



PEOPLE ▶ PROGRESS ▶ PASSENGERS

ANNUAL REPORT 2022



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PEOPLE, OPPORTUNITIES AND THE FUTURE

It's a year on from when I welcomed you to what was then the first Annual Report of the Friends of the Shakespeare Line (FoSL). So much has happened since then as a result of the sheer tenacity and dedication of volunteer trustees of FoSL and indeed the volunteers all along the line who, at around ninety in total represent a significant collective of talent, enthusiasm and commitment.

As you read this year's Annual Report you will, I am sure, be inspired by the scale, depth and number of things that have been going on that have and continue to enhance the railway stations along the Shakespeare Line adding social value to the communities that each station serves. I have always believed and promoted the need for as much engagement of our younger generations as possible and consequently I am truly heartened to see that FoSL has brokered the first railway-based vocational qualification anywhere in the United Kingdom for secondary school students at Woodrush Academy through the alternative curriculum. I am passionate about young people having every chance and opportunity to make a decent life for themselves. That's why I strongly support any means that enable modern apprenticeships, vocational training and qualification for those students that do not wish to pursue wholly academic or university studies. I am reliably informed that there's likely to be more exciting developments for students and the railway in the forthcoming year too so I very much look forward to learning about that.

The level and range of activity outlined in this Annual Report is breathtaking and demonstrates the benefit that volunteers with business and service backgrounds can bring. The railway is very lucky to have such a group of people who have shown they can turn their attention and hand to pretty much anything and make a success of it. The inspired Platinum Jubilee displays all along the line, the colours brought to both Birmingham New St and Birmingham Moor St stations, the unique and inspired daycation and destination posters, the successful bids for funding related to major projects along the route and the organising and engagement of local communities to get involved. This list seems endless and all of it, and more, the work of focused volunteers supporting the communities where they live and the local economy.

I mentioned last year how important it is that all stations and communities are involved and that activity and support are spread equitably. I am pleased to see such an approach is very evident with plans pending to significantly improve Tyseley station platforms and progress and promotion of step free access at Small Heath & Sparkbrook to unlock a high level of latent demand in those communities so they can use the train. At Hall Green too the volunteers have transformed the station environment. These areas are some of the most disadvantaged in the UK so it's heartening to see the effort being made by FoSL to ensure inclusion and help build real social cohesion. Thus FoSL deserves the support of all relevant organisations that are responsible for enabling such improvements and aims. Finally, as we face challenging times with the economy it's timely to learn and see how FoSL, as a totally volunteer-led and volunteer organisation, has achieved so much with limited funding.

The Value for Money approach with efficient, prompt and effective decision making using local services and supporting volunteers on the front line commends the volunteer based Community Station Partnership model and is worthy of consideration as part of the new Great British Railways approach designed to make all aspects of rail travel a fabulous customer experience.

When times are worrying & hard, when so many things we all take for granted are questioned & damaged every day, strong & cohesive communities become even more important. For a community to become & remain strong, there needs to be emblems & projects we can all be proud of. FoSL is one of those. I am proud to be its Patron, the more so because it stands for something special, something with which we can all identify... because in reality, FoSL is yours.

**Lord Digby Jones of Birmingham Kb
Patron of Friends of the
Shakespeare Line**



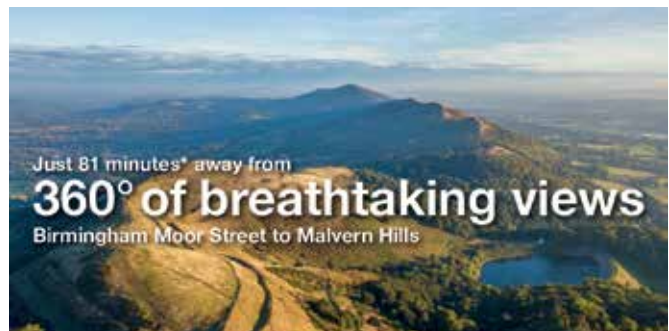
RAIL RECOVERY AND ATTRACTING NEW PASSENGERS TO THE RAILWAY

Working with local businesses, FoSL has brought creativity to the information, visibility and knowledge of the Shakespeare Line and critically encouraged travel by train. We have built on the styles and approaches used last year and expanded the range and diversity in design. We have six fundamental aims which are highlighted in the text below.

We have aimed to highlight leisure journey opportunities, especially considering the post-pandemic growth in this sector of train travel. Focused on ‘Destination Stations’, our unique posters and marketing seek to attract interest from potential day trip visitors, which supports the local economy of each destination. At Birmingham Moor Street, we developed a broader approach. Focusing on several destinations, we used images with high visible appeal and key information, **highlighting the train’s environmental benefit** on ten posters around the station. Here are two examples of the ten designs used at Moor Street.

Working with Creative Touch Design and Art Attack at Henley in Arden, we have brought these concepts to reality and placed local stations as destinations for visitors. We appreciate the support from West Midlands Trains and Chiltern Railways with this work, which we intend to develop further next year. This activity, along with all the work of volunteers along the line, is designed to encourage the use of the railway and train services. Indeed, **it’s all about passengers** and enhancing their journey so that all aspects of travelling by train, including stations, combine to **make train travel a great customer experience**.

Passengers are the lifeblood of the railway, and the hundreds of hours of commitment and work by volunteers and FoSL trustees contribute to creating a better railway. It is all about **a railway closer to those it serves** with increasing benefits from social value, well-being and, crucially, enabling more choices so the railway can attract new and returning passengers, which also **positively contributes towards modal shift** towards sustainable transport.



TRAVEL BY TRAIN CO₂ EMISSIONS

STRATFORD UPON AVON > LONDON
CAR



TRAIN



13.6kg CO₂ SAVED

FROM TRAVELLING BY TRAIN INSTEAD OF CAR

PROGRESS & ENGAGEMENT

When in 2020, the Shakespeare Line Promotion Group set out to embrace the local communities along the route in the face of a global pandemic, one could never have imagined the tremendous response and level of genuine involvement that would arise. Simply, engagement with people and passengers led to a pioneering and innovative approach towards making train travel a great customer experience and providing significant social value to communities and the local economy. Consequently, The Friends of the Shakespeare Line (FoSL) was formed, a Community Station Partnership, that has grown from strength to strength in 2022.

Six trustees and some 80 or so volunteers are responsible for all the hard work, effort and commitment that makes all the stations welcoming, enhances the experience for the train user and makes the railway truly a part of each community at their station.

We could not have envisaged the scale of the innovation and commitment we have unlocked through the relationships we have brokered. As you read this second Annual Report, you will see the strength and depth of the outputs that volunteering has and is delivering.

The active involvement of West Midlands Trains and Network Rail, together with the support of West Midlands Rail Executive and Birmingham City Council, has enabled us to show what can be achieved, and crucially how it can be delivered with a Value for Money approach that is a highly efficient model that currently cannot be surpassed. We believe in efficiency using lean management principles, which is essential as the country faces potentially difficult economic times ahead.

We have shown that the private sector can and will wholly or part fund and support soundly based and sustainable improved community facilities and importantly partner with the railway.

