Juliette Maxam: Hello and welcome to this episode of Life on Rails. I'm Juliette Maxam.

Lucy Wright: And I'm Lucy Wright.

Juliette Maxam: We are from Greater Anglia's PR department and host this podcast which goes beneath the surface of one of the UK's largest train companies.

Lucy Wright: In this episode, we speak to Sally Shaw, director of the Firstsite Art Gallery.

Sally Shaw: The more you exercise your imagination, the more you have this muscle that can work for you in so many different ways, and anyone who can visualize their future and then can draw it, they are nine times more likely to make that into an actual reality.

Lucy Wright: Our resident fares guru, Ken Strong.

Ken Strong: We have lots of money saving offers people may or may not know about, and so it's useful just to have the division.

Lucy Wright: Martin Beable, Greater Anglia's engineering director.

Martin Beable: It's a proper mix of things, new technology, better designed, better acceleration, all of which adds up to be a much more reliable service.

Lucy Wright: And Georgia Payne, Greater Anglia's safe guarding and trespass prevention need.

Georgia Payne: If you feel that somebody needs support, whether you are 100% or not, if it looks out of place or if you feel something isn't right, trust your gut, as simply giving an opportunity to talk can help somebody.

Lucy Wright: Juliette and I will also be discussing journeys to and from the station, and integrated travel.

Juliette Maxam: To kick things off though, we're going to speak to Matthew Chivers, head of revenue. We are here today for a special myth buster feature, talking about fares with the head of revenue, Matthew Chivers. Hi, Matthew. How are you?

Matthew Chivers: I'm very well.

Juliette Maxam: And so what do you do then? What is a head of revenue?

Matthew Chivers: So I'm head of revenue at Greater Anglia. So I think amongst other things, I look after pricing as well as promotions and the product development of Greater Anglia's rail fares.

Juliette Maxam: Some people think that we put up fares all the time, but that's not actually the case, is it?

Matthew Chivers: No, it's not. If you think of almost any retail business, they can and they do put up their prices at any time. So that could be daily, weekly, and they've the freedom to do that. Whereas in the rail industry, we're governed by the Department for Transport, really, and they set some quite strict guidelines around when we can change prices. So that means we only really got three times a year when we can change the price. And that tends to be January, May and September. But actually, because the government do put a cap on prices, we only tend to change prices around once a year.

Juliette Maxam: Now, another query that comes in all the time on social media is, why can't we offer, say, five pound fares every day for every train, or one pound fares every day for every train?

Matthew Chivers: Sure. So as in most businesses, price is used to manage demand and supply, to an effect.

Juliette Maxam: So that would be like, if our rush hour trains in the morning, if all the prices were one pound, we just wouldn't have enough seats, would we?

Matthew Chivers: No, just like any business where there's a limited capacity of the product, then the price is used to, in a sense, spread demand.

Juliette Maxam: Okay. So why do we put up our fares then?

Matthew Chivers: Why do we put up our fares? Well, I guess like all prices, prices go up. As economies grow, prices go up and that that's inflation. We have to cover our costs. So it's wages, it's the cost of the fuel, it's the trains themselves, but it's also we invest for the future as well. So obviously you'd be aware that we've just rolled out a brand- new fleet of fantastic new trains.

Juliette Maxam: And of course we're spending a lot of money on improving stations, car parks, and it all has to be paid for, doesn't it?

Matthew Chivers: Exactly that.

Juliette Maxam: But people do still talk about cheaper fares, especially in countries like Italy and Germany, and I think Spain as well. But why aren't ours as cheap as those in Europe?

Matthew Chivers: Well, I think there's two reasons, I'd say. So you tend to find European governments tend to subsidize more than you UK Government. But I think as well, you need to be really careful with some of the comparisons that are out there. So quite often the media will pick up on the most expensive fare on a particular route, and quite often that can be a price that very few people pay, whereas there are some very cheap fares as well that you'll find. There's been quite a lot of studies on that and they've tended to find that choice in the UK market is much wider, the range is much wider. So yes, there's some expensive fares, but there's also some very cheap fares as well, and you get less of that in European railways.

Juliette Maxam: Tell us a bit about these innovative and cheap fares.

