



The Friends of Dawlish Station (Devon, UK)

Hello.

Welcome to this first newsletter from Citizens' Rail - the EU project to develop local and regional railways by involving the community.

Read on to discover some of the big challenges we're tackling, and how we're harnessing "people power" to create better planned, better maintained and better used rail services in the UK, France, Germany and the Netherlands.

We're always learning and would love to hear what you think. Email us at info@citizensrail.org or add a comment on our website to share your own rail experience.

If you've been given this newsletter by a colleague, do subscribe to future quarterly editions at www.citizensrail.org/signup.

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Investing in Opportunities



This project has received European Regional Development Funding through INTERREG IV B.

INTERREG IV B

SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF THE

INVISIBLE STATION



Burnley Manchester Road : before

When a station is “invisible” to the public - due to its tucked away location, poor signage or inadequate promotion - bad things happen. Passenger numbers are held back, rail users can feel isolated and unsafe, and the station’s potential is squandered.

To crack this conundrum, Citizens’ Rail has been working with local communities on solutions at four stations in the UK, France and Germany.

■ BURNLEY MANCHESTER ROAD (UK)

Burnley, located 40km north of Manchester, is a town striving for economic regeneration. This has been hampered by the extremely low profile of the town’s busiest station.

The problem

Burnley Manchester Road station closed in 1961, and since re-opening in 1986 has been unstaffed and without an operational station building. To make matters worse, its built-up surroundings impinged on the visibility of the station, which was largely hidden from the busy main road. As a result, Burnley Manchester Road was anonymous within the town. With the station “out of sight and out of mind”, it was all too easy for rail to become a forgotten transport option for many.



Burnley Manchester Road : after

The solution

In 2011, Burnley Borough Council purchased the former station building, used for many years as a dairy after the station closed in the 1960s. Funding from the Interreg IVB programme, Burnley Borough Council and Lancashire County Council has enabled this to be replaced by a new building.

The decision to rebuild followed a sustainability assessment as part of another Interreg IVB project, SusStation (Sustainable Stations).

One of the crucial elements of the new building's design is its distinctive blue fin. This eye-catching feature has hugely improved the visibility of the station within the surrounding area. It has also given Burnley Manchester Road its own look and identity within the town.

The fin was proposed by the French partner in Citizens' Rail, Pays de la Loire, in an example of the transnational collaboration that lies at the heart of the Interreg IVB programme.

Due to the fin's striking appearance, it attracted a divided reaction among local Councillors, but was approved by Burnley Council's Development Control Committee by a single vote. Quoted in the local newspaper, Cllr Stephen Large said: "As it is, Manchester Road is a completely dreary railway station, and currently we can't see it from the road. I think this is the right design and I support it."

When construction began last summer, Burnley Borough Council Leader Councillor Julie Cooper said: "For some passengers the railway station can be the first impression they get of a town. This is a vitally important project for Burnley's future economic growth."



Penhoët : before and proposed

The new building was completed in summer 2014, and opened its doors to the public on 17th November 2014.

It has already attracted strong interest within the rail sector. Visitors have included a special advisor to the UK government's Department for Transport, who praised the station for its visual appearance and its modular design.

The modular nature of the station means that it could become a template that could be expanded or contracted to suit the local circumstances of other stations. So perhaps in future we will see more blue fins cropping up across the UK and even beyond.

■ PENHOËT (FR)

Penhoët is a station close to the docks of Saint-Nazaire in Pays de la Loire. Citizens' Rail is working to improve the station's negative image through an innovative makeover, developed in partnership with the local community.

The problem

Despite its proximity to residential areas, the station has very low recognition among the local community. When surveyed, more than half of local people did not even know

the station existed. Those who do use Penhoët view the station as isolated and, at night, potentially intimidating. Two thirds said they were dissatisfied with the station. The station is currently mainly used by shipyard workers.

The solution

As part of Citizens' Rail, a competition was held among students from Nantes Design School to generate radical plans to improve the station's image.

Nine concepts were developed for the refurbishment of the station, incorporating ideas as varied as airport travellers and a giant life ring.

