

Great Western Railway Train Name Fame for a Hospital Hero and 'Mask Tree' Creator

Two community heroes from Wiltshire who selflessly helped others at the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic are to have their names featured on the side of a Great Western Railway train.

Liz Gallagher, from Swindon's Great Western Hospital, and Community Mask Tree founder Naomi Betts, from Amesbury, have been chosen as BBC Make a Difference Superstars. The pair were selected by judges following a link-up between the BBC and train operator GWR to celebrate those community heroes who have been going above and beyond during the pandemic.

Now plans are being made for their names to be added to either end of a high-speed Intercity Express Train.



Hospital hero Liz Gallagher



'Mask tree' founder Naomi Betts

Liz, a nurse of 40 years' experience, delayed her retirement to stay on as ward manager of the Intensive Care Unit at the Great Western Hospital. She ensured they had enough ventilators and PPE and also set up a second unit to cope with Covid-19 patients. She has since 'retired' but is back at the hospital in a part-time nursing role.

Naomi created a 'mask tree' to hang the face coverings she had been sewing for anyone in the community who needed them. Her social media post went viral and to date 418 'mask trees' have been registered across the UK.

Naomi's tree has raised £3,200 to the Hope for Hasti charity and delivered almost 4,000 reusable face coverings. With the help of her team she also installed a 'mask tree' in Salisbury District Hospital, distributing 2,000 reusable face coverings and raising more than £2,000 for The Stars Appeal.

GWR Interim Managing Director Matthew Golton said: "The GWR has a long and proud history of naming trains after Great Westerners – past and present heroes from across our network – and to that list now we can add the names of Liz Gallagher and Naomi Betts from Wiltshire. It has been a privilege to partner with the BBC Make a Difference campaign and learn more about people like Liz and Naomi who have helped to make such a huge difference in their communities during the pandemic.

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said: "I have been blown away by the efforts of all the Covid-19 heroes during the course of the pandemic. Their dedication and compassion have been truly heartwarming and made a huge difference in their communities. These trains will be a lasting reminder of all those who have gone the extra mile to keep this country going."