Matthew Chivers: Well, there's probably more out there than some people think, and I think when people actually delve a bit into it, they're sometimes quite surprised by some of the good value that's out there. So with an advanced purchase on Greater Anglia, you can go from Norwich to London for as little as 10 pounds. That's over 100 miles of in a journey, that's great value. Cambridge, eight pounds, Southend, six pounds. So some really good, advanced purchase deals especially. But also, people are generally familiar with off- peak prices, but not everyone's aware that we also offer some super off- peak prices as well.

Juliette Maxam: And what's super off- peak?

Matthew Chivers: So super off-peak is just in what we call the later afternoon, effectively. So if you're getting into London after 12: 00, so you can get an even bigger discount on your off- peak ticket. So yeah, we have a range of special offers available. So one of them, for example, is the weekend duo, that two people traveling together. So effectively that's buy one, get the second half price. So that's a great deal. There's a whole suite of rail cards, obviously, and people should look out for promotions that are out there as well. So always check the Greater Anglia website.

Juliette Maxam: Well, thank you very much, Matthew. I think that's been really interesting and certainly answered a lot of questions that we know people have about fares, so thanks very much for joining us.

Matthew Chivers: No problem. Thank you.

Lucy Wright: It's now time for meet a member of staff, and today I'm joined by Greater Anglia's safeguarding and trespass prevention lead, Georgia Payne. Hi, Georgia.

Georgia Payne: Hi, Lucy. Thanks for having me.

Lucy Wright: Thanks for being here. So can you please explain a bit about your role and what your job entails?

Georgia Payne: Yes. So the job itself is quite a broad remit. There's quite a lot of different elements to it, including reducing trespass. Another key part of the role is to implement a suicide prevention strategy, as well as safeguarding vulnerable people on the network. We do a lot of collaborative working with the British Transport Police, Network Rail, and various charities such as the Railway Children, Children's Society, and Samaritans as well.

Lucy Wright: Brilliant. So this is such an important role and we are so glad that you have joined us. So thank you. So the railway is full of hidden dangers and I don't think people sometimes realize this when they trespass. They may think, " Oh, I'm just taking a shortcut home. I know there's an hourly service along my line. The train's just been, I should be good to go." That's not the case at all, is it? The railway is full of some hidden dangers, isn't it?

Georgia Payne: Yeah. And I think, like you said, the problem is people fail to understand the dangers and these dangers can be to themselves and also others, their family, their friends, if they're to get injured or something even worse, rail staff or even the emergency services. I think the people that are making these choices to go onto the railway network without authorization, the key message is to educate them, whether that's their parents having conversations with their children or even in schools. There's lots of materials out there and campaigns to promote safety on the railway and encouraging a lot of the time children and young people not to trespass, but that can be anyone, it's not always young people either. Every day, hundreds of people risk everything by trespassing on the tracks. And the railway is not a playground, there's so many hidden dangers. The overhead lines, the electricity through them is 100 times stronger than your household electricity at 25, 000 volts. That's just a crazy number. And I think people don't realize that trains can often run off timetable. There's never a quiet time.

Lucy Wright: Absolutely. And if anyone does see somebody on the track who shouldn't be there, please tell someone as soon as possible. Tell a member of rail staff if you're at a station, or if you are say at a level crossing, out enjoying a dog walk, call the police. Call 999, an emergency call, just report it as soon as possible, please. So part of your role is going to be working with Samaritans. We do a lot of work with Samaritans on the railway. And they have a campaign coming up this winter, don't they? Small Talk Saves Lives. Can you tell me a little bit about it?

Georgia Payne: Yes. So it's a really exciting campaign, with the next phase launching in February. There's going to be lots of different components to it, but there will be outreach events happening at stations across the Anglia route. It's essentially a campaign aimed at rail passengers in the public to promote that all it takes to prevent a suicide is small talk. Suicide is preventable and it can be prevented, as suicidal thoughts are often temporary and they can be interrupted. And so I think the key message is just engaging with people and empowering people to act, trusting their gut instincts and starting conversation. If you think there is something that doesn't sit right with you, is a little small talk can be all it takes sometimes.

Lucy Wright: So what could those things look like? Perhaps somebody who's been at a station and hasn't boarded a train for a period of time. Would that be one?

Georgia Payne: Yeah. Exactly. There's so many different common behaviors, like you said, different individuals on a platform for a long time, sat down, pacing, anything like that. But if they're not boarding trains, you would stop and think, because nine times out of 10, somebody's at a train station to travel somewhere. Somebody could be standing alone in an isolated spot, doesn't have to be at the end of a platform, could be anywhere, looking withdrawn or upset.

