

Volunteers' Week: West Midlands Railway pays tribute as record numbers step forward

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Railway chiefs have paid tribute to the community spirit of the West Midlands after record numbers of people stepped forward to care for their local stations.

West Midlands Railway (WMR) estimates volunteers have already donated over 2,000 hours of time so far this year to help with landscaping, floral displays and art installations at stations across the network.

To mark National Volunteers' Week, WMR is taking the opportunity to recognise the fantastic contribution volunteers make to the railways and their own local communities.

Fay Easton, WMR head of stakeholder and community, said: "Our volunteers tell us there is nothing more fulfilling than being part of community efforts to support the railways and local neighbourhoods.

"During this year of the pandemic we have seen volunteering provide opportunities for people to take part in joint activities with friends and neighbours, boosting physical and mental health. Researchers have aligned volunteer activity as the public service equivalent of going to the gym.

“We are incredibly grateful to our fantastic army of volunteers which has more than doubled during the past 12 months as people spend more time in their own localities and refocus on neighbourhoods and communities.”

Among the station volunteer projects under way this week was the installation of 14 timber planters at the picturesque Henley-in-Arden station in Warwickshire.

Sue Bird, from the Friends of Henley Station, said: “It is great to see our work coming to fruition after we spent many long hours preparing the station for this project.

“To see the colours and flowers on the platforms now is great and we can now be proud of how our station welcomes visitors to our fabulous town.”

Other volunteer-led projects recently completed at stations have included spring and summer planting in volunteer-created gardens at Coseley station in the Black Country; the creation of wildflower gardens along the Shrewsbury Line at Bilbrook in Staffordshire; and the development of plans for a spectacular ‘urban’ mural at Wylde Green station in Sutton Coldfield.

For information on launching a group or getting involved with volunteers at your local station, visit www.wmr.uk/community-rail or email friends@wmtrains.co.uk

Photo credit: West Midlands Railway