

Network Rail 'graffiti hit squad' launched to clean-up railway

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A graffiti hit squad which will target tags and vandalism on the railway has been launched in the West Midlands.

Network Rail and West Midlands Rail Executive are investing over £700k to clean-up lines, bridges and all things railway-related to improve the look and feel of tracksides for passengers and communities.

Graffiti can give the impression of an uncared for environment as well as making people feel unsafe. The new hit squad's aim is to make the railway and surrounding areas more appealing.

The clean-up work started this month and is already helping to make the railway more welcoming for passengers as they return to travelling by train following the pandemic.

The graffiti blitz will also help to make sure the railway is ready for the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

Allun Edge, maintenance protection coordinator at Network Rail, said: "The railway is a regular target for graffiti but we are determined to tackle it and give the best impression to passengers, local communities

and the worldwide audience which will be watching us during the Commonwealth Games next year.

“Removing graffiti is an ongoing battle but we know the majority of people hate it as much as we do. Trespassing on the railway to do it can also have fatal consequences and it’s simply not worth risking your life to spray a wall with a tag.”

Malcolm Holmes, executive director of the West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE), said: “While we are investing in new stations and new services across the West Midlands it is also important we look after our existing railway infrastructure – which we do through programmes like the Community Rail Partnerships.

“This graffiti hit squad is a welcome addition to that as it sends a positive message to our passengers that our stations, bridges and lines are not only being cared for but under regular supervision.”

Graffiti is not only an eyesore, it is a criminal offence while trespassing on the railway is punishable by fine of up to £1,000.

Superintendent Sue Peters, from British Transport Police, said: “Vandalism goes far beyond just looking unpleasant. It has huge financial implications for the rail industry and causes frustrating delays to passengers while trains are taken out of service to be cleaned.

“Not only this, offenders are also putting themselves at risk by trespassing on the railway, which can have life-changing consequences. It will not be tolerated and we will continue to support the rail industry by running dedicated operations to target this type of crime.”

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps MP, said: “Graffiti on our railways is unsightly, it makes people feel unsafe and can lead to further crime taking place. It is therefore fantastic to see Network Rail taking the initiative and clearing it up.

“Removing graffiti across the network will help clean up our railway and make stations and services more pleasant for passengers as we build back better and prepare for the Commonwealth Games.”

To report graffiti or vandalism, contact Network Rail’s 24-hour national helpline on: 03457 114 141

Photo and video credit: Network Rail