What is especially rewarding is that FoSL has been and remains an agent of social value and improvement. We are determined to ensure that the most socially disadvantaged communities along part of the Shakespeare Line, within the inner city of Birmingham, are equally included and get the opportunities and chances that more affluent suburban and rural areas already enjoy.

I hope you enjoy reading the details of this year's volunteering along the Shakespeare Line, the comments from some of the volunteers involved and other key industry stakeholders.

Most people wake up each morning intending to make a positive difference to something or someone; all those involved or referred to within this report can be fulfilled in the knowledge that they are making a real difference to others. As 2023 approaches, we look forward to significant schemes that move this exciting story on with more activity and social value arising as a result..

Fraser Pithie
Chair
Friends of the Shakespeare Line



THE TRUSTEES OF THE FRIENDS OF THE SHAKESPEARE LINE



Howard Hemmings. Born in Birmingham Howard has lived in the city all his life. Leaving school he joined Lucas Girling as an apprentice and enjoyed a career of some 34 years initially as Factory Planning Engineer and then as Patents Engineer. A keen DIY person Howard is very much involved in community works including Friends of Hall Green Library, Sarehole Mill, Sarehole Environmental Action Team (SEAT) and he is also a keen bowler with Solihull Bowling Club where he is also Treasurer.



Martin Lambert. Educated at Bordesley Green Technical School and Aston University, Birmingham Martin has held several positions in the automotive industry in the UK, South Africa and Europe including at Jaguar Land Rover, GKN, British Leyland, Chrysler, and Nissan. A committed family man and keen Birmingham City Football Club supporter, Martin has been involved in Dorridge Local Residents Association and is Chair of the Solihull and Leamington Spa Rail Users Association.



Neil Morgan. Now retired from a long career in banking which culminated in becoming a Branch Director at Lloyds Bank Neil has lived in the West Midlands all his life. With a keen interest in sports and particularly football and Aston Villa. Neil currently volunteers for VASS a Community Transport Charity providing passenger lifts to medical appointments. He enjoys walking, usually with his retired Alsatian police dog and also takes an interest in railways due to strong family connections. Neil is currently the treasurer of FoSL.



Angela Okey. After a 21-year career in banking, Angela took early retirement and now spends her time supporting several charitable trusts, including Chair of Friends of Henley Railway Station (FOHRS). An avid golfer, who when not on the golf course can be found walking her three dogs or spending quality time with her family & friends.



Fraser Pithie. With over 33 years in the water industry Fraser was Severn Trent's Senior Operations Manager before retirement in 2011. He was involved in the successful campaign to prevent the second attempt to close the Stratford upon Avon - Birmingham railway line between Birmingham and Stratford upon Avon in 1984. Previously a Warwickshire County Councillor and Chair of Warwickshire's Police Authority, Fraser was born at Stratford upon Avon. He volunteers his time by managing the day to day activities of FoSL and is currently the Chair of FoSL.



Neil Williamson. Neil is a lifelong rail traveller, supporter and indeed enthusiast. Now retired he worked for Severn Trent Water in the West Midlands before transferring to a print and document solutions provider in Tewkesbury. He enjoys hill walking, nature conservation, gardening and watching cricket.

PEOPLE, INNOVATION AND THE RAILWAYS

With six voluntary trustees drawn from a wide spectrum of business knowledge and experience, the Friends of the Shakespeare Line (FoSL) looks after and manages the needs of over 80 volunteers that look after 21 railway stations between Birmingham and Stratford upon Avon.

FoSL has built on the 'Firm Foundations' as titled and outlined in last years Annual Report. As a Community Station Partnership FoSL provides a pragmatic, effective and above all, efficient means of encouraging, supporting and maintaining engagement through volunteering. There is regular contact with volunteers along the line and a prompt response to any issue or matter that a volunteer raises or materials and help they might need.

The past twelve months has been a very busy, but crucially rewarding time. The Shakespeare Line was one of only a handful of railway lines on the national network that planned and organised all the requirements needed to celebrate at every station the Platinum Jubilee of HM Queen Elizabeth II in the summer. While the nation mourned the loss of the late Queen in September we know many passengers and communities along the route were pleased the volunteers ensured a fitting celebration of colour in the summer to mark what was an historic occasion.

Volunteers along the Shakespeare Line route have been involved not just in looking after their local station but in several cases have helped the local area and indeed the West Midlands with additional activities organised through FoSL where they have stepped up to help, contribute and play a key part in making passengers' use of the train services a great customer experience.

2022 has been a year with a story of inspired people, tenacious organisation and management delivering excellent and tangible results that people can see and experience. Work at stations and in Birmingham City Centre, work with students and young people, work promoting accessibility to the railway for socially deprived communities, work to renovate and restore heritage buildings and work to support the local economy through encouraging train travel to access great destinations.

Community Station Partnership We're all volunteers!



- Encouraging people to connect with the railways and adopt local railway stations
- Working with neighbours, friends, local businesses, Network Rail and the Train Operating Company to develop stations as community assets
- Promoting 'reasons to travel' and increase train usage with local publicity
- Bringing people together to enhance their neighbourhood and make new friends
- Helping to make the station more welcoming with a sense of localism and community

Friends of the Shakespeare Line was the first Community Station Partnership, which is a collective of stations and their volunteers that is managed and operated by volunteers enabling efficiency and value for money with funds concentrated on stations and customer experience. Already two more CSP's have been formed in the West Midlands at 'Beyond the Hills' Ledbury and Herefordshire and the Chase Line.

For more information email friends@wmtrains.co.uk or visit www.communitystationpartnership.co.uk

MEET THE FRIENDS OF THE SHAKESPEARE LINE

Having been established in 2020/21, FoSL, and those volunteering with it, now have the benefit of two full years in terms of developing relationships, processes, aims and objectives. There's little doubt that FoSL has benefited from the the broad diversity of skill, experience and background available from a team of over 80 volunteers.

Core infrastructure elements are now in place to improve the passenger experience at all stations along the Shakespeare Line route. Volunteers can build their activities and plan what they would like to do further to make their station an integral part of the community in which they live. It's a commitment that enhances the experience of those that use the train and encourages people to the railway who perhaps have not given the train the consideration it deserves.

Every station, with the exception of Small Heath and Bordesley, now have planters and areas where the natural environment can thrive with colour, life and biodiversity where up until recently it had no space to thrive. The imaginative skill of the volunteers at each station has led to different, yet always stunning displays of colours and plants. The experience of being able to develop the station environments with natural elements has enabled volunteers to imagine what further things might be possible at their individual station as each year approaches.

While all the work at individual stations forms the bedrock of volunteering and social value along the Shakespeare Line there has been significant progress in much broader terms arising from FoSL.

We enjoy a sound and productive relationship with the Train Operator for the services along the Shakespeare Line which is West Midlands Trains. WMT are supportive through their Community and Stakeholder approach and the equitable way they seek to reward and support community based rail activity based on efficiency and outputs. It's a challenge that we relish, as it encourages value for money and innovation, that when combined, can deliver highly efficient and effective results and outputs.

