed:

Day one consisted of a rail safety presentation and Nottingham station tour which showed them how to buy a ticket, how to find the correct platform and how to ask for help if needed.

Day two saw the students boarding the Poacher Line for Skegness where they enjoyed traditional fish & chips and some team bonding exercises on the beach. We designed a "Try the Train" booklet which included a quiz about what they had learnt the previous day.

Day three involved the students again boarding the Poacher Line, this time to head to Sleaford station. Here, working with urban artists James and Luke from Imageskool, they transformed the rather neglected subway with a bright and cheery mural which depicted Sleaford's skyline and RAF heritage. The CRP provided a goody bag filled with Christmas treats as a thank you for their hard work.

We received fantastic positive comments from residents both while we were completing the artwork and afterwards, with one resident saying she felt safer walking through the subway. The students all said they now felt confident to use the train independently and Charlie from NCS ranked the project at the top of any he had been involved with. He also went on to say the students were "buzzing" on the train trip home.



The weather was particularly bracing on our trip to Skegness and the CRP is providing the students with complimentary train tickets to be used after their GCSE exams, so they can get a true Skegness experience!

Funding for the project was provided by the CRP and EMR.

Rail Safety presentations

The CRP managed to visit some schools this year to deliver the important message of rail safety, delivering presentations to 195 children across three schools. We have also developed a "Try the Train" programme to increase confidence to travel by train. The programme consists of a rail safety presentation, train trip, station tour, and we have designed a workbook for the students to complete. We were due to take a set of students from Grantham's Young Persons Learning Provision to Nottingham station in December, but this has had to be postponed until the New Year due to tightening Covid-19 restrictions.

Routes of Remembrance

We were honoured to work with the Veterans Charity and EMR to remember our fallen heroes in a campaign to raise awareness and funds for this vital charity. A virtual Wreath Relay was created, starting at Skegness station and continuing down the line with each day telling a different story. The Wreath Relay concluded at Nottingham station in time for Armistice Day where a poignant service of Remembrance was held. EMR created a JustGiving page for donations.

It was important to us to involve as many young people along our line as possible to ensure the message was kept alive for future generations, lest they forget. Some of our stations were decorated by local schools and groups, with them all sending in wreaths on the train which included:

- Boston station, decorated by students from the English for Speakers of Other Languages course at Boston College
- Heckington station by the children of St Andrew's primary school
- Aslockton station by the children of Archbishop Cranmer primary school
- Sleaford station by Rainbow Stars charity.

The train was also met at Sleaford by the Combined Cadet Force of St. George's Academy.

We were also thrilled to accept wreaths on behalf of Skegness Rotary, Royal Air Force College Cranwell & Boston in Bloom – thank you!



We are Netherfield Station! Graffiti project



Over the summer we jumped at the chance to work with Network Rail and urban artist Lionel Stanhope to address the existing graffiti on the road bridge at Netherfield station. It had been an eyesore and concern for residents for many years. Funding was provided jointly by the CRP, EMR and Network Rail.

We decided the best way to approach this was to engage with the community. We asked local schools and youth groups for ideas for the mural, which would span both sides of the bridge. A template was created for participants to add their design and send in electronically with the working title of "We are Netherfield station!" We joined the local Facebook sites to spread the project further and we received 115 designs which enabled Lionel to create the final piece.

A working party consisting of the CRP, EMR and Network Rail spent a day prepping the wall, which included removing all loose masonry and vegetation and painting over 120m² of wall, ready for the artwork to be applied!

Lionel spent 4 days in August applying the artwork on the bridge. One side was "Welcome to Netherfield" and on the other side, spanning the entrance to the station, was the community mural.

We were pleased to welcome the Mayor of Gedling, Cllr Lawrence, to view the finished mural, with the children attending when they returned after their summer break. The comments from residents have been extremely complimentary and the artwork really brightens up the bridge.

Sleaford station window art

Replacing the artwork in the windows on the front of Sleaford station has been something the art department at St Georges Academy, Sleaford have wanted to do for some time. We were delighted to be able to offer them the opportunity to get involved. Before the summer break we went into school to brief the students on what was required; research and initial ideas were to form part of their Year 13 transition work over the summer holidays. There are currently two windows with artwork in a state of disrepair. The intention was for one window to showcase Sleaford's rich architectural history and the second to celebrate Lincolnshire's RAF heritage.