But however, it is important to say as well, if somebody is considering suicide, there may not be any signs. But I think it's again, it's all about if you feel that somebody needs support, whether you're 100% or not, if it looks out of place or if you feel something isn't right, trust your gut as simply giving an opportunity to talk can help somebody. But obviously, if it's safe to do so. If they are on the tracks, obviously it's best to contact rail staff or call the police. But if they are in a safe place, it's really important to trust your gut and just have a bit of small talk. I think we're all quite good at it and it's just building that confidence to do so.

Lucy Wright: What kind of conversation starters can we suggest? Maybe talk about the weather, very. British?

Georgia Payne: Yeah, very British Brits love to talk about the weather, but it could be anything. I think never underestimate the power of just a simple hello and a smile, just interrupting those thoughts. A simple question, you don't want anything too complicated, asking their name, where they can get a coffee, what the time is, anything like that. Or even introducing yourself, asking them where they're going or even asking if somebody's okay. I think there's a lot of pressure now, people are scared about saying the wrong thing and I think it's just say what you feel comfortable with saying. You can't make a situation worse. I think just smiling, saying hello, asking about the weather's a good one, or even ask for directions if you're lost, anything like that.

Lucy Wright: Some really, really good ideas there. So Small Talk Saves Lives, The new Samaritans campaign will be back with us in February.

Georgia Payne: Yes.

Lucy Wright: Brilliant. Georgia, thank you so much for joining me today.

Georgia Payne: Thanks, Lucy.

Lucy Wright: In this Greener Anglia segment, Juliette and I will be talking about integrated transport, the way people traveled to and from stations. Traveling by rail is one of the greenest ways of traveling, only beaten by walking or cycling. We know the railway is environmentally friendly, but how can you reduce your carbon footprint when traveling to and from the station?

Juliette Maxam: Well, we make it easy for people to use the greenest forms of transport to get to the railway. You mentioned walking and cycling. We've got over 10,000 cycle spaces at our stations and a huge variety of them. And do you we've got them at every single station?

Lucy Wright: Even Berney Arms.

Juliette Maxam: Even Berney Arms in the middle of nowhere. Isn't that incredible? And they range from our multi- story cycle park at Cambridge, to cages with fobs, so it's very secure to just a simple basic stand like at Berney Arms. And of course, our new trains have more space for bikes as well, proper dedicated cycle spaces, although please check the website because there are restrictions on taking full- sized bikes on trains during the rush hour.

Lucy Wright: That's full- sized bikes. But if you've got a Brompton or a folding bike, if it folds it rides, it can go on any service.

Juliette Maxam: Absolutely. But yes, so you can definitely cycle to the stations. And we work with local authorities to make sure that you can find the way, there's good signs, and in some cases, also cycle paths. When it comes to walking to stations, there's good sign posts. We are in Colchester at the moment and outside the exit of the station, there's an elephant, that's Jumbo, and if you just follow Jumbo and the yellow flags, you get up to the town center. And that's one of the things that we have done with local authorities to make it easy for people to find their way.

Lucy Wright: I'm very familiar with that elephant. I've seen it many times. How did you get here today?

Juliette Maxam: I walked.

Lucy Wright: I walked to the station, too.

Juliette Maxam: Excellent. Well, we are green.

Lucy Wright: So a lot of our network is very rural. Walking, cycling isn't always an option, so how can people living in a more rural community get to the station in a green fashion?

Juliette Maxam: Well, there are buses. We do work with local authorities and bus providers to make sure that our buses connect with the trains as well as possible. You can even get a plus bus ticket.

Lucy Wright: Plus bus.

Juliette Maxam: Plus bus. Which is really good value ticket, it includes your bus fare as well. If there is no public transport, it's too far to cycle or walk, obviously you're going to need the car. We've got very good car parking at our stations with a range of different tariffs. And we've got a flexible parking season ticket, which matches the flexi- season ticket. And we even have an hourly, short- term hourly rate at some of the stations now. So for instance, if you're going shopping in Norwich, park at Diss, park for an hour or two or up to four hours, and then hop on the train to Norwich, it's a great way of getting into the city center.

Lucy Wright: And parking electric cars?

