



On Track

Rail Investment Strategy • Assistance Dog Card • New 196 Train Launch

New train fleet

'Class 196s' enter service



A brand new West Midlands Railway train fleet has welcomed its first passengers on board.

Passengers, including a small band of railway enthusiasts, climbed aboard the Class 196 at Shrewsbury railway station shortly before 7am on Monday 17 October for the maiden journey to Birmingham New Street.

The first train to carry passengers – 196101 – was officially named “Charles Darwin” by the High Sheriff of Shropshire Selina Graham at a special ceremony. Naturalist Charles Darwin – who is regularly voted one of the greatest Britons of all time – was born in Shrewsbury.

The train is one of 26 which make up the Class 196 fleet, whose features include smart air conditioning, plug and USB chargers at every seat and extra storage space.

The trains offer 25% more capacity than the fleet they replace. They will initially run between Birmingham and Shrewsbury before entering service on the Birmingham-Worcester-Hereford route next year.

West Midlands Trains **On Track**

Welcome

Monthly news update from WMT

Welcome to this edition of *On Track* - your monthly news update from West Midlands Trains.

West Midlands Trains runs services under the West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway brands, connecting communities across the country.

Through this newsletter we aim to bring you up to date with all the latest developments across our network, including timetable changes, station developments and any major planned engineering projects, as well as our projects to support our local communities.

If you have any questions about our business, please do not hesitate to get in contact using the details on the final page of this newsletter.

Performance

Driver recovery plan

The driver training programme at West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway is continuing to make good progress following the delays caused by the pandemic.

This progress was evidenced during October half-term - a popular time for annual leave - with the number of services cancelled due to a lack of available train crew less than half the 2021 figure.

For more information on our driver recovery plan click [here](#).



Rail Consultation

Have your say on the West Midlands Rail Investment Strategy



The West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE) is updating its West Midlands Rail Investment Strategy and needs your support. You can help plan the next 30 years of rail in the region by reading the draft strategy and completing the online survey.

The survey is open now until 11.59pm on Monday 28 November. Read the draft strategy and fill out the survey at wmre.org.uk/consultation

The updated strategy details how they plan to tackle challenges like post-pandemic recovery, maximising the benefits of HS2 and contributing to net zero.

The strategy sets out WMRE's priorities for the rail network, which are to:

1. support the recovery from Covid-19.
2. contribute to net zero.
3. maximise the benefits of HS2 and deliver Midlands Rail Hub.
4. develop high growth corridors whilst reducing social deprivation and levelling up.
5. maximise access to the rail network.
6. support the movement of goods by rail.
7. consider radical change in the long term.

It also provides in depth analysis of how WMRE aims to achieve those priorities, as well as the current challenges faced by the railway and predictions for future rail demand.

Industrial Action

Strikes on four November dates

Passengers are being urged to only travel if absolutely necessary with strike action set to significantly impact services this month.

On Friday 4 November a very limited timetable will be in operation on West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway due to strike action by members of the TSSA union. No services will run after 7.30pm.

A similar reduced service will also run on Saturday 5 November, Monday 7 November and Wednesday 9 November due to national strike action by members of the RMT union. Early morning services on days in between strike days will also be impacted.

The action coincides with the start of the Frankfurt Christmas Market in Birmingham along with other events across the network and people planning to travel are being urged to plan their journeys carefully.

For more information click here (WMR) or here (LNR).

Diversity Award

Recognition for company



West Midlands Trains has been highly commended for its commitment to equality in the workplace at a prestigious awards ceremony.

Last month's Black Country Chamber of Commerce Awards saw WMT 'highly commended' in the Excellence in Diversity & Equality category.

Pictured collecting the certificate at the event are Saheeb Hussain and Jacqueline Hunt from the WMT rail network group Embrace.

Community Rail

New strategy published



Operated by West Midlands Trains

The new West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway Community Rail Strategy has been published.

Community Rail activity at WMR and LNR includes community rail partnerships, station adopters, station partnerships and a small army of volunteers.

