

FAST TRACK

How Friends of the Shakespeare Line (FoSL) are making a difference

Opening the door...

Education is uppermost in our minds in all that we do along with the aim to get younger people to embrace sound ethical choices. That's why we have just brokered with the Train Operator, West Midlands Trains free travel to enable students from all social backgrounds across the West Midlands to access a performance of Shakespeare at the RSC in Stratford upon Avon through their secondary school or Academy. This will provide opportunity for all and directly supports ALL students undertaking the National Curriculum.

Bringing the Shakespeare Line to Life

FoSL are seeking to bring Shakespeare to life along the whole route of the railway in 2023. Each of the 20 stations will adopt a Shakespeare Play and showcase it with panels like the one to the right. Plants that appear or are mentioned in each particular play will be grown at each station. A steel silhouette of William Shakespeare is also planned to be installed at each station.



Volunteers, SME's & Rail

It's turned out to be a dynamic combination, volunteers from local communities working with local SME's to support rail with its sustainable transport credentials. The illustration above is of a poster that is currently on Birmingham Moor St station. The poster was conceived and its content collated by FoSL volunteers and produced by Creative Touch Design, a SME based locally in Henley in Arden.

With around 7 million rail passenger journeys made from and to Birmingham Moor St station the impact and influence upon travellers is significant. Highlighting the time and carbon emissions benefits of train travel the poster represents a new, innovative and less corporate approach to marketing designed to encourage visitors to South Warwickshire and thus support its local economy while minimising the environmental effect of travel.



Concept design of bringing Shakespeare to the Shakespeare Line



Brokering Futures & Attracting Investment

We are proud to have set up the first City & Guilds Vocational NVQ qualification, based on railway volunteering and Horticulture, at Woodrush Academy. We have brokered a key relationship between Woodrush Academy and Network Rail with a view to developing a potential path to modern apprenticeships.

We enjoy a great relationship with the Train Operators and Network Rail. We have also attracted funding for 3 city area stations from Birmingham City Council which we have match funded and we have also brokered support from train operators, Network Rail, the Railway Heritage Trust & WMRE.

FoSL is all about tangible outputs that make real difference to real people across all generations, age groups and backgrounds. And we do it all for FREE!!

Efficiency & Investment, it's what volunteers do best...

The combined sum of value from the commitment by volunteers has attracted over £460,000 pounds of investment along the railway line between Birmingham and Stratford upon Avon. That is supporting the local economy, education, & heritage - and all promoting the use of environmentally sustainable travel.



Tyseley station where in March 2023 FoSL designed art boards, displaying daycation destinations by train & local social history, have been erected on all four platforms improving the station environment

Since its inception in 2020 FoSL has steadily built up key relationships across the railway sector, with local communities, SME's and key stakeholders and partners. It has done so without any employment costs, simply its volunteer trustees spending time and commitment to deliver benefit for all.

At Stratford upon Avon some £50k has been attracted to provide a room at Stratford upon Avon station, Visitor Information Point and Centre. It can also enable the toilet facilities at the station to be open even when the booking office might be closed.

At Henley in Arden over £360,000 of investment has been attracted to renovate and repurpose the derelict original GWR station building creating a micro brewery and community activity space. These investments will draw visitors and cash into the local economy. Work has now started on the renovation and repurposing of the building.

HENLEY IS STEAMING AHEAD...

Between 2019 and 2020 the Shakespeare Line Promotion Chair User Group (SLPC) approached Birmingham & Stratford in Arden Joint South Central to encourage the railway station to be adopted by the local community.

Friends of the Shakespeare Line designed to support volunteers at all 28 stations along the Shakespeare Line is formed by SLPC, Henley in Arden community group and Friends of the Shakespeare Line (FOSSL).

To restore and repurpose the station building for the benefit of rail passengers, visitors and the community.

Public donation to support renovation of the station building, including support to acquire the building, as well as ongoing and ongoing support. Negotiations with Network Rail.

