Malvern Link Station Adoption Project Report for the 2018 AGM

The aim of the project is to develop woodland, hedgerow, bumblebee/pollinator, and tree-fruit areas as mini-nature reserves and community environmental resources. The project is led by Malvern Community Forest in partnership with the Friends of Malvern Railway Stations/Malvern Civic Society, and (initially supported by London Midland. The project was launched on the 3rd May 2017, with an initial grant of £300 from London Midland for whips and plants, and to purchase items related to the work of the project, e.g. a first aid kit.

Working parties are limited to recognised Station Adopters, volunteers who had been registered with London Midland, following extensive health and safety training and routines. We started with six, and after some drop-out, are now up to nine Adopters. We meet weekly.

Four areas between Osborne Road and the Birmingham platform – Platform 2 – took from May until late November to clear, due to the combination of under-management, on-site waste "disposal", and sweeping many items under a carpet of rooting fleece, which had become an eco-system in itself. The Adopters were helped by teams of Network Rail and London Midland employees on volunteering day release, on two days in August and one in October. Large skips of rubbish were removed on each of these days. The opening day and these work parties were organised and well publicised by London Midland's Community Rail Lead, Faye Lambert, who organised Station Adoption schemes throughout the region.

On December 1st, in National Tree Week, a Tree Planting day was organised, with maximal attendance of Adopters, as well as community rail volunteers and managers. The lady mayor attended and planted one of the traditional apple trees. The Chair had persuaded the Three Counties Traditional Orchard Project to support the project, and they provided both the expertise and fifteen trees of locally bred traditional apple varieties as cordons. We also planted hazel, oak, sweet chestnut and birch whips on the larger, woodland area, plot.

The plot closest to Osborne Road was cleared and planted as a pollinator-friendly shrub/perennials demonstrator 'garden' plot. Rotting logs have been added as a decorative feature, and a compost bin will be added. The small plot next to it had a traditional variety of fruiting cherry planted in it, with more pollinator friendly plants.

As part of the woodland area preparation, we unearthed a lot of rubble and abandoned machinery. Once this was removed, we had a potential pond-site and the hole was sculpted to provide different depths. One of the MCS adopters persuaded the AONB to fund a pond liner and underlay. The wild-life pond is now in operation, attracting lots of wildlife, and awaiting both a more permanent form of fencing and more plants.

Work on the beds next to Plaform 2 on the far side of the footbridge commenced in June 2017, to enable them to receive hay full of seeding wildflowers from neighbouring Link Common, courtesy of Malvern Hills Trust. However, the poor weather prevented this, and

wildflower seed was purchased and sown. Some of the seed has taken and now needs controlling! The rest of the beds on this part of the platform are continuing to be cleared, in order to be able to plant a variety of forms of hedges and hedgerows in the autumn.

London Midland lost the operating franchise, which was taken over by West Midlands Trains. Part of the new franchise agreement was to allocate substantial sums to support community rail activities such as station adoption. Faye Lambert took retirement at the end of the London Midland franchise, and has yet to be replaced, but we have had continuing support from other carry-over managers. We have been asked to work up a plan, and expected costs for the continuation of the project. In the New Year, we received a shed from a London Midland contractor, arranged by the Property Manager, who is also providing some signage for the project.

Malvern Civic Society made a generous donation of £500, for tools, plants and equipment.

Ken Timms

Project Lead

28th May 2018