



Heart of England CRP founding members at Leamington Spa railway station

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## A boost for Community Rail in the Heart of England

West Midlands Railway is playing a key role in an exciting new partnership to support and promote community engagement at railway stations across the Heart of England.

The train operator has joined with ten other organisations to form the 'Heart of England Community Rail Partnership' (CRP). This new collaboration, which officially launched this week, will help facilitate various community activities at railway stations across the region.

Community Rail can include initiatives such as station gardening projects, art displays and using station buildings for a range of events. These activities have been recognised as not only improving the station environment for passengers and increasing station usage, but also offering significant benefits to the volunteers who take part. Involvement in activities can help combat issues such as loneliness, by promoting community cohesion and giving the local community a sense of pride and ownership in their local station.

The Heart of England CRP area covers stations between Stratford-upon-Avon / Leamington Spa and Tysley, as well as stations to Nuneaton and West Coast mainline stations between Marston Green and Coventry.

West Midlands Railway is already promoting community rail on these lines through a 'Station Adoption' scheme, which gives groups the support to facilitate activities at their local station. A number of stations within the Heart of England CRP area are already adopted, with active projects ongoing. With the formation of this new CRP, the train operator and partners in the scheme hope to see this activity grow, flourish and attract new volunteers.

Community Rail Partnerships already exist in other areas across the country and have been a real asset in supporting local residents in their activities. A dedicated Community Rail Officer will soon be appointed to work solely on the Heart of England CRP and support the growth of these initiatives across the region.

Fay Easton, head of stakeholder and community for West Midlands Railway, said: "The Heart of England Community Rail Partnership (CRP) is a unique and significant venture. It is also the first of a number such partnerships being planned across the West Midlands Railway network over the coming months. Through the work of the CRP, we are particularly focused on bringing community rail activities to many of our local stations, both urban and rural, to help enhance the platforms, promote community cohesion & economic development and to tackle social issues such as loneliness.

"Our army of committed station adopters already run many successful gardening, art and literary projects at our stations, with the potential to see many more new and enterprising ideas developed across the Heart of England through the support of the CRP.

"The investment being made into this new CRP is part of our wider

commitment to expand the company's community rail agenda, with the aim of having engagement at every one of our 114 stations across the West Midlands.”

Cllr Roger Lawrence, chair of West Midlands Rail Executive and West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) portfolio holder for transport, said: “West Midlands Rail Executive is delighted to be supporting the Heart of England Community Rail Partnership. Local communities are at the heart of our ambitious plans to transform rail services in the West Midlands, which is why Community Rail Partnerships are so important to us. We strongly believe that the needs of the community should shape what the railway offers and Community Rail Partnerships, through the work of the Community Rail Officer, represent a key way of integrating these community needs into the local rail network. We are therefore very excited to be working as part of the Heart of England CRP to put the community at the heart of the railway.”

Alongside West Midlands Railway and West Midlands Rail Executive, the partnership also includes Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP), Chiltern Railways, CrossCountry, Vintage Trains, Coventry City Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, Stratford-on-Avon District Council, Warwick District Council and Warwickshire County Council. Shakespeare Line Promotion Group has also been instrumental in the creation of the partnership.

For more information on West Midlands Railway’s station adoption scheme go to [westmidlandsrailway.co.uk/adopt-station](http://westmidlandsrailway.co.uk/adopt-station) or email [fay.easton@wmtrains.co.uk](mailto:fay.easton@wmtrains.co.uk).

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## **About West Midlands Trains**

For further information on this release, call our press office on 03300 955150 or email [press.office@wmtrains.co.uk](mailto:press.office@wmtrains.co.uk)

West Midlands Trains operates both West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway services.

- **London Northwestern Railway** services operate between Liverpool and Birmingham, and on the West Coast mainline to and from London Euston.
- **West Midlands Railway** services operate to destinations across the West Midlands via Birmingham New Street.

For more information on these services visit [westmidlandsrailway.co.uk](http://westmidlandsrailway.co.uk) or [londonnorthwesternrailway.co.uk](http://londonnorthwesternrailway.co.uk)

The West Midlands Trains franchise started on 10 December 2017 and will run until 2025/26.

West Midlands Trains operates 1,300 services a day, manages 150 stations and provides over 70 million passenger journeys a year. Over the course of the franchise, West Midlands Trains will be investing £1 billion into the rail network to deliver new trains, improved routes and station upgrades. This will include 400 new train carriages across the network and space for an extra 85,000 passengers into Birmingham and London at peak times.

The franchise is a joint venture between Abellio (70.1% share) and East Japan Railway Company / Mitsui & Co., Ltd (29.9% share in a 50:50 split). Abellio is the international passenger transport subsidiary of the Dutch national railway company, Nederlandse Spoorwegen. In the UK, Abellio operates ScotRail and Greater Anglia train services, Merseyrail services in a joint venture with Serco and buses through Abellio London. For more information visit [www.abellio.com](http://www.abellio.com)

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Press Contact

[press.office@wmtrains.co.uk](mailto:press.office@wmtrains.co.uk)

0330 095 5626