

Birmingham New Street flowers get Shakespearean treatment

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Green-fingered volunteers have transformed flower planters for thousands of passengers returning to Birmingham New Street station.

Last week volunteers from Network Rail and the Friends of the Shakespeare line rejuvenated the large flower beds on the station's eastern plaza, next to Smallbrook Queensway.

There are numerous references to flowers in Shakespeare – especially in ‘A Midsummer Night’s Dream’:

*‘I know a bank whereon the wild thyme blows,
Where oxlips and the nodding violet grows.’*

There may not be wild thyme, oxlips or violets in the station’s striking raised flower beds, but they are now full of new, diverse plants that encourage wildlife and are more visually appealing for station users and passers-by.

Patrick Power, Network Rail head of stations and passenger experience, said: “Let’s not beat about the

bush – it's been great to work with our volunteers to spruce up the area around the station as more passengers return to the rail network.

“Although we've not planted any 'Peaseblossom' or 'Mustardseed', we're hoping these plants will bring 'a Midsummer Night's Dream' to station users as they enjoy the new greenery in the lighter evenings this summer.”

Fraser Pithie, who manages the volunteer-led Friends of the Shakespeare Line group, said: “It's great for volunteers from several smaller local stations. They have brought their commitment and expertise to work with Network Rail's team to help transform the frontage at New St Station. It's one of the benefits that arise from volunteers and Network Rail working much more closely together to improve the well-being of our local communities.”

Network Rail staff used volunteering leave to get their hands dirty and get a bit more greenery into Birmingham city centre.

The Friends of the Shakespeare Line is a voluntary led group that has attracted and supports volunteers at all the railway stations along the railway line between Birmingham and Stratford upon Avon.

The group have ventured beyond their usual boundaries to lend a hand at the station, repaying a favour to Network Rail after the installation of a new water tap at Henley-in-Arden for the station's adopters.

For more information on how Network Rail works with community groups visit:

<https://www.networkrail.co.uk/communities/community-rail/>

Find out more from the Friends of the Shakespeare line at: <https://www.friendsl.org.uk/>

Photo credit: Network Rail