FoSL has developed a very positive and productive relationship with the Network Rail Birmingham (Central Route) team. Consequently, we have been pleased to help Network Rail by planting out the frontage of Birmingham New Street station for the past two years and this year also enhance Birmingham Moor Street, again with Network Rail's help. The importance of passengers and customer experience is clearly at the centre of the NR Birmingham (Central Route) team and our relationship with them has gone from strength to strength with a number of the Network Rail team now actively involved in helping with community based projects along the route between Birmingham and Stratford upon Avon.

We are pleased to have developed a good relationship with Chiltern Railways and look forward to working with them at Birmingham Moor Street and Stratford upon Avon stations.

We liaise with the Heart of England Community Rail Partnership, which is confined to the southern section of the Shakespeare Line. Our focus is based on the need that caused us to be formed, providing equitable support to volunteers along the whole route of the Shakespeare Line ensuring inclusion for all those volunteering between Birmingham and Stratford upon Avon. In reality, our work supporting the volunteers along the whole of the Shakespeare Line route complements the Heart of England CRP as it enables the CRP to concentrate more of its resources and time on the stations, volunteers and other routes that it covers on railway lines between Leamington, Olton, Nuneaton, Birmingham International and Rugby. Ongoing relationships with the West Midlands Rail Executive, Birmingham City Council and British Transport Police (BTP) have grown with key individuals from those organisations establishing direct contacts with FoSL and indeed volunteers where called upon to do so. We have worked throughout the year with BTP who have been very responsive to the issues we have occasionally had to raise concerning elements of Anti Social Behaviour at one or two locations. The imminent installation of CCTV at all Shakespeare Line stations over the next 36 months will make a significant difference to such problems and provide BTP with a tangible asset to enable and help them do their job while providing a deterrent to anyone engaged in anti social behaviour.



Community rail: as you like it

After just two years the work of volunteers is already having a major impact on the Shakespeare line

I like this place, and willingly could waste my time in it. Wise words from the Warwickshire bard, and a sentiment I felt strongly as I travelled along the Shakespeare line back in March.

Of course, a journey between the 22 stations from Birmingham Snow Hill to Stratford-Upon-Avon could never be considered a waste of time. Far from it, and a far cry from the description I would give the purposeful and ground-breaking work I was privileged to see, and has been achieved by the trustees, volunteers and partners of the Friends of the Shakespeare Line (FOSL).

ACADEMY ADOPTION

Established in 2020, in just two short years (despite the challenges of a global pandemic) the FOSL has already helped to fund and produce a rich and diverse range of projects that bring huge benefits to both local communities and the railway. I was particularly blown away by the partnership with Woodrush Academy at Wythall station – the first station adoption in the country to be undertaken by a school.

Students have worked hard to transform Wythall, producing artwork for display in the platforms' shelters that reflects the heritage of the area, as well as carrying out planting and landscaping that has vastly improved the appearance and safety of the station for passengers – and increased biodiversity. Head of Humanities for Woodrush Academy Andy Reece describes how being involved in the development of the station has given students, many of whom travel to school on the train and alight at Wythall station itself, a new sense of pride in their local area. This in turn has had a wider impact across the community, which now associates the students with a positive change in the neighbourhood.

If that wasn't enough, the Academy's IT students have also gotten on-board (pun intended) and created an Adventure Lab app (part of *geocaching.com*), exploring locations along the line. Unlike regular Geocaching, there are no physical objects to find; instead, participants navigate to different locations to solve clues,



Working together: (from left) volunteer Howard Hemmings, Fay Easton and Ian Taylor of West Midlands Trains, and Fraser Pitthie of the FOSL.



Four minutes to Birmingham: Cllr Shabrana Hussain with artwork at Small Heath station (formerly Small Heath & Sparkbrook).

find information or visit specific co-ordinates to complete the challenge. It's believed to be the world's first Adventure Lab app based along the railway in the UK, and anyone (that's right, even you) can take part.

STATION IMPROVEMENT

Supporting projects that remove barriers to travel is a significant part of what FOSL does, and perhaps nowhere is this more important on the Shakespeare line than at Small Heath station. Here I chatted with volunteer and local Councillor Shabrana Hussain, who described how recent changes to the station, including the installation of artwork, better lighting and realignment of handrails, has improved safety and usability.

However, one of the biggest barriers that prevents even more people from travelling is accessibility. Staffed only part-time, and with no lift or step-free options available, travel for anyone with a disability or even parents with young children in buggies is simply not possible. With help from FOSL and its partners it is hoped this may change. There is certainly a huge appetite from the local community, which wants to take advantage of the rail link on its doorstep – which would turn a difficult car journey into the centre of Birmingham into an easy four-minute train ride.

PARTNERSHIPS

So what is the key to FOSL's success so far? As well as carriage loads of

passion and unbounding ambition, the partnerships and relationships it builds locally seem to be the cornerstone of everything FOSL does. Earlswood Garden & Landscape Centre, for example, not only adopted Earlswood station (immediately next door to its property), but quickly agreed to provide FOSL with all plants and gardening resources for other station adopters at a discounted rate. With no complicated expense reclaiming processes or delays whilst funding for equipment is scrounged, volunteers feel empowered and can build up momentum with their work.

Howard and Sandra from Hall Green station first began volunteering long before FOSL was established, and often spent their own funds or bought flowers from their own garden to replant at the station. The support provided by FOSL has transformed the way they feel about what they do and ensures they, and other volunteers, can focus on what they do best – creating a welcoming environment for passengers.

The spring and summer weekend vintage bus service between Wythall station and Wythall Transport Museum is another great example of a mutually beneficial opportunity for passengers, the railways and local organisations alike. And do keep an eye out for the wonderful artwork along the line, produced by Henley-in-Arden business Creative Touch Designs.

All this is before even mentioning the support of West Midlands Trains. Fay Easton, Head of Stakeholder and Community, and Ian Taylor, Line Manager, are an integral part of the operation here too.

By bringing together such a diverse local network, the FOSL aspires for the needs of its communities to always be at the heart of opportunities and decision-making. With more projects and even greater ambitions on the horizon, I can't wait to see what will be launched next – perhaps a return trip to Henley-in-Arden to explore how the abandoned station has now been repurposed for community use. But wait, no spoilers. 🚂

My thanks to Fraser Pitthie and Angela Okey, Trustees of FOSL, for welcoming me so warmly and introducing me to everyone involved in Shakespeare line projects.



HIGHLIGHTS



2022 - A YEAR OF COMMUNITY ENTERPRISE AT OUR STATIONS

BIRMINGHAM MOOR STREET

By common consent, the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham were a great success. It was great, therefore, for FoSL to be asked primarily by Network Rail and, on behalf of Chiltern Railways and West Midlands Rail Executive to help give Birmingham Moor Street station a makeover. With a four-day duration in June planned for engineering work on the approach to the station, FoSL effectively and voluntarily project-managed the natural environment part of the makeover and was able to organise eleven new planters, compost and topsoil together with plants for the station.

