

FRIENDS OF THE SHAKESPEARE — Est. LINE 2020 —

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First community station partnership launched in West Midlands

The first community station partnership in the country has been launched by Friends of the Shakespeare Line (FoSL), a not-for-profit organisation, managed by volunteer trustees.

The partnership is operated entirely by volunteers who believe in positively contributing to their local communities by providing a range of enhancements and activities at the railway stations along the Shakespeare line route.

The Shakespeare line runs from Birmingham Snow Hill to Stratford-upon-

Avon and spans 20 stations from market towns to inner city hubs. The partnership aims to encourage residents to adopt their local stations and work with partners to develop the stations as assets to the community, bringing people together and enhancing the passenger experience.

Station enhancements already under way include installing garden planters, station art and information boards that are individual to each locality. There are also plans to arrange pop-ups at the stations for local enterprise and installations that celebrate local heritage.

FoSL has five trustees who volunteer their time to manage the partnership and attract funding to enable the work of over 70 volunteers who are 'adopters' of their local stations.

Lord Digby Jones, a former director general of the CBI, has been named Patron of the charitable organisation and recorded his delight at being involved with the "energetic group of volunteers."

Fay Easton, head of stakeholder and community from West Midlands Railway, said:

"We are proud to support this energetic and visionary group of volunteers who give their time so generously to their communities.

"The work at our stations reflects local care and community investment and we are grateful for the volunteer work and efforts to help regenerate localities and make our passengers smile."

Fraser Pithie, from FoSL, said:

"We want to create a local sense of pride and offer passengers and visitors a welcome at the stations that is reflective of the area they are visiting.

"Wellbeing and community spirit has never been more important to society and we are proud to have created this partnership that will provide a template for communities across the country to replicate.

"We are happy to share our template and operating documents and will be

glad to help advise new volunteer groups.”

The partnership is funded by a combination of train operating company investment and sponsorship from local authorities, businesses and private donations.

To find out more contact fay.easton@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

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