

PROJECT REPORT

2021 | OCTOBER

POSITIVE TRAIN OF THOUGHT

Lead: Caroline Holden, Community Rail Development Officer

Artist: Karen Allerton

Partner: St John's Catholic Primary School, Burscough

Line: West Lancashire Line (Preston to Ormskirk)

Station: Burscough Junction Station, the disused platform

Budget: £6,000

Funded by: Community Rail Lancashire and Community Rail Development Fund (CRN)





OVERVIEW

This project was developed by Community Rail Lancashire (CRL), the West of Lancashire Community Rail Partnership along with artist, Karen Allerton to support St John's Catholic Primary School in Burscough get re-started looking after the disused platform at Burscough Junction Station. Access to this platform had been granted by Network Rail through a licence to CRL.

The school, along with CRL, started by clearing the platform and getting the various planters and tyres ready for planting. Unfortunately, the work had to be suspended following the first lockdown in March 2020.

To help kick start this again, CRL approached the school in March 2021 and proposed a project designed to help the pupils emerge from lockdown with a '**Positive Train of Thought**'. It was developed as an art, environmental and wellbeing project, which would recognise what everyone had witnessed and the massive mental health issues that had developed as a result, as well as the need for action to protect the natural environment. This picked up the 'Bee Friendly' and 'Make A Bee Line for the Station' themes already successfully used along the Preston to Ormskirk line.

APPROACH

This project was designed to be delivered flexibly to take into account any pandemic issues, but ideally it was hoped that the planned activities would be undertaken in the summer term, face to face within the school and a range of locations.

The project was 'kick started' with a special environmental celebration day involving the whole school with a customised assembly and artistic activities involving every class. This included an innovative way of showing how flowers emerge from the earth to grow and thrive healthily. Using white crayon, the children (and adults) were surprised to be drawing pictures of flowers, bees and butterflies onto white paper, which was very hard to see as you can imagine. Then, everyone saw their pictures emerge, as the children chose their favourite colours, Karen dusted fine powders onto the white paper, and then, as the children were encouraged to spray water straight onto the paper (just like you'd do to help plants to grow), like magic, their beautiful pictures 'bloomed' into life – quite mesmerizing for all involved!

More sessions then took place on another 3 days, with the children having lessons on different artistic mediums, for example pencil drawing, use of watercolours and inks and smudging colours using a range of brushes or one's fingers; all sessions focussing on the creation of bees, flowers and butterflies and their wonderful efforts now seen on the Dibond artwork panels adorning the fencing on the disused platform. The classes also included the children being inspired by walks in their natural environment including a nature walk to a nearby fishing lake, to the disused platform at Burscough Junction train station and on train trips.

The Year 5 and 6 pupils did an extra session, choosing in advance what their favourite colours were. Karen designed and made bee/bug hotels and in school, on a separate occasion, the children created colourful mosaics which are now, not only being enjoyed visually by those using the station, but also friendly to any insects or bees that may take a fancy to them! They made such a 'wow factor' that a local passenger and member of the nearby litter picking group Facebooked a picture of them to share the lovely display now at the station.



OUTPUTS

- 1 whole school 'kick start' event and assembly customised to the project by the school. All school classes involving 83 pupils had at least 2 sessions on drawing butterflies, bees and flowers and included an innovative approach to viewing how things can grow using paper, inks and water!
- The construction of 16 bug/bee hotels with Year 5 and 6 pupils that are now on the disused platform along with the artwork that the pupils helped to produce with Karen Allerton.
- Prior to the summer holiday there were three working sessions at the station where the pupils undertook a variety of tasks including sweeping, weeding, planting and watering.
- A Double Royal information poster for the CRL noticeboard at the station's live platform entrance has been produced to share the project with passengers and the local community.
- Following the start of the autumn term the school tend to the station fortnightly.
- Celebration event as part of Community Rail Week 2021 where the school received a framed certificate and copy of the explanatory poster, both recognising their work at the station.

OUTCOMES

- The school has resumed its adoption of the disused platform at Burscough Junction to enable pupils to learn about gardening and tending plants, especially bee-friendly ones.
- The pupils are learning new skills as part of their regular visits to the station.
- All pupils have learnt about rail safety and the benefits of rail travel as part of CRL's 'Educating the Passengers of the Future programme'.
- Added interest and pride in the station locally and links to more organisations in the community.



WHAT WORKED WELL

Being a small school of 83 pupils and mindful of the challenges the whole school community was having, the project involved all classes, raising awareness of the railway to all and helped confidence grow in getting out and about.

The collaboration and support by all partners, including the school's enthusiasm to get involved and make things happen with an ability to adapt to the various challenges as a result of Covid-19 as the project progressed, the support and cooperation of Network Rail who own the disused platform, the way Northern train drivers have embraced the pupils when they have been entering the station when the pupils are there which has reinforced the safety training they have all received through the CRL education team as well as the positive communications expressed and connections made with passengers while doing work on the platform.

Because all the school took part in this project, when the planting up of the planters and tyres took place on the platform, these activities were able to be undertaken by a number of different classes, depending on the classes in school at the time. All pupils received rail safety sessions and were well equipped to undertake the practical work at the station. It has also ensured that all school classes have become connected to the railway and have ownership of it as they progress through the school and see the value of their work to their local community.

The school is a gold standard Forest School and have brought their environmental expertise to the project, using the station and the planting as an education tool and their knowledge base adding to the station and line's environmental credentials.

Providing long term commitment to the disused platform and a sense of ownership. There is a wider concern expressed to keep the station safe and litter free that the children are highlighting and hopefully will help the station as a whole to keep welcoming.

The station is looking more welcoming and friendly to the environment and will continue to grow in its beauty.

This project has provided inspiration to expand the environmental theme to other stations on the West of Lancashire Line to raise its profile and encourage more people to use the line and see the places to visit in the area. This is supported by the 'new' Make a Beeline for the West Lancashire Line leaflet.

Recognition of the valued work the school is doing at the station at the celebration event

LESSONS LEARNT

- Keep flexible and adaptable; especially important following the pandemic.
- Involving the whole school isn't always possible as in this instance but providing mechanisms to share the good work and practice within the whole community has positive effects and helps others perhaps not directly involved to be connected.
- Projects assist to promote rail safety, especially through the CRL education team expertise and stations are a great learning tool.
- Links to the community have long standing positive effects for those involved but also, this seems to extend to a local community level, with more people interested in it as a place to have pride in in their community. Pride in it themselves too.
- Involving all partners from the beginning of a project helps to be aware of the varying needs, requirements and perspectives and provides for strong long-standing relationships.
- It has been learnt that Dibond is an excellent medium for installation on metal fencing and has long-lasting print quality and so has been replicated here.
- Having a plan for keeping plants watered especially in the summer holidays and considering the tools and equipment required.



