

# Holding a Station Community Day Event

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## An ACoRP Briefing Sheet

**In this briefing sheet commissioned by the Designated Community Rail Development Fund (DCRDF), Faye Lambert tells us how the North Staffordshire CRP has developed the concept of Station Community Day Events.**

### **What is a Station Community Day?**

A Station Community Day is an easy to organise, very simple event whereby representatives from the local community and supporting organisations are invited to come together for a few hours to work alongside station volunteers, the Community Rail Partnership and TOC staff and carry out a station 'spring clean'.

The 'Day' – generally up to 4 hours from mid-morning to early afternoon - involves rolling out a number of team activities to improve the station for passengers, from cleaning and litter picking to gardening and painting.

A Station Community Day can be held either as an individual 'spring clean' event or be combined with a station community occasion when a new project for the station is introduced, for example, the installation of new community artwork or a cheque presentation from a community supporter. In the last year we've held a total of 4 of these events at North Staffordshire Line stations, and each one proved a real benefit to the station and was greatly enjoyed by all.



*East Midlands Trains Customers Relations Team help out at Blythe Bridge Community Day March 2011*

## Why hold this event?

Station Community Days are a great way of:

- adding value to the work of station volunteers and retaining their interest and support
- securing involvement from the wider community and local agencies to help improve and take ownership of their local station
- involving your TOC right in at the coalface, because through this event TOC staff will have the opportunity to work side by side with volunteers actually in the station environment. Benefits to the TOC are that the event helps demonstrate to your volunteers its support for and how much it values station volunteering; the event also helps to improve the understanding of community rail within the TOC
- raising awareness of the station, rail travel and volunteering (both via the associated publicity you will engender for the event and word of mouth from people who take part)
- improving the station for that most important of groups, the rail passenger, and reducing anti-social behaviour at the station
- having fun and providing a real sense of satisfaction and local pride for everyone involved

## What do you need to hold this event?

The key component is station volunteers linked to that station; if you've got a group all the better, but even with one volunteer, you've got the basis. Add to this you need permission from the managing TOC to run the event and buy-in from them in terms of staff support to

attend on the day (and to take care of the health and safety brief for all attenders).

Finally, to make it a real community event, you need involvement from local agencies (i.e. parish/town council, BTP, perhaps a local school or community group, even the local MP); it may only be one or two community representatives and who you invite is up to you and what activities you have planned for the day, but the general rule of thumb is, the more the merrier.

One thing I haven't mentioned is funding and that's because one of the best things about a Station Community Day is that it's an event that can be run on a shoestring. Apart from a bit of petty cash to supply everyone with a cuppa and a snack (if you speak nicely to your TOC they will generally provide this from on-board catering) and if gardening is part of the day, a few bedding plants, that's it!

## Planning the day

So you and your volunteers have decided you would like to hold a Station Community Day.

### Get agreement from TOC

Firstly, speak to your TOC Route Manager or the key person there you usually work with on a day to day basis. Seek their agreement to have the event, explaining the sort of activities you would like to hold on the day, the benefits of the event and what resources you will need from them.

### Pick some dates

With their agreement, choose two or three provisional dates that they (or their nominated representative) can attend – it's easier if you make these dates the same day of the week that your volunteers usually work at the station.

Also choose dates that give you at least a couple of months lead-in time so that you have time to make all the

arrangements. Ensure also that they are dates when the TOC's Station Service Team for the route will be available to attend; having them there on the day makes it easier all round as it means you will have access to additional tools and equipment such as litter bags, leaf blowers etc.

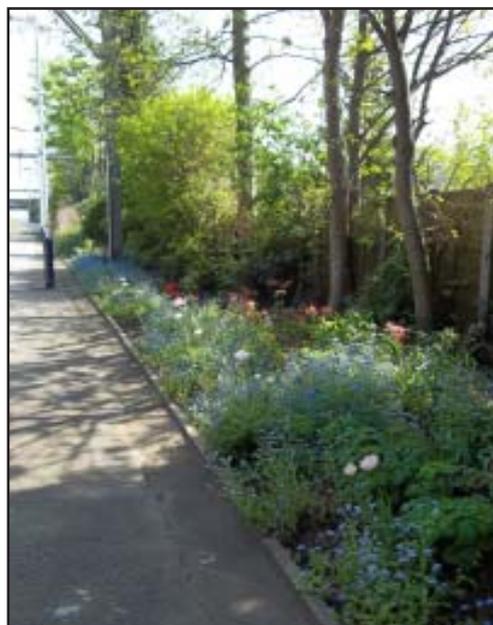
## Pre-Community Day meeting

Next speak to your volunteers and arrange to hold a pre-Community Day meeting at the station with the TOC. Use this to look around the site and list activities that can safely be done on the day. These can include for example,