We have had several visits to look at some amazing ideas and we are looking forward to seeing the finished pieces installed at the beginning of 2022.



News in brief

January saw our website "go live" and we have continued to improve and develop it during the year. We now have nearly 4,000 subscribers and we are thrilled to have a platform to showcase all our great work. You can check it out at: poacherline.org.uk

We supported the North Kesteven Walking Festival in July. We took 10 walkers on the train from Sleaford to Ancaster and walked back to Sleaford via the Poacher Line's Ancaster Rail Walk (see picture top right). After experiencing scorching weather the previous days, we were relieved to have a cooler day. Thank you to station adopters Russell, Adele and Mark for supporting us, Stuart Parker from The Ramblers Association for leading and Hill Holt Wood for including us in your festival itinerary.

In April, as part of the continued improvements at Boston station, we worked with Transported Art to install a plaque which forms part of their "Etched in Time" heritage trail and starts at the station (see picture bottom right).

We were delighted to hear that both Boston and Skegness stations would form part of the Town Funds deal from central government. The Town Fund, worth £25m for each town, will see both stations undergo a complete transformation over the coming years!



We were pleased to be able to support Gedling Borough Council's summer scheme, with a grant of £400. This scheme supports local children from deprived backgrounds to enjoy a programme of fun activities and new experiences they would not normally have access to.

The Old Waiting Room Sleaford station

This is our flagship project for 2021/22 and this year we spent time ensuring we had all the correct permissions and funding in place ready to start the project in early 2022.

Sleaford station is Grade 2 listed and the Old Waiting Room on the island platform had been out of use for over a decade, suffering from some fire damage. The project, to renovate the building into an Education and Community room, was first discussed back in October 2020 when we invited the Railway Heritage Trust (RHT), Community Rail Network and the East Midlands Railway (EMR) property team to take a look. The premises, at the time, sat in EMR's commercial portfolio but a tenant could not be secured. After consultations with EMR it was agreed the space could be made available for community use.



The building contained evidence of previous toilets and water supply, but there was a question as to whether the connection was still active. In January, with funding from Lincolnshire County Council and the Community Rail Network, we commissioned a feasibility study which investigated whether the building would be viable to develop. On a cold snowy day MAKE Consultants arrived to check the condition of the utilities and to trace the water supply and sewer connection. The engineer managed to trace the sewer to a manhole cover on Platform 3, but due to the proximity of the next manhole cover to trackside the operation was abandoned in order to consult with Network Rail over safety. The water supply had been disconnected several years before but a plan was hatched to pipe a source in over the footbridge!

After some months of negotiation with Network Rail we completed the feasibility survey which showed that the sewers had been disconnected either side of the main track: making it not financially viable to reinstate the supply. With the option of working toilets removed from the proposal, the decision to not bring the water source over the bridge was made. It would have been just for drinking and the outlay did not justify the expense, so instead we opted to include a bottled water dispenser in our plans.

While we waited for the outcome of the feasibility study we were busy obtaining landlord's consent from Network Rail, Listed Building Consent from North Kesteven District Council, agreeing terms and conditions with EMR and getting advice from Andy Savage at the RHT.

As the outcome of the feasibility report showed we would not be able to deliver the level of development detailed in the initial proposal, we looked to adapt the project. The CRP had already been successful in securing £60,000 from the Stations, Social & Development Plan (SSCDP) fund from EMR and, combined with the agreement from the RHT to fund 40% of the development costs, we realised that there was an opportunity to give the whole station an overhaul. We entered into negotiations with EMR to paint Sleaford station in heritage colours of green & cream. We set aside a portion of the SSCDP fund and, along with the grant from RHT, we were able to bring the external painting of the station into the scope of work. Additional funding, purely for the development of the Old Waiting Room, was secured from the Community Rail Network and CrossCountry Trains.



