



Pictured at Hall Green station (l-r): Fraser Pithie, Shakespeare Line Promotion Group; Ian Taylor, West Midlands Railway; Fay Easton, West Midlands Railway; Howard Hemmings and Sandra Hateley, station adopters.

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New lease of life for West Midlands rail line as volunteers step forward

A popular rail line is set for a makeover after dozens of volunteers stepped forward to work with West Midlands Railway to give its stations a new lease of life.

The historic Shakespeare Line, which runs between Stratford-upon-Avon through north-west Warwickshire, north-east Worcestershire and into Birmingham city centre, carries millions of passengers every year.

For the first time in its history, every one of the 17 stations along the route now have dedicated 'station adopters', who are already working on a range of innovative ideas to liven up and localise platforms.

Long-standing station adopters will be joined by new volunteers to take on the remaining, unadopted stations along the line. This will include part of the route covered by the Heart of England Community Rail Partnership, which was formed last year.

Fay Easton, head of community and stakeholder for West Midlands Railway, said: "Station adopters are the lifeblood of the railways. They bring the character of neighbourhoods and communities to the platforms through planting, artwork, enterprise ventures and interactive activities.

"Community spirit has been endemic over this period of lockdown and our loyal station adopters have welcomed new people and new ideas. Our volunteers enjoy working on our stations and they constantly come up with fantastic ideas which we are excited to see come to life as the platforms become busier and more people begin returning to rail.

"I am thrilled we now have a 'full house' with every station adopted along this beautiful route and this would not have been possible without the dedication shown by our existing volunteers and the tireless community-spirited members of the Shakespeare Line Promotion Group.

"We wholeheartedly encourage and welcome anyone with a passion for their local station, anywhere on our rail network, to get in touch with us to find out how they can be involved."

Among the groups who have stepped forward along this line are students from Woodrush High School in Wythall, scout groups at Spring Road and residents at Henley-in-Arden who have already transformed platforms with heritage installations and colourful planting displays.

Fraser Pithie, secretary of the Shakespeare Line Promotion Group, said: "It's part of our mission to make sure as many people as possible enjoy the train service as well as the heritage and attractions of our beautiful stretch of railway line.

“In little more than three months we have helped communities up and down the line to get involved with the railway and adopt their local stations.

“We have had fantastic support from local businesses in sponsoring information posters and providing cost price landscape starter kits, which is even more remarkable given the economic challenges we face. This support clearly shows the strength of our West Midlands communities.”

Supporting businesses include Earlswood Garden & Leisure Centre, which has provided cost-price plants and materials, and Olton-based Sign Service which is sponsoring new information posters on the route.

The full list of adopted stations is: Stratford-upon-Avon; Stratford-upon-Avon Parkway; Bearley; Wilmcote; Wootton Waven; Henley-in-Arden; Danzey; Wood End; The Lakes; Earlswood; Wythall; Whitlocks End; Shirley; Yardley Wood; Hall Green; Spring Road; Tyseley.

If you're interested in finding out more about station adoption, visit wmr.uk/adopt-station or email friends@wmtrains.co.uk

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 Main Line to and from London Euston.
- **West Midlands Railway** services operate to destinations across the West Midlands via Birmingham New Street and Birmingham Snow Hill.

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. 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.

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