

New ways of making a difference

Living Railway Memories.

Introduction

March and District Model Railway Club have been looking at what they do and thinking about this as more than just model trains. After seeing an article in a national model railway magazine they decided they wanted to explore doing a project to help people with dementia and other conditions affecting memory, using a portable model railway layout.

This is the second case study we have done on this group as it moves into new projects and partnerships. The first [can be found here](#).

They approached CCVS to help with creating a proposal that:

- Evidenced the need
- Set out the objectives
- Described the outcomes

They were also looking at possible sources of funding to help with the costs of the new portable layout, they had already got support from three model making companies who donated models and a national model railway magazine who wanted to publish an article about the project.

The club recognised the importance of working in partnership for this project and they had already developed links with the Dementia Café in Wisbech run by Alzheimer's Society and PHAB Wisbech.

What was done

CCVS were able to help the club in a number of ways, and were able to make the links with the Healthy Fenland project run by Care Network. To start CCVS were able to help the them to find evidence to support their proposal and to help them develop this. (see below)

Funding

The project was referred to the Healthy Fenland Team, who, following support from CCVS, were able to assist the club to write an application to the Healthy Fenland Fund.

The club were also encouraged to apply to CCVS for a RAG grant.



"Grants are never easy to get, even if someone tells you what they are. They require a lot of preparation and planning. CCVS and The Healthy Fenland Team have provided the support and knowledge to enable our applications to be successful".

The project proposal

“Living Railway Memories” Project.

According to the Alzheimer’s Society, in the UK there are currently over *800,000* dementia sufferers, with *670,000* family and friends acting as their primary carers. *By 2021 there will be over one million people in the UK with dementia.*

Triggering the early memories of dementia patients and older people of life in the 1940s-60s when they were growing up is the purpose of our “Living Railway Memories” project.

March has been a railway town with large stock yards, a very big station and the railway was the most common way for local people to travel. The railway continues to be big part of the town’s social life and its economy. The March and District Model Railway Club has it man lay out at the Rockwood Social Club, but has developed several smaller, portable layouts which they enjoy displaying in community settings.

These often provoke people’s memories of using the railways, Living in March and their work which was often related to the railway or memories of people they knew who worked in the yards and of course model railways themselves have always fascinated people, something many of us have played with.

Some of the model railway club’s members have seen the potential of these portable layouts to be used in residential homes, clubs and other setting to benefit people with dementia (and other learning difficulties) and their careers.

Frequently carers are at a loss to know how to engage with a dementia patient, the model railway display, photographs, being able to operate the models themselves or direct the volunteers to move the models will stimulate their minds model trains, layout locations and railway objects and experiences familiar to them from their childhood and teenage years.

The interaction and recall which our “Living railway Memories” resources will provide may help to break the isolation of people living with memory loss and lead to informative conversations and reminiscences, opening up topics which can be returned to in the future. Such mental activity is beneficial for the patient’s well-being and can ease the stress of the carer too

The layout, models and other items will remind any viewer who grew up in those years of many different aspects of life, and will also stimulate many memories of the viewers’ early years, which are also likely to lead to lively discussions.

[Link to video](#)

Training and Networking

CCVS were able to help the club get training in dementia awareness for a number of their members to help them when they were taking the layout to groups.

We also promoted the project with other groups in the area who might have an interest in the project, and ensured that both Fenland District and Cambridge County Councils community and health teams were aware of the work. Specifically we were able to facilitate the links with Linden Court Care Homes

The Impact/change

With £680 funding from the Healthy Fenland Fund and £200 from the RAG fund, along with the donated items they received from the model companies, the club were able to begin building a larger scale layout which will:

- Make it easier for groups of people to see what is happening on the layout
- Make it easier for people to uncouple and recouple wagons when doing the 'Inglenock Shunting Puzzle' and to see

Interest in the club has grown because of their engagement with the community and their attendance at events with this project. In their words

"The problem is we now have as many members as we can accommodate, and more people are wanting to join".

After a successful session at the Dementia Café, the wife of one of the people attending came up and said she was buying a model railway for her husband who suffered from dementia, as she had not seen him so animated and engaged for a long time.

Wisbech PHAB have asked them back. There was interest across all those who were at the first event, not just in how the trains worked but also on how the model was built and the scenery and figures etc. used in the layout.

Interest in the project has continued to grow. The County Councils community teams, the local Alzheimer society and a group of care homes have all expressed an interest in working with the club. This has put pressure on the club as they only have a small number of members who want, or feel confident enough, to go out to speak to groups

"The response to this project so far has been really good, especially from the health care community".

The club will look to train more members to work with groups in the community and will continue to work in partnership with other organisations to use model railways to engage individuals.

"Without the help of CCVS and the Healthy Fenland Fund the project would never have got off the ground"
