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All change! West Midlands Trains appoints new communications chief as Francis Thomas retires

West Midlands Trains (WMT) has announced the appointment of Charlotte Ritchie as the organisation's head of external communications and engagement.

Charlotte, who started her role earlier this month, replaces the outgoing Francis Thomas, who will shortly retire from his role as head of corporate affairs after nine years with WMT and its predecessor London Midland.

Francis first joined the rail industry in 1983 as a management trainee with British Rail. He spent a decade working in various communications roles as well as a stint 'on the front line' as a customer services manager at Birmingham New Street station.

He later worked in senior communications roles at The Boots Company, LEGO and in both local and national Government, before rejoining the railway in 2013 with London Midland.

Francis said: "It has been a privilege to work with so many dedicated and talented people over five decades, in sectors such as transport, healthcare and education that are key to people's everyday lives."

Charlotte Ritchie has a background in transport, education and Chambers of Commerce. She joins WMT from National Express, where she has been head of public affairs since 2015.

Charlotte said: "It is an exciting time to join the rail industry and I am delighted to join the team at West Midlands Trains where so much hard work is going on to build a strong, reliable railway.

"While our primary focus continues to be on managing the impact of the pandemic, we are also looking forward to the introduction of two new train fleets which will make a real difference for passengers across our network."

Lawrence Bowman, WMT deputy managing director, said: "The pandemic has changed the face of the railway and Charlotte will play a vital role as the industry works together to build a system which works for everybody.

"I would like to thank Francis for his hard work and dedication over the past nine years and wish him an enjoyable retirement."

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About West Midlands Trains

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

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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

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