



Transport for
West Midlands



Midland
Metro Alliance

Connecting SANDWELL & DUDLEY

ISSUE 9 DECEMBER 2020

Welcome

Welcome to 'Connecting Sandwell & Dudley', a bi-monthly publication designed to keep those working and living in the area up-to-date on the progress of the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro extension which we're building on behalf of Transport for West Midlands (TfWM).



Getting Around

We appreciate that everyone will have a different journey; the following is to assist you to plan ahead:

The overflow car park at Dudley Port Railway Station remains closed to allow access to the railway corridor where the Metro is being constructed.

The main Park and Ride car park, including provision for disabled and car sharing bays, remains open throughout construction for the Metro.

Dudley Port Park & Ride

Overflow closure

From Monday 24 August

Plan ahead



Plan ahead:
www.metroalliance.co.uk

Cycle storage provision remains in place at Dudley Port and the station is regularly served by buses, too.

Those who need to travel are being advised to plan ahead and leave more time for journeys.



Work continues across Sandwell and Dudley as 2020 wraps up

Progress to connect Sandwell and Dudley via a brand-new Metro route has continued at pace as autumn turned to winter.

The first canal bridge needing to be replaced for the scheme, along the Walsall Canal in Tipton, was recently demolished with the work being completed ahead of schedule allowing those in the area to use the canal towpath and waterway once again.



Utility diversions have also continued in Dudley Town Centre with one particular piece of work unearthing a historical discovery beneath Flood Street. You can read more on this overleaf.

All of our work has been completed in a Covid-secure way, with new measures continuing to be introduced on site to keep our workforce and the general public safe.

Throughout the past few months, and indeed 2020 as a whole, work has also continued remotely on the detailed design for the tramway.



Paul Marshall, Head of Design at the Midland Metro Alliance, said: "Throughout the global pandemic the team have been busy working on the design for the route and work has progressed well, even in these challenging times. The final design for the tramway is set to be completed next year and we hope to share an early vision of how the route will look in January."

Throughout 2020, construction work has intensified with many activities involving not only the upgrade and diversion of utilities in Dudley, but also the demolition of aged structures in Sandwell, along with clearing the site of the disused South Staffordshire Railway which will make up more than seven kilometres of the new tramway. Tracks and sleepers removed from the railway corridor were donated to Severn Valley Railway in Bridgnorth earlier in the autumn as part of the Midland Metro Alliance's sustainability initiative.

Next year work will continue on structures in Sandwell, with the first new bridge decks set to be installed for the extension and full construction expected to begin in the first half of the year along Castle Hill in Dudley. More detailed information on construction schedules, including traffic changes, is currently being finalised and further details will follow in early 2021.



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Online platform launched to inspire young people

An online platform has been launched by the Midland Metro Alliance to inspire the next generation of youngsters in the West Midlands to consider careers in construction and railway engineering.

Connecting Futures is a sub-site of the MMA website and supports the successful work already undertaken to encourage young people to consider the construction industry as a potential career path recognising that there are many and varied roles within it. The platform has short videos from employees at the alliance sharing personal insights into their specific job role and their career journeys.

Across the summer and through the autumn, both remotely and in person, the alliance Communications and Engagement and Skills Teams have been interviewing colleagues to create the guidance videos and have often been surprised at their colleagues' varied experiences as well as being inspired by their advice to young people.

Content, and deeper dives into particular job-roles and topics, will continue to be added to the site on a regular basis to make Connecting Futures a hub for local career advice which people will want to bookmark.

To access Connecting Futures, visit: www.metroalliance.co.uk/connecting-futures



Local businesses brought together for virtual community conversation

Over 50 people, representing public, private and voluntary sector organisations in Dudley and the surrounding areas, came together during two virtual events in November hosted by Business in the Community (BITC) and Midland Metro Alliance.

Delegates got to hear more about the exciting developments Dudley is witnessing, including the Metro but a key outcome from the community conversation is a commitment amongst participants to continue to work together and agree on collaborative actions that can make a real difference in a place. BITC is assessing the output from the events to help the community plan further actions.

Key themes that emerged were mainly related to the impact of Covid-19 pandemic and concerns around barriers to employment, mental health care along with delegates recognising the importance of local networking and collaboration during these unprecedented times.