The existing garden at the station between Platforms 2 and 3 received significant attention. Existing planters on the station all received care and attention too. Howard Hemmings, the lead station volunteer at Hall Green station, led the Moor Street work with Sue Bird from Henley in Arden and Cheryl Roberts from The Lakes, also working with him on plant selection and work planning. Sandra Hateley, a volunteer at Hall Green station, took the gardens between platforms 2 and 3 under her wing and has considerably improved the garden since June. FoSL also worked with Creative Touch Design from Henley in Arden to design, produce and fix ten new and unique daycation posters on existing artboards around Moor Street station. Some fifteen volunteers from FoSL stations came together in June to carry out the work at Moor Street, which they completed in one day. Our partners, Earlswood Garden and Landscape Centre, provided the materials and planters. It was a fabulous team event that brought FoSL volunteers alongside Network Rail, Chiltern Railways, West Midlands Trains and Mitie staff on site giving the station a deep clean and spruce up.



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THE DRAGON BRIDGE	MONK'S BOULDER	BRANNOCK'S BARK	BAKE OVEN RE-USE	JEV'S WOODS	GREEN ROAD FURZE	LANEHEAD MILL	FLOUT OF DRAWS
<p>Completed by...</p>	<p>Completed by...</p>	<p>Completed by...</p>	<p>Completed by...</p>	<p>Completed by...</p>	<p>Completed by...</p>	<p>Completed by...</p>	<p>Completed by...</p>

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It's important for me to volunteer because, you get a great deal of satisfaction from it. When you start with an overgrown garden and planters that need lowlight conditions, that's a challenge. Flowers make people feel good if only for a few minutes, I have some lovely comments from passengers and staff. That's what makes it so worthwhile, I still have a long way to go to get it finished but it will be well worth the all the effort. I have been gardening since I was 4 years old, I had my own little patch and grew mostly flowers from seeds brought from good old Woolworths.

Sandra Hateley / Birmingham Moor Street Station



Chiltern Railways are privileged to have such a close relationship with the Friends of the Shakespeare Line, a group that has had a really positive impact on our customers' journey experiences. In particular we were thrilled by the result of the collaborative project undertaken by the Friends of the Shakespeare Line and Network Rail at Moor Street Station ahead of the Commonwealth Games, which transformed the station and made it ready to welcome the world to the West Midlands. The Friends' can-do attitude and professional approach was very impressive to see, and the new planters that they installed at Moor Street Station are a fantastic uplift to the station environment. The tireless efforts of everybody involved in this project and their continued work at Moor Street shows what can be done when passionate local people care about and get involved with their railways. We hugely appreciate the time and energy that the Friends brought to Moor Street ahead of the Commonwealth Games for the benefit of our customers and the wider community that we are proud to serve. We look forward to deepening our partnership with the Friends of the Shakespeare Line in the future.

Eleni Jordan
Commercial and Customer Strategy Manager
Chiltern Railways

Chilternrailways

Making our railway a positive and attractive place for passengers and local communities is something that I am incredibly passionate about. Our rail stations are absolutely vital in making the network a more bright and inviting place and I'm so pleased to have seen our relationship with the Friends of the Shakespeare line go from strength to strength over the past year. The group and the volunteers have made such a huge impact on our stations between Birmingham and Stratford upon Avon and beyond - in particular ahead of the Commonwealth Games and the Queen's Platinum Jubilee - and I look forward to working together further to welcome passengers old and new to a warm, welcoming rail network across Central route.

Denise Wetton
Director of Central Route
Network Rail



ALL STATIONS & BIRMINGHAM NEW STREET

The celebration of HM The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee was the pinnacle of our success along the whole Shakespeare Line route and this was enabled through an agreement we brokered between Earlswood Garden & Landscape Centre, Network Rail, West Midlands Trains and Mitie. Thousands of red, white and blue plants were ordered and sourced at New Year that went on to adorn the railway between Birmingham and Stratford-upon-Avon thanks to the dedication of all the volunteers along the Shakespeare Line.

A blaze of red, white and blue floral gems was unleashed at the entrance to Birmingham’s New Street station in May when some 20 FoSL volunteers were joined by staff from Network Rail and train operators West Midlands Railway, DRS, Cross Country and Avanti West Coast on a morning in May who all helped to transform the main planters at the front of New Street station with patriotic colours. Joseph Brown, Customer Account Manager at Network Rail said: “We have developed a great relationship with the Friends of the Shakespeare Line, who are showing how volunteering can be directed to deliver both an improved customer experience and positively contribute towards social value in each community connected by the railway.



FRIENDS OF THE SHAKESPEARE LINE
Est. 2020

CELEBRATING OUR QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE

Map of the Shakespeare Line route: BIRMINGHAM NEW STREET, BIRMINGHAM SANDY HILL, BIRMINGHAM MOOR STREET, BORDENLEY, SMALL HEATH, TYBLET, SPRING ROAD, HALL GREEN, YARDLEY WOOD, SHIRLEY, WHITLOCKS END, WYTHALL, EARLSWOOD, THE LAKES, WOOD END, DANZET, HERLEY IN ARDEN, WOOTTON BASIN, WILMCOCKE, STRATFORD PARKWAY, STRATFORD UPON AVON.

www.friendsl.org.uk

Network Rail, West Midlands Railway, mitie, EARLSWOOD GARDEN & LANDSCAPE CENTRE, Chilternrailways

WYTHALL

The students at Woodrush Academy who volunteer to look after the station at Wythall have excelled in several things they have completed as part of adopting the village station. With the support of FoSL and West Midlands Trains, the students have created unique artwork that recognises the history of Wythall and has been placed in the waiting shelters at Wythall Station. Their work with the planters and garden borders has increased and thus improved the station's appearance and experience for the passengers' benefit. In the Spring of this year, Woodrush students engaged in IT studies built and enabled FoSL to launch the first Geocaching adventure lab tour based on a railway line anywhere in the world. The tour allows families to visit the line and check out several destinations along the route to learn specific things enabling them to complete the Geocaching assignment.



We have continued with our close relationship with Transport Museum Wythall who have developed and operated vintage bus rides on specific weekdays and weekends in the summer to meet selected train services at Wythall Station. The Museum continues to go from strength to strength with an increasingly impressive collection of vehicles that provide a real insight into the heritage of public transport enabling visitors to experience life as it used to be for their parents, grandparents or great-grandparents. We have been so pleased with our relationship with Transport Museum Wythall and the positive feedback we have received from visitors by train that we chose the Museum as the destination for one of our unique daycation posters we designed and have placed at Birmingham Moor Street station.



Encouraged by Friends of the Shakespeare Line (FoSL) to run a free vintage bus connection from Transport Museum Wythall to Wythall station, meeting West Midlands Railways services from both ends of the line (supported by an imposing poster promoting the museum on Moor Street station) the museum has seen a significant increase in rail visitors in 2022. Along with a strong focus on family visits, TMW has increased its patronage on pre-pandemic levels by over 50%, to 15,000 in 2022. We look forward to working with FoSL on further initiatives in 2023.

