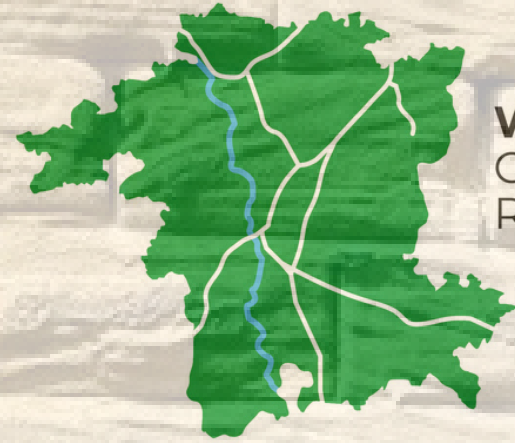




Worcestershire
Community
Rail Partnership



**UNIVERSITY of
WORCESTER**

Student-led Wellbeing Rail Trail Walks

Turning stations into gateways to wellbeing.

8 trained • 7 active • 12 guided walks • 55 participants • 10 stations

Funded by GWR and CrossCountry

Where Did the Idea Come From?

We saw an opportunity to connect three things that already existed: the rail trails, the natural landscapes along our lines, and young people looking for meaningful, paid experience in their communities.

- ✓ Rail as a gateway to nature
- ✓ Walking as a wellbeing tool
- ✓ Wellbeing needs trusted, relatable guides
- ✓ Young people as those guides



Could students become the people helping others make those connections? That was our core question — and the starting point for everything that followed.

The Partnership Model

Four partners working together to deliver student-led wellbeing rail trail walks across Worcestershire — each with a distinct and essential role.



Worcester University

Recruitment, training, contracts and pay for Walk Leaders. Research, evaluation and academic oversight throughout the project.



WCRP

Rail Trails, coordination and community engagement. Promotion of the programme and connection to station gateways.



Students

Paid Walk Leaders delivering guided walks. Gaining real employment experience, confidence and public-facing skills.



Community

Participants and local groups. University staff, Healthy Worcestershire, older people and SEN groups discovering new places.

What Actually Happened

2-phase approach, 18 students recruited, 9 trained, 7 active Walk Leaders delivering approximately 12 guided walks across 10 stations — reaching 55 participants from university, community health, older people's and SEN groups.

55 participants

Reached across all walks

University students and staff, Healthy Worcestershire groups, older people, and an SEN group through Bridge House in Malvern.

10 stations

Rail access points used

Walks delivered across the Worcestershire rail network, connecting participants to nature and community via the rail trail routes.

12 walks

Guided walks delivered

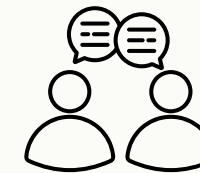
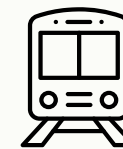
7 of 9 trained Walk Leaders led public guided walks, and 8 students completed the full training programme.





What Students Gained

This was paid, public-facing employment — not just volunteering. Students developed a wide range of real-world professional skills while leading guided Rail Trail Walks across Worcestershire stations and nature routes.



8 Skills Areas

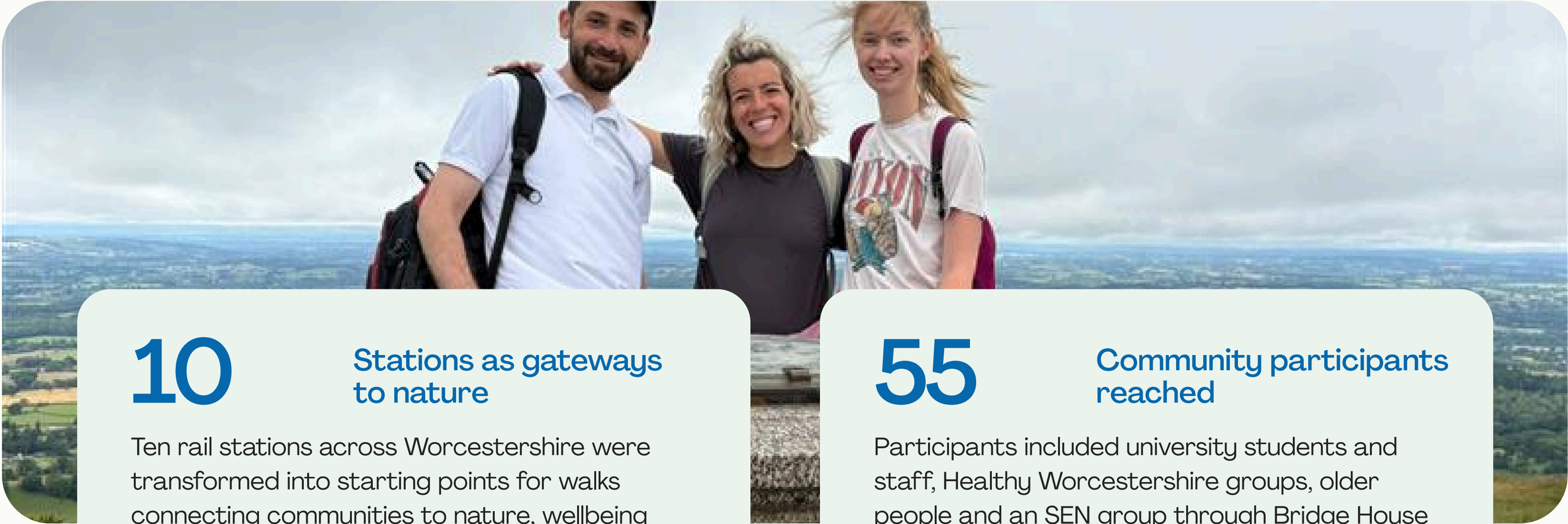
Communication, leadership, confidence, problem-solving, teamwork, organisation, public engagement and safeguarding/professional responsibility.

Paid Employment

"Interacting with different people and learning from older participants was something I hadn't expected — it gave me so much confidence."
— Thea, Walk Leader

Wider Community Impact

Stations became gateways to places, people and wellbeing — with participants discovering parts of Worcestershire they had never previously visited.



10

Stations as gateways to nature

Ten rail stations across Worcestershire were transformed into starting points for walks connecting communities to nature, wellbeing and social connection — places many participants had never explored before.

55

Community participants reached

Participants included university students and staff, Healthy Worcestershire groups, older people and an SEN group through Bridge House in Malvern — all accessing rail-connected green spaces for the first time.

What Didn't Work

Challenges :

- 01 Lower than expected student uptake
- 02 Weather disruption during launch phase
- 03 Competing student pressures & commitments
- 04 Lower public uptake & slow community engagement

How We Adapted :

- 01 Clearer paid-role expectations set upfront
- 02 Re-recruitment to build a committed team
- 03 Smaller, focused team with clear accountability
- 04 Widened access to community & wellbeing groups

What Would I Tell Another CRP?

Lesson	Key Action
1. Treat students as employees	Paid roles, clear contracts, real expectations
1. Recruit early & set expectations	Enthusiasm ≠ commitment; screen carefully
1. Evaluate from day one	Build in research; capture impact early



A Station is the Start of More Than a Journey

Rail → Trail → Connection

Young people gain confidence and employability. Communities gain accessible routes to nature, wellbeing and connection. Together, we turn stations into gateways.

Thank you!