The designs were showcased at a public exhibition. Nearly 200 people attended, eager to help shape the future of their station. Informed by a public vote on the designs, regional and city elected representatives selected the "Tuyau Toi" (or "You Pipe") as the concept to take forward. It features an illuminated pipe stretching across the footbridge to increase the visibility of the station during both day and night. The installation of a "lightning totem" is also being considered along the boulevard to help to signpost the station.

The design is planned to be implemented in 2015-2016 to create a safer, more visible and attractive station.



Aachen West: before and proposed (image courtesy of RKW Rhode Kellermann Wawrowsky, Düsseldorf)

■ AACHEN WEST (DE)

The German city of Aachen has a thriving and rapidly growing university. However, its students and staff are currently served by an inadequate station. Citizens' Rail is helping to plan major improvements.

The problem

With the expansion of RWTH Aachen University set to create 5,000 to 10,000 new jobs over the next decade, the university's station, Aachen West, is in the spotlight. However the current station is very basic.

Its bland appearance gives it little presence and visibility, and the only way to access the station is by using the stairs – with no wheelchair access possible.

The solution

An ambitious plan for a new bridge across the station would remedy this, with lifts installed to provide easy access to each platform. Aachen's transport authority AVV and the City Council are bringing together the local community, businesses and rail partners to plan the proposed improvements.

A €6.4 million infrastructure upgrade subsidy was secured earlier in 2014, and a contract has been awarded for the writing of a feasibility study.

It is hoped that this will be followed by an open architectural competition in 2015 for the design of a new station bridge and potentially a station building. This would include architecture, urban design and technical aspects.

One idea that is being considered is for students and university staff to be involved with judging the entries.

■ TORRE (UK)

Torre is an unstaffed station in Torquay in the South West of England. It has a very low local profile, despite being well placed to serve residents and businesses. Citizens' Rail is using measures including targeted marketing and community engagement to remedy the problem.

The problem

In terms of local profile, Torre is often over-shadowed by Torquay's main station, located a mile to the south.

This issue is exacerbated by the fact that the majority of Torre's station building has been sold and converted into a furniture shop (see purple branding on photo overleaf). This significantly reduces the station's visibility.



Torre: Photo by Hugh Llewelyn under Creative Commons license, bit.ly/1ys5587

The solution

A major marketing campaign by the Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership is underway in the local area to raise awareness about the station.

The first step was a series of local newspaper adverts to promote the more frequent service now running every weekday from the station, 50% funded by Interreg IVB. This was accompanied by a local competition to win a pair of train tickets to London.

A website was created to provide practical advice about travelling by train and links to journey planners, season ticket calculators and other useful resources. Visit the site at www.the.riviera.line.com.

A Torre and Torquay rail leaflet was also delivered to more than 15,000 homes in the local area, providing a map of the station's location, information about buying tickets, and ideas and fares for day trips by train.

Further newspaper advertising is currently taking place to continue to raise the station's profile.

This has been complemented by a programme of community engagement carried out by Citizens' Rail's dedicated Riviera Line officer. This has included promoting rail travel to local businesses, running stalls at events including Torbay Carnival, and engaging local stakeholders through regular line forum meetings.

A QUESTION FOR YOU

Are you involved in a project to improve an "invisible station"? If so, we would love to hear about your experiences and the lessons that you have learned.

Add a comment at www.citizensrail.org/invisible or email us at info@citizensrail.org.

Torre marketing materials

Initial newspaper advert

The Riviera Line website

Door-to-door leaflet

Follow-up newspaper advert

Reviving local stations in Pays de la Loire



What brings a speech therapist, a parents' association representative, a Deputy Mayor and numerous others together in their town hall? Their station of course!

As part of Citizens' Rail, consultation has been in full swing this summer in seven villages and towns in the Pays de la Loire who want to safeguard the heritage of their unused railway buildings by transforming them into lively, thriving community hubs.