Denis Chick
Vice Chairman, Transport Museum Wythall



Volunteering at Wythall Railway Station provides an opportunity to make a difference to the local environment and community around the station, bringing different generations together in a project which benefits everyone, both in the short and long term. Most importantly, it is great to see how local residents have a positive perception of young people who are working hard to make a difference in their community and to see them benefitting through social interaction, physical exercise and developing new skills which will result in vocational qualifications for these young people.

Andy Reece / Head of Humanities at Woodrush Academy and Station Adopters at Wythall Station



EARLSWOOD GARDEN AND LANDSCAPE CENTRE

The celebration of HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee at all the stations and the work by volunteers at both Birmingham New Street and Moor Street stations were supported by the Earlswood Garden and Landscape Centre team. Without the logistics, part sponsorship and ability to provide the level of support they do, providing plants, supporting materials and equipment that volunteers can easily access and obtain success would be considerably more challenging to achieve.



SHAKESPEARE LINE PROMOTION GROUP (SLPG)

The Rail User Group for the Shakespeare Line SLPG works closely with FoSL. This was demonstrated earlier in the year by unveiling a plaque at Wilmcote Railway Station in recognition and memory of the late Douglas King, who lived in the village. As a regular user of the train service in the 1960's Douglas became involved in the campaign to stop British Railways from closing the railway between Birmingham and Stratford upon Avon, which was announced in 1966. Mr King acted as solicitor for the North Warwickshire Line Defence Committee, which today is SLPG. Mr King's dedication led, within just three days of the line's proposed closure, to the Court of Appeal granting an injunction against the British Railways Board that effectively saved the line.



HALL GREEN

The railway station at Hall Green is a fine example of a Great Western Railway suburban railway station. It remains as it was originally built and continues to serve passengers using the train. The volunteers at Hall Green have pioneered artwork and marketing for FoSL, and working with the nearby Hall Green library has made Hall Green a visitor destination.

On the exterior of the station building, a range of destinations have been presented as potential daycation destinations for the traveller from Hall Green. The development of daycation style posters by FoSL volunteers and Creative Touch Design are demonstrated well at Hall Green. Unique boards have been installed on both platforms that detail the several attractions and places of interest nearby to the station. On the Birmingham-bound platform inside the waiting room, poetry is presented for passengers to enjoy while waiting for their train. The poems are changed regularly, encouraging many to look at and read the display cases regularly.

The station was undoubtedly put on the map at the beginning of the year when West Midlands Trains chose it as the location to launch its 'Music Maps' initiative, which aimed to show passengers where local and famous musicians and groups came from in the locality. Consequently, meeting the long-established and renowned Birmingham band UB40 at Hall Green was great when they unveiled and launched the 'Music Maps' concept at the station.

UB40 at the launch of Music Maps at Hall Green Station





THE CUSTOMER & COMMUNITIES FUND IS IN ITS SECOND YEAR AT WEST MIDLANDS RAILWAY AND SUPPORTS PROJECTS THAT CREATE BENEFITS FOR COMMUNITIES, ADDRESSES SOCIAL NEEDS AND ENHANCES THE RAILWAYS, FOUR PROJECTS ARE BEING DELIVERED AT STATIONS ALONG THE SHAKESPEARE LINE AND WILL CREATE POSITIVE COMMUNITY IMPACT AT LOCAL SCHOOLS AND WITHIN NEIGHBOURHOODS.

2023 ENTERPRISING PLANS

FoSL has worked with and supported volunteers along the Shakespeare Line who submitted applications to the West Midlands Trains Customer and Community Improvement Fund (CCIF). Consequently, in April 2022 the following applications were approved and work has now started with completion due in 2023 with the following.

HALL GREEN

Organising Poetry Days at local schools to support ongoing research re the railways. The winning poems to be featured in a permanent display board at the station and entitled 'Hall Green Station for Young Poets'.

WYTHALL

The development of an Educational Qualification (City & Guilds Level One and Two) connected to station adoption based on Woodrush High School's extensive experience in local volunteering with the railways. The model will be shared with other education providers.

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON

The refurbishment of a small unused room at Stratford station, creating a community and a visitor hub that will provide a welcome and information point, operated by community volunteers.

HENLEY-IN-ARDEN

The restoration of the station building to create a Community Hub that will provide a sustainable local venture to create community regeneration and enhance the station and the passenger experience.

HENLEY IN ARDEN

RENOVATING HENLEY IN ARDEN'S STATION BUILDING THE STORY SO FAR...

The current railway station building at Henley in Arden was opened in 1908 by the Great Western Railway when it also completed its own railway line (the last mainline it built) between Birmingham (Snow Hill) and Cheltenham via Stratford upon Avon, Honeybourne and Broadway. Constructed to the GWR's standard architects' pattern for a mid-sized station, the building remained open until 1992 when British Rail closed the Booking Office. At this point, the building was boarded up and left. Consequently, the building has been unloved for some thirty years, and its appearance, until recently, deteriorating and poor.

Over the thirty years since the building became redundant, several attempts have been made to try and do something about improving the station at Henley. However, these attempts were not successful. In 2019 the line's long-established Rail User Group, the Shakespeare Line Promotion Group, approached Henley in Arden Parish Council and tried to pursue potential community interest at Henley in Arden in adopting its railway station. The Council appeared keen to help but was anxious about potential liabilities leading to it being cautious and non-committal. Eventually, the Council embraced the concept and asked one of its then-members to take it forward under its tourism/visitor/local economy brief. Angela Okey from Henley in Arden took on this role and, despite having left the Parish Council, continued to lead what is now a proper Trust formed in the town known as the Friends of Henley Station (FoHRS). After a break, Angela has since rejoined the Parish Council enabling a helpful link between the local community, FoHRS and FoSL. The first phase of the activity was to apply tactical measures to improve the overall appearance of Henley's station. Sue Bird from Henley became involved and transformed the station's natural environment with a dedicated team of other volunteers. The station gardens were renovated, and new planters were installed. Angela Okey led the design and creation of unique art-boards using local Henley in Arden businesses, Creative Touch Design and Gary Nicklin's 'Art Attack'. The art-boards were fixed to the station building transforming its appearance, improving its environment and reducing anti-social behaviour.

With SLPG also attracting and establishing volunteers at all of the 21 railway stations along the Shakespeare Line route, it formed the Friends of the Shakespeare Line (FoSL), a Community Station Partnership, a volunteer-led and managed collective that supports all the volunteers along the line. FoHRS, with the active support of FoSL, then applied themselves to the potential renovation and repurposing of the station building. Consequently, hundreds of hours have been spent over the past year pursuing the aim of reopening the station building and to provide the community with an amenity whilst also delivering innovation by repurposing the building to become an attraction to visitors by rail.

Through considerable work and with support from Fay Easton at West Midlands Trains, Denise Wetton, Patrick Power and Derek Brace at Network Rail, together with Andy Savage and Tim Hedley-Jones from the Railway Heritage Association, FoHRS has been successful in progressing its aim. Funding to renovate and repurpose the building has been applied for by FoHRS and obtained. As 2023 approaches, so does the signing over of the building by Network Rail to FoHRS to enable the renovation works to begin. Network Rail will also work on other aspects of the station to allow FoHRS's work to proceed.