Juliette Maxam: Electric cars, that's the future, isn't it, they say? Almost as good as trains, I suppose. But yes, we do have some parking spaces for electric cars and that is something that we are reviewing currently, excuse the pun.

Lucy Wright: Oh no. Like you said, there is quite a lot of parking available. And if people are concerned that they may get to a station and there are no spaces left, don't be concerned because there is a live tracker on our website. So if you know you're going to be traveling to the station soon, you can look that up and make sure that there'll be space for you, which is very handy.

Juliette Maxam: Yes, that's true. And then also, you can check how many bike parking spaces there are and all the facilities, the bus interchange, where the bus stop is. Everything like that is all available on our website.

Lucy Wright: We run services to airports as well, don't we? That's a great way to get to the airport to take the train, isn't it?

Juliette Maxam: Yeah, planes, trains and automobiles, we do them all. It's a brilliant way of getting to Stansted Airport. You can get to Stansted from Norwich, there's a direct service, or from London, Liverpool Street, and it takes you right underneath the terminal. So you just roll up on the train, walk up the ramp, or go in the lift, and there you are, in the departures building. So much better than faffing around with parking. And we also stop at Southend Airport. And City Airport in London. Just catch the train to Stratford, get on the DLR and there you are. It's just so simple.

Lucy Wright: I love catching the train to the airport because you can take far more luggage with you than perhaps you can fit in some cars. And like you said, you're directly in there, you don't need to worry about organizing parking, paying for parking. It's super, super quick and convenient, I think, to get the train to the airport.

Juliette Maxam: Yeah, definitely cheaper as well. And your holiday begins from the moment you set foot on the Greater Anglia train, of course, doesn't it?

Lucy Wright: Right. Well, I'm off to book a holiday.

Juliette Maxam: No.

Lucy Wright: That's brilliant. Thank you so much, Juliette.

Juliette Maxam: Thank you. And enjoy your holiday, Lucy.

Lucy Wright: For the new train segment, I'm here with our engineering director, Martin Beable. We're talking about how the new fleet has helped improve overall performance on the railway. Hi, Martin, welcome back to Life on Rails.

Martin Beable: Hi, Lucy. Good to be back.

Lucy Wright: So our new trains, they are more punctual and reliable, which is really great news for our customers. So what is it that makes them better?

Martin Beable: Well, it's real mix of things. So I think if you think back to 2, 3, 4 years ago when we had our old fleet, it was a real mixed bag. So we had some newer trains, some much older trains, including trains that were designed and built in the '70s and early '80s. So for trains that are that vintage, comparing our new fleet to them is a little bit like comparing a Morris Minor with a Tesla.

So we went through the design process with the manufacturers for our new trains quite some time ago now. But these things, as always, you only get out what you put in to them. And we spent quite a long time focusing on things to do with the design process, like reducing what we call single point failures. So they're parts of the train, which if they don't work properly, the train won't work without them.

And of course our new trains, they're modern technology, so they move away from relays and valves, so things that have got mechanical moving parts. They're much more software based. So of course, that's got its own challenges, as anybody who's ever seen the Windows' famous blue screen of death can tell you. But once we've solved the software problem, the benefit is you fixed it forever. So yeah, really it's a proper mix of things, new technology, better design, better acceleration, all of which adds up to be a much more reliable service.

Lucy Wright: So you mentioned there new technology, and we've actually got something that's in place to help resolve problems as soon as they're reported. So how does that work, and how does that help to improve the overall reliability of the fleet?

Martin Beable: You are absolutely right. The way in which we tackle train performance isn't just stopping faults from happening in the first place. So our team have got a really, really structured approach to managing in- service faults and getting the train moving again as quickly as possible. We've actually got an engineer in my team, sat in our control room, and if a driver's got a fault, which is impacting their service or they think they have a fault, they might have a fault, they phone the engineer for some help. It's kind of like phone- a- friend on Who Wants to Be a millionaire? But hopefully our guys get the answer more often than they do.

So our phone- a- friend engineer, they use an intuitive system, which we call our Decision Support Tool, which is a neat piece of software. It's kind of a little bit like Wikipedia, but with easier click- throughs. So the engineer asks the driver some really simple questions about the fault that the driver's experiencing, and dependent on the answers he gets or she gets, it takes them to a decision as to how they can fix that fault and get that train moving. Or if they can't fix the fault, which still sadly happens in some occasions, how we can at least clear the line so that we can free up the railway for the trains that are running behind it and keep people moving?