Région Pays de la Loire and consultants Erea led workshops at the start of July in each local area. Mayors and councillors invited local stakeholders along to discuss possible uses for station buildings left vacant after the closure of ticket offices. Attendees included elected officials, business figures, local residents and many more – all taking part in productive brainstorming sessions.

Around the table, ideas swiftly took shape for possible uses of the stations: as a cycle hire facility, exhibition space, sales point for local businesses (selling organic vegetables, pastries and other farm produce), library book exchange, tourism installation, extension of a speech therapy clinic, local museum, extra space for a youth club, a medical centre, and more.

The sessions led to the emergence of ideas that would not have been generated in any other way. Each locality is now developing its own way forward to progress the project. At Voivres-lès-le-Mans, a municipal steering committee has already been created, prior to staging a large public meeting in September with the villagers.

■ Find out more: www.citizensrail.org/pays-de-la-loire

Transnational student masterclass



Students from all four of the Citizens' Rail partner countries came together in Heerlen in the Netherlands and Aachen in Germany for a two-day masterclass to learn, collaborate and generate ideas for local stations.

The masterclass on Monday 7th and Tuesday 8th October 2013 included site visits to stations including Nuth, Aachen Eilendorf and Aachen West. The 48 students (from Plymouth University, the University of Central Lancashire, L'École de Design Nantes Atlantique, Hogeschool Zuyd and RWTH Aachen University) came from a range of disciplines including geography, tourism, design and civil engineering.

They formed four international, multi-disciplinary teams to create impressive visions for improvements to Nuth and Eilendorf stations. The students also benefited from thought-provoking presentations from Prof Martina Fromhold-Eisebith (RWTH Aachen University), UK-based community rail champion Paul Salveson and artist Michel Huisman, the man behind the spectacular "Maankwartier" redevelopment of nearby Heerlen station.

The masterclass was organised by Citizens' Rail partners RWTH Aachen University, the City of Aachen, Aachen Transport Authority (AVV) and Parkstad Limburg.

■ See the students' designs: www.citizensrail.org/masterclass

How a community can revitalise their station



Earlier this year, severe storms pounded Dawlish station in Devon, UK, and left the line in tatters. But alongside the herculean efforts of Network Rail and First Great Western, local volunteers played a real role in reviving their station.

During the line's closure, Citizens' Rail worked to rejuvenate the previously dormant Friends of Dawlish Station volunteer group. Work days were arranged, and new members were recruited through an appeal in the local newspaper, placed by the Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership (Citizens' Rail's lead partner).

Working alongside TV gardener Toby Buckland, who lives locally, the volunteers proceeded to give the station a green makeover. The group planted cordylines, lavenders, pansies, violets, primroses and other species in 10 new planters installed on the platforms. In the run-up to the high profile re-opening of the line, the volunteers also decked out the station with bunting to celebrate the occasion.

Thanks to their hard work, the group became front page news in the local press, were featured on BBC regional TV news, and were interviewed on BBC Radio 4 and

filmed by Channel 5. Members of the group were also invited to Downing Street and thanked by Prime Minister David Cameron.

In August, the Friends of Dawlish Station were again in the spotlight when they were personally thanked for their efforts by the UK's Secretary of State for Transport, Patrick McLoughlin MP. The Secretary of State visited the station with First Great Western, Network Rail and local MP Anne Marie Morris to discuss the future safeguarding of the line and to meet the Friends group and see the fruits of their labour.

In October, the group's achievements helped secure first prize in the Outstanding Teamwork category of the national Community Rail Awards.

The group is now self-sustaining and undertakes regular watering of the plants that now brighten the station. This creates a welcoming first impression for visitors to the town.

The success of the group has also been followed by the creation of a new Friends Of Teignmouth Station group at the next station along the line.

■ Find out more: www.citizensrail.org/devon

“Beach train” project wins national award



Citizens' Rail's "Beach train" project has won an award at a ceremony recognising the best regional transport projects in France.

The summer weekend service was introduced by Citizens' Rail partner Pays de la Loire on the previously struggling La Roche-sur-Yon line in July 2013.

