

# Business Update

December 2021



Operated by West Midlands Trains



## MUSIC LEGENDS CLIMB ON BOARD

Honour for Stourbridge

03

UB40's "Musical Routes"

05

Marston Vale celebration

06

## MD: "Driver training the focus as we move into 2022"

It might be two years since the first recorded case of Covid-19 but we're all continuing to feel the impact of the pandemic, writes **West Midlands Trains managing director Julian Edwards (right)**.



In fact, as West Midlands Trains celebrates our fourth birthday, we reflect that for almost half of that time we have been living with Covid-19.

Thankfully we're moving in the right direction to address the driver shortage which resulted from losing 25,000 training days during the pandemic.

With every month that passes more and more new trainee drivers become fully-qualified, thereby reducing the likelihood of short-notice cancellations which have been impacting our passengers recently.

Christmas is a popular time for annual leave, so we must ask our customers to bear with us over the next few weeks as some services will be cancelled.

This month brings us an opportunity to tweak our timetables - see **Page 3** for details of some of the changes we are making for customers.

As demand for rail travel continues to fluctuate we are listening to our customers and working with

the Department for Transport and West Midlands Rail Executive to develop sustainable timetables as we emerge from the pandemic.

Last month saw the reintroduction of mandatory face coverings on trains in response to the Omicron variant.

I urge all our customers to follow the rules which are for the benefit of us all. We continue to work with the British Transport Police to drive up compliance while the regulations are in force.

While the pandemic may not be over yet, it has been so refreshing to see our passenger numbers increasing over the course of 2021.

When you consider that at the height of lockdown we were carrying just 5% of pre-Covid levels, to be at around 60% now feels like real, tangible progress.

We know that travel habits are changing and it is our job as operators to respond to customer demand and keep encouraging people back to the railway.

These are exciting times for WMT with the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham drawing close and new trains heading for the network in 2022.

Finally, I would like to wish all of our customers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.



## Call for station adopters along West Coast Main Line

Could you lend a hand to help your local station shine bright? London Northwestern Railway is seeking station adopters for a number of its stations on the West Coast Main Line.

Lichfield Trent Valley, Polesworth, Tring and Kings Langley are all seeking volunteers who can spare a few hours to help brighten up platforms for the benefit of their local communities.

To find out more, visit [www.lnr.uk/communityrail](http://www.lnr.uk/communityrail) or email [timothy.bellenger@wmtrains.co.uk](mailto:timothy.bellenger@wmtrains.co.uk)



## Stourbridge Junction named nation's favourite station



Jonny Wiseman, Ian Tomlinson and Simone Carter from WMR, with the Rail Delivery Group's Catherine Murphy.

Stourbridge Junction has been crowned Britain's favourite railway station in an online poll.

Thousands of passengers voted to support the popular hub in the 'World Cup of Stations' run by the Rail Delivery Group, which represents train operators.

Many voters were inspired to support Stourbridge by the popular station cat George, who has his own social media account.

Station manager Simone Carter said: "Taking part in the World Cup of Stations was great fun for all our customers and the station team.

"Being part of the community is incredibly important to everyone and events like this really bring people together."

A plaque celebrating the win will now be installed at the station following a presentation ceremony with representatives from the RDG.

## New timetable introduces additional fast London train

An additional fast service between Northampton and London Euston is the most significant change in the West Midlands Trains timetables this month.

The introduction of the service, which will run every weekday from Monday 13 December, means changes to departure times between Birmingham, Northampton and Euston.

Some trains between Milton Keynes and Euston will run with eight carriages rather than 12 in order to provide the rolling stock for the new service.

On the West Midlands Railway timetable some departure times will change to help improve performance and customers are being urged to check the new schedules before travelling.

Other changes include:

- A new 2217hrs service from Liverpool Lime Street to Crewe on Saturdays
- The 0537hrs service from Milton Keynes to Birmingham New Street will double in length (8 carriages compared to 4 currently)
- Additional train services are being reinstated on the Abbey Line (Watford-St Albans) and Marston Vale Line (Bletchley-Bedford)

Meanwhile, passengers are urged to plan ahead as engineering work at Rugby from Jan 4-12 affects LNR services between Crewe and London Euston. Journeys may take longer or require a change.

## Remembrance Day marked with Veterans' Charity link

Military veterans in Milton Keynes and Northampton were represented at a major national Remembrance ceremony thanks to a partnership with London Northwestern Railway.

As part of the "Routes of Remembrance" drive, wreaths on behalf of The Veterans Charity were laid at a London memorial after being transported aboard LNR services to Euston.

The initiative was established by The Veterans Charity to help veterans unable to travel to London to take part in national ceremonies due to the pandemic.

Iraq veteran Dean Griffin escorted a wreath from Northampton with Oscar Wilding escorting the wreath from Milton Keynes on behalf of 678 Squadron (Rifles) Army Air Corps, Lawrence Bowman, LNR customer experience director, said: "We were proud to join The Veterans Charity in helping to pay tribute on Remembrance Day.



Oscar Wilding, Max Rumsey-Kane of LNR and Dean Griffin at Northampton.

"With some unable to travel to London to take part in ceremonies, we were honoured to take part in the Routes of Remembrance across the railway network."

Danny Greeno, chief executive of The Veterans Charity, said: "After expanding the scheme for 2021

we have had a brilliant response. The pandemic has not gone away yet and this event helped veterans engage with Remembrance.

"I would like to thank LNR and our members for their efforts in celebrating the deep links between the railway and the military."