Lucy Wright: Brilliant, I'm so pleased it's working well. Now, we are the first train company to have a Stadler train. They're new to us as a company, to Greater Anglia, but they're completely new to the UK. We'll be the first train operator to have a Stadler train running on the tracks. So how has that process been?

Martin Beable: So it's been a massive learning curve for both us and Stadler. The UK really isn't an easy market for new train manufacturers to enter. Like with everything, I think we do it just that little bit different here. The process of getting new training into service is quite complex and quite drawn out and it's got lots of stakeholders.

So actually, for Stadler to get up to speed on those issues in such a short period of time was really quite impressive. And I think we've ended up with this really neat mix of new thinking which has already bought benefits to our route and to our region, combined with a good dose of UK experience, which Stadler lent on to help them with the service introduction.

So last month, our Stadler fleet ran about 9, 000 services, about 600,000 miles and we had eight trains canceled as a result of technical faults. Gosh. So that's pretty staggering when you consider these trains interface with hundreds of thousands of passengers every day, running all weathers, hundreds of moving parts. The best bit is I still know there's more we can get out of this fleet, more reliability that we can get out of them, we can make them better.

Lucy Wright: So a majority of our new trains, they're now in service. So I've got to ask you the question everyone wants to know, when will the entire fleet be replaced? When will we just have new trains running on the network?

Martin Beable: That is a very good question. So the Class 720 fleet are already our biggest fleet by some distance, but we've still got a number of trains to buy. We're working really closely with Alstom at the moment to try and speed up the testing and the acceptance process of the remaining trains. We're hopeful that we'll have them all in service later this year, but it's just worth saying that the amount of new trains we've still got to buy is actually bigger than the amount of trains that they're replacing, because of course, the new trains are all about building extra capacity and extra seats into our railway. So actually, passengers should start to see an all new train service way before the last train is delivered.

Lucy Wright: Brilliant. Martin, it's been so good to talk to you today. Thank you for joining me.

Martin Beable: Thank you for having me.

Lucy Wright: Happy New Year. It's January and we are all trying to save money where possible. I'm here with our fares guru, Ken Strong, who has our whole host of ways you can save while traveling with us this year. Hi Ken, welcome back.

Ken Strong: Happy New Year, Lucy. Thank you for having me back.

Lucy Wright: Happy New Year to you. So if you could just run through loads and loads of ways that people can save money while traveling with us this year, please.

Ken Strong: Well, we have lots of money saving offers that people may or may not know about and so it's useful just to have a quick revision. We have the group save, where if you're traveling in a group of three or more people, you can get a third off. It can be bought on the day without any reservation or pre- booking requirement. We have a duo ticket, which is for two people traveling together. The second person pays half price in the group of two, and that's available in the London and southeast area, south of Cambridge and Manningtree.

We also have of course our very good value advanced fares, and the further out you book, the better they are. Currently, we are opening reservations about six or seven weeks in advance. So if you check that far in advance, you should be able to find some very good value tickets, especially if you travel outside the peak times, quieter days like Tuesdays or basically try and avoid early mornings going towards London and late afternoons coming out of London, which obviously are traditionally the busiest times for travel. If you avoid those times, you can get some very good value tickets.

Lucy Wright: I think that's a good point to always remember. Whenever you're traveling, if you know the date, you're going to travel, book as far in advance as you can and you're likely to save the most amount of money. And also, if you know when you're going to travel, there's an alert, you can sign up for the alerts on our website to find out when the cheapest tickets are available, so I would definitely advise people to do that if they know their date of travel.

Ken Strong: Yeah, that's right. This applies, of course, to longer distance journeys where we have advanced tickets available, you can sign up to the alert and this is a very useful tool to let you know when the tickets become available. But on our shorter distance journeys, we have very good offers as well, such as, as I've said, the group save and the duo ticket. And we also have super off- peaks, so if you're traveling anytime at weekends or anytime after lunchtime on a weekday, you can get the cheapest value return ticket. One useful tip, if you're booking any ticket and you're traveling both ways, always put in a return journey. You may end up with, if it's an advanced ticket, buying two singles, but it may be the case that buying the return ticket is not much dearer than buying a single. So it's always as well to put in both legs of the journey when you're making the journey inquiry at the same time. And then you quite often will find tickets that you won't find if you just put in a single one- way and then do a separate inquiry for a single coming back.

