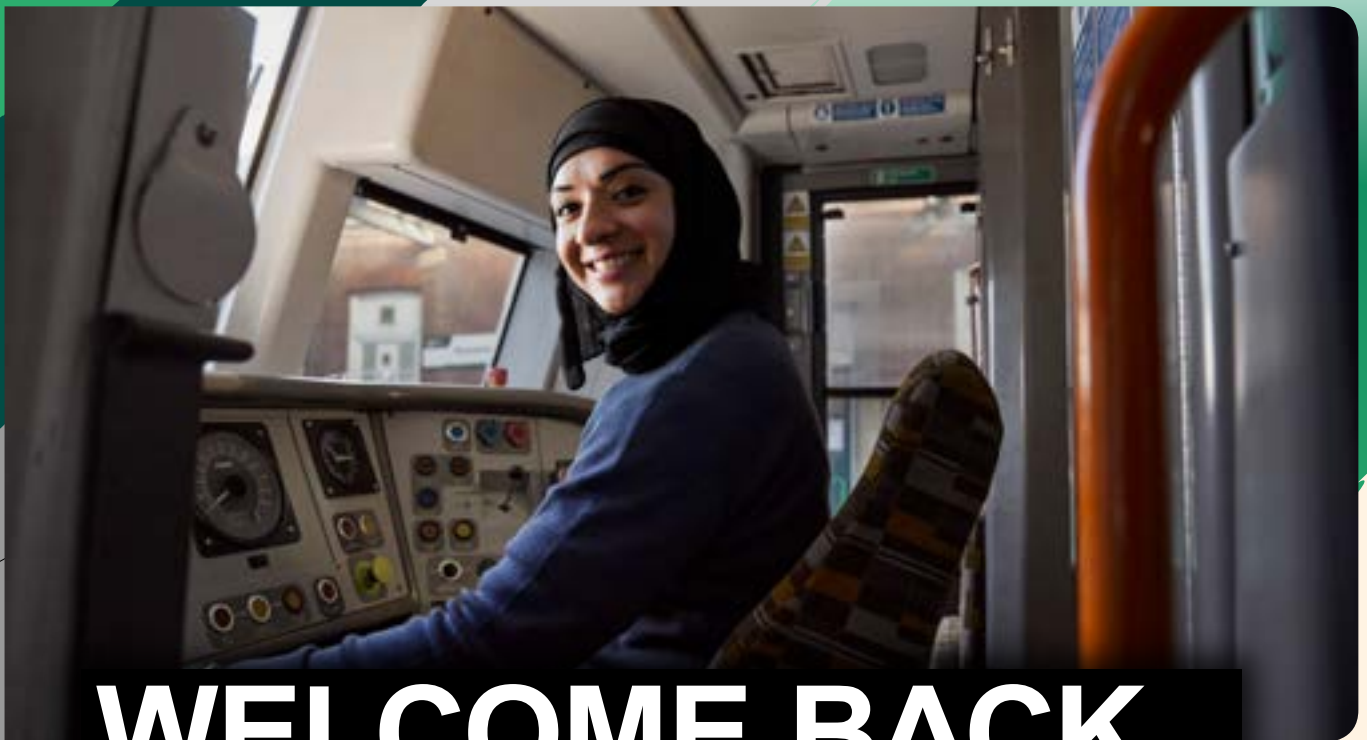


Business Update

September 2021



Operated by West Midlands Trains



WELCOME BACK TO THE RAILWAY

Busier trains as passengers return

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MD: "New contract signing brings welcome certainty"

Signing a new contract to deliver post-pandemic rail services brings certainty for passengers, writes **West Midlands Trains managing director Julian Edwards (right)**.



Ever since the pandemic there has been a certain amount of flux within the industry as Government stepped in when passenger numbers fell.

After working under Emergency Measures arrangements, I am thrilled we have now signed a formal National Rail Contract with the Government.

The contract commences on Sunday 19 September and will run for a minimum of three years, with an option of a further two years.

It is testament to the hard work of everybody at West Midlands Trains that we have been able to overcome so many challenges to make this happen.

It is an exciting time with the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham around the corner, new trains in development and station upgrades on the way.

Of course it has also been exciting to see more and more people returning to the railway. It is still a mixed picture and we are some way off carrying the numbers we were before the pandemic struck.

However, as the months go on, our customers and staff are increasingly reporting busier carriages and bustling platform, particularly at weekends.