## Performance Update - West Midlands Trains

Railway Period	T3 %	MAA %	Reliability %
7: September 19 - October 16	84.9%	88.5%	99.0%
8: October 17 - November 13	79.8%	88.3%	98.0%

- T3 is the % of trains arriving within three minutes of advertised times.
- MAA (Moving Annual Average) is the average T3 over the last year to date.
- Reliability is the % of trains that ran for the whole of their journey.

A new metric measuring performance has been introduced under the National Rail Contract.

The metric - T3 - records the number of services which arrived at their destination within three minutes of the time advertised on the timetable.

This replaces the previous metric - the Public Performance Measure (PPM) - which benchmarked against a five minute target for regional services, or 10 minutes for long-distance services.

West Midlands Trains' performance under T3 in recent months has been impacted by the ongoing challenges associated with Covid-19.

The principal issue remains staff shortages caused by the necessary suspension of driver training for seven months during the height of the pandemic.

Elsewhere, incidents affecting T3 in Periods 7 and 8 included a number of fatalities on the network and a significant cable theft in the West Midlands.

## Reggae legends UB40 unveil musical artwork project



Music legends UB40 with partners at the official unveiling of the Musical Routes project at Hall Green.

Legendary reggae band UB40 were guests of honour as West Midlands Railway unveiled its new 'Musical Routes' initiative to celebrate the region's musical heritage.

The 'Musical Routes' project is the brainchild of the Birmingham Music Archive and funded through WMR's "Your Community, Your Fund" scheme.

It offers rail passengers a tour of the second city's world-class musical heritage, celebrating legendary Brummie artists like Ozzy Osbourne, Joan Armatrading and Jamelia.

The project will see music-themed information boards installed at dozens of railway stations across the city in coming months.

Fay Easton, WMR head of stakeholder and community, said: "Your Community, Your Fund' was designed to bring life to community projects that benefit our customers and we are so pleased to see this world-class concept delivered in Birmingham.

"Many local people and global visitors will be unaware of the musical talent that impacted world music from Birmingham and the Midlands.

"This talent should be celebrated, and we are

proud to have been part of this project to bring Birmingham's musical heritage to life at our stations."

"Your Community, Your Fund" is funded by the Department for Transport and was previously known as the Customer & Communities Improvement Fund.

Jez Collins, founder of Birmingham Music Archive, said: "I'm passionate about our music history and this project allows us to reach hundreds of thousands of people each year as they travel by train."

The intricate 3D wooden maps feature Spotify codes that connect to a curated playlist for each area.

Maps will be installed at Sutton Coldfield, Four Oaks, Wylde Green, Chester Road, Erdington, Gravelly Hill, Hamstead, Jewellery Quarter, Duddeston, Aston, Witton, Bordesley, Small Heath, Adderley Park, Lea Hall, Five Ways; Spring Road; Hall Green; Yardley Wood; Acocks Green; Stechford; Tyseley; Selly Oak; Bournville; Kings Norton; Northfield and Longbridge.

University and Perry Barr stations will also receive maps following completion of redevelopment work at the stations next year.



## New-look Kidderminster Station celebrated - at last!



Station manager Simone Carter outside the new-look Kidderminster Station. Inset: The official opening.

Team GB Paralympic star Rebecca Redfern was the guest of honour at the delayed official opening of the new-look Kidderminster Station.

The station came into service during last year's national lockdown, meaning the multi-million pound project was unable to be officially celebrated.

However, with restrictions eased, officials from Worcestershire County Council, contractors SLC Rail

and West Midlands Railway were finally able to come together to showcase the facility.

Councillor Alan Amos, from Worcs CC, said: "I am so pleased we have finally been able to celebrate the opening of this wonderful, fully refurbished station."

Rebecca, from Droitwich, who claimed silver in the 100m breaststroke at the Tokyo Games, is pictured above unveiling a plaque to mark the occasion.

## Marston Vale Line celebrates 175 years in operation

Special celebrations were held in November to mark 175 years of the Marston Vale Line.

The line, between Bedford and Bletchley, first opened on 17 November 1846.

Celebrations organised by the Community Rail Partnership included exhibitions and activity days along with a new plaque.

Chris Green, a former senior British Rail manager, was guest of honour at Ridgmont station.

The Marston Vale Line is supported by a team of more than 75 station friends and volunteers. For more see [www.marstonvalecommunityrail.org.uk](http://www.marstonvalecommunityrail.org.uk)



Celebrations at Ridgmont on the Marston Vale Line.

## Community Rail Conference a hit - online and offline

More than 100 people tuned in and turned up to celebrate another year of community rail activity on the West Midlands Trains network.

With the ongoing pandemic meaning some people preferring to attend events virtually the event was run in a hybrid format, with attendees in person and online.

Fay Easton, WMR head of stakeholder and community, said: "It has been a record-breaking year with so many people stepping forward to help their communities.

"We have so many amazing projects ongoing across our network and this event was a great chance to celebrate our volunteers, thank them for their hard work and look ahead to the future."



The conference was held in a hybrid format both online and offline.

## Community art and wellbeing centre open at Nuneaton



Representatives from The Station Gallery and London Northwestern Railway at Nuneaton station.

A community art and wellbeing centre has opened at Nuneaton station following a grant from London Northwestern Railway.

The Station Gallery is the brainchild of the Escape Arts organisation and features artwork inspired by the station itself, including trains, staff and passengers.

The project is part of LNR's Your Community, Your Fund initiative which provides funding in partnership with the Department for Transport.

Tim Bellenger, LNR head of stakeholder and community, said: "This project is part of our mission to put stations at the heart of our communities."

# About Us

## West Midlands Trains

West Midlands Trains has operated services under West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway since the beginning of our original 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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