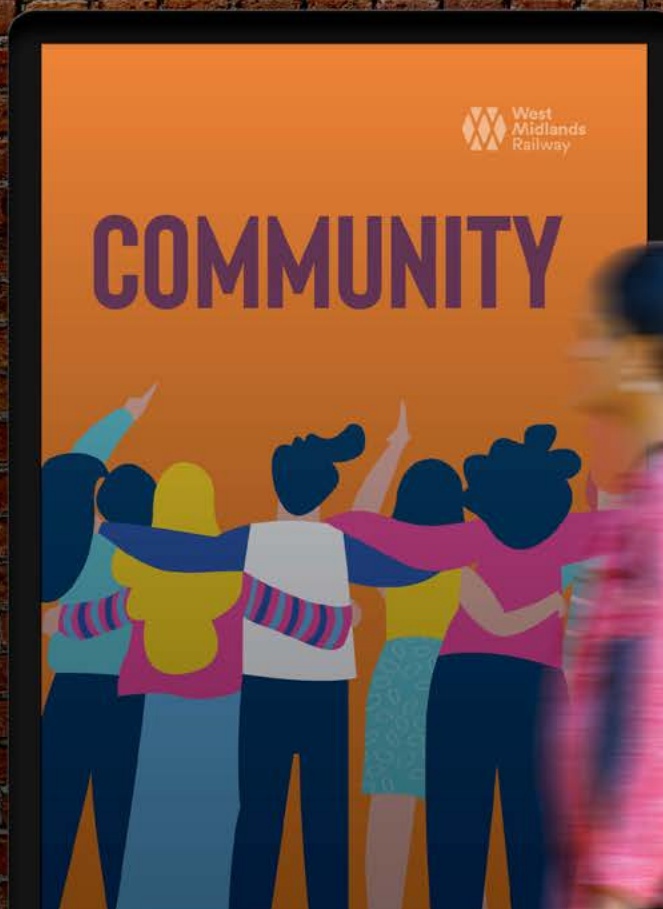
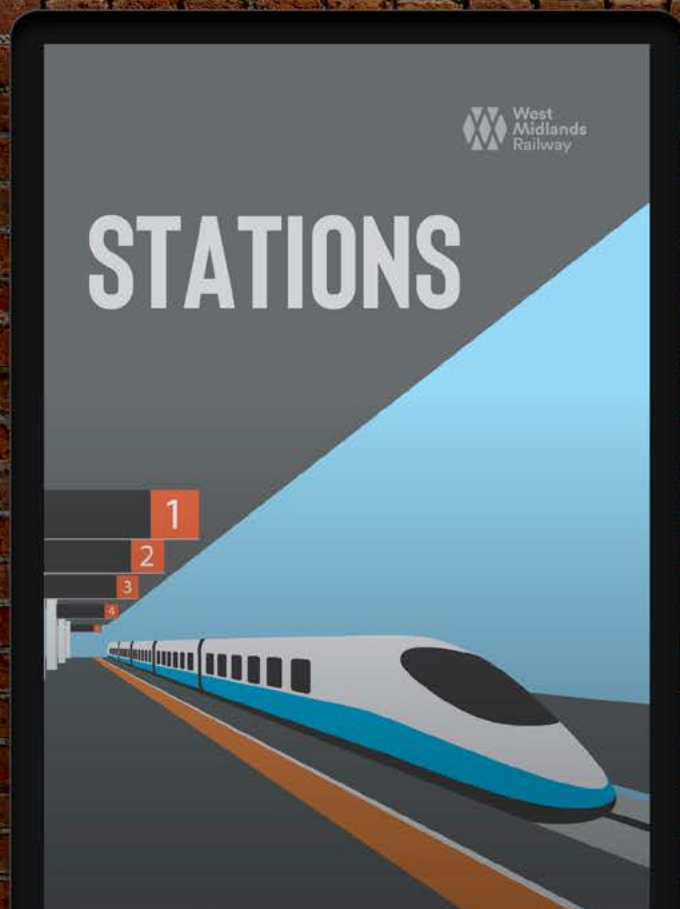


ISSUE 1

JULY 2021

# Stations, Community & Commerce

West Midlands Community Rail Magazine





A thank you  
poem for  
our station  
volunteers,  
adopters and  
friends...

