**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 3 September 2020**

**Avanti West Coast gets behind Coventry Acts of Kindness**

* *Avanti West Coast teams up with Heart of England Community Rail Partnership*
* *Customers at three Warwickshire stations treated to welcome gifts*
* *Campaign designed to encourage more people to return to rail and reassure*

Avanti West Coast is supporting an initiative aiming to encourage people back to railway with welcome gifts including cakes and cookies.

Organised by the Heart of England Community Rail Partnership, “Coventry Acts of Kindness” will see customers at Coventry, Tile Hill and Canley treated with goodies when arriving at the station.

The project has been backed by Avanti West Coast’s Station Community Fund, which aims to encourage Community Rail Partnerships to develop schemes which involve the local community and benefit passengers using local stations including ones run by Avanti West Coast stations.

The inspiration for the idea came from Julia Singleton-Tasker, Community Rail Officer for the Heart of England Community Rail Partnership.

“Understandably, given recent events, there will be a lot of people who are nervous about travelling by train right now,” added Julia. “Many may feel overwhelmed or have concerns about getting back onboard, so we were delighted that Avanti West Coast got right behind Coventry Acts of Kindness.”

As well as the fun element, members of The Kaleidoscope Plus Group, one of the Midlands’ leading mental health and wellbeing charities, will be on hand to talk to people with any concerns and signpost them to some of the support services available for mental health and wellbeing, as well as services for those who have been affected by COVID-19.

“We’re committed to making sure our customers can travel with confidence and have put in lots of extra measures to make our trains and stations even safer,” explained Joanna Buckley, Community Manager for Avanti West Coast.

“But as well as the physical measures, it’s important to acknowledge the human side of the impact the pandemic has had on everyone. That’s why the Coventry Acts of Kindness scheme struck a real chord. It’s a great, and fun way to help reassure customers and hopefully put a few smiles on faces at the same time.”

The gifts have all been sourced from local businesses and include: -

* Cookies from Wicked Cookies
* Flowers from CreScent Florist
* Art Postcards from Brink Contemporary Art
* Cakes and Brownies from Buttercream Dreams

Ends

**Notes to Editors**

The teams from Heart of England Community Rail Partnership and Kaleidoscope Plus Group will be visiting the following stations: -

**Friday 4th September** **Saturday 5th September Monday 7th September**

Tile Hill 7am - 10am / 3pm - 5pm Coventry - All day Canley 7am - 11am

Canley 7am - 11am

**Thursday 10th September**

Tile Hill and Coventry - All day

**About Avanti West Coast**

Avanti West Coast, operator of intercity rail services on the West Coast Main Line, is a joint venture between FirstGroup and Trenitalia, delivering a cleaner, greener railway that drives the West Coast forward.

We’re on a mission to revolutionise train travel, linking together the towns and major cities of the UK to create an iconic railway the country can be proud of. We’ve got big plans including a fleet of new intercity trains, as well as the complete refurbishment of the existing Pendolino train fleet. We will introduce more train services every week with new routes added, and a much-improved onboard service with enhanced free Wi-Fi, plug sockets, 25,000 brand new seats and improved catering. Since 8 December, passengers have benefited from improved passenger compensation, available for journeys delayed by just 15 minutes.

**About Heart of England Community Rail Partnership**

The Heart of England partnership was founded in 2019 and is formed of 11 principal partners and funders, who are: Avanti West Coast, Coventry City Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, Stratford-on-Avon District Council, Warwickshire County Council, Warwick District Council, Chiltern Railways, CrossCountry, West Midlands Railways, Vintage Trains and West Midlands Rail Executive. Network Rail also supports the work of the Partnership.

The Partnership covers 36 stations over 3 train lines operating between Birmingham, Coventry, Nuneaton, Leamington Spa, Warwick and Stratford-Upon-Avon.

Community Rail is acknowledged to be powering a quiet regeneration revolution in the UK and in the West Midlands the Heart of England CRP aspire to introduce community rail to many of our urban and rural stations and lines.

**About Kaleidoscope Plus Group**

Established in 1973, The Kaleidoscope Plus Group support thousands of people all over the UK each year. The charity offers a wide range of services for those experiencing mental health difficulties, as well as residential care homes and supported houses for the most vulnerable in society. The Kaleidoscope Plus Group works to promote and support positive health and wellbeing and is committed to making sure that the services and facilities they provide are of the highest possible quality.