

# Business Update

February 2021



Operated by West Midlands Trains



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## MD: "Keeping key workers moving is still top priority"

It might be February already but I hope I am not too late in wishing everybody a Happy New Year, writes **West Midlands Trains managing director Julian Edwards (right)**.

Like everybody I was pleased to see the back of 2020, which was probably the most turbulent year on the railway since the Second World War.

It has been a very strange experience running a railway which has gone from being so busy just 12 months ago to - at times - near-empty trains today.

With the vaccine programmes beginning to roll out across the country I hope it will not be too long before we can start to encourage rail travel again.

For now, of course, the message remains that the railways are for essential journeys only as we all follow the clear "Stay At Home" message from Government.

Our priority at the moment must be to provide a regular, reliable service for key workers who still need to travel, which is what we have done with the new timetables we introduced in January.

With coronavirus still prevalent in society - and of course new variants to contend with - we remain focused on hygiene and our cleaning teams continue to do a sterling job.

An additional challenge we have faced in 2021 has been the significant impact of coronavirus on our staff.

In mid-January we saw more colleagues off work due to Covid-19 than at any time and it was necessary to further reduce services for a period as a result.

We know our customers appreciate that railway staff are key workers too and are not immune from coronavirus - and we welcome everybody's patience and understanding. We really are all in this together.



Julian Edwards.

## Timetables reduced during third national lockdown

A reduced timetable came into operation on West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway services from Monday 18 January 2021.

The timetable was introduced to provide an appropriate level of service with passenger numbers extremely low due to the third national lockdown.

It was also designed to mitigate the possible impact of train crew being unable to work due to Covid-19, whether through self-isolating or testing positive for the virus itself.

Among the temporary changes are:

- Buses replace trains on WMR services between Nuneaton and Leamington Spa
- Fewer afternoon services are running on WMR routes via Birmingham Snow Hill
- Buses replace trains on LNR services between Bletchley and Bedford as well as services between Watford Junction and St Albans Abbey

The timetable is being kept under close review with a view to reinstating services when possible.

## Signalling improvements at Birmingham New Street

A major project to improve the reliability of signalling at Birmingham New Street is under way.

The station is one of the busiest in the country and caters for millions of passenger journeys every year but some of the signals still in use date back to the 1960s.

Network Rail estimates the work will take until June 2022 to complete, with a rolling programme of platform closures in place to allow improvements to be carried out safely.

In January, platform 12 became the first to temporarily close for the work, with Cross City Line passengers urged to double-check which alternative platform is in use.



## Wolverhampton station on course for spring opening

The multi-million pound rebuild of Wolverhampton station is continuing apace with the facility expected to fully open in the spring.

Exterior work on the second phase of the project is nearing completion.

The scheme is part of the city's £150million Interchange project which was recently hailed at the West Midlands Property Awards 2020.

Contractors Galliford Try have installed steelwork, clad the building and lifted in the floor and roof slabs to make it watertight.

Work has started on the roof, canopy cladding, ceramic tiling and mechanical installations ahead of final phase works prior to opening.

The first phase of the project - a new concourse with six ticket vending machines, toilets, retail units and train crew accommodation - opened last year.

The second phase includes three more retail units, a customer waiting room and a help point.



How the completed Wolverhampton station will look.

Wolverhampton Council cabinet member Cllr Stephen Simkins said: "The station is a beacon of the multi-billion-pound regeneration taking place across our city. It is an extraordinary project."

Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands, said: "Once complete the station will link the Metro and the bus station, meaning residents will have better access to jobs, aiding the city's regeneration."

## 'Community Station Partnership' launch in West Mids

Volunteers from stations along the 'Shakespeare Line' in the West Midlands have pledged to work together under a new scheme.

The creation of the innovative Community Station Partnership follows the adoption of 18 stations on the route between Stratford and Birmingham last year.

Supported by West Midlands Railway, the partnership has a volunteer management group and brings together more than 70 people across the route.

Sponsors, such as Earlswood Garden and Landscape Centre, have enabled the partnership to get to work planting bulbs and painting heritage signage on the historic route.



Volunteers clearing undergrowth at Henley-in-Arden and preparing the flower bed under the station sign for planting.



Partnership with Bee Friendly Trust at Watford Junction

Watford Junction station was a hive of activity as part of a new partnership with the Bee Friendly Trust wildlife group.

A dedicated team of volunteers dug in to shift more than 10 tonnes of gravel and soil prior to the lockdown.

The team then set about refilling the station planters with wildlife-friendly greenery.

The project continues this year with children's artwork, information boards and bee 'hotels' next on the list.

The Bee Friendly Trust has also donated a spectacular art installation of a bee hive, which is now proudly on display at the Hertfordshire station.



Volunteers digging in at Watford Junction station prior to lockdown.

New design for Perry Barr station unveiled to the public

A new design for Birmingham's Perry Barr station has been unveiled ahead of building work starting at the site later this year.

The station is being given a multi-million pound revamp in time for the Commonwealth Games which take place in the city in 2022.

West Midlands Mayor Andy Street said: "The key is to create a station that works for passengers with safety, clear information, lifts and toilets a priority."

The scheme is due before Birmingham City Council's planning committee in February with work due to start in the spring.



The new proposed look for Perry Barr station.