## Pride of Place

Here's to the shopkeepers, office staff, pensioners, dads,  
students with sass, and footballing lads  
the mums, and the grandmas, the drivers of vans  
who look at their stations, and come up with plans  
who see something needs doing and decide there and then  
that the someone who's going to do it is them

who paint and who plant, who make dreams become real  
who make greenery grow beside ballast and steel  
who give old buildings new purpose, their stations new heart  
who put poems in waiting rooms, create murals and art  
who roll up their sleeves and who don't make a fuss  
who say this is our place, and it matters to us

who give up an hour in the evening, or one at weekends  
who are links in a chain of an army of friends  
who put a spring in your step and pep in your paces  
a song on your lips and smiles on your faces  
who see what is and what could be, then make it come true  
who sow the seeds of small miracles, and then give them to you.

With thanks to Poets, Prattlers & Pandemonialists for this wonderful poem

[www.pandemonialists.co.uk](http://www.pandemonialists.co.uk)

# To West Midlands Communities & Stakeholders

“Given the past year of increased community activities at our stations, the volume of news, developments and contributions to the looming rail recovery is significant and newsworthy.

And because of this surge in activity, we’re producing this new magazine that will be published half-yearly. We’re also developing enhanced working protocols between the Train Operating Company and Network Rail to make community works progress more efficiently. We so appreciate your endeavours and thank you for your patience and your work for the recovery of our railways over these past challenging months. It’s a joy working with you all”.



**Fay Easton**

Head of Stakeholder & Community  
West Midlands Railway



## Contents

Welcome	04
West Midlands Railway	05
West Midlands Railway Community Rail Headlines 2021	06
Community Stations and Partnerships	08
Community Engagement with the Railways	09
West Midlands Youth Rail Forum	10
A Community Vision	11
Community Station Toolkit	12
West Midlands Stations Community Projects	14
Date for Your Diary	19

# Welcome

This magazine will be produced half-yearly to keep you updated on the community powered developments at West Midlands Railway stations. The title comes from the impact of community works at stations which increase customer and passenger numbers for the railways.

Our West Midlands community station activity has seen the busiest year on record. The growth of local tourism, the success of the Customer & Community Improvement Fund and an increasing interest in community volunteering has increased the numbers of stations adopted and local involvement with railway stations.

People generously give their time to help enhance local stations, promote the railways and make our customers feel welcome. Over the past year as the global pandemic impacted all our lives, communities have come together with friendship and care for others. Neighbourliness has been a lifeline for many people living alone and the gardening pursuits at our stations have helped tackle loneliness, provided levels of calm

**“Stations are the  
welcome mat for  
the communities  
they serve”**

for mental anxiety and helped people to gain health benefits. Children have seen people caring for ‘public amenities’ and witnessed ‘care in the community’.

Communities will have a bigger part to play in the railways since the release of the Williams-Shapps ‘Plan for Rail’ that outlines the central place customers and communities need to have in the future for the industry.

There is a vision within The Plan for Rail to make the railways richer with improved community engagement and a recent report from Network Rail called ‘Tomorrow’s Living Stations’ included this quotation: “Stations are the welcome mat for the communities they serve”.

Thank you for making those welcome mats so much more ‘welcoming’ and we hope that this publication brings you useful information, contacts and inspiration. If you have ideas for content for the next issue of this magazine, please don’t hesitate to get in touch [friends@wmtrains.co.uk](mailto:friends@wmtrains.co.uk).

# West Midlands Railway



## Community Rail at West Midlands Railway

- ✓ **Senior Role within the company, leading on Community & Stakeholder Partnerships**
- ✓ **Delivering Customer & Communities Improvement Fund twenty-one regional projects**
- ✓ **Supporting the volunteer development of a pioneering new model for Community Rail with local Station Partnerships**
- ✓ **Engaging young people in the future of the railways and launching West Midlands Youth Rail Forum**
- ✓ **Providing funding with other rail partners for two Community Rail Partnerships**

**Stations have played a central role in our villages, towns and cities for over a century, and the vision for our collective works is that people will enjoy their time at our stations and see the places as reflective of the local communities they serve.**

Over the past year there has been significant growth in volunteering all over the country and the numbers of station volunteers across our network have also increased, we now have a listed 235 adopters at 64 stations. West Midlands volunteers work with us to transform stations into vibrant places of welcome and local character, helping to make the station a part of the local neighbourhood and the rail journeys more pleasant for our customers.

At West Midlands Railway we want to help our local communities connect to local stations, we want to encourage artisan projects, to inject local character and to enable our stations to be reflective of the surrounding areas. Over this past year 'gardening' has been acknowledged as a health benefit, helping to tackle the loneliness and isolation of the lockdowns we have all endured, and volunteering at our stations has subsequently increased in popularity. The volunteers at stations are keen to landscape and beautify the station surrounds and this helps the train operating company who are leaseholders and guardians of tens of thousands of acres of land.