We look forward to continuing to work closely with FoHRS, and towards the end of 2023, we hope to report that the station building at Henley in Arden is again open after thirty or more years!

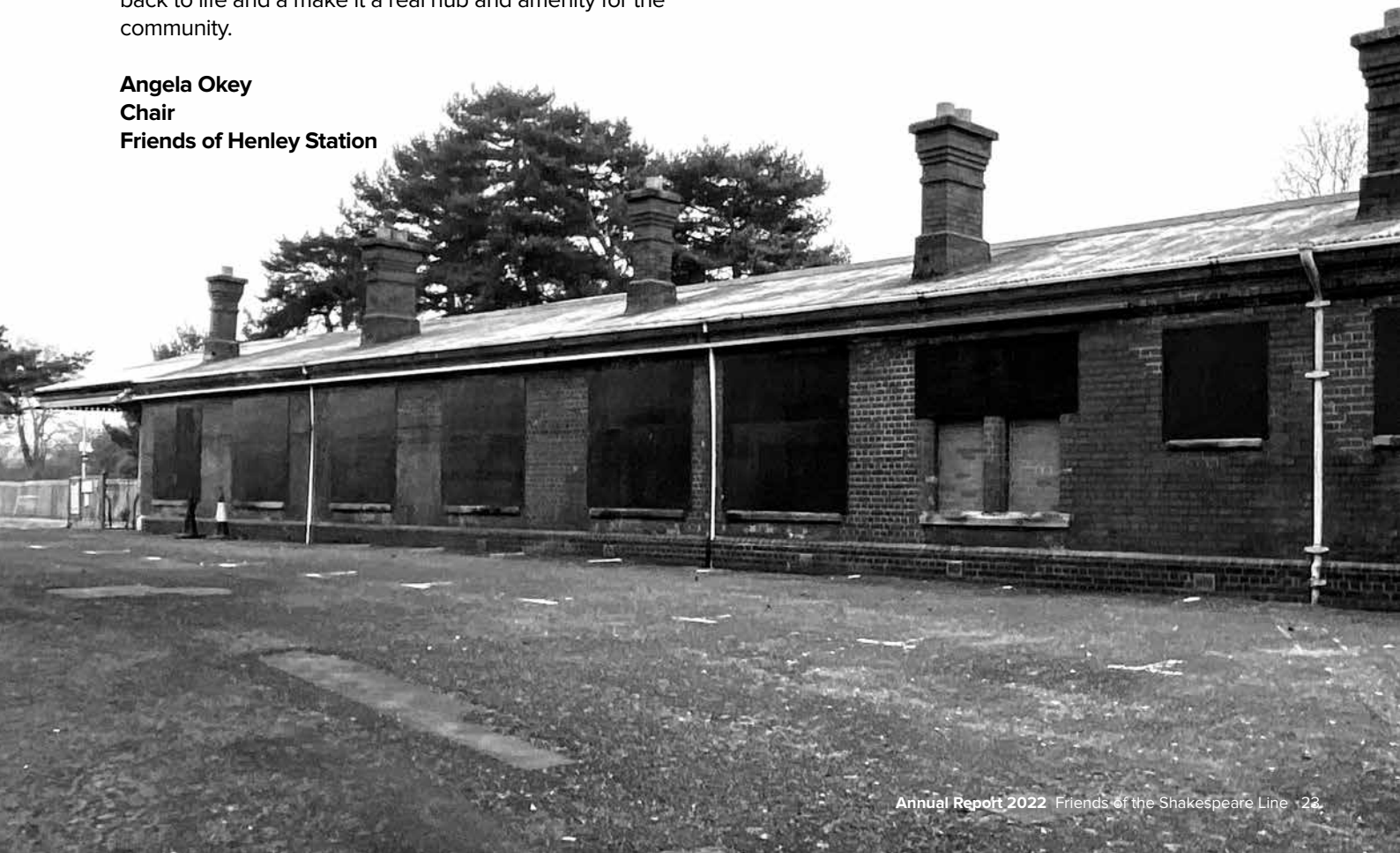
Having arrived personally as a passenger at Henley Station I can say that the flower displays, general tidiness and cared-for appearance lifted my spirits. This is particularly true on a dank or dreary day. It was super to see that some folk actually take pride from creating and maintaining such a lovely space. It made me want to linger to fully appreciate. Personally, being actively involved provides wellbeing, purpose and satisfaction. The social benefits are a wonderful bonus too.

Iain Duck / Henley in Arden Station



Tenacity and sheer determination of our small group of volunteers has brought us to the point where we are imminently due to sign an Agreement to Lease with Network Rail the owners of the station building. This really is a ground-breaking opportunity for us as a community to demonstrate to the rail network how we can bring not only the station building, but also the station as a whole, back to life and a make it a real hub and amenity for the community.

**Angela Okey
Chair
Friends of Henley Station**



COMMUNITY STATION HEROES

It's people that make all the difference and without the volunteers at all the Shakespeare Line stations simply none of what has been achieved to date would have happened. When one considers this point you start to appreciate the power of volunteering and how it can galvanise a community to enhance its environment and quality of life. The welcoming and engaging style of the stakeholders is also crucial to such success and we are lucky to be able to work alongside a committed set of people from the several stakeholders we interact with.

HERE'S WHAT THEY HAVE TO SAY...



For me, volunteering on behalf of FoSL is all about communities helping to improve the environment at their local station. Social interaction with others involved in achieving this aim is also a big part of the picture, as is the ultimate goal of attracting more train passengers and reducing car use.

Neil Williamson / Danzey Station



The station & community benefits in a number of ways, and not just by having litter picked and nice flowers in planters and borders. Volunteering at a station is an opportunity to tell people about rail services, talk about local history, discuss upcoming community events and share skills & ideas with others.

Jon Knight / Stratford upon Avon Parkway Station



I have long had an ambition to repaint the rocks white around the 'garden' on Stratford-upon-Avon Station Platform 2. A great-uncle of mine had been station master at Bewdley and family history said he kept a wonderful Victorian cottage flower garden and my home town station was drab. With the help of Stratford-in-Bloom 'The Friends' got going in 2017. I have been overwhelmed by the support of West Midlands Trains and FoSL. Without the local support this journey could not have happened. We are planting for colour, interest and bugs and beetles as well as residents and visitors. It is so good to think we are part of a movement along the line to Birmingham to create green corridors. Time spent working on the platform is fun and rewarding and satisfying. Looking forward to 2023.

Jenny Fradgley / Stratford upon Avon Station



This year was a particularly special and poignant year for the volunteers planting up the planters and flower beds for Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee with the red, white and blue plants. It was also important to maintain the planters, as well as the flower beds, over the dry summer so that the Station looked good for visitors to the Commonwealth Games and many positive comments were received from members of the public using the station. Although we are entering late autumn the planters are still flourishing and visitors to the Station have shown their appreciation.

