

Case Study

Visit by Rail: Amberley Museum

Background

Visit by Rail is a schools Sustainable Travel project delivered in partnership between The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) and Sussex Community Rail Partnership and funded through the Government's Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF).

The project had two aims:

1. To increase the number of schools accessing the National Park by rail and to embed sustainable travel values and experiences in a wide range of secondary students, equipping them to travel confidently by public transport and to consider the role of sustainable transport in managing rural tourism.
2. To boost the market for outdoor learning providers within the South Downs National Park by encouraging and enabling a wider range of schools to visit by sustainable transport.

Secondary schools within easy reach of train stations were targeted for the project.

A series of Educational Visit Plans were developed and delivered by National Park Learning Providers who are accessible by rail travel.



The project

Amberley Museum is situated right next to Amberley station so it was an ideal site for the Visit by Rail project. However in the last few years there have been no secondary school visits to the museum so it was decided to use a Primary School visit for the project.

Fittleworth CE Village School is 2.4 miles away from Pulborough Station and regularly uses the train for educational visits. This was the case for Oak Class (Years 1 & 2) who visited Amberley Museum in October 2015 to learn about what it was like to live in the past for their topic 'Then and Now'.

The educational material for the visit was provided by the Education Team at Amberley Museum. The children started off in the Electricity Hall where they were able to see variety of domestic appliances from across the ages and then they moved on to the Connected Earth's Telecommunications exhibition where the children had great fun 'using' old fashioned telephones. Then it was back to the Electricity Hall where there was a fantastic visual display of different types of electricity. Then followed a ride on the miniature railway around the whole site.

After lunch there was an open top bus ride and then the opportunity to explore the rest of the exhibits at the Museum.

Thanks to the generosity of Southern Railway, the pilot visit benefited from 32 free pupil and 8 free adult tickets.

“As a school we recognise the importance of Educational Visits. We regularly travel by rail to enable us to make visits that might otherwise be unaffordable. Within the last year we have made visits to Portsmouth Dockyard, Arundel Castle and London’s Southbank amongst others.”

Mrs Wilmhurst, Educational Visits Co-ordinator – Fittleworth C E Village School.

The outcome

32 Year 1 & 2 pupils and 8 adults visited Amberley Museum in the South Downs National Park by train and would have saved over £100 by not going by coach. The pilot visit has demonstrated that is cheaper for some schools to travel by train than by coach for educational visits to the Museum.

The Education Team at Amberley Museum have agreed to add in educational material about sustainable transport for their KS2 programmes as a result of this pilot visit and will be promoting sustainable travel to schools in the future.

An Educational Visit Plan has been produced to encourage other schools to visit Amberley Museum by train, and this will be promoted through the South Downs National Park Authority, the Sussex Community Rail Partnership and the Amberley Museum websites.

The future

The LSTF funded Visit by Rail pilot projects will come to an end on the 31st March 2016.

The Case Studies, Educational Visit Plans and Lessons Learnt documents will continue to be shared on the partner websites and a dedicated Visit by Rail page has been created on the SDNPA Learning Zone to promote sustainable rail travel for future education visits.

The legacy in terms of proven financial benefit of rail over coach travel for schools provides a strong marketing approach. In addition, work with the rail companies to simplify the online school booking process will directly benefit schools using rail travel in the future.