- 1) Shared priorities, key challenges?
- 2) Opportunities to support and collaborate
- 3) Actions you'll be taking away



Forgotten piece of history uncovered during Metro extension works in Dudley

A historical treasure has been unearthed in Dudley after a well was discovered during works to extend the Metro across Wednesbury and Brierley Hill. The 8.5m deep fountain was uncovered during excavation works in Flood Street car park before the main construction works commence.



It is not the first time that a lost piece of history has been unearthed during works to extend the West Midlands Metro across the region. An old footpath dating back to the late 18th to mid-19th century was also found during excavations in Birmingham city centre, in summer 2018.

Councillor Ian Kettle, cabinet member for regeneration and enterprise at Dudley Council, said: "Dudley has a long and fascinating history, and it is always exciting to discover items of historical interest. The unearthing of the well provides a very interesting look at Dudley in days-gone-by at a time when so much work is taking place to transform the borough through new developments and technological advances, including the Metro."

Mosin Khurshid, Head of Utilities at the Midland Metro Alliance, added: "When carrying out excavation works there is always a possibility for items of historical importance to be uncovered. We paused our works for a short period while we investigated the find and the utilities have now been re-routed around it. The site will be backfilled to allow a new highway to be constructed in the area."

MMA joins colleges to launch programme to get West Midlands back into work

Rose Rees, Head of Engagement and Skills at the Midland Metro Alliance, joined college leaders from across the West Midlands last week to help launch a skills programme aiding those who lost jobs during the pandemic. All 20 colleges across the region have come together to offer skills recovery programme called 'Reignite Your Future'.



More than 5,000 adults are set to benefit from free training over the next year thanks to the initiative, funded by the West Midlands Combined Authority, to help them gain jobs in one of the region's growth sectors. Any adult living in the West Midlands can join a short sector-based work academy programme, which usually last up to six weeks. Sectors include construction, digital, health and social care, engineering and logistics, with a guaranteed interview for everyone who completes the learning.

Speaking at the launch, Rose said: "Programmes like these are a brilliant way for organisations to recruit adults from diverse backgrounds into key roles often providing individuals with an opportunity to change their lives through sustained employment."



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Celebrations following prestigious accolade for construction apprenticeship

The Midland Metro Alliance is celebrating after winning an accolade at the prestigious Institution of Civil Engineers West Midlands Awards for the third year in a row.

The alliance scooped the Education and Inspiration Award, for its Trailblazer Apprenticeship in Light Rail, during a virtual ceremony in November. It follows a similar success in the Communications Award category at last year's event, and a 2018 win for a programme designed to help unemployed people gain new skills and experience in the construction sector.

Peter Cushing, Alliance Director, said: "We are delighted to have won such a prestigious award for our work in securing talent for the future. The apprenticeship programme is the first of its kind and is a valuable recruitment tool. This win is a true reflection of the hard work and dedication of our teams in making this apprenticeship a success and it is fantastic that the first cohort of people studying for this apprenticeship demonstrated its importance to the judges."

The Midland Metro Alliance was also shortlisted in the Communications Award for its collaborative travel disruption campaign with Transport for West Midlands and Birmingham City Council for Metro works taking place in Birmingham.

MMA staff dig deep for charity campaign

Christmas is likely to be different for all of us this year, however for the sick and vulnerable in our society it is likely to be even harder. In a bid to help, staff at the alliance are raising money for the organisation's two chosen charities, St. Basils and Acorns Children's Hospice, this festive period.

Acorns Children's Hospice looks after children with life limiting conditions and donations assist with ensuring they have access to the best quality of care. You can find out more about the fantastic work that Acorns do here in the West Midlands by visiting: https://youtu.be/_e-J48w3k2U.

Our second chosen charity, St Basils works with young people who are homeless, or at risk of homelessness. You can hear more at: <https://youtu.be/bEtbXsyFB5c>.

Within the first two weeks of MMA's staff campaign more than £780 has already been raised with additional donations of selection boxes, bedding, cleaning and personal care items also generously donated by the alliance team.

acorns
Your local children's hospice

**St
Basils**
Works with young people

Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year

With the festive season fast approaching, we'd like to wish all of our readers a very safe and merry Christmas with best wishes for the new year ahead.

Construction and site activity will pause briefly over the Christmas period with works recommencing from 4 January 2021.



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