Major grant funding received from the Railway Heritage Trust and West Midlands Trust. Customers & donors from, online individuals and community based organisations.

Work now Started

For the very latest information visit us at: www.friendsl.org.uk

Partners: openreach, EHSmith, NetworkRail, nationalgrid, West Midlands Railway, WADSWORTH'S, SEVERN WATER, GREAT NORTH DESIGN

THE PRIZE

How Friends of the Shakespeare Line (FoSL) is delivering economic support & social inclusion

The potential economic benefit of increasing visitors by rail to Stratford upon Avon and South Warwickshire is significantly reinforced by the sustainability offered by rail travel and its positive contribution towards net zero through lower carbon emissions. We support West Midlands Rail Executive in placing the “Snow Hill Lines” (which are the trains services that serve the Shakespeare Line) as a priority for electrification investment as reflected in their Rail Investment Strategy.

For 2019 the Rail Regulator (The Office of Rail & Road ORR) reported that Stratford upon Avon attracted over one million rail passenger journeys. Excepting the period for Covid 19 rail passenger usage at Stratford upon Avon has increased year on year. At around 10m visitors a year pre covid the proportion of visitors by rail to Stratford upon Avon and South Warwickshire was estimated at 6% (600,000)

The medium to long term aim of FoSL is to help potentially double visitors by rail to Stratford upon Avon District to the national average of visitors by rail to comparable UK visitor destinations of **12%**.

Based on the latest Tourist Economic Impact Assessment for Stratford upon Avon, commissioned by Stratford on Avon District Council, reaching the national average for visitors by rail for the Shakespeare Line could lead to an additional annual economic benefit to South Warwickshires local economy of up to **£17.3m**.

The average percentage recovery for UK rail passenger usage between 2020 and 2022 was

43%

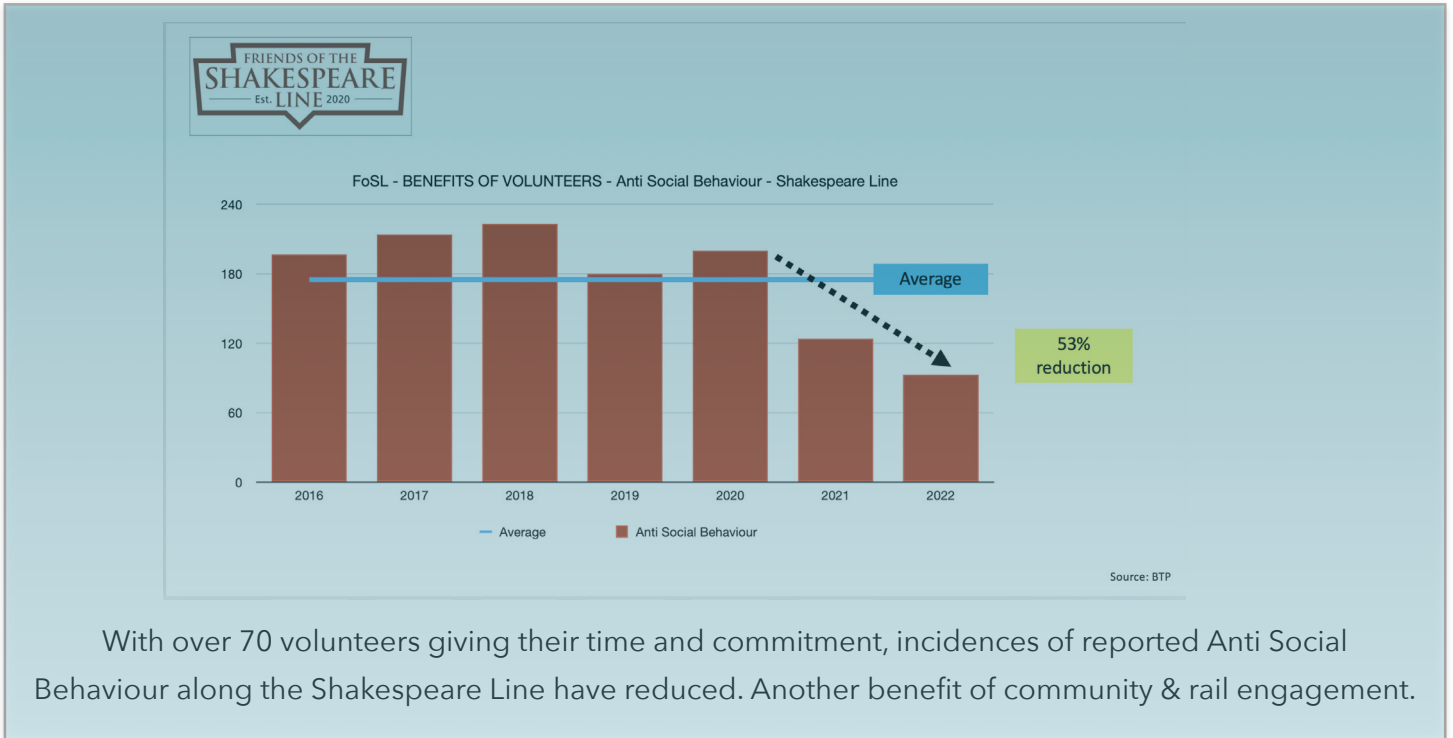
The percentage recovery for rail passenger usage on the Shakespeare Line for Stratford upon Avon was **165%**