# West Midlands Railway Community Rail Headlines 2021

**‘It’s all about the customers’**

## Creating Social Value

- ✓ Social Regeneration
- ✓ Gardening for Health
- ✓ Community Partnerships
- ✓ Tackling anti-social behaviour
- ✓ The Railways & Schools







# Community projects

- ✓ **£1million value of Community projects invested into 21 rail projects involving stations in the West Midlands Railway network as part of the 2020-21 Customer and Communities Improvement Scheme.**
- ✓ **The first volunteer led 'Community Station Partnership' in the UK has been launched on The Shakespeare Line encompassing 20 stations. Works are underway to enrich local communities and help support works to ensure that stations are an important part of the travel experience.**
- ✓ **Community Rail Partnership for Heart of England, the area includes 11 WMR stations.**
- ✓ **Community Rail Partnership for Worcestershire, the area includes 14 WMR stations.**
- ✓ **235 Registered Volunteer Station Adopters with West Midlands Railway.**
- ✓ **64 stations with community activity across the West Midlands Railway network.**
- ✓ **'Going Green Project' with wildflower zones and rewilding at Bilbrook Station.**
- ✓ **'Urban Art' project at Wylde Green Station.**
- ✓ **West Midlands Railway community projects fit with DfT's 4 Pillars of Community Rail:**
  - Providing a voice for the community
  - Promoting sustainable, healthy and accessible travel
  - Supporting local social and economic development
  - Connection to communities, supporting diversity and inclusion
- ✓ **Working with metro councils and authorities to support community urban regeneration**



# Community Stations and Partnerships



Community  
Station  
Partnership

24 - Stratford-upon-Avon Herald, March 25, 2021

NEWS

## New partnership arrives on the Shakespeare Line



THE first community station partnership in the country has been launched by Friends of the Shakespeare Line.

The partnership is operated by volunteers who provide a range of enhancements and activities at the railway stations along the Shakespeare line route, which runs from Birmingham Snow Hill to Stratford and includes 20 stations.

The aim of the partnership is to encourage residents to

adopt their railway stations and work with local enterprises and the train operating company to develop the stations as assets for the community.

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

Five trustees manage the partnership, bringing in funding to enable the work of more than 70 volunteers who are 'adopters' of their local stations.

Fraser Pithie, representing the 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 that is 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."

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 about the partnership, email [fay.eason@wmtrains.co.uk](mailto:fay.eason@wmtrains.co.uk)

In the West Midlands Railway network, we now have a new volunteer led railway model for community rail and this is a first in the UK.

The Shakespeare Line has formed a Community Station Partnership which is a collective of adopted stations, managed centrally by volunteers. The model was certainly ahead of its time as Williams-Shapps recently called for communities to contribute to the future of rail and this dynamic new partnership has shown that communities can indeed help contribute to the successful future of rail.

The Partnership have produced record-breaking results, in just over a year they have upgraded

all the platforms along the line, installed 70 planters, 36 poster boards, researched and published the history of every station, raised funding and sponsorships for their work and are now helping to tackle 'urban community rail' that will support the 'levelling up agenda' in inner-city Birmingham.

In just fifteen months, this group have transformed their local stations and are now working on plans to give people reasons to travel along their line. The trustees are also helping other groups across the region to launch their own Community Station Partnerships.



The full story is here  
[www.friendsl.org.uk](http://www.friendsl.org.uk)



# Community Engagement with the Railways

**Community Rail works create healthier, happier  
and better connected communities**



7% increased passenger  
usage from community rail  
improvements at stations  
(Community Rail Network 2018)



Positive stakeholder  
engagement & public support  
for the railways through the  
visible works



Media coverage and positive  
press for the railways



Third-party investment into  
the railways via grant aided  
works and volunteer hours



Creation of 'Pocket'  
Gardens, Little Library  
ventures and the re-use of  
redundant station buildings



Increased feelings of safety  
with people 'around more'  
at the stations



Opportunities to develop  
unused station land to help  
drive rewilding and landscaping  
improvements across the railway  
property portfolio



Community help in  
'welcoming people to  
rail' with the creation of  
'Destination Stations'

# West Midlands Youth Rail Forum



The West Midlands Youth Rail Forum will be launched during 2022, the inception panel includes Youth Patron for The Shakespeare Line CSP, Station Adopters, Birmingham Enterprise Community and School Representatives.

**The purpose is to** embed youth engagement into the work of the railways and involve young people in decision making to impact the future of rail and communities in the West Midlands. The West Midlands Rail Youth Forum will represent young people aged 16-30 who represent the future of our region.

