

## Community heroes from Wiltshire travel on GWR train named in their honour

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Hospital hero Liz Gallagher and 'mask tree' creator Naomi Betts travelled on a train named in their honour today as Great Western Railway celebrated their community heroics.

Liz, from Swindon, and Naomi, from Amesbury, were chosen as BBC Make a Difference Superstars for selflessly helping others at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the height of the pandemic, Liz, a nurse of more than 40 years' experience, delayed her retirement to stay on as ward manager of the Intensive Care Unit at Swindon's Great Western Hospital.

Naomi created a mask tree to hang the face coverings she had been sewing for anyone in the community who needed them. Her social media post went viral and led to more than 400 trees being registered across the UK.

The pair were selected as BBC Make a Difference Superstars by judges following a link-up between the BBC and GWR to celebrate those people going above and beyond to help others in their communities.

Now their names feature at either end of Intercity Express Train 800035 as GWR continues to honour BBC Make a Difference Superstars from nine regions across the network.

South Swindon MP Sir Robert Buckland, who joined the winners at Swindon Station today, said: “We all know that our NHS has gone above and beyond throughout the pandemic, but no-one more so than Liz, who delayed her retirement to stay working on the very frontline at the Great Western Hospital. She is a true hero and it is absolutely fitting that GWR and BBC Wiltshire have recognised her in this way.”

Salisbury MP John Glen said: “Before March 2020, I’m not sure many people will have had face coverings as one of their essential daily items; however, when the pandemic hit the likes of Naomi stepped up to provide that much-needed protection for our community, as well as raising money for charity in the process. It’s really fantastic that her contribution is being celebrated by GWR and BBC Wiltshire.”

Great Western Railway Managing Director Mark Hopwood said: “Liz and Naomi went to incredible lengths to support their communities and we’re thrilled to add their names on to the side of an Intercity Express Train.

“The GWR has a long and proud history of naming trains after Great Westerners – past and present heroes from across our network – and it’s a real treat to add these two community stalwarts to that list.

“It was a privilege to partner with the BBC Make a Difference campaign and the stories which featured on BBC local radio were truly overwhelming.”

Head of Audio and Digital for BBC England Chris Burns said: “We have been amazed by the response of many listeners to our Make a Difference campaign on Local BBC Radio, as listeners have been helping each other out throughout the pandemic.

“It has been humbling to learn about the kind-hearted efforts of so many in our communities and Liz and Naomi are great examples to the rest of us. Congratulations to them and to the team at BBC Wiltshire.”

*Photo credit: Great Western Railway*