

# Arundel Station Improvements: a Community Rail Partnership Case Study

## Background

Through the Southeast Community Rail Partnership, Rowena Tyler organised an exploratory visit to Angmering, Lancing and West Worthing stations for a couple of greening enthusiasts from Arundel. The visit took place on a particularly cold morning in January 2023, but at each station, they received a warm welcome and returned home with ideas and inspiration.

By mid-February, a new alliance of local organisations had been formed – Greening Arundel – bringing together like-minded organisations to combine knowledge, experience, ideas and energy, in order to have a greater, faster and more sustainable impact. The following month, recruitment got underway for the Green Team - a band of volunteers from across the community, who would deliver greening projects on the ground. Their first endeavour was to transform the path to Arundel station.

## Achievements in 2023

Work began on 1 April and over the following five months, members of the Green Team devoted more than 500 volunteer hours to the project. Initially, this entailed cutting back brambles, nettles and maretails that had overtaken the path.

Next Stubbs Copse Woodyard donated and delivered soil conditioner to improve the quality of the beds, along with golden woodchips for the underpass. Another local business, Arundel Arboretum donated shrubs (a hydrangea, fatsia and ferns) for one of the shady beds.

Meanwhile, the formation of Greening Arundel and the Green Team had caught the attention of Arundel Town Council (ATC), which provided a grant to support the work at the station. This enabled the team to buy pollinator-friendly, native hedgerow plants for both of the 120 metre beds. Station staff were kind enough to hold the plants overnight before Green Team members arrived to undertake planting. Nasturtiums, grown from seed by local primary school children, were also planted to complement the hedgerow plants and wildflowers that sprang up between them.

Weeding of the beds (especially to remove bindweed and goosegrass) took place in alternate weeks carried out by the now 30-member Green Team. Using ATC funding, the Aldingbourne Trust was engaged to provide climate-sensitive weekly watering, which proved to be essential, particularly in the six week dry spell of May and June. In July, assistance came from students who spent their Community Day supporting Greening Arundel projects. In all, 19 students from Seaford College and 2 from Six Villages Academy rolled up their sleeves to help with watering and litter-picking. Later in the year, representatives from the Environment Agency's Tidal Walls Project spent a team-building day at the station making a start on the forecourt area.

## Activities in Early 2024

Early in 2024, National Highways granted permission for the accumulated rubbish and biomass to be cleared from behind the fence along the station path. This work was undertaken in February by Spruce Gardening and Tree Care, In addition, a biodegradable membrane was laid with wood chips once again provided by Stubbs Woodyard, This component was funded through the Royal Horticultural Society's Network Development Grant to Greening Arundel.

In March, Network Rail arranged for a three-person team from SNC Forestry Limited to transform the station forecourt by removing diseased and dangerous branches and trees. They also pruned for tree health and to allow more light, kindly leaving the resulting wood chips and small logs. They were very careful not to disturb the many daffodils already in bloom.

## **Future Plans**

In April, Arun District Council plans to remove plants currently located in Jubilee Gardens. These will be donated to Greening Arundel and many of them will be planted in the station forecourt area. A remaining piece of membrane will be put down and covered with woodchips in a central spot as the foundation for a picnic table.

Greening Arundel applied to the *Your Station: Your Community Fund (YSYC)* to purchase a picnic table, bench and wooden train as the focus of a usable community space in the forecourt. That funding was also designed to support the purchase of gardening equipment and tools, as well as additional signage, a children's artwork project, a bug hotel and a new nature-based display in the waiting room. Unfortunately, the proposal was not successful. However, a similar proposal is being prepared for Network Rail's Green Fund.

A major impediment to usage of the station path in the winter months is the lack of lighting. The YSYC proposal included provision for lighting to be installed along the path. This proposition is supported by National Highways, the South Downs and ATC.

## **Impact**

The impact of this initiative has been considerable even in its first year. It provided the catalyst for the formation of Greening Arundel and the Green Team and has thus contributed to community cohesion and wellness.

It has brought a lot of pleasure and pride to local residents (including young children) and helped to provide a much-improved first impression of Arundel for visitors, hopefully encouraging their return. It may also have triggered increased rail use.

In addition, it has provided purpose for young adults with autism and learning difficulties, and enabled young people as well as local businesses to get involved in local greening activities.

We will be working to make the station path safe and usable throughout the year and to create a welcoming and inspiring community space in the forecourt.

Ultimately, we plan to create a wildlife corridor stretching from the train station along the Causeway, up High Street and onto London Road heading towards Arundel Park.

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