Together they will feed into our strategies for the future of community rail in the region, providing a voice for the 'Youth Customer & Youth Employee' and influencing the national community rail movement.







## A Community Vision... from the Community

*One of the main concerns for station adopters is what we call 'bland and soulless stations' and we work as volunteers to introduce local character to uninspiring environs and highlight local destinations in our areas. We have witnessed the decline in commute business and would like to help the railways to build new business. As communities, we are close to the customers that the railways now need to attract. We can support efforts to upgrade local stations and give people reasons to travel by train, visit local areas and discover fascinating attractions that may well be off the beaten track.*

*Many of the community supporters of railways will be willing to help attract new passengers to the rail services and if there is to be a new golden era for the railways, domestic tourism needs to flourish. Volunteers can help.*



# Community Station Toolkit



**We are developing a Community Station Toolkit so that when you register to adopt a station you receive a starter pack as described here. Please can you let us know of any additions/amends that would be useful based on your own experience?**

- ✓ Template Design of new Planters for Station Use with inbuilt 'Poster Panel' so that 'One item secures two functions and separate locations are not required for poster / information board installation' for community use
- ✓ A Community Station Pack for station adopters containing:
  - The Station Lease Plan showing the areas of TOC responsibility and the areas outside the lease that remain with Network Rail for permissions and approvals. The space and condition of any disused station buildings
  - Areas where planters, posters and arts installations would be 'safe and acceptable' with land available for landscaping highlighted
  - Template application form for permissions for works, art installations and planters
  - Method Statement & Risk Assessment Templates
  - Handbook with H&S Briefing and Useful Contacts List
  - List of funding sources for community projects
  - Network Rail planting guide
- ✓ The DfT 4 pillars of C/Rail
- ✓ Name & contact of Line Manager, cleaning contractor/ gardening manager
- ✓ Station Adoption Group Lead contact, Local CSP or CRP contact
- ✓ Contact for Network Rail Community Manager for the area
- ✓ Year ahead template planner for the volunteer group
- ✓ Rewilding info pack, Little Library set up systems and Covid procedures
- ✓ Examples of arts, landscaping and rewilding schemes
- ✓ Metrics for CRP Officers:
  - Numbers of stations adopted
  - Numbers of community volunteers
  - Value of station improvements
  - Number of press and social media articles for positive media coverage
  - Matched project funding secured
  - Volunteer hours log at the adopted stations

# West Midlands Stations Community Projects

**As domestic tourism begins to grow, passengers, new to rail will be able to discover the walks and rambles, the cafes and bars, the rivers and canals, the market towns and villages and this interest will help attract new customers to the railways and aid recovery across our network.**

**Our community station enhancement work will provide opportunities to:**

- ✓ Transform our stations to be reflective of the character of the locality with both community and commercial features
- ✓ Ensure the station experience helps to develop rail travel as a rich experience rather than an A-B necessity
- ✓ Contribute to the work to attract passengers back to the railways and build on the predicted boom in domestic tourism
- ✓ Capitalise on the changes in journey patterns as off peak and leisure travel supplements the losses of commuter traffic
- ✓ Connect local people to their stations

**And here are a few stories from our community stations that may well contribute to all of the above...**





# The Urban Fox at Wylde Green

Modern art in the form of a mural of a cubist fox to enhance a station environment at Wylde Green.

Thanks to the vision and hard work of our new adopters at Wylde Green Station, this is just one of their fabulous projects since they formed the new community group in Lockdown 2020.



## Wonderful Wythall!

Woodrush High School have adopted the local station at Wythall and the students are busy taking over the landscaping and planning arts installations.

*"It is fantastic that local young people in the community have taken over the planting at Wythall Train Station. It shows young people are taking pride in the area that they live and go to school in."*

PC Albutt, Bromsgrove Police.

*"This warms our hearts to see all sections of our communities playing a part in their railway and community. We are so pleased to have supplied the planters with support from Earlswood Garden Centre"*

Friends of The Shakespeare Line



# People's poetry along the Shakespeare Line

Poets, Prattlers and Pandemonialists are three amazing performance poets from The Black Country who have been celebrating the local community adoption of every station along The Shakespeare Line.

As part of the CCIF programme, firstly they commissioned Birmingham poet laureate Casey Bailey to write a poem for the whole line and release it on Shakespeare's Birthday 2021. This was an outstanding success and a glorious poem that will be part of the Shakespeare Story for years to come.

