

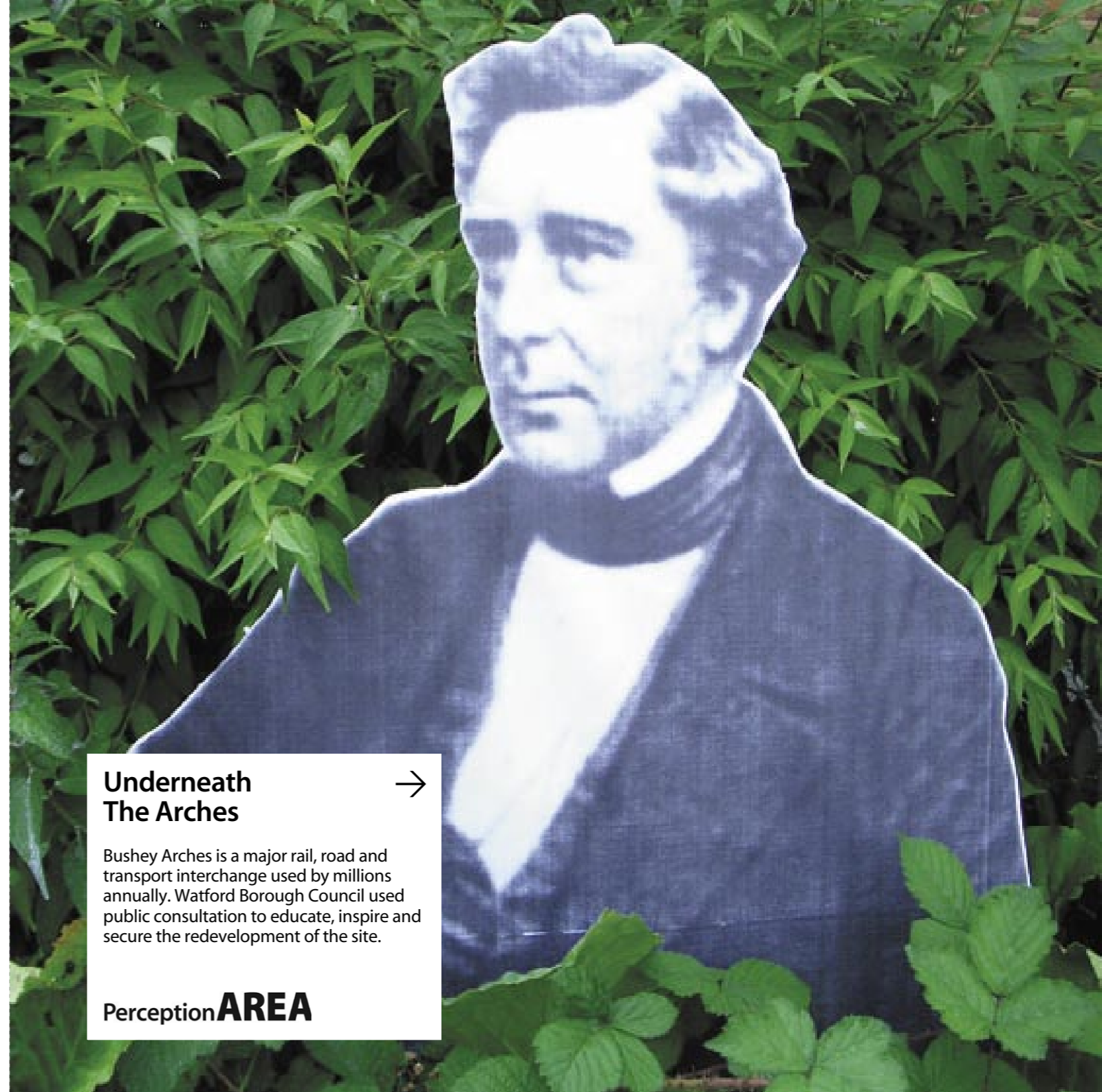


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## Underneath The Arches



Bushey Arches is a major rail, road and transport interchange used by millions annually. Watford Borough Council used public consultation to educate, inspire and secure the redevelopment of the site.

Perception**AREA**

## Underneath the Arches

Watford Borough Council

**The project:** Bushey Arches is a major rail, road and pedestrian transport interchange used by millions of people annually. The project site was an area under a Grade II listed railway bridge designed in 1834 by the civil engineer Robert (son of George) Stephenson. The site was in a poor condition due to years of neglect and pollution from trains, motor vehicles and pigeons. Watford Borough Council designated the area for regeneration investment.

The council wanted to run a public consultation process to assess the extent of the public's awareness and understanding of local environment and sustainability issues and to inform their plans to develop the site as a gateway to Watford.

The spirit of Robert Stephenson would be realised as a life size cut out photograph, to attract the public and help generate dialogue about the forgotten heritage value of the Arches and the environmental reasons for the condition of the Arches and surrounding area.

**The idea:** Green Heart Partnership creative team selected British artist Tony Stallard to be involved in the consultation process from the outset with a view to creating a site specific work in and around the Arches. Perception AREA used the findings from previous Council consultations as the foundation for this new work which would target people who live, work and travel through the Bushey Arches area. Documentary filmmaker Rayna Nadeem was commissioned to work in tandem with Tony Stallard.

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**The work:** Over two summer months, Rayna and Tony and 'Robert Stephenson' spoke with over 100 people, aged 7 to 90 as well as Watford Council environmental, heritage and highways officers and the Police. The creative device helped to prompt many people who would not otherwise have participated in a traditional council Q&A consultation to share their thoughts. A 20 minute film, entitled 'Underneath the Arches' was edited from over 15 hours of footage. The team produced an accompanying publication explaining the site's development phases with a synopsis of the key consultation questions and issues.

**The results:** The consultation revealed significant confusion about crucial environmental terms, including 'carbon footprint' and 'sustainability'. The consultation process and 'Underneath the Arches' inspired Tony Stallard to develop a lighting installation which would positively identify Bushey Arches as a gateway to Watford. The project provided a high profile opportunity for the use of recycled materials, demonstrating the council's messages about environmental sustainability.

The film was presented to portfolio holders, other key members and to Highways Joint Panel and helped to secure funding to implement Tony's designs from Watford Borough Council, Hertfordshire Highways and subsequently the Elected Mayor of Watford's Environmental Fund.

**"With such clearly positive strides forward being made by the Green Heart Partnership on the Bushey Arches project, the Council is already starting to explore how this model of joint working across departments and with external partners on arts projects can be adopted for future developments within the Borough."**

Alison Stainsby,  
Head of Leisure and Community Services,  
Watford Borough Council