A tender for the works was sent out in early summer 2021 and a contractor was appointed. Work is due to start on the development in early January 2022 and is expected to take around six to eight weeks. There has been positive feedback from the Sleaford community around the proposed station improvements: they will provide a spectacular first impression of the town once complete. Keep updated with the progress via our website at poacherline.org.uk

Station projects

We have completed many projects at our stations this year to benefit both passengers and our communities. Take a look at what we have been getting up to.

Sleaford station Voluntary Centre Services action day

During the pandemic we started to regularly attend the Voluntary Centre Services (VCS) coffee mornings where it was mentioned they were finding a lack of outdoor volunteering opportunities. Not one to miss an opportunity, we invited their clients to a taster action day at Sleaford station. Nine volunteers from the VCS MOVE project turned up and we decided to tackle a piece of unloved garden area on Platform 1. The first job consisted of clearing the space of lots of rubbish and vegetation, before laying weed membrane and bark down. We had called in the help of our wonderful adopters Russell and Adele who showed the attendees how to safely build planters, which we then painted and planted up. Over a four-hour period the volunteers saw the complete transformation of this piece of land, learning some valuable new skills. Five of the volunteers then went on to become official station adopters at Sleaford station, which was an amazing result. We will be holding these one-off action days across all of our stations next year.

We were delighted to be shortlisted in the Community Rail Awards and thrilled to place 2nd in the Projects under £500 category on the night – a real testament to all their hard work.

Radcliffe station Radcliffe Community Vegetable Patch



Friends of Radcliffe station (FoRS) were approached by a group of local residents who were interested in growing food which they could donate to a local charity RadCooks, providing free, healthy meals to the elderly and vulnerable of Radcliffe. They had been struggling to find any land to cultivate and were on a long waiting list for an allotment. They had seen a little parcel of land on Platform 2 at the station which they thought would be ideal for some raised vegetable beds.

Keen to get involved, the CRP sought permission from EMR who readily agreed and offered their support. The group, who named themselves Radcliffe Community Garden, became station adopters as a sub-group to the FoRS, enabling them to work safely on the platform.

The Poacher Line officer applied to the Community Rail Network for funding and was successful.

The officer spent a day with the group clearing and marking out the spaces for two raised beds. On two unseasonably warm days at the end of March a working party which consisted of the CRP, EMR, FoRS and the gardening group built two vegetable beds and shifted six tonnes of soil. The group then planted up the beds following the Three Sisters method with corn on the cob, runner beans and courgettes. The beds were deep enough to grow potatoes and the group harvested 28kg of potatoes in the autumn.

This project was shortlisted in the 2021 Community Rail Awards in the Influencing Positive Change & Sustainability category.



Sleaford station Poacher's Patch

With the easing of lockdown at the end of spring we were pleased to welcome Rainbow Stars, a local charity which supports adults and children with both hidden and physical disabilities, into the allotment to plant. We held several sessions with our knowledgeable adopters sharing gardening tips. The vegetables were then harvested and made into delicious vegetable soups.

We planned for the grand opening of the allotment in June* and were pleased when the Mayor of Sleaford, Cllr Oakes, agreed to formally open the garden. We held a competition beforehand to name the allotment and the winner, which was chosen by the East Midlands Railway Community Rail team, was local resident Vivien. The successful name was Poacher's Patch. We had goody bags, light refreshments and activities for those attending and an information board detailing the allotments' journey. We held a raffle for Rainbow Stars and were pleased to raise £65 for the charity and they have now agreed to adopt the allotment. There are still information boards and a bench to be installed which are scheduled for January 2022.

Poacher's Patch was shortlisted in the 2021 Community Rail Awards in the Involving Diverse Groups category and we were delighted to be awarded 3rd place!

*all Covid-19 restrictions in force at the time were adhered to



Boston station Planter Panels

As part of the Boston regeneration scheme of works, artist Jeni Cairns was commissioned to design and install a piece of metal artwork in the planter at the front of the station. These impressive panels detail the history of Boston through the ages, from its rich wool trade and agricultural history through to the story of the Pilgrim Fathers and the sailing of the Mayflower to America in 1620.

Permission from Network Rail to install the sculpture was obtained, the CRP took out a community licence and the panels were installed in April. The project, which was funded jointly by the Community Rail Network, CrossCountry Trains and Lincolnshire County Council, was started back in 2019 but was delayed by Covid-19.



