

READING CIVIC SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2025
LOOK DRAW BUILD
SPECIAL

Registered Charity no. 263959

Website: Readingcivicsociety.org.uk



Whitley Park team



Hillside Primary team

Once again LOOK DRAW BUILD@Reading has been a success. This is the 4th year of our project to encourage young children to connect practically with architecture, engineering and railway history and 2025 saw 15 classes of years 5 & 6 from 10 schools take part, engaging 430 students and building 150 models.

We want to say a big thank you to all those who; sponsored the project, worked with the children, saved toilet roll innards, bottle tops, coffee capsules, and CDs. To the Ways and Means Trust for preparing the packs for the schools. Especially to the children who this is all about. THANK YOU ALL!

The 3 winning model stations were L-R; Hillside (Gold), Calcot (Silver) and Micklands (Bronze). Here they are displayed in The Oracle.



Our thanks to Andy Briggs and Sabina Piech for enabling us to hold the exhibition in the Oracle and for their support and assistance to make it happen.

Many of the model-building children brought along their parents and siblings to see their handiwork. Some of the teachers came along too. There was also a lot of interest from the general public and from teachers at other schools interested in taking part next year.



Delivery Partners



This year's project began back in September 2024 with applications for grants, encouragement of schools & volunteers to take part. The logos of this year's funders & delivery partners are shown at the bottom of the page.

The schools which took part were:

- Calcot Primary School,
- Hillside Primary School
- Manor Green School (SEN)
- Micklands Primary School
- New Christ Church Primary School
- New Town Primary School
- St Anne's Catholic Primary School
- St Edward's Prep School
- The Avenue School (SEN)
- Whitley Park Primary

The Ways and Means Trust at Rotherfield Peppard assemble and pack all the materials ready to be sent to schools. The materials for each class are packed in bags for each group of 3 children and then boxed ready to be sent to the schools. Below assembly in progress.



Donated materials, by members & friends, Reading Rock Choir, Churches, included 640 toilet roll cores 320 recycled CDs, 2500 coffee pods and plastic bottle caps.

Materials purchased included, 320 thick cardboard squares (station bases), 640 thin cardboard rectangles (walls), 3200 bamboo skewers, 1280 pipe cleaners., the list goes on.

Cost of the 2024 Reading only project

Direct Costs £7,300; £2,300 materials, £1,500 Gemma's travel, £900 filming in schools & video updates, £800 2 schools transport to station, £600 printing, £400 Catering, £800 Prizes.

Benefits in kind £48,000. Volunteering effort; £28,000 project management (Gemma & Richard), workshop

volunteers' time £16,000, Station advert £4,000.



In February the children visited Reading and Didcot railway stations to receive a briefing on railway safety and design and on how to navigate a modern station, from Dan Pearce, the GWR Accessibility Mentor. For some of the children it was the first time they had visited a railway station or been on a train.

Back at school, the children are asked to work in groups of 3, to draw what their station would look



like and the features it would contain.

From early March we held morning workshops in the 15 classes. We asked, and supported, the children to build their own model stations in their groups. The workshops were supported by 30 young STEM Ambassadors from Stantec, Ridge & Partners, Mott Macdonald, Weston & Co Architects, Civic Society members, a former SEN teacher and a Brigadier.

The schools had to choose a model to represent each class in an interschool competition. A neat exercise in democracy.



Having received the schools' representative entries, on 27 March a panel of professionals judged the submissions. All were ranked according to set criteria.

The results were then announced at an evening reception at Haslams Estate Agency, attended by 40 guests.



We were delighted to welcome the Mayor of Reading, Cllr Glenn Dennis, on his 2nd visit to the project, and Tony Page, an enthusiastic supporter from the start.

Also present were representatives of the project's funders; the Royal Academy of Engineering and Network Rail. Other funders this year included The Earley Charity and The Rotary Club of Reading. All of the speakers spoke enthusiastically about the value they, and the children, gained from the various events.



