

All change at the top of the West Midlands Trains comms team

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Charlotte Ritchie has become the new head of external communications and engagement at West Midlands Trains (WMT).

Charlotte is replacing Francis Thomas, who will soon retire from his role as head of corporate affairs after nine years with WMT and its predecessor London Midland.



Francis Thomas

Francis's first job in the rail industry was in 1983, when he became a management trainee with British Rail. For a decade, he worked in a number of comms roles, as well as being a customer services manager at Birmingham New Street station.

Then, he undertook senior communications roles at The Boots Company, LEGO and in both local and national government before rejoining the railway in 2013 with London Midland.

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

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



Charlotte Ritchie

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

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

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

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