

Business Update

April 2021



Operated by West Midlands Trains



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MD: "Record punctuality shows steady improvement"

The coming summer months will be a pivotal time for the rail industry as customers begin returning, writes **West Midlands Trains managing director Julian Edwards (right)**.



It is now more than a year since the Prime Minister imposed the first national lockdown, restricting our free movement across the country.

During this time the railway has continued running to make sure those making essential journeys - especially key workers such as NHS staff - could get to where they need to be.

The end of March also marks the end of the 'railway year' and gives us the opportunity to look back on our performance.

I am pleased to report that in 2020/21 our Public Performance Measure (PPM) score for punctuality was 92.3% - a record for this franchise.

This achievement is all the more pleasing when you consider that just before the pandemic struck we had launched our remedial plan to fix the operational issues we endured in 2019.

Our PPM improvement over the past year was the fourth best in the industry and I am incredibly proud of how our business pulled together during Covid-19.

Despite working at unprecedented pace, our planning team seized the chance to make timetable changes which met the needs of our key workers and simplified operations to boost performance.

The challenge we now face is how to make sure we continue this trend in the post-pandemic world.

Although the government message remains for us all to minimise our travel, it is inevitable the railway will soon be carrying significantly more passengers as we support our local and national economies.

For West Midlands Trains this means an increase in our level of service, with trains returning to the Marston Vale and Leamington-Nuneaton lines in April and a wider timetable step-up in May.

Looking ahead, one of the big challenges we have faced over the past year - and continue to face - is dealing with the impact of Covid-19 on our staff.

We have been very open that a third of our staff have been off work at one time or another in the pandemic.

However, one area our passengers may not be so aware of is the impact on our driver training programmes.

With trainee drivers needing to form 'bubbles' with instructors to reduce the risk of spreading coronavirus, we have seen thousands of training days lost, which in turn impacts on the front line.

While we are doing all we can to mitigate this, we are going to need to ask our customers for patience at times while we work to get the driver pipeline flowing at full speed once again.

Speaking of our customers, I am very much looking forward to meeting many of you at our upcoming stakeholder conference next month - see page 5 for details on how to sign up.

With the speed at which passengers will return to the railway currently uncertain - although we know they will certainly return in time - there has never been a more important time to hear people's views so I do encourage you to join us if you can.

Finally, as we near the roadmap's end, I would again like to offer my gratitude to our incredible NHS staff and key workers, including our own railway staff, for their efforts over the past year.

Thank you all.



Trains will soon be carrying more passengers.

Dozens of community schemes unveiled in £1.7m fund



David Wisehall at Hednesford



Volunteers at Hall Green

Dozens of community schemes are getting under way following £1.7m of grants from West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway.

The "Your Community, Your Fund" scheme invited applications from groups across the network.

Successful bidders have been informed, with many schemes already under way including plans for a new community hub in a refurbished railway carriage at **Hednesford** in Staffordshire.

In Herefordshire, history boards celebrating the history of **Ledbury** will be installed at the station.

In Warwickshire, local poets will write prose which celebrates the diverse communities at 18 stations on the **Shakespeare Line** between Birmingham and Stratford-upon-Avon.

The **Milton Keynes Night Shelter** has also stepped up its work with homeless people in the city after a London Northwestern Railway grant.

The "Your Community, Your Fund" scheme was previously known as the Customer & Communities Improvement Fund and is funded by the Department for Transport. See wmr.uk/ycyf or lnr.uk/ycyf for more information.



Poetry on the 'Shakespeare Line'



Milton Keynes Night Shelter.

Station adopters return to platforms as restrictions ease

Volunteers have been busy preparing to return to station platforms across the West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway network.

With the 'Stay At Home' rule lifted, station adopters have been tending to flower beds and other improvements.

To find out more about volunteering at your station, contact Fay Easton (WMR) or Vicky Cropper-Clarke (LNR) using the contact details on the back page.

Pictured right is Hall Green adopter Howard Hemmings.



Temporary closure at Perry Barr for total station rebuild

Passengers are being advised to make alternative travel plans when Perry Barr station closes for 12 months for a total rebuild.

The station will close its doors on Monday 10 May 2021 for a full year while a multi-million pound building scheme is completed.

The station, in the north of Birmingham, is expected to reopen in May 2022 in time for the Commonwealth Games.

Passengers are being advised to use nearby Witton station while Perry Barr is closed.

Train tickets will be accepted for travel on local buses between Walsall, Witton, Perry Barr and Birmingham city centre.

Full details: wmr.uk/perrybarr



How the new Perry Barr station will look following the rebuilding work.

Customer satisfaction hailed in major national study

London Northwestern Railway (LNR) and West Midlands Railway (WMR) have ranked highly in a national customer satisfaction study.

The bi-annual UKCSI survey found that LNR was the third most improved organisation for customer satisfaction in the whole country.

Both WMR and LNR scored above average for the transport sector in the report by the Institute of Customer Service.

LNR was the highest-ranked train operating company with a satisfaction rating of 75% with WMR close behind on 73.7%.

To see the report in full, visit

www.instituteofcustomerservice.com



The study was by the Institute of Customer Service.