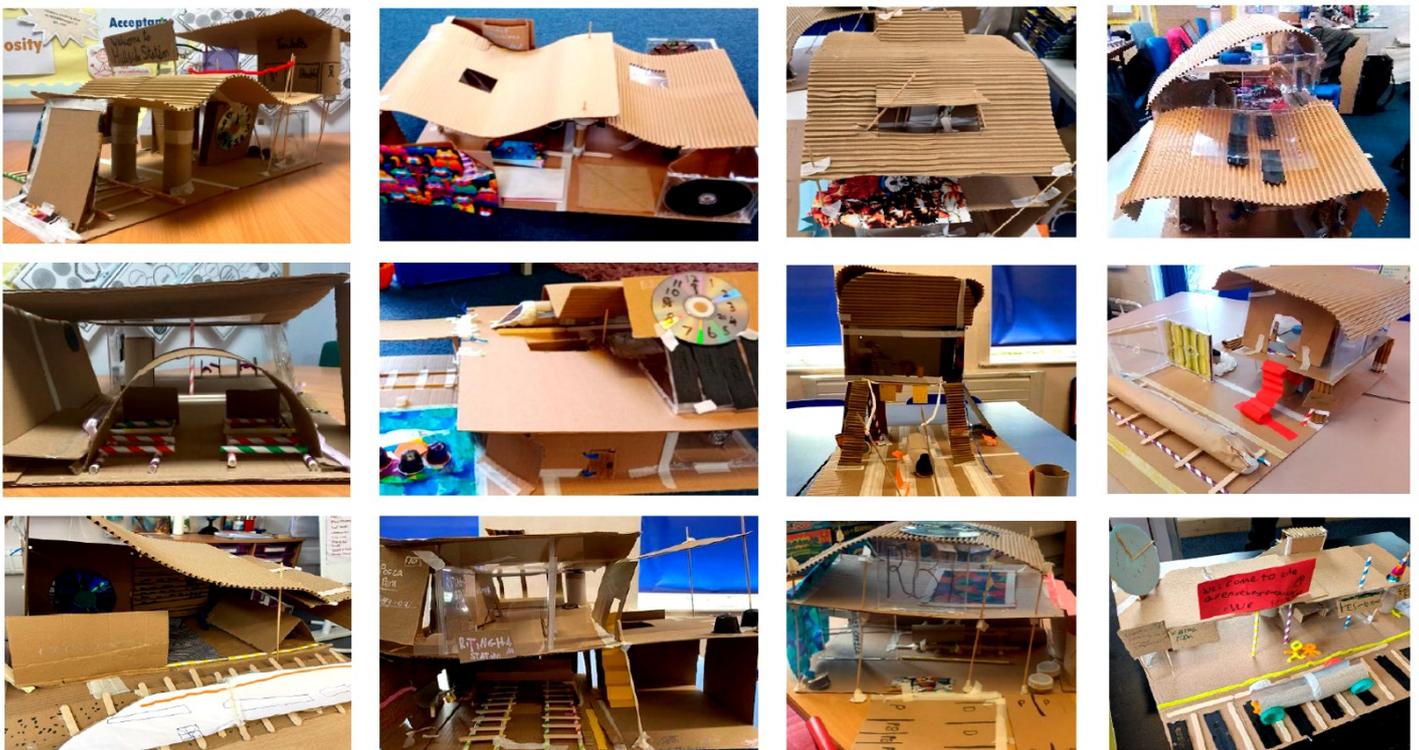
One of the highlights of the event was listening to the feedback that the children are asked to give once they complete the workshops. Here are a few:

- I enjoyed helping each other and working as a team
- I enjoyed seeing a plan come to life
- I enjoyed being creative with different materials
- I learnt that you get many types of engineers
- I learnt you need to make a sturdy structure
- I learnt nothing!
- Its hard - I still want to be an architect
- It's super fun
- I learnt to plan it out before you make it
- A train has to be for everyone
- What could make the workshop better? NOTHING, I LOVE IT' (child's own capitals)

The day after the reception the winning schools were presented with their prizes - a plaque and books about architecture and engineering. The class with the winning entry also gets a chance to visit Didcot Railway Centre, paid for by the project.



Exhibition in the Oracle 29 March



Heading down the Main Line to Bristol

The project in Bristol starts after Easter with visits for 9 schools to Bristol Temple Meads Station. They will be taken around by the GWR Senior Accessibility Mentor, Dan Pearce, who we have worked with since 2022. The message of safety on the railway, and how to navigate large stations and their features, are such an important part of the project. Network Rail wanted us to deliver this project in Bristol as they are opening new stations there and see the project as one of the ways to get out these important messages.

Over 2 weeks in May we will deliver station building morning workshops in 14 classes, some 420 children. They will be led by RCS Members Steve Snook, Lindsey Barker, Richard Stainthorp and Richard Bennett.

We will be assisted to deliver the workshops by 24 STEM ambassadors from Network Rail and large engineering companies; Stantec, Ridge and Partners, Mott Macdonald, Taziker and Enerveo (the latter two being large engineering companies working on Bristol Temple Meads Station).

Results of the Interschool Competition

“Awards Night at the Engine Shed”



The project will draw into the station on 5th June with a model station Assessment Panel in the Engine Shed in Bristol (Brunel’s original station).

We will meet in the breakout room attached to Brunel’s original Boardroom followed by a reception. Mr Brunel will join us, we hope.

The prize for the willing class, a visit to SS Great Britain or the Avon Valley Railway.

More about the project on
www.readingcivicsociety.org.uk

Updating the history of the railway video

The history of the railway video we provide to the schools has been updated to include the story of Bristol Temple Meads. This may be seen on [LOOK DRAW BUILD @ Reading&Bristol Station 2025 on Vimeo](#), from 8:27 minutes in to 10:34 minutes.

Railway 200 Celebrations

Railway 200 Events page will, from this coming week, gradually add our Bristol events; the video, station visits, school workshops, the assessment panel and reception on 7 June. Search Bristol in [Search for activities and events – Railway 200](#)

Bristol Civic Society?

Unfortunately, to date, we have been unable to engage the Bristol Civic Society on this at all. We will keep trying.

Costs and Funding

2024 Delivery to 10 Reading schools cost £7,300

2025 cost to date (Reading only) is **£7,800.**

2025 we will receive grants of £15,000 to deliver the project to schools in Reading and Bristol.

- £8,000 Royal Academy of Engineering Follow on Fund,
- £3,000 from Network Rail.
- £3,000 Earley Charity,
- £1,000 The Rotary Club of Reading
- Reading Rotary and Earley grants are used exclusively for delivery to Reading Schools (Earley to schools within the area of benefit).

We will undertake extensive reporting to our grant providers.

2026

At the Project Reception in Haslams, on 27 March, I announced that GWR had that day agreed a grant from the GWR Customer & Community Improvement Fund of £16,000, the full amount of the project.

This is to enable the project to be delivered again to Reading and Bristol Schools, during February to May 2026, still within the Railway 200 celebrations. The GWR comment was **“We like your project idea very much, and it scored well”.**

Project Management

We do need to explore how to manage/ run the project differently. Gemma is unable to manage the project in 2026. [Barcelona](#) has been named the UIA’s 2026 [World Capital of Architecture](#) by [UNESCO](#). Gemma’s projects there will be drawn into that world. It also takes a great deal of my time, fun though it is.

Work in progress.