

INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE

Sponsored by The EU Citizens' Rail Project

JOINT FIRST:

Brian Haworth & Marjorie Birch
for the Community Rail Lancashire
'Young Person's Passport to Safe
Travel'

Community Rail Lancashire's 'Young Person's Passport to Safe Travel' has evolved following five years of experience and knowledge developed whilst working with over 5000 primary school children. From the initial project which involved a short visit to the school to give a talk and present a DVD the children now experience over 6 hours of education about rail history, use of timetables, safe travel and railway related safety issues. Over time the schools involved have realised the benefit, both financial and convenience of rail travel and many now choose the train as their preferred method of travel on school outings.

"As a school working with Community Rail Lancashire this has increased our awareness of the opportunities that the local rail network can provide as a facility for the school. We have planned a number of activities in the local vicinity where we have used the local station and train network as a viable transport method for school travel." said S. Crosier, Headteacher, Huncoat Primary School. "Our next challenge was to try to encourage our pupils to travel with their parents by train. It is very evident when we take the children on the train journey that a large number, around 60% have never travelled by train. From their expressions of surprise and questions asked it is clear that this is a totally new and fun experience."

As part of the educational programme they spend 30 minutes working out local journeys using the timetable for the relevant route. The children also make a ticket for the journey planned and take both these items home, trying to encourage family use of rail travel.

Whilst working with Willow Class at St Anne's and St Joseph's School in Accrington, the children talked about going shopping, visiting Blackpool and the majority travelled by car even though they lived very close to a railway station. The teachers commented that it was sad that the potential was there for greater use of the train but we needed to put something in place to motivate parents. One child asked if they could use the ticket they had made if they travelled with their parents on the train. We felt that there was an opportunity to acknowledge the hard work the children had put in and combine it with some form of free ticket. The children of Willow Class were then set the task of producing something that would fit the brief and following class discussions they all decided on a passport style document. Joshua and Jacob's design was selected as the one to be developed and Mrs Clarke, the class teacher chose the most relevant statements and worded them in a positive "I Can" format as recommended in the Key Stage 2 National Curriculum. The children ticked the appropriate box when they had completed that area of learning.

Brian the Bull had to go on the front cover, of course, as that character is synonymous with Community Rail Lancashire. Northern Rail has always supported the educational programme by providing free rail travel to schools visiting Accrington Station bunker so we asked them if they would go one step further and agree to the children having free travel on off peak services for three months, on two specified routes, when accompanied by

an adult. We were delighted when Northern agreed. This must be a first for a train operating company, making such a financial commitment to this continuing programme. The passport has also been partly funded by a Designated Community Rail Development Fund grant from the Department for Transport, Network Rail and ACoRP.

The children's copy was sent to the designer and printer used by Community Rail Lancashire and the pupils were delighted with the finished product. Craig Harrop, Northern Rail Customer Services Manager launched this new passport in January 2014 in front of an invited audience from the participating school. It was then taken to three other schools to be presented to children who had recently completed the 6 hours of study. In the first two months approximately half of the children had used the train to go shopping, visit family and attend football matches with their siblings and parent/s. As a by-product the project has encouraged families to spend time together as well as achieving one of the main aims of increasing passenger usage on off peak trains.

"I hadn't thought of using the train, even though the station is only 5 minutes away, as it is so convenient to use the car. That is until Max brought his passport home from school. We decided to go to the football museum in Manchester and it was easy as the museum is just across from Manchester Victoria Station. We didn't have the problem of finding and paying for a parking space in the city. We will certainly use the train again as a family" Mrs M (parent) Brookside school.

Since the launch there has been a presentation of the project at the Community Rail Designated Lines Seminar in Blackpool in March of this year. In June this year Dominik Elsmann of the RWTH, Aachen University asked if Community Rail Lancashire could assist in developing the passport project in schools in Aachen, Germany as part of the EU Interreg IVB Citizen's Rail Project.

"An excellent innovative project with on-going benefits and educational value. A brilliant idea!" Community Rail Awards judges.