Supported by a fantastic marketing campaign, the train was a huge success – with more than 5,300 extra journeys made, and an average ridership of 171 people per train, rising to 359 people on the busiest service. Passengers gave an overwhelming thumbs up to the service, with satisfaction ratings hitting 90% and the only grumble being overcrowding – and this on a line which is sometimes practically deserted.

The beach train returned for an extended season in 2014 (1st May to 28 September), helping to take a line blighted by having too few trains and even fewer passengers and transforming it into a thriving resource that boosts tourism and the economy.

The project won the "Passenger service" category at the national Grand Prix des Régions awards held by French transport sector magazine Ville, Rail & Transports.

The awards, now in their fourth year, recognise the country's very best regional transport projects. The "Passenger service" category recognises new services benefiting TER passengers. The award was presented to Gilles Bontemps, Pays de la Loire's Vice-President for Transport, on 13th May 2014.

■ Find out more: www.citizensrail.org/pays-de-la-loire

Minibeast Trail on The Riviera Line



As part of Citizens' Rail, a "Minibeast Trail" was launched on The Riviera Line (Exeter-Paignton in the UK) this summer to encourage young families to try the train.

Children from Gatehouse Primary School in Dawlish and Sure Start Dads' Club Stay and Play in Teignmouth made the minibeasts – including butterflies, dragonflies, bees, ladybirds and snails – from recycled plastic. They were then installed on planters at Teignmouth, Dawlish, Newton Abbot, Torquay and Paignton stations.

An accompanying Minibeast Trail leaflet was produced, and promoted in local newspapers and on social media. This encouraged children to visit each station, find that station's minibeast and give it a name. Once all five were found and named, the child could win a copy of the Ladybird "Minibeasts: First Fabulous Facts" book by sending their completed leaflet and train ticket to the Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership.

Leaflets were available at local staffed stations and could also be downloaded from the project's webpage. As well as instructions for how to take part, they also contained interesting facts about each creature, and messages about rail safety.

The project generated good local press coverage and has attracted interest from Citizens' Rail's European partners as well as other community rail partnerships in the UK.

For more information about the trail, contact Riviera Line Project Officer Celia Minoughan at the Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership on 01752 584777 or at celia@citizensrail.org.

■ See more photos and the Minibeast Train leaflet: www.citizensrail.org/minibeasts

8 out of 10 want to get involved in planning stations



Students from RWTH Aachen University have uncovered strong public support for a new station at Richterich, with 80% of those surveyed eager to be involved in the project's planning.

660 local residents were consulted through face-to-face interviews and online surveys during July 2013. The 10 students asked what level of participation people wanted to have in the new station project, as well as their preferences regarding destinations and the choice between the North and South variants of the plan.

Findings

- » 71% said would use the train (because it would be quicker than the bus and more convenient).
- » 21% said they would not use the station (due to anticipated delays and being satisfied with the existing bus service).
- » 80% wanted to be involved in planning the new station.
- » People's highest priorities for the station's design are shelter, good bus connections and personal safety.
- » Other priorities include greening and noise protection for local residents.
- » There is an even split between those wanting a station with modest features but that is quick to realise, and those wanting a more comprehensive station that may take longer to build.
- » The students found that it is the youngest and oldest residents who rely most heavily on existing public transport in the form of the bus service.
- » It is estimated that 1000 passengers would use the new station per day.

International geographers' conference

Dominik Elsmann from RWTH Aachen University presented on the topic of "Citizens' Rail – Using citizens' participation for rail revitalization" at the International Geographical Union conference in Krakow this summer.

The presentation formed part of the session on "Geography of Governance – Geography, governance and citizens' participation". It was a great opportunity to promote the Citizens' Rail project to a dedicated audience and to exchange knowledge on this important topic.

Citizens' Rail toolkit

Over the coming year, we will be creating a free Citizens' Rail toolkit of advice and resources. It will cover everything from how to engage local residents in station planning, to tips on working with schools on your line.

Its aim is to pass on the lessons we have learned, in order to help even more railways to thrive by involving the community. Make sure to sign up to this newsletter to hear the latest about the toolkit - including how you can contribute.

Sign up for future editions

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