

Giving inclusive design a front row seat for attractive transport hubs

May 6, 2021



Never has it been more important to put all passengers at the forefront of our minds when it comes to the railways.

Despite the country coming out of lockdown and the number of people using trains starting to increase, there are claims that levels might not be back up to that of pre-COVID for several years.

Following months of government messaging urging people not to use public transport, the industry is now looking at ways to attract people back to stations and the railways, and making sure they are accessible to all.

Leading the charge is [Green Furniture Concept](#). The organisation is transforming UK railway stations by designing comfortable, placemaking furniture for waiting areas.

“The rail industry is really starting to appreciate the importance the station experience as it looks to reconnect with the community and transforming transport hubs into community hubs,” said designer and founder Johan Berhin.

“At the heart of this has to be inclusivity and making sure stations are a place for all dimensions of society – not excluding anyone, seeing to that stations are attractive for all.”

The concept isn’t new for Johan Berhin, who for the last eight years, along with his colleagues, have created over 14 miles of seating in public interiors around the world, including transforming the likes of London Victoria, Waterloo and Liverpool Street stations, and Stockholm Central station.

“Inclusivity has been at the heart of all our work from the first station we worked at in Stockholm,” he said.

“A lot of thought goes into both the design and the positioning of the seating and we make sure the community also has a say in what they’d like to see. We want them to have a sense of pride and ownership of the station.

“There has to be places for people who want to sit alone – maybe using curvature and seating outwards if you don’t want to sit too close to your neighbour – and a curve facing inwards so you can sit together with your family and friends around a table.

“There also needs to be space for laptops if people want to work or read a newspaper and seating for people with restricted mobility – so higher seating with armrests and spaces for those in wheelchairs.”



Johan is the designer of the Nova C series from the company, but is also the father of a number of

industrial designs through the years.

“The first railway space we did was at Stockholm Central station, where there was a clear vision of inclusion, so we created a really nice place that could attract all travellers,” he said.

“They made a plant wall and put in our furniture and they had sound showers, creating little sound rooms, good lighting, good carpets everything.

“It really was a success and is still there. The plants are still there and it is working well. That project was how we came into rail, so from day one inclusion has been at the heart of our projects.”

Another aspect of the company that has won recognition all over the world has been the emphasis the way its furniture merges into its surroundings and the importance of sustainability.

It comes with outstanding green credentials, with the company priding itself on using natural and up-cycled materials crafted in an ecologically sound way, providing stations a design and layout process.

“What we offer has never really been an option before,” he said.

“In the past organisations who wanted nice public interior seating would use upholstered furniture that is more suited for offices and doesn’t stand the wear and tear so it would need to be reupholstered every year which is terribly expensive. They also degrade each time up until being reupholstered.

“There hasn’t been such a thing as place making furniture for public interiors, so we are basically the only ones in the world doing this for railway stations.”

Looking to the future, and Johan says the plan is to continue to change the rail industry for the better, increasing passenger satisfaction and confidence at a time it needs it most.

“More and more I’ve realised how the things we do are impacting people’s daily lives. Our mission is to make places matter, and we have started to roll down that track,” he said.

“This is our way of making the earth a better place, bringing the rest of the industry along with us on the sustainability journey.

“Some people may be feeling insecure about coming back to the railways after the pandemic and you need to bring down their heart frequency and give them a place to breath and a nice environment so they can relax. That is what we offer with our furniture, which works seamlessly with the structures of the buildings.

“The vision is really to mean something to the many and on a global scale. We’re already effecting millions who use our furniture every day, I really wish everyone to have access to seamless public transportation with a feeling of wellbeing.”

Visit <https://greenfc.com/> for more details.



Photo credit: Green Furniture Concept