Next, they involved 18 of the Midland's leading poets to write about one specific station and every station along the line will now be displaying its very own poem, passengers can listen to these poems using the Overhear app as they travel along the line. This has been a powerful 'people' project with a legacy value that will brighten days long into the future.



Watch it here  
<https://youtu.be/TNoc8Ht7vpc>



## Wildflowers at Bilbrook

The station adopters at Bilbrook aren't just 'friends' of the station, they are friends of the entire village.

A non-profit making community group, whose main aim is to regenerate the environment in which they live and to improve the open spaces around Bilbrook in South Staffordshire.

They recently came up with the idea to leave the grass areas at the station 'unmowed' and insert signs so that passengers realise this is done with good intent.



# Rail & Ramble Tours from Albrighton

**Another CCIF grant-aided project to encourage leisure travel by rail and support local communities.**

Developed by inspiring local people who are working hard for the local regeneration of their towns and villages, whilst also supporting recovery of the railways. Why not have a picturesque train-ride followed by an escorted 4-5 mile easy ramble in the beautiful Shropshire countryside after which you can enjoy a free cup of tea and biscuit in the Red House Village Hall. Alternatively you can have lunch or snack in the delightful village of Albrighton where there are shops, 4 pub, 3 restaurants and 3 coffee shops all within a 10 minute walk from the station.

## How to get here by train

Catch, or connect into from the Church Stretton, Chester or Crewe lines, the 09.41 departure from Shrewsbury which also calls at:

○ Wellington:	.....09.56
● Oakengates:	.....09.59
● Telford Central:	.....10.04
● Shifnal:	.....10.10
● Cosford:	.....10.14
○ Arriving Albrighton	.....10.16

Find out more

[www.albrightonrailramblers.co.uk](http://www.albrightonrailramblers.co.uk)

### Photos

- 1 Peter Illes, the creator of Albrighton Rail & Ramble with David Wisehall, CCIF
- 2 Starting pathway for one of the 'rambles'



## We will be covering other community station works in future issues:

- Ledbury's Heritage Buildings at the Station
- Transformation Shenstone Station
- Pocket Gardens at Jewellery Quarter
- New Planters to Celebrate 25 years of Community at Olton
- Hall Green, Books, Poems and 'Railway Children'
- International Poets at Ledbury
- Finding Halesowen
- Walking with Giants
- Community Gardening at Canley
- Urban Community Regeneration at Small Heath
- Music Maps for Birmingham Stations
- Well Being Pop Ups in Inner City Birmingham
- Arts & Landscaping at Tyseley Station
- Enterprising Great Malvern
- Breathing Life into the Station Building at Henley in Arden
- The Dark Horse at Coseley
- Secret Garden at Wellington
- Vintage Rail Carriage Hub at Hednesford

To submit your station news story please email  
**[friends@wmtrains.co.uk](mailto:friends@wmtrains.co.uk)**



# Date for your Diary

Thursday 11th November

## West Midlands Trains Annual Community Conference

**How can entrepreneurial communities contribute to rail recovery and encourage people safely back to rail?**

**Our annual conference with London Northwestern Railway will take place in Birmingham this year.**

We will mark the changed world of 2021, celebrating the many hours invested in stations by communities and the new spirit of localism that might well see even more interest in our stations, initiating more passenger journeys for leisure and domestic business which will help boost the recovery of the railways.

The conference will be a hybrid event with speakers and community leaders at the venue and live screening to an unlimited number audience. We will look back at a year of intense community activity for West Midlands Trains, profile the new model for community rail in 'Community Station Partnerships', celebrate community successes, showcase the CCIF 2021 scheme, present WMT Community Rail Accolades and set out our vision for community rail in the year ahead.

## Register

✉ To register your attendance:

[www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/annual-community-conference-tickets-159961919407](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/annual-community-conference-tickets-159961919407)

"Britain could see the repurposing of redundant station space as flexible 'offices' and meeting rooms, appealing to those who have less than acceptable home-working conditions"

Lucy Harper, Rail Delivery Group

2 June 2021

"I honestly don't know how I would have got through this past year without the friendship of our station adoption group"

*"Make railway stations a destination in their own right rather than just part of a journey."*

DesignByCCD.com

Railway Terminal  
Conference, Vienna 2012



#### Community Rail Websites

[www.21stories.co.uk](http://www.21stories.co.uk)

[www.communitystationpartnership.co.uk](http://www.communitystationpartnership.co.uk)

[www.friendsl.org.uk](http://www.friendsl.org.uk)

[www.heartcommunityrail.org.uk](http://www.heartcommunityrail.org.uk)

[www.wcrp.org.uk](http://www.wcrp.org.uk)