Lucy Wright: Perfect. That's a great tip. Thank you. And how about commuters? How can they save money?

Ken Strong: Well, as you probably know, we have introduced over the last couple of years, in conjunction with all the other train companies, the flexi- season ticket, which allows eight days travel within a 28- day period. So once you validate your ticket for a day, you can use it as many times in that day as you like on your chosen route, including stopping off at intermediate stations. Most people will, of course just use it to travel from A to B and back. And it works out to be the best value on our traditional medium distance commuting route such as Cheltenham to London, Harlow to London, Bishop's Stortford to (inaudible) , route like that, it can save you quite a bit of money over buying day return fares.

Of course, if you're traveling four or five days a week, in most cases, nearly all cases, it's better to buy the traditional season ticket. Nowadays, if you're working sometimes flexibly, at other times you're working a full week, you can mix and match. You can buy a flexi- season for a certain period of time, once that's used up and then the following you're going in every day, you can buy a weekly season or a monthly season. So you can mix and match tickets now, or even just if you're only going in the one day, just buy a day return for that particular day.

Lucy Wright: Brilliant. Well thank you so much, Ken. So there you have it. New year money saving rail cards, flexi- season tickets, group saves, duos, off- peak book in advance, they are all the ways that you can save money and we very much look forward to welcoming you on board this year. Thank you so much, Ken.

Ken Strong: Thank you.

Lucy Wright: For today's travel surgery. We are here at the incredible Firstsite gallery in Colchester where we're joined by our special guest, director, Sally Shaw. We are sat just inside the entrance to the gallery, so you might hear some noises. It's really great to be here.

Sally Shaw: It's not an un- busy space.

Lucy Wright: No. We've got two literal life size model cars that we are in the way of, really.

Sally Shaw: Yes, we are about to get mown down by art.

Lucy Wright: What's the significance of the cars?

Sally Shaw: They are part of our sculpture park. They are by a brilliant artists called Julian Opie. There are two cars, they're life size. One is driving towards me, the other one is driving away from us. One is bright yellow and it's a '90s Golf. If anyone knows that, they'll know exactly what that looks like. And the other one is a Ford escort. And again, it's a very specific vintage of Ford Escort. They both look very boxy and quite cartoon- like. The colors are very cartoon- like and they look like someone has literally made them out of cardboard. They're really funny.

Lucy Wright: So Firstsite has had a bit of a checkered start. And many people still resent it for replacing the concrete bus station that was here before it.

Sally Shaw: Yeah. Some people do, not many, some. But it's a longstanding story, for sure.

Juliette Maxam: Yeah. It wasn't the best start in the world, although I have to say, as a Colcestrian, I much prefer the art gallery. I'm putting that out there. That's controversial. I'm going to get hate mail, but how did-

Sally Shaw: I'll build it for you, don't worry.

Juliette Maxam: Oh, thank you.

Sally Shaw: If anyone does send you a bad email, just pass it on to me and they can come in and have a chat. That's fine.

Juliette Maxam: Brilliant. Well, I'd certainly recommend that people come here. I've certainly enjoyed my experiences here rather more than at the bus station, but how did you actually end up here? What did you do beforehand, and when did you arrive?

Sally Shaw: I arrived in 2016 and I've spent a lot of time doing public art mostly. So commissioning things in very public context, not inside galleries. So I did a lot of art in places that weren't art galleries, so that took me to London Underground. I worked for the mayor of London, Boris Johnson for three years and I worked on his Fourth Plinth program, and I commissioned a load of artworks for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic games as well at the same time. So lots of big, very public stuff.

Juliette Maxam: Why the change? Why did you decide to come to Firstsite?

Sally Shaw: Lots of reasons. I wanted to take all of that public art thinking and learning and put it back into a gallery and prove a point, maybe to myself but also to maybe some other people, that art galleries are for everyone. This Firstsite in particular is heavily publicly funded, we've all paid for it. So I don't consider it my gallery at all, it's our gallery. So I wanted to come see if I could get rid of a load of hurdles and get loads of people in.

Juliette Maxam: And you've really brought the community into Firstsite, haven't you? You do all sorts of things. You've had the Free Meals for Children, the work with refugees, you've local artists as well as big national artists. Tell us what you've done that's also made you become Museum of the Year last year? You've really turned around the fortunes.