The planter now forms part of the Boston in Bloom judging route. Boston in Bloom donate all the plants and our station adopters are responsible for the upkeep of the planter, making for a beautiful first impression for this lovely station. The installation has received positive comments from residents and has instilled a sense of pride in the community.

Station Adoption

We really value our station adopters and the work they do along the Poacher Line. Our numbers continued to grow in 2021 and now stands at an impressive 90 volunteers. A huge thank you for all their hard work!



Station Adopters conference - Derby

It was great to see a return to a physical conference which was held at Derby County Football stadium in October. We were treated to a host of workshops and presentations, which included the Friends of Radcliffe station talking about their very successful Bucket & Spade train - well done Phil! It was great for the adopters to see and hear the great news from their neighbouring groups. A workshop highlight was definitely the "Mindful Moment" workshop held by artist Mel Langton and of course the delicious lunch! Thank you to EMR Community Rail team for arranging another engaging and interesting event: our adopters came away full of enthusiasm and new ideas!



Bottesford Friendly Garden

A dedicated group of 14 station adopters look after this wonderful garden at Bottesford and they are always thinking of ways to add to the garden. They were gifted some fencing over the summer which they have installed, as well as managing to grow a successful haul of tomatoes over the summer! For some time they have discussed the possibility of a pergola over the path and we were delighted to be able to fund this great idea. Over the autumn months our talented adopters measured and built the pergola which now looks splendid in the garden. They are intending to grow trailing plants up and over, adding another dimension to the garden - well done guys!



New planters

We were pleased to receive funding from Community Rail Network's Small Grant Fund and EMR Community Development Fund to purchase new planters for several of our stations. Ancaster, Sleaford, Swineshead and Wainfleet have all benefited from some fantastic Amberol planters which will look amazing when installed in the new year. Thank you for the funding!



Flying Scotsman

In September the Flying Scotsman paid us a visit while recreating the Jolly Fisherman experience to Skegness. Our station adopters really stepped up when a call for assistance was made from EMR for help with security at our stations. Thank you to all those who gave up their Saturday to help make sure everyone stayed safe!



Network Rail Action Day - Ancaster

Network Rail have a scheme which provides a certain number of days a year for their employees to volunteer on projects. We were delighted to have them come out for an action day at Ancaster station in September. Ancaster station had become overgrown during the pandemic and we had just welcomed a new group of adopters here. The task of getting the station back under control was quite daunting. With help from EMR, we held an action day where we cut back the garden area, cleared all the weeds from the platforms, painted the fence, removed the rotten planters and generally got it back into a manageable state for our new group. We provided refreshments for the work party and the result is a much-improved station.



Boston Adopters

This is a super group who formed during the pandemic and are passionate volunteers who really make a difference. Not only do they look after Boston station but they tend our smaller stations right to Skegness! They have worked with Boston in Bloom this year to include the brick planter at the front of the station into the judging route. We were thrilled to hear they were awarded Gold in September - well done!



There are lots more of our stations which need your love and attention. If you would like to become a station adopter please see eastmidlandsrailway.co.uk/stationadoption for further details

Marketing and Promotion

Promotional video

The Journey is Part of the Adventure

We have worked hard on an exciting project designed to encourage leisure passengers to visit us out of season. Our area is packed with nature reserves, beautiful walks and interesting places which do not need the weather of the summer months to enjoy. We partnered with East Lindsey District Council (ELDC) and discussed several options, including a coffee table brochure, but it was decided a promotional video would have a far wider reach. The end-to-end journey from Nottingham to Skegness is over two hours so we created a storyboard around this, titling the video "The Journey is Part of the Adventure". The video showcases the city, county and coast aspects of our line; along with a segment around the rich RAF heritage of the area. A pull up banner and social media assets have been created to compliment the video. This will be released in the New Year and we hope it will encourage many new passengers to enjoy our eclectic line, our wonderful coastline and the stunning Lincolnshire Wolds AONB.

We have developed some exciting projects this year to showcase our line and to encourage integrated travel. We have a new line guide and station boards planned for the new year.



Funding was kindly provided by ELDC, from within their Love Lincolnshire Wolds budget and their Welcome Back fund from the EU (European Regional Development Fund), and EMR's Community Development Fund.



