

# Business Update

September 2020



Operated by West Midlands Trains



## ADAPTING TO A NEW RAILWAY

Timetable Increase

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# What's New

## September timetable change brings additional services

Thousands of extra seats are being introduced on West Midlands Trains services from September as passenger levels on the rail network continue to rise.

The new timetable, running from Sun 6 Sep, adds space in time for the return of schools across the country. It returns the capacity in many places on the WMT network to near pre-Covid levels.

All rail operators significantly reduced services in March in response to the pandemic, with passenger numbers dropping by 95% at the height of lockdown.

Services have been stepped up twice since May and with increased numbers travelling, WMT is once again adding more trains as part of a timetable focused on capacity and reliability. Among the key changes are:

- Frequency on Birmingham's Cross-City Line increases to four trains an hour on the majority of the route with all services the maximum six carriages long
- B'ham-Hereford and B'ham-Shrewsbury lines increase to two trains per hour in the peak
- Introduction of longer trains on many services to



and from London Euston

- Peak-time train services return on the Marston Vale and Abbey branch lines

For details on the timetable changes in your area, visit [wmr.uk/september](http://wmr.uk/september) and [lnr.uk/september](http://lnr.uk/september)

## MD: "How we're meeting the Covid-19 challenge"

As we head into September we are preparing to step up our services once again, writes **West Midlands Trains managing director Julian Edwards**.



Since the start of the pandemic, we have continued to offer a train service to the people of the West Midlands and our London Northwestern routes.

At every stage we have followed the latest government advice and kept our focus on the health and safety of our customers and staff.

We have put in place a broad range of measures to reassure our passengers and increase hygiene on the network. These include:

- Round-the-clock cleaning including overnight deep cleans using specialist microbial cleaners
- Putting social distancing signage in place at our stations and promotion of face covering usage
- The purchase and giveaway of face coverings to our passengers and promotion through the media
- Supporting the British Transport Police to challenge non-compliance on face covering usage among passengers and issue fines where appropriate

On this latter point, I know some of our stakeholders have asked what West Midlands Trains can do to help enforce the new rules.

While levels of compliance with the law appear to be high amongst our passengers, as it stands, our teams do not have the powers required to enforce it.

In line with government guidance, we have stepped up security patrols so our staff can engage,

educate and encourage those who are not following the rules. We also work closely with BTP to spot times and locations where we are seeing recurring problems to help them focus their enforcement activity.

As you can read above, from 6 September we are making timetable improvements and adding thousands more seats for passengers.

We anticipate the resumption of schooling will increase the number of young people travelling on our services and may cause challenges in terms of face covering compliance and social distancing.

We have plans in place to deal with this and we are in touch with schools on our network to find solutions where required.

It is clear to me that ensuring our communities feel that travelling by train is safe is going to be a critical part of our economic recovery.

To help us do this, I encourage you to share positive experiences you have had on our services via social media. Please tag us using @WestMidRailway or @LNRailway on Twitter and Facebook.

By working together with key stakeholders and partners across the network, I know we can play a positive role in ensuring the best possible recovery from this extremely challenging time.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to the three men who sadly died in the recent train derailment at Stonehaven in Scotland on August 12. Their loss has been sorely felt across the railway community and our heartfelt condolences go to everybody affected.

# New Trains Update

## New Class 196 diesel trains enter track testing phase

The first of West Midlands Railway's new fleet of Class 196 diesel trains have begun on-track testing.

A total of 26 new trains have been ordered to run primarily on the routes between Birmingham-Hereford and Birmingham-Shrewsbury.

The new arrivals include 14 four-carriage units and 12 two-carriage units, making 80 carriages in total.

Among the key features are:

- More seats and tables with improved storage
- Increased bike storage areas
- At least one accessible toilet on every train
- Plug and USB sockets at every seat and free WiFi
- Intelligent air-conditioning system

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused some delays in manufacture and testing processes but the first units arrived safely in the West Midlands during lockdown.

Meanwhile, progress is continuing on the Class 730 electric fleet being built by Bombardier in Derby, with one complete unit undergoing testing in Czechia.

