Press Release

24 March 2022

Avanti West Coast creates a buzz for bees with community garden in Wigan

- *Avanti West Coast supports project to help bee population in the region*
- *Redundant railway land to be transformed into wildflower haven for vital species*
- *Bee-friendly space designed to inspire people of all ages to care for environment*

Avanti West Coast is supporting a community project in Wigan to transform redundant railway land into a bee-friendly space.

Green-fingered volunteers from Avanti West Coast, Network Rail, South East Lancashire Community Rail Partnership (CRP), and the local area recently teamed up to begin work to create a wildflower meadow next to the West Coast Main Line.

Their efforts to plant seeds mark the start of the Wigan Meadow Project – an initiative, funded through Avanti West Coast's Community Rail Project Fund, to brighten up a bare spot of land to make it a haven for bees.

An idea of South East Lancashire CRP, the project aims to help the region's bee population, which is in decline due to loss of habitat, by creating a friendly space for bees with pollinator plants. It also aims to support the local production of honey with beehives.

To bring further life to the area, a living wall with edible herbs and plants for residents to pick and enjoy at home will be created behind the Swan and Railway pub, adjacent to the unused land

It is hoped the space will become a hive of activity - with local people being given the opportunity to join a new community group where they can volunteer their time to maintain the living wall and pass on their gardening knowledge.

Webcams will be installed near to the beehives to monitor their progress – enabling people to learn about the insects and beekeeping with the aim of inspiring them to recreate a wildlife haven at home.

Joanna Buckley, Community Manager at Avanti West Coast, said: "We want to make a positive difference to the environment around us, so we're excited to have joined volunteers to begin transforming the area and hope it will inspire others to care for this space, support the local production of honey and make Wigan a bee-friendly town.

"We're proud to play our part in bringing the community together to help the bee population. This project will brighten up the local scenery for visitors as well as our customers as they travel between London and Scotland onboard our trains."

Dr Steph Dermott, Community Rail Officer for South East Lancashire CRP, said: "The population of bees in the UK is declining quite rapidly with disastrous consequences forecast. Creating a town centre wildflower meadow area with some hives will provide a habitat for both wild and domestic bees which will be a step towards saving them. Shortages of local honey from Wigan hives for health benefits is another driving factor for this project."

Kara Wood, Network Rail's North West Route Head of Performance and Customer Relationship, said: "This is a fantastic project lead by our brilliant community rail partners. At Network Rail, we care deeply about the environment. It will be great to watch this new space bloom into a home for the bees and a community hub for people in Wigan.

"I'm very pleased Network Rail had the chance to contribute to the Wigan Meadow Project and we hope the local community and passengers travelling through Wigan really benefit from it."

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About South East Community Rail Partnership

South East Lancashire Community Rail Partnership (CRP) was formally established in June 2019, growing out of the work of Bolton Station Community Development Partnership. The CRP aims to take a more strategic approach with a strong emphasis on promoting social inclusion and community cohesion, particularly through arts-related activities.

https://www.southeastlancscrp.org.uk/

About Avanti West Coast

Avanti West Coast, operator of intercity rail services on the West Coast Main Line, is a joint venture between FirstGroup and Trenitalia, delivering a cleaner, greener railway that drives the West Coast forward.

We're on a mission to revolutionise train travel, linking together the towns and major cities of the UK to create an iconic railway the country can be proud of. We've got big plans including a fleet of new intercity trains, as well as the complete refurbishment of the existing Pendolino train fleet. We will introduce more train services every week with new routes added, and a much-improved

onboard service with enhanced free Wi-Fi, plug sockets, 25,000 brand new seats and improved catering. Since 8 December 2019, passengers have benefitted from improved passenger compensation, available for journeys delayed by just 15 minutes.

For the latest news, visit the Avanti West Coast Media Room:
https://newsdesk.avantiwestcoast.co.uk/

Press Office: 0845 000 3333