Campaign & branding

Poacher PLUS

We are passionate about encouraging a modal shift from our cars onto public transport and we are fortunate to have superb Demand Responsive Transport which serves all of our Lincolnshire stations. The first and last mile has always been an issue when encouraging people to switch to train travel, so after positive conversations with Lincolnshire County Council's CallConnect team we were delighted to start work on an integrated ticket offer. This offer enabled passengers, upon production of a valid same day rail ticket, to make connecting travel to and from our Lincolnshire stations for a flat fee of one pound one way on CallConnect buses.

We wanted to design an eye-catching campaign and we decided the best way was to create a separate brand, but which was identifiable with the Poacher Line. We applied for funding from the Integrated Sustainable Transport in Community Rail grant fund, administered by the Community Rail Network. This fund is highly competitive and we were delighted to find our application had been successful. This enabled us to design a new brand, including logo, branding guidelines, templates, pull up banner and social media assets, which would form a toolkit we could send to other partners interested in joining our scheme. Whilst we are trialling the scheme with CallConnect, our intention is to widen the offer to include venues and retail outlets, whereby visitors will receive a discount when they show they have travelled by train.



Magazine feature

Poacher Line

We have been working hard to raise the profile of the Poacher Line this year and were fortunate to be contacted by a local journalist working for Heckington Living magazine, who wanted to write a piece on the Poacher Line for their winter edition.

We met at the station to talk about the work of Community Rail and how it benefits communities up and down the country, as well as some of the projects we were currently working on. We were delighted with the resulting article which showcased our wonderful line; they even managed to squeeze in an extra feature about the fantastic work our station adopters do at Heckington station. We have further articles planned for next year.



Community Rail Awards



It was a welcome return to a physical awards night which was also streamed online for those who were unable to attend in person.

We enjoyed a glittering night of celebrations at Southampton's O2 Guildhall which was filled with guest speakers and surprise cameo appearances. Thank you to the Community Rail Network for hosting a wonderful night.

We were shortlisted in five categories and were thrilled to have won three awards which were:

First Place in the Photo Competition "Community Rail in Action" with "Roll out the Barrows!" taken by CRO Jo Andrews with the Friends of Radcliffe station. The judges said it captured the essence of our volunteers during the pandemic.

Second Place in Small Projects Award – Under £500. We worked with the Voluntary Centre Services with their MOVE clients to transform a piece of wasteland at Sleaford station.

Third Place in Involving Diverse Groups. Working with Kirsty, from My Little Allotment, we created an allotment at Sleaford station to help alleviate those living with physical and mental health challenges.

A huge congratulations to all the shortlisted and winning entries!

Education and Training



There were many opportunities available to develop our knowledge and understanding over the year. We took advantage of some important and useful workshops and conferences offered by the Community Rail Network and our Train Operating Companies. These were still held virtually, and we attended:

Suicide Training with the Samaritans

Recruiting Volunteers workshop

Community Rail Network Conference

CrossCountry Community Rail Conference

Introduction to Presentations webinar

Project Outcomes webinar

LNER Community Rail Conference

Digital & Marketing training

We were also invited by the Community Rail Network to co-present on their Bio-diversity webinar in September, with Luke from the Bee Friendly Trust, to talk about Bottesford Friendly Garden.

Our virtual networking continued throughout 2021, with new opportunities and partners being found. We look forward to developing those relationships in the coming year.

We managed several CRPO get-togethers with our friends and colleagues from our neighbouring Community Rail Partnerships to share knowledge and catch up on each other's news (pictured left).

Poacher Line in Numbers



£160,518.50
of funding
secured



15
stations
adopted



90
station
adopters



3
Awards
won



769
Twitter
followers

Coming up in 2022

We have had a great 2021 and are looking forward to delivering more projects in 2022 which benefit our communities. Here are a few of our projects to look out for:

Sleaford station improvements
Thorpe Culvert station improvements
New station walks booklet

Get in Touch

Want to get involved with the Poacher Line or learn more?
We'd love to hear from you...

✉ poacherline@lincolnshire.gov.uk

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📘 Poacher Line Community Rail Partnership

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Thank you to all of our partners for your continued support



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