After such a long disruption, I am thrilled to see people returning to travel once again, whether for work or leisure.

We know people will return at a different pace - our marketing campaign slogan "Ready When You're Ready" really sums up where we want to be.

As well as signing our National Rail Contract, September is the month we've been able to restore some services to the timetable.

Customers using services between Nuneaton and Leamington Spa will have 40% more trains from September 27 as we continue to tackle our driver training challenge - see **page 4**.

While we have been able to add some extra trains across our network as some demand has started to return, we are still not where we would like to be in terms of our driver resourcing.

Our trainers are doing all they can to make up for the time lost during the pandemic but we know there is still much to do as we continue to drive the railway's post-Covid recovery.



Consultation on timetable changes prepares to launch

Following 18 months of disruption due to the pandemic, West Midlands Trains is working with industry partners to consult stakeholders over the future make-up of the railway timetable.

Consultations relating to changes being made in the December 2022 timetable are in development with the Grand Railway Collaboration, which represents operators in the West Midlands.

The consultations are due to launch later this year and will be publicised to stakeholders via email, social media and online.



Trainee Charlotte hailed for pandemic community work



Charlotte Marsland with her specially-named train after being hailed by the BBC.

A trainee driver with West Midlands Railway has been given a special award for her selfless work in helping others during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Charlotte Marsland, from Worcestershire, was chosen as part of a BBC drive to celebrate people who went the extra mile to support their communities.

Charlotte set up a Facebook group and food bank to help

isolated people in need of support.

To celebrate her achievement, her name was emblazoned on a Great Western Railway train serving Worcestershire routes.

Charlotte, who is continuing to train as a WMR driver, said: "It's a special moment for me.

"I worked in the community not expecting anything like this to come of it. Having something like this happen that also relates to my

job and what I love makes it even more special."

Chris Burns, from BBC England, said: "We have been amazed by the response to our campaign and how people have helped each other out throughout the pandemic.

"It has been humbling to learn about the kind-hearted efforts of so many in our communities and Charlotte is a great example to the rest of us."

Stakeholder survey and briefings open for your views

West Midlands Trains has launched its annual **stakeholder survey** for 2021 to measure how we collaborate and communicate with key user groups.

If you've received your invitation to take part, please do your best to get your response back as soon as possible. We are listening to your views and this research helps shape how we engage with you.

We're also pleased to host two online **virtual briefing sessions** - for London Northwestern Railway on October 6 and for West Midlands Railway on October 12. Both events run from 10.30am-12.30pm.

We hope you can join us for one of these interesting and engaging events, as we travel through the remainder of 2021 and look to the

future in 2022 as we rebuild and restore our railway services for the people we serve.

If you would like to attend and have not received an invite, email corporate.affairs@wmtrains.co.uk

Finally, registration is open for our **Virtual Annual Community Rail Conference** on November 11.

This online event will be broadcast live from Carrs Lane Conference Centre in Birmingham to an audience of rail customers and communities.

The event runs from 10am to 12.30pm and will feature a look back at a year of intense community rail activity and look forward to what 2022 holds.

For more information and to book your place, visit <https://bit.ly/3nxIVkK>

Dedicated platform launched for business rail travellers

West Midlands Trains has launched a new, free online service to help businesses simplify their travel bookings.

With millions of UK workers returning to offices, Just Business is aimed at those who need to travel for work.

It simplifies the booking process while helping customers find the lowest fares for journeys on any train route across the UK.

Businesses which sign up are given a unique login for each member of staff so they can search for, book, and purchase tickets through the platform.

The service allows companies to set rules and preferences to determine which tickets employees have permission to book, along with spending caps.

With employees using the same platform, expenses are all held in one place, helping managers keep track of costs.

Tim Bullock, from West Midlands Trains, said: "From



misplaced receipts and credit cards to scouring the internet for deals, booking workplace train travel can be unnecessarily timely and costly.

"For employees, Just Business instantly shows the cheapest fares across all operators as well as featuring a system which removes the need to process expenses and

spend your own money.

"For businesses, this is free, quick and simple and has a dedicated helpline for additional support.

"It centralises rail expenditure in one place with bespoke travel preferences and policies - ultimately saving valuable time and money."

See wmr.uk/justbusiness

Performance Update - West Midlands Trains

Railway Period	PPM %	MAA %	Reliability %
4: June 27 - July 24	85.6%	91.3%	92.0%
5: July 25 - August 21	88.6%	90.6%	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.