Christine and John Thorp / Whitlocks End Station



As a lad in my junior years, I spent many holidays at my Great Aunts house in North Wales close to the Rhyl/ Llandudno Junction four track rail line. Many a happy hour was spent watching the great steam trains thunder along the track. The dream then was to be a train driver, it never happened. Now to volunteer at Hall Green is fulfilling part of the dream, to work with the lovely folk of the railways and to brighten up the station with colourful gardens and planters for the travelling public is a satisfying benefit of retired life.

Howard Hemmings / Hall Green Station



What's important from volunteering at the station is the feeling of giving something back to our community and it is also good to meet and speak to people that we may not meet in any other circumstance. Just a five minute chat is enough to make an introduction to a neighbour you may not otherwise have been introduced to. Also being out of doors, if only for a few hours each week, gives a great sense of well being.

Cheryl Roberts / The Lakes Station



Volunteers at Claverdon bring friendship and ideas to fulfil station projects. The work we do at the station helps to make a difference to the passenger experience and promote the railway as an alternative form of transport.

Phil Stoakes / Claverdon Station



As a volunteer, I have been able to provide colour, interest and celebration of the Platinum Jubilee and Commonwealth Games through the seasonal planting of our platform planters. At the station, I also experience community engagement and insight into what actual users (locals and visitors) need and would like from the railway station. Volunteering at the railway station enriches users' experience of the station by showing that it is cared for and invested in and promotes the station and train service within the local community.

Angela Williamson / Wood End Station

Volunteering at the station brings a sense of village inclusion to the station, rather than it being an independent entity. The fabulous complimentary supply of plants from Earlswood Garden and Landscape Centre add to a more welcoming experience and occasionally volunteers get to meet villagers using the trains, a conversation ensues and more awareness is created of the Shakespeare Line ethos.

Jessica Earle / Wootton Wawen Station



The benefits of volunteering at Yardley Wood Station have been returning the original strip gardens to life and receiving the appreciative thanks from passengers passing through when we are there and getting to meet other volunteer stations gardeners along the line.

Vivienne Wilkes / Yardley Wood Station



We realise, sadly, that there will always be people who show little or no respect to public property but, equally, from the many positive remarks that we receive from passengers when we are working at the station, the planters give most people great pleasure. It certainly makes our efforts worth while when we listen to how much they are appreciated and this adds to our enjoyment of volunteering.

Sue and David Shrimpton / Shirley Station



We have enjoyed bringing the red, white and blue colours to life in our planters. We are always pleased when users of the station comment and thank the volunteers at our station for making a difference which is our whole aim. The original GWR station building and footbridge provides us with a perfect environment around which can enhance the borders, garden and platforms with a range of flowers that also encourage biodiversity.

John Philps / Wilmcote Station



This year people have noticed our efforts more because of the jubilee and themed planting, plus the new sign. When travellers see us working and weeding on the platform they take time to comment on our progress and improvements with their appreciation. During the heatwave passengers sympathised with our shrubbery losses!

Gary & Diane Scruby / Bearley Station



The benefit of volunteering at Spring Road Station combines one of our other volunteering role with Scouts. We are able to involve the young people as it is in the heart of the community they live in and they take pride in making it a pleasure to catch a train there.

**Sue Weake / 260th Birmingham Scouts
Spring Road Station**

By volunteering, we have been able to share our love of beautiful plants with our local area. This has been a privilege, to inspire those travelling via the Shakespeare Line to get involved with brightening our fantastic region with natural colours.

**Leanne Carrigan / Earlswood Garden
& Landscape Centre & Station Adopters
at Earlswood Station**



Our station is based in a deprived part of Birmingham and is generally unloved. I think the group of volunteers have made a difference by brightening up the ambience of Tyseley station by clearing litter and dramatically improving the flower beds. We have also worked on schemes to help deliver further visual improvements to the station that we hope to see take place soon.

Neil Ewart / Tyseley Station

THE SUPREME POWER OF COMMUNITY

Thinking back to the dark days of March 2020, it was a good saying that “when the UK went into lockdown, communities went into overdrive”. This applied ‘in spades’ to the SLPG Committee in general and our Secretary in particular.

With a wealth of rail promotion experience under his belt and a good understanding of the best and worst aspects of ‘community rail’ projects, Fraser Pithie and SLPG set out to engage the Shakespeare Line and the wider community it served to the considerable benefit of both parties.

The word ‘synergy’ seems to have fallen out of fashion in recent times but its’ meaning - producing a combined effect greater than the sum of its parts – exactly describes the effectiveness of Friends of the Shakespeare Line!

We at SLPG share an immense sense of pride in the massive strides and achievements made by volunteers at every station in the less than three years that FoSL has existed. The volunteers have turned each of our stations into a destination, with the excitement of anticipating what lies ahead, including the repurposing and reopening of Henley’s main station building for community use!

I was pleased to attend an excellent Stakeholder Conference at Symphony Hall, Birmingham in October 2022, organised jointly by train operators West Midlands Trains and London North Western Railway. The gathering celebrated the importance of community engagement with our railways, among other topics. I felt very proud that both SLPG and FoSL are so highly-regarded.

The ‘taking to the stage’ with a presentation by Woodrush Academy on their adoption of Wythall station profoundly demonstrated what FoSL has enabled, with the audience’s applause at the end corroborating my view.

Well done, FoSL; it’s great to be working with you, we very much look forward to 2023!

Peter Morris
Chair
Shakespeare Line Promotion Group



VALUED PARTNERS & STAKEHOLDERS



One of the essential elements of a thriving community is social cohesion, and it's vital in those areas that suffer from some of the highest levels of social deprivation in the United Kingdom. So, it's been uplifting to see the engagement of people from several diverse communities across inner-city Birmingham becoming involved with their railway station to improve its environment, encourage sustainable travel by using the train and positively contribute towards making using the train a great customer experience and choice. Spring Road and Hall Green stations, and their planters festooned by a blaze of colour, have been a joy this year enjoyed by many using the train. The imaginative artwork installed at Small Heath & Sparkbrook station and similar plans for Tyseley station are significant steps towards attracting more people to the train in those areas. The work of the voluntarily managed and operated Community Station Partnership, known as the Friends of Shakespeare Line, has been a catalyst by unlocking communication channels and getting real engagement between local communities and the railway. As we each need to play our part in reducing emissions and making sustainable choices, the role and position of our railways have become increasingly important. Making railway stations better and great places to use plays a big part in encouraging the modal shift we need when travelling. The fulfilment of those who have been able to volunteer at the Birmingham City area stations and the pleasure and well-being the results of their work gives to thousands of people using the train should not be underestimated. In just two years, the Shakespeare Line has been transformed by those communities that use and depend upon it. I look forward to 2023 and beyond as even more benefit from this voluntary and social value enterprise goes from strength to strength.

