



3 Sir
Gysylltiedig

3 Counties
Connected





What was the project?

A series of guided rail-based heritage and tourism experiences delivered during the quieter winter months.

Working with Green Badge Guides, we delivered themed tours covering:

- Women's Stories
- Railway 200
- Border Connections
- The Marches

The aim was to encourage people to explore by rail, support local businesses and build confidence in using public transport.



Why did we do it?

We wanted to:

- Encourage leisure rail travel.
- Support local tourism and businesses.
- Reduce isolation.
- Help people build confidence travelling independently.

We knew many people had railcards, concessionary passes and free travel opportunities but were not using them.



What did success look like?

- People booking places.
- People enjoying the tours.
- Positive feedback.
- Increased rail use.

What we discovered was that the impact went much deeper than that.



The Story That Stayed With Me

One participant was a retired firefighter. After experiencing stress in his previous role, he had taken early retirement and had become quite isolated. His wife saw the tours advertised on Eventbrite and booked him a place. He arrived on his own. He told us it was the first time he had joined a group activity since leaving work. By the end of the day, he was chatting with everyone. He later joined additional tours.

For me, this perfectly demonstrated the project's impact on confidence and wellbeing.

“This was the first instance of socialising with a group after a very long time since retiring”.

What Changed?

Participants told us:

- New friends.
- More confident travelling.
- Discovered places they had never visited before.
- More likely to use rail in the future

92% more likely to travel by rail for leisure after taking part.

100% would recommend the tours.

100% wanted more tours.

“The tours have completely dispelled any nervousness I had about using rail”.





Testing Behaviour Change

At the end of the project, we invited previous participants to attend a further tour. This time they were expected to travel independently to Ruabon by train.

- Most did.
- Many used concessionary travel passes they had never previously used.
- Participants travelled by bus as part of the journey. Several commented that they had not used a bus for many years and were surprised how easy it was.

The project had created genuine behaviour change rather than simply a positive day out.

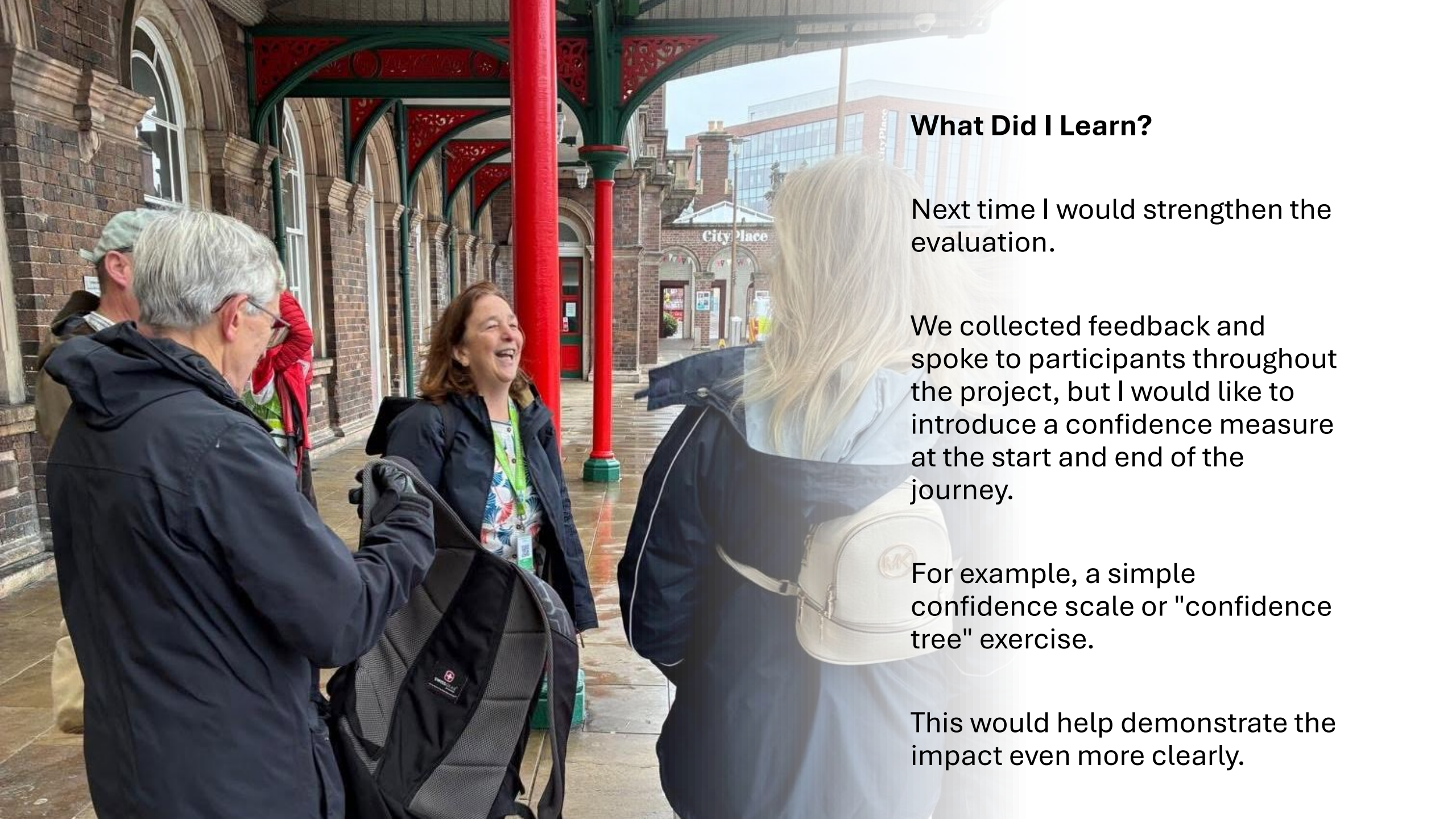


What Surprised Me?

The social impact. I expected a tourism project. What emerged was a confidence-building and wellbeing project.

The friendships, conversations and personal stories became just as important as the destinations we visited.

I also underestimated how many people lacked confidence using public transport despite having access to free or discounted travel.



What Did I Learn?

Next time I would strengthen the evaluation.

We collected feedback and spoke to participants throughout the project, but I would like to introduce a confidence measure at the start and end of the journey.

For example, a simple confidence scale or "confidence tree" exercise.

This would help demonstrate the impact even more clearly.



Final Reflection

Tours by Rail started as a project to encourage leisure rail travel.

It became much more than that.

It helped people reconnect with their communities, build confidence and make new social connections.

For me, that has been the most rewarding outcome of all.