Performance Update - West Midlands Trains

Railway Period	PPM %	MAA %	Reliability %
11: January 10 - February 6	91.2%	88.5%	96.0%
12: February 7 - March 6	93.7%	89.3%	97.0%
13: March 7 - March 31	93.5%	90.6%	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.

May date confirmed for WMT stakeholder conference

The return of passengers to the railway will be among the topics at the WMT online stakeholder conference on May 19.

Senior WMT directors will discuss the future for London Northwestern Railway and West Midlands Railway timetables.

Fay Easton, head of community and stakeholder for WMR, said: "We look forward to welcoming as many of our stakeholders as possible."

Vicky Cropper-Clarke, head of community and stakeholder for LNR, said: "So much has happened over the past year the challenge will be fitting it all in."

Invitations have been issued to our mailing list, or to request a place simply email corporate.affairs@wmtrains.co.uk



The stakeholder conference will take place on May 19.

Luggage bridge refurbished at Worcester Shrub Hill

An historic luggage bridge which was removed from Worcester Shrub Hill station last year has been replaced with an identical-looking replica built with stronger modern materials.

Network Rail rebuilt the structure after the Grade II-listed station's disused luggage bridge between platform 1 and 2 had fallen into disrepair.

Working closely with conservation experts, an identical-looking bridge was made with modern materials and was lifted back into place in April.

Lawrence James, from Network Rail, said: "It's important to protect and conserve heritage structures like this luggage bridge which give historic stations a unique charm and character."



The revamped bridge and inset, the existing structure.

Have your say on national Penalty Fares consultation

West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway customers are being urged to have their say on the future of the national Penalty Fares system.

The Department for Transport has begun a consultation on whether penalties for non-payment should be increased.

Currently passengers without a valid ticket must pay a Penalty Fare of £20 or twice the full single fare to the next station, whichever is greater.

The Rail Delivery Group estimates around £240million is lost to the railway each year through fare evasion.

To have your say, visit smartsurvey.co.uk/s/D6ROAW



Innovative 'green paving' scheme at Leighton Buzzard

Remarkable new technology which allows passengers to generate energy on their journey has been installed at a London Northwestern Railway station.

Leighton Buzzard, in Bedfordshire, is first railway station in the country to receive the Pavegen system.

Two strips of durable floor tiles have been installed outside the station. They convert the kinetic energy generated by passengers' footsteps to electricity.

The technology is in use now and is powering a nearby display screen as well as USB charging points on nearby benches.

Lawrence Bowman, customer experience director for LNR, said: "Embracing new technologies is a vital part of any industry which is why we are delighted Leighton Buzzard is hosting for this pilot scheme."

The project has been funded by the Department for Transport and Central Bedfordshire Council.



Pavegen boss Laurence Kemball-Cook (above left) with the kit.

Power lines given clean bill of health after LNR testing

Hundreds of miles of power lines were given a clean bill of health after London Northwestern Railway stepped in to support a major Network Rail testing programme.

LNR loaned one of its Class 350 electric trains to test 800 miles of lines across the north-west of England.

The unit had a Pantograph Damage Assessment System (PANDAS) mounted on its roof to check the condition of the wires.

Two days of inspections were carried out in March, with a small number of minor issues identified for repair work.

Alex Crow, from LNR, said: "This work has helped Network Rail prevent infrastructure issues which can impact our passengers."



A London Northwestern Railway Class 350 carried out testing.

Cycle policy change as London Euston trains get busier

Only fold-up bicycles will be permitted on London Northwestern Railway services arriving into London Euston at peak times.

The operator had relaxed its rules during lockdown as lower passenger numbers meant more space for bicycles on board.

However, with passenger numbers beginning to increase as society reopens, LNR will reinstate its previous policy from Monday 26 April.

Lawrence Bowman, customer experience director, said: "With space so important and passenger levels increasing, now is the right time to reinstate our folding bikes-only policy on peak Euston services."



Victorian station clock is ticking again at Great Malvern

A station clock which has been helping passengers in Worcestershire stay on time for more than 160 years is up and running once again.

The Victorian timepiece at Great Malvern ground to a halt three years ago at 2.12pm.

Now, thanks to the hard work of the Friends of Malvern Railway, the clock is keeping time once again after specialists Smiths of Derby installed a new electric mechanism.

The project was completed in March and funded by Network Rail and the Railway Heritage Trust, with support from West Midlands Railway.

Michael Pritchard, from the Friends of Malvern Railway, said: "This work is the first stage of our plan to restore the station and ensure its heritage features are preserved."



The station clock at Great Malvern is keeping time once again.

East West Rail consultation opens on Bletchley changes

Passengers can have their say on the future of Bletchley station as part of a major consultation by East West Rail (EWR).

EWR has been created by the Department for Transport to develop a new railway linking Oxford and Cambridge.

Bletchley, which is operated by London Northwestern Railway, will be an important hub under the plans. Two new platforms (7&8) are proposed under the plans as well as a new station building with a link bridge connecting it to the existing facility.

The new station building and platforms are hoped to be complete next year, with EWR services in operation from 2024.

The consultation is now open and runs until Wednesday 9 June 2021 - to have your say on the proposals, log onto the East West Rail website at www.eastwestrail.co.uk



How the new Bletchley station might look.

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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