Performance Update - West Midlands Trains

Railway Period	PPM %	MAA %	Reliability %
8: October 18 - November 14	89.6%	83.4%	97.0%
9: November 15 - December 12	91.4%	85.1%	97.0%
10: December 13 - January 9	91.9%	87.1%	97.0%

- 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.

Homeless shelter first to benefit from new £1.7m fund

A charity which supports dozens of rough sleepers in Milton Keynes every year has been given a boost thanks to a grant from London Northwestern Railway.

The Winter Night Shelter Milton Keynes operates from its base at Unity Park Station, opposite the city's Central railway station, which is operated by LNR.

The £30,000 grant will be used to support the work of the project which provides a welcoming, warm environment for homeless people in the town.

It provides the homeless with food, clothing and other essentials to help them find more permanent accommodation and work.

Vicky Cropper-Clarke, head of community and stakeholder for LNR, said: "We recognise the huge impact coronavirus has had



The Milton Keynes Winter Night Shelter helps dozens of people every year.

on society and we felt it was important to support this very worthwhile cause."

The grant was made by LNR as part of its Customer and Communities Improvement Fund, funded by the Department for Transport. LNR and West Midlands Railway will invest £1.7million in community projects

across the network in coming months.

Sara Millington, communications manager for the Night Shelter, said: "This grant has enabled us to expand the support we provide to the homeless and vulnerable at a crucial time when the need for our services has never been greater."

Eco-Garden scheme is unveiled for Jewellery Quarter

An eco-garden will be installed at one of Birmingham's busiest inner-city stations under the CCIF scheme (see above).

Jewellery Quarter station will have a 'green makeover' thanks to community volunteers and the area's Business Improvement District (BID).

The £66,000 scheme, titled "Greening a Grey Station", will see 'living walls' of plants and shrubs installed at the station to enhance the environment for passengers and residents.

Fay Easton, head of community and stakeholder for WMR, said: "This innovative community project is central to our ethos in working with local people to ensure the railways are at the heart of our neighbourhoods."

Steve Lovell, from the BID, said: "This project is central in improving the aesthetic of the area and increasing the amount of green spaces."

"We will create an inviting entry point into the area for our independent businesses."



Pictured at Jewellery Quarter, from left: Station adopter Gaynor Steele, Ayannah Wilson from West Midlands Rail Executive, Ian Taylor of WMR and Steve Lovell from JQ BID.



## Revamp for popular 'Stourbridge Shuttle' branch line

One of the country's best-loved train services – the Stourbridge Town branch line – is getting a makeover.

The popular line, which connects Stourbridge Town and Stourbridge Junction stations, will close for two weeks in February for the work.

The small Class 139 trains used on the route will be internally repainted, deep-cleaned and have new passenger grab rails installed.

Some seating will also be temporarily removed to aid social distancing on board.

The line – which is less than a mile long – is believed to be the shortest branch line in Europe.

Jonny Wiseman, WMR customer experience director, said: "This is one of our best-known services and its uniqueness makes it popular with our customers and rail enthusiasts alike."

"With passenger numbers currently very low due to the national lockdown it is the perfect time for us to pause the service to give the trains and tracks some TLC."



The 'Stourbridge Shuttle' is getting a makeover.

## Winsford station in Cheshire picks up 'Best Kept' award

Volunteers who give up their time to keep their local station looking its best have been handed a top award.

Winsford station was named one of the winners at the Cheshire Best Kept Station Awards.

The site, operated by London Northwestern Railway, features five art panels on the station which have been created by community artists and local primary school children.

Mark Barker, chairman of Cheshire Best Kept Stations, said: "Despite all the changes we've had to make, the ongoing work of station friends and communities to make their stations welcoming gateways is brilliant."

**To volunteer at your local station, contact Fay Easton (WMR) or Vicky Cropper-Clarke (LNR) - see Page 8.**



Volunteers and station staff at Winsford.

## Senior conductor Robert honoured for community work



A train guard from Northamptonshire is celebrating after being awarded the British Empire Medal for his commitment to charity and volunteer work.

London Northwestern Railway senior conductor Robert Moore was commended in the 2021 New Year Honours list for services to the community.

Robert, from Corby, has worked on the railway for five years and volunteers as an assistant scout leader with the Sywell Air Scout Group in Northamptonshire.

The 38-year-old has helped to establish a search and rescue team, teaches first aid through the British Heart

Foundation and volunteers at his local football club.

Robert said: "Following an incredibly difficult year for so many people it was humbling and a huge surprise to be recognised for working with my local community."

"So many people have gone the extra mile over the past nine months and I know there are many out there who have done more than I have and I would pay tribute to them for their dedication."

Robert will receive his medal from the Lord-Lieutenant of Northamptonshire at a formal presentation ceremony on a date yet to be set.

## Birmingham Children's Hospital is 2021 charity partner

Birmingham Children's Hospital Charity has been unveiled as West Midlands Trains' official charitable partner for 2021.

The hospital has been caring for poorly children in the West Midlands for more than 150 years having been founded as the Birmingham and Midland Free Hospital for Sick Children way back in 1862.

A wide range of fundraising activities are planned at stations and in staff areas across West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway in support of the charity under the partnership.

Last year West Midlands Trains' staff and passengers raised more than £19,000 for the Alzheimer's Society through events including coffee mornings and lost property sales.



The Birmingham Children's Hospital Charity.

# About Us

## West Midlands Trains

West Midlands Trains operates services under West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway. The franchise started in December 2017 and will run until 2025/26. 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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