Sally Shaw: We will forever be Museum of the Year. Well yeah, we've done a lot. It's the tip of the iceberg, really, in terms of working with different communities and bringing people into the building. But the main thing that we've been doing is to ask people how we can help and talking about what's happening in Colchester and what a place like this can do, what sort of role it can play in helping to improve things for lots of different people. And when you start to ask, " How can I help" you become useful. And most art galleries, I think, aren't very useful, actually. But art is a really important fundamental thing that we do as human beings. And one of my long- term missions is to recenter that so that people really understand and reconnect with the idea of what creativity and culture are really about.

So in my early conversations with people like Maria Wilby from Refugee Action Colchester, we'd have big wide- ranging conversations about everything that was happening and I'd say, " How can I help?" And she'd say, " Well, we need somewhere to cook," which isn't a very arty conversation at all. But then when you think about the fact that my restaurant wasn't working at the time, it was literally shut, I could give her my restaurant for a weekend, she could enable lots of her clients to come and cook and I would get 2, 000 visitors in two days. So this lovely, very cultural, really cultural exchange starts to happen at a very basic, basic level, that took place in part of Gee Vaucher's exhibition. And she's a very politically motivated artist, so it made sense that this partnership with Refugee Action Colchester was in her show.

Juliette Maxam: And that's what you got Museum of the Year for, is it?

Sally Shaw: Partly, but it's also COVID stuff that we were doing, too. We had to shut the building, as did everybody else, two weeks in. It was just ridiculous. And we thought, " Well, if we can't get people into the building, how do we get the building out?" And we ended up making this PDF, a downloadable PDF called The Art Where the Home Is Activity Pack. And in the first pack it had, I think, 20 artists in it, but it was like Michael Landy, Antony Gormley, Jeremy Deller, Cornelia Parker, Sarah Lucas, really wonderful, the hit list of all great names in British art at the time. And they all contributed these wonderful little ideas that you could just do at home with basic materials or whoever you were with at home, stuck it into a pack, uploaded it onto our website, and people could just download it for free. And they ended up being downloaded by something like 100, 000 households across the UK.

Juliette Maxam: Amazing. And so it was an awful lot of emphasis on the artists of the future, if you like, isn't it? You're working with children. Why is that so important to you?

Sally Shaw: The more you exercise your imagination, the more you have this muscle that can work for you in so many different ways. And anyone who can visualize their future and then can draw it, so take it out of their brains and put it on a piece of paper, they are nine times more likely to make that into an actual reality. I can only think of it as magic and everything that we're trying to do now post- COVID is about resilience, it's about reinvention, it's about finding new solutions, it's about imagining new futures, and all of that is about using your imagination.

Lucy Wright: Right. And you're totally providing the space and the facilities to do that. I think there was always an excuse why people exercise their creativity for whatever reason, and right here you have all of that. So this is part of the podcast, which is our travel surgery. And as part of that, we like to find a destination for you to visit. Now, we know that you and your daughter, you like traveling by train, don't you?

Sally Shaw: Yes, very much.

Lucy Wright: Yeah. So what kind of things do you like to do? It's okay, we won't judge.

Sally Shaw: You will and it's fine. I'm happy to be judged on what we do. My daughter and I, we love going to the beach. But along the way we do a lot of things, we get on the train, which is brilliant. I did have a car, I don't have a car anymore. The closest to a car I am now is to Julian Opie and his beautiful Golf.

Juliette Maxam: (inaudible) beautiful, but...

Sally Shaw: So we use the train a lot and that means that we chat and we hang about, we mess about on the train and we talk about all sorts of stuff. So we go on the train, we usually go to Walton- on- the- Naze, which is our nearest and dearest. And we head, what do we do first? We go pie and mash first. Very important. I have pie, mash, and gravy. It's a White's Pie and Mash in Walton- on- the- Naze and Verna has pie, mash and liquor. Sometimes she'll nick a bit of my gravy. And then we go to the beach to look for fossilized sharks teeth. Very important. We've got a collection in the kitchen on the wall, bits of blue tack. Then we go to the arcades, then we have an ice cream, then we go to the playground, and then we come back and sometimes we have a bit more pie mash, and then we get on the train and go home. And it's brilliant, it's best day.

Lucy Wright: It sounds it.

