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New community hub facility for Wolverhampton station

A community hub celebrating Wolverhampton, offering passengers and residents a place to meet, access business advice and enjoy local art is open in the city's railway station.

The 'Changemakers' scheme is the brainchild of the Wolverhampton Business Improvement District (BID) in a partnership between station operator West Midlands Railway and rail firm CrossCountry.

The facility is being fitted out now ahead of an autumn opening inside the brand-new station building, which fully opened last year following a multi-

million-pound redevelopment as part of the Wolverhampton Interchange project - supported by funding from City of Wolverhampton Council, West Midlands Combined Authority and the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership.

The hub has been made possible thanks to a development grant from CrossCountry's Customer and Communities Improvement Fund, while West Midlands Railway has provided project management and a community licence for the station unit.

John Robson, CrossCountry's regional director West Midlands and North West said: "It will be great to see this project being brought to life on this truly community-centric space. We are proud of our strong community relationships across our network and this truly collaborative application stood out for its enthusiasm and attention to detail."

Mel Bryett, Wolverhampton station manager, said: "We pride ourselves on putting our stations at the heart of our communities and I am delighted we are able to host such a worthwhile project in our beautiful new concourse. With more and more people returning to rail following the pandemic, I am thrilled to be working with such dedicated community organisations to offer additional services and opportunities to our customers."

Cherry Shine, managing director of Wolverhampton BID, said: "This project made possible by CrossCountry's Improvement Fund provides a real opportunity to connect our community and city centre businesses, support sustainable rail travel, provide an even warmer welcome to this key gateway to our city centre and encourage enterprise at our iconic new station. We are delighted to be working in partnership with CrossCountry and West Midlands Railway in an exciting venture for us all."

Councillor Stephen Simkins, City of Wolverhampton Council Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for City Economy, said: "The new railway station building is symbolic of the multi-billion-pound regeneration that is taking place in our city and the Interchange provides a gateway to Wolverhampton that everyone can be proud of. As we emerge from the Covid-19 pandemic and its restrictions, people are beginning to feel the full benefit of what these impressive new facilities have to offer.

"It is fantastic to see major names operating from the retail units - and the

addition of this community hub epitomises what Wolverhampton is all about. I'm hoping this acts as a catalyst for further investment in the station by our Interchange partners. The railway station development is a big part of how we are transforming our city centre to help boost the local economy, create jobs and make the most of the nearby canalside areas, where we have major housing plans.”

The community hub marks the latest stage of the station redevelopment, with retail giants Costa Coffee and Co-Op Food opening in recent weeks. The new stores, which have boosted employment in the city, are already proving a hit with passengers with features such as phone charging points in the Co-Op.

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