

# Business Update

June 2021



Operated by West Midlands Trains



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## MD: "Patience key as society unlocking draws closer"

Patience is key after the decision not to fully unlock society following a rise in cases of Covid-19, writes **West Midlands Trains managing director Julian Edwards (right)**.



Like many, I was disappointed that the four steps required to allow further easing had not been met.

As a rail operator it has been very frustrating being unable to carry the passenger numbers we would like to, but public health must be paramount.

We must remember that Covid-19 and its variants will not simply go away. Indeed, at the time of writing some parts of our network remain subject to advice that people must 'minimise travel'.

Ultimately the decisions of Government are out of our control and our focus, as always, remains on providing the best possible service to our customers.

While it may feel like the worst of the pandemic is behind us, we are still continuing to feel its impact.

The recent increase in cases of the Delta variant has begun taking its toll on our staff.

This is a particular issue for us when it comes to on-train colleagues, with our driver numbers already depleted due to training days lost to the pandemic.

In order to maintain our service we have introduced new, Covid-secure training methods and we are also looking to recruit experienced drivers at a number of our traincrew depots.

Even with these measures we do anticipate driver shortages may disrupt journeys for some months yet and we must ask our customers to bear with us.

On a more positive note, I can report that we have made some excellent progress in tackling anti-social behaviour such as fare evasion.

Working in partnership with British Transport Police and the rail industry, we are already beginning to see positive outcomes across the network.

It was a pleasure to see so many people attending our Annual Stakeholder Conference in May - see page 4 for more details and how you can catch-up if you missed out.

Of course one of the 'hot topics' was the future of the rail industry following the Williams-Shapps Review and the creation of 'Great British Railways'.

We look forward to working with the industry to shaping a railway that works smoothly in the best interests of passengers and taxpayers alike.



## Changes to Abbey Line timetable to protect tracks

Services on the Abbey Line in Hertfordshire began running to a new timetable from Monday 28 June in order to protect the rails.

London Northwestern Railway services must run more slowly along the route between St Albans Abbey and Watford Junction until Network Rail completes essential track maintenance works.

Some rail replacement buses will be in operation and customers are urged to check their travel in advance.

See [www.lnr.uk/timetable](http://www.lnr.uk/timetable) for the revised train times.



## Record number of station volunteers stepping forward



Volunteers planting flowers at Henley-in-Arden station in Warwickshire

West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway have said a huge 'thank you' after record numbers of new volunteers stepped forward to care for their local stations during the pandemic.

It is estimated volunteers have donated over 3,000 hours of time so far this year to help with work including landscaping, floral displays and art installations at stations across the network.

Fay Easton, WMR head of stakeholder and community, said: "During the pandemic we have seen volunteering provide opportunities for people to take part in joint activities with friends and neighbours, boosting physical and mental health.

"Researchers have aligned this activity as the public service equivalent of going to the gym.

"We are incredibly grateful to our fantastic army of volunteers which has more than doubled during the past 12 months as people spend more time in their own localities and refocus on neighbourhoods and communities."

Among recent station volunteer

projects were the installation of 14 timber planters at Henley-in-Arden station in Warwickshire.

Sue Bird, from the Friends of Henley Station, said: "It is great to see our work come to fruition after we spent many long hours preparing the station. To see the colours and flowers on the platform is great and we can be proud of how our station welcomes visitors to our fabulous town."

Other volunteer-led projects recently completed include: planting at Coseley station in the Black Country; the creation of wildflower gardens at Bilbrook in Staffordshire; a major planting scheme along the Abbey Line in Hertfordshire in partnership with Building Better Opportunities and the Mencap Watford group.

To volunteer at a local station, email [friends@wmtrains.co.uk](mailto:friends@wmtrains.co.uk)



Volunteers planting along the Abbey Line in Hertfordshire.

## Future of rail discussed at WMT stakeholder conference

The future of the railway at a local and national level was at the top of the agenda at the annual West Midlands Trains stakeholder conference.

The event - streamed live from the University of Birmingham due to Covid-19 restrictions - came on the eve of publication of the Shapps-Williams rail review.

More than 100 stakeholders took part in bespoke workshops on topics including community rail, customer experience and supporting the rail recovery.

