Press Release

16 September 2026

Wildlife inspired projects at Stafford station create a buzz within local community

- *New station projects unveiled in support of Stafford's 'Bee Friendly Town' status*
- *Wildlife inspired artwork and pollinator themed garden engage local community groups*
- *Avanti West Coast celebrates initiative supported through its Community Rail Project fund*

A collection of projects inspired by local wildlife have been unveiled at Stafford station in support of the area's 'Bee Friendly Town' status.

The joint initiative between Avanti West Coast colleagues, local artists and North Staffordshire Community Rail Partnership has created a vibrant gateway into the town, with wildlife inspired murals displayed around the station and a new shared garden for colleagues designed to encourage pollination.

Installed on platforms and running along the walls of the customer overbridge, the colourful artworks have taken inspiration from pollinating wildlife. Staffordshire artist, Tom Edwards, worked with groups of young people to explore the pollinator theme, helping them bring the designs to life before painting the final artworks.

In addition to the murals, a new 3D installation on the overbridge has been created using recycled tin cans, which were collected and modelled into flowers, blossom and pollinating insects. The project was led by Protean Art who worked with community groups to produce the 3D leaves and flowers featured in the artwork which surround the word 'Stafford'. The artwork was the idea of Customer Service Team Leader at the station, Fiona Main, who envisioned the installation as a "creative and alternative way to welcome customers into the town".

The project reinforces Stafford's Bee Friendly Town status – awarded to the town in May 2024 – with the station also now included in the area's Bee Friendly Trail located in Victoria Park, which sits opposite the rail hub. Avanti West Coast, who manage the station, supported the project through its Community Rail Project (CRP) funding – a scheme that helps CRPs deliver initiatives that engage communities with their railway.

Alongside local groups that participated in the projects, the wider rail industry teamed up with Avanti colleagues to help with the build of a shared garden, designed to encourage pollination by bees, butterflies and other insects.

Employees from Network Rail and train supplier, Alstom, volunteered their time to assist with turning repurposed pallets into planters to house flowers and plants that will attract insects and encourage pollination, creating a colourful and sustainable display that supports local wildlife.

Following its installation, the garden has been adopted by the local Scout group, which is led by Justin Williams, a Customer Service Assistant also based at Stafford.

The garden will provide an educational opportunity for the children through the upkeep of the planters and sessions led by external groups such as the Bumblebee Conservation Trust. It will also build on other environmental insights the group has brought to the station, which includes the creation of the 'bug hotels' – small boxes that have been repurposed as homes for insects.

Avanti West Coast colleagues, Justin and Fiona, are Community Champions at the station – a voluntary position that the operator created for its colleagues alongside their day-to-day role. It offers employees the opportunity to engage with the community surrounding their place of work, having a positive effect on personal wellbeing as well as enhancing social value in their local area.

Speaking about the project, artist, Tom Edwards, said: "It's been great to work on this with North Staffs Community Rail Partnership and Avanti West Coast. The designs developed through a series of workshops with local youth groups, taking Stafford's Bee Friendly Status as the starting point and exploring the bees, butterflies, moths and other insects that are so important to our local environment.

"It's really rewarding to see the finished artwork installed at Stafford Station. Thousands of people pass through the station every day, so having my work become part of that environment, and hopefully bringing a bit of colour and nature to people's journeys, is a great feeling. I particularly enjoyed working with the different community groups and bringing some of their ideas into a permanent piece of public artwork."

Justin Williams, Customer Service Assistant at Avanti West Coast, said: "Having the Scout Group working on the wildlife friendly garden and re-wilding area has been very rewarding.

"Their volunteering links in with 'Platforms for Change' which is a joint initiative between Scout groups and the Community Rail Network. Over the last three years as part of this programme, our young people have put in a lot of effort doing a variety of jobs including litter picking at the station, researching suitable plant species for the wildlife garden and constructing bug hotels.

"In addition to these activities, the opportunity for our Scouts to learn about railway safety has also been a big part of the project. I am so proud of what they have achieved."

Emma McIntosh, Community Rail Officer at North Staffordshire CRP, said: "This project provided a brilliant opportunity to celebrate, promote and support pollinators. Through creative engagement with the local Stafford community, together we have delivered engaging artwork that creates a colourful display for all that use the station."

To donate unwanted garden items – such as large plant pots, stones and seeds – so that they can be repurposed within the rewilding space, please speak with a member of the Avanti West Coast team at Stafford station.

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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. Avanti West Coast serves key UK cities, including London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow as well as North Wales.

We're on a mission to be the transport of choice – connecting customers and communities along the West Coast. Our award-winning Pendolino refurbishment programme transformed the UK's hardest working fleet with all 56 of the iconic trains providing best-in-class comfort.

Our Evero fleet, which offers more seats, improved comfort, and a substantial cut to carbon emissions, was introduced in June 2024 and is the result of a £350m investment in sustainable travel. Built by Hitachi, the 23-strong fleet, consisting of 10 seven-carriage electric trains and 13 five-carriage bi-modes, serves routes from London to the Midlands, Chester, North Wales and the North West.

We want to make a positive difference to the people and places we serve – helping to drive economic growth, green travel, and break down barriers. Our efforts to contribute to society and enable people to benefit from the opportunities rail offers through purpose-led initiatives including

Feel Good Field Trips and award-winning female driver recruitment campaign has seen us create over £1billion in social value impact.

We're tackling climate change wherever we can, from reducing energy and water use to training drivers in eco-driving techniques and sourcing food and drink from local suppliers. Our goal is to be net zero carbon by 2031. We're on track.

For the latest news, visit the Avanti West Coast Media Centre: https://newsdesk.avantiwestcoast.co.uk/

Press Office: 0845 000 3333

About Tom Edwards

Tom Edwards is a mural artist from North Staffordshire, creating large-scale public artworks inspired by wildlife, nature, heritage and local identity. A graduate of Staffordshire University, Tom works with communities, schools, local authorities and organisations across the UK to develop site-specific artwork that connects people with the places around them.

You can see Tom's latest projects and follow his work on Instagram at **@tomedwards.art** or visit www.tomedwards.art.

About ProteanArt

ProteanArt is the creative partnership of Staffordshire artists Debbie and John Todd, founders of a community of artists, designers and makers at Woodings Yard Studios in Stafford, UK.

Working both independently and collaboratively, Debbie and John create bespoke art installations and large-scale artworks for community projects, public spaces and private commissions.

Sustainability is at the heart of their practice, with much of their work crafted from recycled drinks-can metal, transforming everyday waste into colourful and distinctive artworks.

Their work has been seen in locations including Newport, Shropshire, where three large metal fish formed a striking public art installation, Tamworth Castle was home to a giant metal crown, and the National Trust's Shugborough Estate, where their flower-themed artworks and large letters brought colour and character to the grounds.

Alongside their own artistic practice, John runs Woodings Yard Studios, while Debbie delivers creative workshops and has developed a range of bespoke recycled drinks-can metal project kits, giving people the opportunity to explore their creativity and create their own artwork at home.

For more information visit www.proteanart.com or **@proteanart** on Instagram and Facebook.