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ALL CHANGE AT CHERRY TREE - a Blackburn with Darwen BC and Community Rail Lancashire community art and horticultural project with a musical difference!

- All change at Cherry Tree aimed to establish Cherry Tree Station as a gateway to the local community and to the nearby Witton Country Park.
- The station is on the Preston to Colne line and is served by an hourly diesel service between Preston and Colne. The facilities offered to passengers were very basic, with approaches to the platforms infested with weeds and litter and shelters and running in boards bearing the brunt of regular bouts of vandalism over a number of years. Viewed as a no go area especially in the evenings the station required immediate action to develop a safe and smart local public transport gateway for the local community.
- Despite the extremely poor waiting environment and issues of anti-social behaviour the station has averaged growth of 12% per annum over the last 5 years and Community Rail Lancashire and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council both recognised the potential for further growth through considerable latent demand given its proximity to the commuter hubs of Preston and Blackburn and the growth of students needing to travel to colleges in both towns. A key issue was, therefore, how to deal with the anti-social behaviour at the station and the tired looking environment and its effect on the image of the local area and future passenger demand.
- Following its success with the 'My Mill Hill' project, Blackburn with Darwen BC wanted to apply a similar package of intervention at Cherry Tree to transform the feel and perception of the station. From this 'All Change at Cherry Tree' was born. The project has involved multiple partners of all age groups. A plan of action was developed to tackle all the known problems at the station and create a fitting gateway to the local community and Witton Country Park.
- As with the 'My Mill Hill' project the first task was to install CCTV cameras to help monitor and remove issues of anti-social behaviour prior to the start of any local community intervention. The next stage was to remove litter and clear the overgrown vegetation and this was achieved thanks to a local Community Pay Back team supported by public service students from Blackburn College who between them managed to clear over 10 tons of rubbish and weeds.



- Following clearance Year 6 pupils from St Francis Primary School, and local Scouts, Cubs and Beavers from the Feniscliffe pack along with their parents planted over two thousand Daffodil bulbs on site to ensure a colourful spring show. The children from St Francis Primary School also worked with our local Community Rail officer to learn about the history of Cherry Tree Station which culminated in the production of a "spot the difference poster" for display at the station
- Stanley Grange a local group which specialises in working with adults with learning difficulties gave advice on further planting at the station as well as supplying plants and labour on planting days giving their clients an opportunity to work on a project alongside local college students.



- The task of linking the station to the local Witton Country Park was achieved using an innovative imaginary story line which was enthusiastically taken up by the school and Scout group who produced colourful art work for the station reflecting the story line. The magical story tells of a song mine which ran from the station to Witton Country Park and from where songs were transported by rail from the station all over the world. As part of the project the old entrance to the mine adjacent to the station car park was 'rediscovered' and a ceramic sculpture produced by a local potter working with adults with learning difficulties whose workshop is located in Witton Country Park has been installed to represent the capped mine entrance.
- An overland route following the old mine workings has been established and will be marked with QR codes which when activated play one of the 'songs' left behind when the mine was worked out. The music was written and recorded especially for the project by young musicians from two local youth groups at Strawberry Bank and Mill Hill.



- Art work from the school, Scouts, Cubs and Beavers swelled with contributions from two local adult craft groups and a local art group and having been digitally mixed by local artist Alastair Nicholson 11 panels now feature spectacular and colourful artwork.
- Another group of students from Blackburn College produced bird boxes and insect shelters and installed them around the station approach road.

- Local businesses have also been involved with one local company allowing us to store tools and materials on their premises and another providing man power to help with a particular heavy aspect of the project.
- To complete the community art and horticultural project modern well lit shelters have been installed, the station fencing has been repaired and repainted, new running in boards and new branded Community Rail noticeboards have also been installed.



- Blackburn College have been very pleased with the project and the experience it has given to participating students and to this end have indicated that they will continue to support the project with their next intake of public service students providing continuity to the project.
- This has been a community project with over 12 community based groups of varying ages and ability working together to produce a very satisfying end result. The regular working groups, particularly the students have attracted favourable comments by users of the station many commenting how nice to see youngsters working on projects benefitting the community. The parents who accompanied their children in the bulb planting saw the day as an opportunity to contribute working side by side with their children on a project that would impact on the local community in a positive manner.
- Through the involvement of so many groups it is hoped that a sense of ownership of the station has been achieved that will reduce vandalism and make the station feel a secure environment and thus further increase ridership. We expect patronage at the station to grow and this will be monitored by Community Rail Lancashire.

A big thank you must go to the following people:

- Brian Howarth Community Rail Partnership Officer (also the rest of the CRL team)
- Alastair Nicholson local artist
- Emma Fielding BwD Park Warden
- Northern Rail
- Children and staff of St Francis Primary school
- Youth Groups at Mill Hill and Greenfield Community Centres
- Local Beavers, Cubs and Scouts groups (and parents)
- Blackburn College
- Community Payback
- Young musicians at Strawberry bank and Kaleidoscope Centres
- Amanda Healy and members of her ceramics group at Witton Park
- Jane Coultherd and Horticultural team at Stanley Grange