Continuing challenges associated with the impact of Covid-19 have affected PPM scores this summer.

The principal issue has been continuing staff shortages caused by the necessary suspension of driver training programmes during the pandemic.

With around 25,000 driver training days lost but the retiree rate remaining steady, a shortfall has been created leading to some short-notice cancellations.

These shortages have been felt most on routes via

Birmingham Snow Hill, as the depots on this line have the highest vacancy levels.

With Covid-19 restrictions loosening we have been able to step up our training with the result that more qualified drivers are now coming through the pipeline.

Elsewhere, incidents affecting PPM in Periods 5 and 6 included a fatality at Dudley Port, a trackside fire at Ledbury and extreme rainfall on lines towards London Euston.

Community artwork celebrates history at Small Heath



Representatives from the community, council and station with the new artwork at Small Heath.

Passengers using West Midlands Railway services from Small Heath in Birmingham are enjoying a vintage feeling thanks to a community art project.

The art deco style reflects the era in which the station opened - 1908 - and highlights the fast journey time to the city centre. The station, which also serves Sparkbrook, is one of 18 along the Shakespeare Line to be adopted by the local community.

Fay Easton, head of stakeholder and community for West Midlands Railway, said: "It was a privilege to work with the Friends of the Shakespeare Line and councillors on this stunning community art project.

"We are committed to supporting communities in the areas we serve and we will continue to work with local people to celebrate the history and heritage of Small Heath and Sparkbrook."

College students' art goes on display at Northampton

Dozens of pieces of art have gone on display at Northampton station following a link-up between London Northwestern Railway and Northampton College.

The idea came about after the college was unable to hold its annual art display due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

David Flanagan, duty operations manager at the station, said: "Working with the community is so important to us and we love the idea of showcasing the talents of students in the town for the benefit of our customers to enjoy."



Station and college staff with artistic students.

Framework of two new station buildings taking shape



Build project representatives inspect the new station framework at Perry Barr. Inset: University Station.

The steel frameworks of two new stations being build in the West Midlands are already taking shape. Multi-million pound schemes are under way at Perry Barr and University in Birmingham to create stations fit for the 21st Century.

Due to the extensive demolition work required, Perry Barr station is closed to allow the project to be completed but trains continue to serve University.

Both building projects are being led by the West Midlands Combined Authority Speaking on a recent site visit to Perry Barr, West Midlands deputy mayor Cllr Bob Sleight said: "This station will not only be a gateway for visitors to the Alexander Stadium for the 2022 Commonwealth Games but will also provide a welcoming, accessible facility for Perry Barr residents for years to come."

Jive dancers entertain crowds at Abbey Line Fun Day



Jive dancers were the star turn at the Abbey Line Community Rail Fun Day in September. Guests at the event, held near Bricket Wood station, included the Mayor and Mayoress of St Albans (right) and David Williams, deputy lord-lieutenant of Hertfordshire (far left) and CRP chair Sandy Walkington.



Urban fox mural steals the show at Wylde Green station

A foxy art addition to a West Midlands Railway station is turning heads in Birmingham.

The spectacular mural - named 'Urban Fox' - was commissioned by the Friends of Wylde Green Station and completed by Birmingham-based artist Annatomix.

The station is surrounded by urban gardens and two 300m long green corridors which attract many urban foxes who visit the station regularly, making the perfect inspiration for the artwork.

The volunteers have planted 36 lavender bushes as part of their mission to make the station bloom.

Nikki Wright, from the Friends of Wylde Green Station, said: "This stunning artwork has brightened a previously dark corner of Wylde Green station.

"We are thrilled at the visual impact and positivity it has already created within the community."



The fox mural is turning heads at Wylde Green station.

Beautiful train planter brightens up Wolverton station



Wolverton Mayor Adrian Moss with volunteers from Wolverton in Bloom and station staff.

A train-themed planter awaits visitors to Wolverton station in Buckinghamshire thanks to community volunteers and London Northwestern Railway.

Members of Wolverton & Greenleys in Bloom turned their hand to creating a planter which would help welcome passengers back to the railway.

Once complete, Mayor of Wolverton Adrian Moss called in to unveil the planter at a small ceremony with volunteers and station staff.

To find out more about getting involved with your local station, get in touch with Fay Easton or Tim Bellenger using the contact details on the back page.

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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