Speakers at the event included Network Rail, Chiltern Railways, West Midlands Rail Executive as well as WMT managing director Julian Edwards.

Francis Thomas, head of corporate affairs for WMT, said: "Listening to the views of our customers and stakeholders has never been more important at such a critical time for the future of the rail industry.



Presenter Sophie Morris at the annual WMT stakeholder conference.

"That's why it was so pleasing to be able to use technology to connect with people and listen to idea for the way forward.

"On behalf of WMT, I would like to thank everybody who

attended and we look forward to meeting again - hopefully in person - in the near future."

To watch a recording of the stakeholder conference, visit: [www.wmtrains.baevents.co.uk](http://www.wmtrains.baevents.co.uk)

## Performance Update - West Midlands Trains

Railway Period	PPM %	MAA %	Reliability %
1: April 1 - May 1	93.2%	92.3%	97.0%
2: May 2 - May 30	91.1%	92.1%	96.0%
3: May 31 - June 27	86.9%	91.9%	94.0%

- PPM (Public Performance Measure) is the % of trains arriving within five minutes of advertised times.
- MAA (Moving Annual Average) is the average PPM over the last year to date.
- Reliability is the % of trains that ran for the whole of their journey.

The first two periods of the new railway year saw continued strong performance, building on the resilient and reliable 'lockdown' timetables.

The month of June brought with it a number of challenges - many linked to the warmer weather and resultant increase in passenger numbers - which have impacted on performance.

Issues have included the imposition of hot weather speed restrictions at several locations and a number of infrastructure failures.

There has also been a significant rise in the number of trespass and anti-social behaviour incidents on the network.

West Midlands Trains is working closely with the British Transport Police to tackle the problems through community working and targeted patrols and interventions.

Cancellations due to driver unavailability remain a challenge - for more details on how WMT is tackling the issue see Julian Edwards' column on Page 2.

## Bench memorial to Captain Tom unveiled at Millbrook



Captain Tom's daughter Hannah Ingram-Moore, seated, at the unveiling of the bench. Photo: Julie Buckley

A memorial bench celebrating the life of Captain Sir Tom Moore has been installed at the fundraiser's local station in Bedfordshire.

Captain Tom's daughter Hannah Ingram-Moore was guest of honour at the unveiling at London Northwestern Railway's Millbrook station.

The bench was funded by the Marston Vale Community Rail Partnership (CRP) and Marston Moreteyne Parish Council.

It has taken pride of place on the platform next to a specially-commissioned poem in Captain Tom's honour which was installed last year.

The centenarian, who died in February, raised more than £32million for NHS Charities Together by walking the length of his garden in the run-up to his 100th birthday in April 2020.

Lawrence Bowman, customer experience director for LNR, said: "Captain Tom united the country and I am delighted we have been able to help his local

community honour his memory in this way."

Hannah Ingram-Moore said: "My father was so invested in the community and would have been thrilled to hear about the passion and dedication of the volunteers who uphold Millbrook station."



Stephen Sleight, from Marston Vale CRP, said: "Captain Tom was such an inspiration to the whole country and I am delighted there is a permanent reminder of him at a station he knew so well."

Mr Sleight also offered his thanks to bench designers Roll & Scroll Ltd,

the Parish Council, the Friends of Millbrook Station - whose members have cared for the station with dedication for the past decade - and to CRP member Andy Buckley, who suggested the memorial bench.

The unveiling ceremony included representatives from the CRP, the parish council, LNR, the Friends of Millbrook Station, the Bedford to Bletchley Rail Users Association and the Royal British Legion, including Bedfordshire county president Eric Robinson MBE.

## New faces in West Midlands Trains stakeholder team

West Midlands Trains has welcomed two new faces to its stakeholder team following the temporary departure of two colleagues on maternity leave.

Tim Bellenger joins as maternity cover for Vicky Cropper-Clarke in the head of stakeholder and community role for London Northwestern Railway.

Tim has a long history in the rail industry having previously worked for London TravelWatch and for various local councils in the south of England.

Tim also runs a station adoption group near his

home in London. Peter Williamson joins as maternity cover for Rebecca Preece in the integration and accessibility manager role.