These groups connect their communities with the railway and play a key role in improving the environment of our stations as well as delivering projects which promote inclusion, diversity, creativity, sustainable travel and new reasons to travel by train.

We are very proud of the relationships we have developed with our community partners and the projects we have delivered together which have made a huge difference to the communities we serve.

We felt it was important to identify a vision for West Midlands Trains that the business can focus on for the duration of our National Rail Contract with the support of our partners. We have designed the strategies based on some of the key topics which have emerged from applications to our Customer and Communities Improvement Fund, our CRPs annual activity plans and funding applications from our volunteer groups.

We believe these strategies will enable us to embed Community Rail across the business and provide us with a lever to gain additional support and engagement with our colleagues.

To read a copy of the strategy, contact Fay Easton (WMR) or Vicky Cropper-Clarke (LNR) using the contact details on Page 5.

Assistance Card

Helping passengers with assistance dogs



A new card which helps people make their fellow passengers aware they are travelling with an assistance dog is now available for use.

The aim of the card is to ensure people travelling with an assistance dog have a comfortable and safe journey by highlighting a protected area for the dog.

The card is visible, reusable and can be placed on the seat next to you to indicate to passengers and on train staff that a working dog is present.

Anybody who travels with an assistance dog can download and use the assistance dog under seat card.

The cards can be downloaded [here](#) for LNR and [here](#) for WMR.

‘Rail Star’ praised

Marc hailed for quick-thinking



West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway are celebrating the unsung heroes of the network through our #RailStars initiative.

Platform worker Marc, pictured, was working at Watford Junction at night when a man fell onto the tracks with a train due to arrive at any moment. Marc reacted quickly to shine a warning light from the platform to warn the approaching train while colleagues brought the man to safety.

WMT Conference

Popular event returns in-person



The annual West Midlands Trains stakeholder conference took place last month – the first fully in-person event since the pandemic.

Over 100 delegates attended the event, which looked at the future of the rail industry and strategic priorities for West Midlands Trains in the coming years.

The conference brought together stakeholders from across the London Northwestern Railway and West Midlands Railway and gave stakeholders the opportunity to hear from senior management and subject matter experts from across the business as well as to ask questions and have their say on the issues of interest to them.

We looked at how we will continue to make rail travel attractive and accessible, and the vital role we and our community stakeholders can play in supporting local social and economic regeneration.

To watch a recording of the conference, click [here](#).

Trent Valley Anniversary

Celebrating 175 years

Railway enthusiasts Dave Barrett and Robin Mathams will be providing a fully illustrated history talk about the establishing of the Trent Valley Railway's 175 year anniversary.

The talk will take place at Stafford station on Tuesday 15 November. Find out more [here](#).



Community Champions

WMT recognition



West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway were delighted to recognise community champions at the stakeholder conference.

Plaques were given out to community heroes who have invested so much time and hard work into serving different sections of the WMR and LNR network.

Camp Hill Line

Clearance work begins

Vegetation clearance ahead of the construction of three new stations in the West Midlands will get under way this month.

Work at the sites of the future Moseley Village, Pineapple Road and Kings Heath stations will take place to enable full access for construction teams.



Contacts



Charlotte Ritchie, Head of External Communications & Engagement
charlotte.ritchie@wmtrains.co.uk



Andrew McGill, Public Affairs Manager
andrew.mcgill@wmtrains.co.uk



Liam Bolland, Media Relations Executive
liam.bolland@wmtrains.co.uk



Peter Williamson, Accessibility Strategy & Projects Manager
peter.williamson@wmtrains.co.uk



Emma Partlow, Accessibility Delivery Manager
emma.partlow@wmtrains.co.uk



Fay Easton, Head of Stakeholder & Community, West Midlands Railway
fay.easton@wmtrains.co.uk



Vicky Cropper-Clarke, Head of Stakeholder & Community, London Northwestern Railway
vicky.cropper-clarke@wmtrains.co.uk