Sally Shaw: Yeah, it's a really good day.

Lucy Wright: We'll come with you next time. This sounds brilliant.

Sally Shaw: It's heavily scheduled. Absolutely.

Lucy Wright: Two pie and mash visits.

Sally Shaw: I know, right. It's a lot of pie and mash.

Juliette Maxam: Where we're recommending, we thought maybe you should branch out, visit some other seaside destinations. Now, the only thing is I can't guarantee the pie and mash.

Sally Shaw: That's okay.

Juliette Maxam: I'm so sorry, you're going to have to do your research there.

Sally Shaw: Seek some new.

Juliette Maxam: I was thinking Felixstow. It's not too far to go. It's a really lovely resort.

Sally Shaw: Will I be scared? Is it very different?

Juliette Maxam: Do you know, it's not that different to Walton- on- the- Naze.

Sally Shaw: Great. Are there arcades?

Juliette Maxam: There are arcades, there are Amusements, there's a pier.

Sally Shaw: Is there a pier? Good. This is good.

Juliette Maxam: There's definitely a pier. And lovely shops, if you just want have a little wander around the shops as well.

Sally Shaw: Is there secondhand shops?

Juliette Maxam: Oh, some brilliant charity shops.

Sally Shaw: This is good. This is sounding good.

Juliette Maxam: Really good charity shops and really pretty lights as well on the front, which I think is gorgeous. And you can see the big docks. And if you are really brave, you can get a little ferry in to go for a little tour of Felixstow docks, which is really interesting. You're dwarfed by those enormous ships full of containers. Then I was thinking, now, Lucy would know better about this, if you ventured even further afield-

Sally Shaw: Lucy just pulled a face. She's just a bit worried.

Lucy Wright: Don't know what she's going to say.

Juliette Maxam: If you're into fossil hunting, is it West Runton? Somewhere near between Cromer and Sheringham, there's a really good (inaudible) for getting fossils.

Sally Shaw: Oh, because we're well into the fossils.

Juliette Maxam: I've got one. I found one when I went there and I keep it in a very special place.

Sally Shaw: What is it, do you know?

Juliette Maxam: I can't remember, it's very, very old and it's a fossil. That's good enough for me, to be honest with you. I think it is West Runton.

Lucy Wright: Yeah. It's in North Norfolk area. So Sheringham, Cromer, that kind of area. Yes, you're absolutely right.

Juliette Maxam: Right. And if you went to Cromer, of course, brilliant pier, end of pier show, and yes, crabs. And fish and chips.

Sally Shaw: Okay. So which one are you sending us to, Cromer or Felixstow?

Juliette Maxam: I'm inclined to think we should send you to both.

Sally Shaw: I think we'd love both. Can we do it all.

Juliette Maxam: Of course.

Sally Shaw: Is it possible to go by train?

Juliette Maxam: I don't think you do both on the same dates. You go Colchester to Ipswich, Ipswich to Felixstow, Felixstow back to Ipswich to Norwich, and then Norwich to Cromer or Sheringham.

Sally Shaw: That sounds like a long day.

Juliette Maxam: A long day. So I think two trips.

Sally Shaw: Yes. Sign us up. Deal.

Juliette Maxam: That's what we'll do. Enjoy.

Sally Shaw: We will.

Lucy Wright: That brings us to the end of this Life on Rails episode. We hope you've enjoyed learning new things about Greater Anglia.

Juliette Maxam: If so, let us know on Twitter, @ GreaterAngliaPR, and leave a rating or review on your podcast platform.

Lucy Wright: This brings us to the end of this season, our first season of Life on Rails. But don't worry, we'll be back later this year with a new season, new episodes, and a new presenter because Juliette is leaving us for pastures new.

Juliette Maxam: I'm very sorry to go. I've really enjoyed making this podcast and we've loved the feedback that we've had from people who've listened to it and I will be sure to subscribe to it from now on.

Lucy Wright: Thank you so much. I've loved co- hosting with you.

Juliette Maxam: It's been an absolute pleasure. You are a brilliant host, Lucy.

Lucy Wright: Thank you so much. And thank you to all of our listeners and we look forward to coming back with a new season very soon.

Juliette Maxam: While you wait though, follow or subscribe to the podcast and visit our website at greateranglia. co. uk/ podcast for more information.

Lucy Wright: Thanks for listening.