

Volunteering spotlight

Mark Bennett (LNW Route) volunteered to engage the community



I'm Mark...

I am a Sponsor for LNW Route working on the Banbury Area Remodelling Project and Banbury Light Maintenance Depot within Network Operations. In the delivery phase of a project the Sponsor is accountable for ensuring that the project is governed effectively and delivers the original Client requirements.

One of the Client's requirements was the demolition of Banbury North signal box. When the local community objected to this, I worked with Chiltern Railway and community representatives to negotiate and lead 'Project Crossover', a 10 week project that facilitated public tours of the signal box before the demolition. I wanted to volunteer my time to make the tours successful and to give the public a chance to see behind the scenes.

What did we do?

We held open days to enable members of the public, local schools, enthusiasts and local businesses to see Banbury North signal box in its final operational condition. The tours were used to explain railway history, signalling, railway safety and to promote careers in the rail industry. 3,508 visitors came between 10 August and 2 October 2016. The project had a hugely positive impact on the community. My role was to ensure safety, to manage the logistics and often act as the tour guide!

What did we give and get?

Tours brought the rail industry to life. Visitors got the opportunity to ring bells, pull levers, and understand the engineering skill that underpins the rail industry. Tours focused on railway safety and showed Network Rails' respect for railway heritage. I realised the public want to hear our messages.

Hundreds of school-age children were reached with the tours. We delivered Level Crossing safety videos and community/safety presentations. It was great fun showing children a working signal box.

We improved our reputation with local communities, which helped my project directly with a reduction in complaints and objections to the project. Over 30 staff volunteered and I saw first-hand the importance of caring for communities and the value of working in partnership with the public.

What have I learned?

Working for Network Rail we all have a great opportunity to make a real difference through using our five days of volunteer leave each year. The team of 30 volunteers provided well over 1,000 hours of volunteering. This is a real opportunity to make a difference outside of the normal day job.

For more information please get in touch...

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