Peter comes with experience of working in a customer services and accessibility background from the aviation and rail sector.

Peter has already started work developing and evolving WMT's accessibility portfolio and meeting stakeholders from around the network.

Contact details for Tim and Peter - Page 8.

## 'Rails to Trails' walking guide launched in Staffordshire

Rail passengers are being invited to get back to nature thanks to a new booklet detailing beautiful walks in North Staffordshire.

The booklet, part-funded by London Northwestern Railway, is designed to encourage users to explore places of historical and environmental interest.

It has been produced by the North Staffordshire Community Rail Partnership working with both LNR and CrossCountry.

The routes take the walker past historic buildings and along the canals of Stoke-on-Trent, Stone and Penkridge and through the quaint market towns of Tutbury and Uttoxeter.

Quieter strolls take in the beautiful Bathpool Park at Kidsgrove and Milton Park at Alsager.

All walks are between one and six miles, starting and ending at a station, ideal for a day out by rail.

The booklet also features a dementia-friendly walk in Alsager – the town's station has recently been



Vicky Cropper-Clarke, of LNR (left centre), with partners.

awarded "Working toward Dementia Friendly Status" by the Alzheimer's Society.

Vicky Cropper-Clarke, head of stakeholder and community for LNR, said: "We are proud to have supported North Staffs CRP in this project. Walking is good for our physical and mental health and we hope the booklet will encourage people to leave the car at home for a day out in the Staffordshire countryside."

To get your copy, visit [www.northstaffsrail.org.uk](http://www.northstaffsrail.org.uk)

## Tamworth community scheme supports mental health

Tamworth station has been brightened up thanks to community-minded volunteers and adults with additional support needs.

Students from Care First, which supports people with learning difficulties, made a planter for volunteers from Community Together TIC to install.

Vicky Cropper-Clarke, head of stakeholder and community for London Northwestern Railway, said: "The community is at the heart of everything we do and it was wonderful to welcome our fantastic volunteers to the station.

"With more travelling again we are keen to make our stations as welcoming as possible and community activity like this is a great example for everybody."

Stacey Bean, from Care First, said: "After a year of not being able to access our community as much as we would like it is fantastic to be part of this amazing group project."



Volunteers and station staff at Tamworth in Staffordshire.

## WMT hailed for commitment to inclusion and diversity

West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway have been hailed for their commitment to inclusion and diversity at the national FREDIE Awards.

Parent company West Midlands Trains was named 'most improved organisation' at the FREDIEs – Fairness, Respect, Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Engagement – are run by the National Centre for Diversity.

WMT was also nominated in seven more categories for both individual and collective achievements.

Jo MacPhail, HR director, said: "We want our employees to feel safe, respected and welcome in the workplace and this award is important recognition that equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of our business."



The FREDIE Awards 2021 were held online in May.

## Sign language and ramp upgrades at London Euston

London Euston has become the first railway station in the country to provide passenger information using British Sign Language (BSL).

Ten screens have been installed at the terminus which is used by thousands of London Northwestern Railway customers every day.

Network Rail has invested more than £1million in the technology which allows both pre-recorded and live messaging to be played to customers through BSL.

Loraine Martins, from Network Rail, said: "Rail travel can be daunting for anyone with specific needs and we're always looking at ways we can improve accessibility so everyone can travel with confidence.

"We're really excited to have these screens installed to see the



A sign language information screen (right) on the main departure board.

real difference they will make for passengers"

Meanwhile, work to improve access to platforms 8-11 at the station are well under way.

The £8million scheme will clear

the way for passengers by removing retail units on the ramp to the platforms, from which many LNR services depart.

Work is due to be complete by the autumn.

# About Us

## West Midlands Trains

West Midlands Trains has operated services under West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway since the beginning of our franchise in December 2017. The company is investing £1billion into the rail network to deliver new trains, improved routes and station upgrades.

Our mission is to provide quality rail services and develop sustainable travel. The communities we serve are central to our ethos and we work closely with a regional network of volunteers and community rail partnerships. We are proud to work with our dedicated station adopters who take huge pride in their neighbourhood stations.

If you ever have any questions or feedback on what we're doing in your area, please contact:



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