Above -Three example posters that FoSL has conceived, developed and are now in use on the rail network

10,000
hours by volunteers

£150,000
value from volunteers

£ 460,000
investment secured by volunteers



TYSELEY

Opened by Great Western Railway in 1906, Tyseley station served many commuters and workers at various industrial units such as Bakelite, Lucas, Rover Cars and Girling Brakes. Tyseley was also the location for the Great Western Railway's locomotive works. The old GWR works site continues as Tyseley Locomotive Works, servicing mainline steam trains for leisure tours. Tyseley station still enables access to many destinations throughout the Midlands.

The old Bakelite works was 5 minutes away
Patented in New York by Belgian Leo Hendrick Baekeland in 1907, it was the first genuine synthetic and thermoplastic, promoted as "the material of a thousand uses." A merger of three British suppliers led to a new bakelite factory being opened around 1907 in Tyseley. The factory and its landmark chimney adorned with the company name were demolished in 1998.

The GWR Locomotive Works is 5 minutes away
Part of the original Great Western Railway site remains and provides vintage trains with a base to run a preserved locomotive overhaul and a maintenance depot. Home to an extensive collection of steam and diesel locomotives, the works are open to the public on special open days only. In the summer, a regular steam hauled service between Birmingham Snow Hill and Stratford-upon-Avon operates on Sundays known as the "Shakespeare Express".

Corona was 5 minutes away
The popular brand of carbonated soft drink produced by Thomas and Evans Ltd in South Wales eventually expanding to 87 depots and factories throughout Britain. The Birmingham bottling and distribution depot was based in Kings Road, Tyseley. During the 70's a memorable advertising slogan was "every bubble's passed its fizzical".

Smiths Crisps 0 minutes away
Established by Frank Smith in Cricklewood, London 1919. Additional factories were soon established including Tyseley, Birmingham. In 1925 Smith added the famous blue bag of salt, making pub landlords keen to stock his crisps as it made patrons thirsty resulting in higher beer sales. Increasing competition forced the Tyseley closure in the 1970's.

One of two display Boards at Tyseley that set out the details of the industrial and social heritage of the area.

The Friends of the Shakespeare Line (FoSL) are a Community Station Partnership which means that there are no employment costs as the non-profit organisation is managed and operated entirely by volunteers.

There are six trustees who seek and attract funding and manage support to over 70 volunteers at 20 railway stations between Birmingham and Stratford upon Avon.

If you would like to become involved and volunteer at one of the stations or support us you'd be most welcome.

Just drop us a line at; **FOSLVolunteers@protonmail.com**