From Liz Clements
Cabinet Member for Transport
Birmingham City Council
West Midlands, Transport Focus



The rail industry is certainly experiencing challenging times. Unsustainable costs and lower passenger numbers since the pandemic. The seemingly glacial pace of industry reform. The most protracted industrial action in a generation. All sobering and depressing against a backdrop of a challenging economic outlook for the country. It is, therefore, always a joy in my job to see the exceptional work being done by the growing army of community volunteers across the region. That Friends of Shakespeare Line (FoSL) is amongst the most proactive and ambitious just adds to my joy. This year I have witnessed the exceptional quality posters at Small Heath and Birmingham Moor Street, and seen incredible work at Wythall by the young adopters there. All of those, and many more across FoSL are making a real difference to passengers, rail staff and local communities. In these challenging times it makes the work of rail community volunteers ever more important, bringing brightness to lives, stations and communities all along the line. In March this year I was humbled to be asked to become Chair of the Heart of England Community Rail Partnership (HoE CRP). In this capacity I am keen to do what I can to ensure that both FoSL and HoE CRP work together in their complimentary ways in pursuit of the same goal... to help our railways flourish. Thank you to all the dedicated volunteers who make such a difference.

Malcolm Holmes
Executive Director
West Midlands Rail Executive





As Stakeholder Manager in the West Midlands, I have seen first hand the outstanding work that The Friends of The Shakespeare Line (FoSL) have been integral to delivering over the last year. Every project FoSL engages in benefits from boundless enthusiasm, energy, and innovation, which could not be further removed from the traditional view of what community rail is. Whether working in central Birmingham or in a more rural setting, a large project like the Commonwealth Games or at a local station, three things consistently shine through:

- A passion for rail and for growing use of, and access to the railway by passengers
- A sense of community that is an exemplar to others
- A rare combination of energy, passion and commitment balanced by entrepreneurial flair and business acumen

Nowhere is this clearer than in their work to pioneer different approaches, such as Community Station Partnerships – and it is clear when you visit a station their work has touched that the look, the feel and the level of vibrancy and community are infectious – and very tangibly connected to the local community they serve. In my work, I spend a lot of time on the rail network and see the diversity of experiences that passengers encounter. As part of this, I have visited a wide variety of stations, but some of my fondest memories of a great experience I have are from stations that have benefited from the work of The Friends of The Shakespeare Line. With the eyes of the world on Birmingham at the Commonwealth Games, a new audience also got to see and appreciate that work. Rail is incredibly fortunate to have such numbers of willing, diligent, and passionate volunteers. At a time when volunteering is falling in many areas, this organisation bucks that trend whilst bringing a sense of community ownership and a laser like focus onto identifying, shaping, and delivering positive change. Long may it continue and thank you all for the huge difference you continue to make – the future is in excellent hands.

Geoff Grant
Stakeholder Manager - West Midlands
Transport Focus



The work of community-led station partnerships such as the Friends of the Shakespeare Line (FoSL) continues to make a huge difference to the railway and our passengers. FoSL have achieved a tremendous amount in just 2 years and have gone from strength to strength, growing volunteer numbers and broadening their reach, to engage and support young people, as well as helping to regenerate their local community. West Midlands Trains is proud to be an active partner of FoSL and to see what can be achieved by a group of passionate, proactive, and determined volunteers is extremely heartening. There are so many achievements this year, including turning the Shakespeare Line red, white and blue in celebration of the Platinum Jubilee, and developing the first Geocaching adventure based on a railway line. One of my personal favourites is the fantastic relationship FoSL have curated with Woodrush High School in Wythall. I have been inspired to see so many students producing artwork for the station, getting involved in planting, watering and litter picking. At a time when anti-social behaviour is increasing and we face difficult economic times, this relationship with young people is all the more positive. Not only does this relationship clearly benefit the local community and those that use the railway, but it also benefits those young people by providing them with transferable skills in communications, enterprise, horticulture and customer service. Work has already begun on the development of a City & Guilds qualification based on station adoption aimed at students special educational needs, a project funded through the West Midlands Trains Customer and Community Improvement Fund (CCIF). I look forward to supporting the development of this relationship in the coming year. CCIF will also support the development of a customer and community hub at Stratford on Avon station, managed by community volunteers. I look forward to see both of these projects come to fruition early next year. While the rail industry is experiencing considerable change, uncertainty and challenge, the hard work of volunteers is unwavering and for that we are extremely grateful.

Jonny Wiseman
Customer Experience Director
West Midlands Trains





It's an honour to contribute to this second Annual Report documenting a year of truly outstanding community endeavours by the first Community Station Partnership (CSP) in the UK; The Friends of The Shakespeare Line. This CSP has delivered a triumphant second year of activity, having increased their membership numbers, expanded the range of projects, worked at inner-city stations, taken on the challenges of disused station buildings and supported an awe-inspiring achievement with Woodrush High School in the development of a new school qualification based on station adoption, the community of the Shakespeare Line is contributing to changing young lives with this work. These stunning achievements have been undertaken whilst inspiring three other station-based community partnerships to launch in the West Midlands. With the impact of COVID, 'community' is seen as a vitally important asset to the health of society and in the rail industry our partnerships with communities are expanding as people form local groups to take a hand in upgrading their stations, helping to bring social values of volunteering, neighbourliness, and local pride to our business. It has been an honour for me to work with the volunteers and trustees this year, to watch them pioneer community works at inner-city stations, develop localised marketing campaigns for their own scenic destinations, bring art, life and colour to station platforms and create plans for the revival of disused station buildings; all whilst enriching and supporting their own local communities. In addition to their endeavours along the West Midlands Railway line, this dynamic group have also undertaken what can only be described as 'gargantuan' collaborative projects with a leading rail operator and Network Rail. In this report you will have read of the transformation at Moor Street Station (for Chiltern Railways) and the seasonal planting uplift of New Street Station (for Network Rail). Both stunning achievements and evidence that united community power is formidable. It is humbling to work with so many community pioneers and volunteers committed to this industry, and I am constantly amazed at their energies, their vision and their kindness, care, and commitment for local neighbourhoods.

It has been said that Communities and Localism will be powerful drivers of revival not only in the challenging year looming but in the decade ahead, and as we face uncertain times, the railways of this country are blessed in having so many people who care enough to step forward and be part of the unique army of railway volunteers. I thank this entire group for all they do for their communities and our railways, and for constantly inspiring me in my own work.

Fay Easton
Head of Stakeholder and Community
West Midlands Trains



For a second year the work of the volunteers along the Shakespeare Line has helped to provide a positive environment for people using the train. The celebration of the late Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee in the summer at every station was fabulous. I'd like to say thank you to all the volunteers and their communities who have established great relationships with our officers, this is beneficial to all and we look forward to building a closer partnership as we move towards 2023.

Lucy D'Orsi
Chief Constable of British Transport Police





THANKS TO THE SHAKESPEARE LINE MANAGER

A special thanks to Ian Taylor, Line Manager for Snow Hill Lines at West Midlands Trains and without whom many of the activities and improvements at the railway stations along the Shakespeare Line route simply would not have happened. Ian is a great person to work with, is always very supportive with a refreshing 'can do' attitude and knows and works closely with all the volunteers along the line.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Geoff Dowling and John Whitehouse for archive photography and Design One from Lapworth for building and maintaining our Website (www.friendsl.org.uk) and for producing this, our second Annual Report.



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