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Alliance launched to revitalise station buildings

High Street retailers and coffee shops could be offered the chance to set up in the region's railway stations.

The idea of leasing disused station buildings to convenience stores, cafes or other businesses is being looked at by rail bosses.

It is one of a range of measures which could be adopted under the pioneering West Midlands Station Alliance agreement - promising passengers cleaner, brighter and more welcoming facilities.

Stations selected to pilot the new initiative include Bromsgrove, Rugeley Town, Hall Green and Dudley Port. Some of the pilots will cover paired stations in the same area - including Smethwick Galton Bridge and Rolfe Street.

Further measures being considered range from more shelters, safer crossings, easier access, improved toilets and waiting rooms, benches and bins to new development on or around station sites.

Proposals are outlined in the Station Alliance between operator West Midlands Railway, the West Midlands Rail Executive, which oversees their franchise, and Network Rail.

They promise to not only look after and maintain stations to a high standard but seek new ways to improve them and develop them as community assets.

Cllr Mark Winnington, chair of the West Midlands Rail Executive and cabinet member for economic growth with Staffordshire County Council, said:

"Our rail stations are at the heart of the communities they serve, and yet many have been under used.

"Through the Alliance we will look to transform our stations into more welcoming places, not just for the thousands of commuters who use them each day but for the wider communities they serve.

"If we can also offer facilities to shops and businesses or groups, this will help to create jobs."

West Midlands Railway customer experience director Richard Brooks said:

"This initiative can benefit passengers, businesses and local community groups. Travelling by rail in the West Midlands has never been more popular.

"We are investing in more trains, better services and upgrading our stations. This means more people entering the railway creating new opportunities for businesses and community groups to use station buildings for the benefit of all rail users."

David Golding, interim route managing director for Network Rail, said:

"The Railway Upgrade Plan is about providing passengers with a better railway. We fully support the West Midlands Station Alliance's plans to improve facilities in stations which will mean passengers have better access to shops, cafes and services when they start or finish their journeys across the West Midlands."

Detailed plans are being drawn up for each of the pilot stations.

As well as clear and committed improvements there will also be aspirational proposals, usually larger projects, which would be developed once funding was available.

And they will work with community station volunteer groups who look after stations, including Coseley and Stechford, by planting flower beds, giving stations a lick of paint and hosting events.

The pilot stations are: Bromsgrove; Cannock; Rugeley Town and Rugeley Trent Valley; Kenilworth; Nuneaton; Dudley Port and Coseley; Droitwich Spa; Kidderminster; Oakengates and Wellington; Smethwick Galton Bridge and Smethwick Rolfe Street; Selly Oak; Stratford-upon-Avon and Stratford-upon-Avon Parkway; Hall Green; Bournville; Marston Green and Tile Hill; Tame Bridge Parkway; Stechford.

About West Midlands Trains

For further information on this release, call our press office on 03300 955150 or email 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 or 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

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