West Midlands Trains has ordered 333 carriages which will operate on London Northwestern Railway services on the West Coast Main Line as well as the busy Cross-City Line through Birmingham for WMR.

Our website now has a new section dedicated to the new train projects, so stay tuned for the latest.



A Class 196 on a track test in the West Midlands



The Class 196 pictured at Malvern Link

Image: Rail\_Photography\_HW

To stay up to date on developments with our new diesel and electric train fleets, log on to:

[www.wmr.uk/newtrains](http://www.wmr.uk/newtrains)



Volunteers on the Shakespeare Line in the West Midlands are celebrating after every one of the 17 stations on the route between Stratford and Birmingham have been 'adopted'. Pictured are Fraser Pithie of the Shakespeare Line Promotion Group, Ian Taylor and Fay Easton of WMR and station adopters Howard Hemmings and Sandra Hateley.

## Poem for Captain Tom Moore unveiled at his local station

London Northwestern Railway has unveiled a poetry plaque in honour of Captain Tom Moore at the 100-year-old's local station in Bedfordshire.

The plaque, at Millbrook station on the Marston Vale Line, is a special acknowledgement and recognition of Captain Tom's remarkable efforts in raising more than £32million for NHS charities throughout the coronavirus pandemic crisis.

The wording was crafted by Mick Child, from the Social Prescribing Service at the Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity.

Mick said: "After being approached by London Northwestern Railway it was an honour to put pen to paper and create my own tribute for Captain Tom. Not only is he our local hero but he has won the hearts of the nation. It felt right to deliver a message on behalf of all the people in the local area for his outstanding efforts."

Lawrence Bowman, customer experience director for London Northwestern Railway, said: "During this difficult period Captain Tom has been an inspiration for the whole country and as his local train company we wanted to find a fitting way to honour his work. After reading Mick's poem we knew it was right to give it a presence at Millbrook.

"The tribute is visible for passengers and the local community to read and pause for a moment of reflection and contemplation in honour of for Captain Tom for years to come."

To read Mick's poem in full, visit <https://bit.ly/3gx5mhj>



Vicky Cropper-Clark, from LNR, and poet Mick Child unveil the poem in honour of Captain Tom, left, at Millbrook station in Bedfordshire.

## Stakeholder survey and database preparing to go live

West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway are preparing to launch their annual stakeholder survey for 2020.

The survey is an important measure of how we are communicating with our key user groups - something particularly important during the ongoing health crisis.

The operators are also preparing to launch a new stakeholder database to make sure we can stay in touch about the issues that matter most to you.

As part of this work we may need to contact some stakeholders to ask permission to continue sending emails of interest - keep an eye on your inbox for details.

## Performance Update - West Midland Trains

Railway Period	PPM %	MAA %	Reliability %
1: April 1 - May 2	96.2%	79.0%	99.0%
2: May 3 - May 31	94.9%	79.1%	98.5%
3: June 1 - June 27	94.5%	79.7%	98.1%
4: June 28 - July 25	94.7%	80.5%	98.4%

- 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.

## Zena Dent appointed as WMT engineering director

Experienced rail professional Zena Dent has been named West Midlands Trains' new engineering director.

Zena, who joined WMT as a project manager in 2018, will oversee the implementation of two new train fleets as well as the maintenance of the existing fleet.

She said: "It is a very exciting time to take up this post as we are on the cusp of a significant positive change with our two fantastic new train fleets which will benefit passengers right across our network."

Zena, who took up her post in July, becomes one of only a handful of female engineering directors at Britain's train operating companies and the first woman to hold the position at a West Midlands rail franchise.

WMT managing director Julian Edwards said: "I am delighted to welcome Zena as our new engineering director at an exciting time for the company. Despite the challenges of coronavirus, we know our £1billion investment in new trains, stations, depots and our people will make a huge difference to our customers."



Zena Dent

## New passenger lifts enter service across the WMT network

Thousands of passenger journeys have been made easier thanks to the completion of three schemes to introduce lifts across the WMT rail network.