- Weeding
- Digging
- Planting
- Other gardening duties likespreading mulch
- Painting (inside waiting shelters, rockery stones, bench seating etc.)
- Cleaning
- Picking litter in and around the station

Make sure you include a number of activities that can be carried out as a contingency back-up if the weather on Community Day is too bad to work outdoors.

Decide also at this meeting what other resources you will need to arrange. For example, if it's an unstaffed station with no toilet



facilities or a booking hall/kitchen where you can prepare and set out beverages, then providing these facilities are something you need to arrange in the locality, perhaps at the community centre (your Town/Parish Council will be able to help with this).

### **Who does what**

Also use this meeting to agree the date, decide who to invite to take part and importantly agree who – CRP / TOC / volunteers - will do what before and on Community Day. Generally, the CRP takes on the task of inviting community organisations to attend and informing the press so you get some good publicity for the event and the station. The TOC provides the resources like extra tools and equipment, high vis jackets and usually refreshments, and recruits TOC staff to work at the station on the day.

### **Write up plan and invite the community**

Make a written plan of this to share all round then start ringing round to get your community organisations on board. These are the sort of groups we've had at North Staffordshire CRP Community Days – BTP Officers; Wildlife Trust; Rotary Club; local councillors; Day Services groups; High School students; primary school gardening clubs; local authority staff; volunteers from other stations on the route; volunteers' family members .....in general everyone who has proved to have an interest in the station and their local area – you'll find as long as you give them enough notice they are more than happy to attend.

### **Keep in regular contact...**

...with your TOC lead, your volunteers, everyone attending so you can update each other as everything is arranged; this ensures that everyone is focused about what they need to do and importantly, it keeps everyone looking forward to the Day.

### **Arrange publicity**

Speak to your local and regional press at least a couple of weeks beforehand to secure coverage; get the event in their photo diaries and get your press release out in good time, with quotes from the TOC and lead volunteer.



*Press photo with Alsager School students*

### **On the Day**

Start the event with a welcome and introduction then it's over to the TOC to deliver a health and safety brief to everyone attending and hand out high vis clothing for all to wear.

### **Jobs for all**

Delegate who will do what and hand out tools etc. accordingly. Ideally, assign one TOC staff member / CRP representative to each working group; your lead volunteer should also be allocated this team leader type role. This will ensure that each group is allied to someone who is used to working in a station environment and can advise them as necessary; they can also ensure that the activities do not affect passengers using the station. The role of the CRP Officer is to be on hand, checking around to see if things are OK, if people have what they need and they are enjoying the day. Also be available to greet the press and gather everyone for the photographs. Be sure to take plenty of your own photos too for CRP publications, local free press, the internet, trade press, even to display at the station (Community Days are a great way of recruiting new volunteers) and to share with everyone after the event as a Thankyou.

### **Take a break**

Stop work halfway for a cuppa and a snack and to give people a chance to meet everyone. You'll find Community Days are great forums for planning too, with volunteers from other stations sharing ideas and getting people on board for their own Community Day!

### **At the end**

Involve everyone in a general tidy round, making sure that all tools etc. are safely removed from the site. Have a quick tour around the station so everyone can share and talk about what they have done. Importantly, thank everyone for their help and start making a list of those that would be happy to be involved in future events.

### **After the event**

#### **It's not all over**

Make sure you include in the plan for the event to have a quick debrief meeting with your TOC representative and volunteers and learn from each other what worked well on the day and tips for next time.

Share press coverage and photos with everyone involved as an extra thankyou.

Then start planning for your next event!



*Pupils from St. Thomas School with their new planters October. 2010*

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