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris was the guest of honour at a ceremony to mark the opening of lifts at Tring on the London Northwestern Railway network in July.

Similar projects have been completed at **Stechford** on the West Midlands Railway network and **Lichfield Trent Valley**, where Birmingham-bound WMR services are now connected to LNR trains on the West Coast Main Line.

The multi-million pound projects were all part of the Department for Transport's "Access for All" scheme.



Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris, left, with officials at Tring station in Hertfordshire



Lichfield Trent Valley

## Online stakeholder rail conferences prove a big hit

West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway have been turning to new technology to keep in touch with customers during the pandemic.

With social distancing proving a barrier to face-to-face meetings, the operators held their second online stakeholder conferences since the pandemic in March.

The interactive events featured video introductions from WMT managing director Julian Edwards, with business updates and an opportunity ask questions.

Julian said: "As a business we know how important it is to stay in touch with our customers. We have had to find new ways of working on the tracks in order to keep the trains moving and the same applies to our communication. I am delighted the sessions have proved such a big hit - but of course we are looking forward to the time when we can meet people in person once again."

To read slides from the respective events, visit [tiny.cc/WMR](https://tiny.cc/WMR) or [tiny.cc/LNR](https://tiny.cc/LNR)



Julian Edwards, Managing Director, WMT

The events featured video introductions from WMT's managing director

## Hidden disability sunflower is recognised across rail industry

A popular scheme which helps passengers with hidden disabilities travel with confidence on the railway is now being recognised by every train operating country in the country.

West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway were among the early operators to join the sunflower lanyard scheme, which is also recognised at airports and in some shops.

Now, with shielding requirements among some vulnerable groups lifted, increased numbers of people with disabilities are considering using train services across the country.

Displaying the sunflower symbol is a simple way in which passengers with non-visible disabilities can discreetly let others know they may need extra time or assistance on their journey.

WMT and LNR customers can pick up their free sunflower lanyard from participating staffed ticket offices.

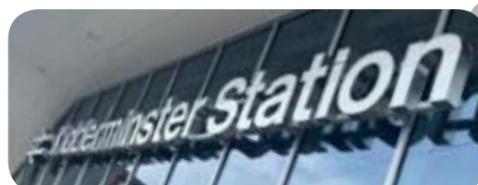
Rebecca Preece, transport and accessibility manager for West Midlands Trains, said: "Making sure the railway is accessible for all is crucial and this scheme is a great way of giving passengers extra confidence and reassurance should they need it."



A rail user displaying the sunflower lanyard



The new-look Kidderminster Station has now opened after a council-led scheme to double the size of the station building, adding an attractive frontage and improved roadway.



## Station groups honoured as volunteers return to work

Volunteers who give up their time to keep their local West Midlands Trains station looking their finest have been honoured with nominations at the national Community Rail Awards.

With 'station adopter' activity now permitted once again, volunteers on both the West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway networks have been keen to catch the end of the summer to keep platforms looking their best with spectacular floral arrangements.

Among those nominated for their efforts were **Friends of Berkhamsted**, **Fenny Stratford Station Adoption Group** and volunteers from **Woburn Sands**.

The **Abbey Line Community Rail Partnership** has been nominated in two categories - for its tourism campaign in St Albans and in the photographic category for a picture of a Halloween special on the route taken last year.

Winners of the Community Rail Awards will be announced in December 2020.

If you are interested in station adoption or getting involved with Community Rail, visit [www.wmr.uk/adopt-station](http://www.wmr.uk/adopt-station) or [www.lnr.uk/adopt-station](http://www.lnr.uk/adopt-station)



Flowers on show at Hall Green in Birmingham



Artwork at Bricket Wood in Herts



Fenny Stratford in Buckinghamshire



A project to enhance the forecourt at the entrance to Watford Junction station is under way. The scheme, being run by Watford Borough Council, will include the installation of large, freestanding letters spelling 'Watford' - inset. The scheme will also include open space, seating and a heritage trail. Pictured at the launch of the scheme is LNR head of stations Sarah Higgins (far right) with officials from the council and developers.

# 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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