

West Midlands Trains

Business Update

February 2020



**PUTTING
THINGS
RIGHT.**

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West
Midlands
Railway



London
Northwestern
Railway

Operated by West Midlands Trains

New fleet of diesel trains begins on-track testing ahead of introduction this year

Passengers in the West Midlands have been offered a glimpse of the new, state-of-the-art trains which arrive in the region this year after on-track testing began.

West Midlands Railway has ordered 26 of the diesel trains - Class 196s - as part of its £800m investment in the region's railway network.

The trains - which are being built in two-car and four-car formations - will be used to increase capacity on the busy line between Hereford and Birmingham.

Among the benefits to passengers using the trains will be power points, WiFi and under-floor heating.

A total of 80 carriages will be constructed under the project with the first batch now under construction in Europe by manufacturer CAF.

They are due to arrive in the UK in the spring, with the remaining trains being manufactured at a purpose-built factory in south Wales.

To watch a video, visit <https://youtu.be/IIISzYfjzaM>



A Class 196 diesel train on testing in eastern Europe.

Victorian railway tunnel receives major upgrade



Engineers working at the Rowley Regis tunnel.

A railway tunnel which has allowed passengers to travel swiftly through Rowley Regis for more than 150 years is undergoing important engineering works.

Network Rail has invested £2million in the project at the Old Hill tunnel as part of its multi-billion-pound Railway Upgrade Plan.

Engineers began strengthening the tunnel in January to ensure it remains safe and reliable for years to come. The work required closure of the line on six consecutive Sundays and is expected to finish in February.

The tunnel was built in 1867 and takes 819 metres of the Stourbridge to Snow Hill line underneath Rowley Regis.

Kathryn Berry, scheme project manager at Network Rail, said: "This important work will mean fewer train delays on the Birmingham - Stourbridge line and make this Victorian-built structure fit for the 21st Century."

For the latest information on future engineering works which may disrupt journeys, passengers can find full details on wmr.uk or lnr.uk

Good progress on new building at Kidderminster

This image shows how good progress is being made on the redevelopment of Kidderminster station in Worcestershire.

The previous station building was built in the 1960s and was torn down in the summer ahead of improvement works.

Originally opened in 1852, the station is the second-busiest in the county and handles almost two million passenger journeys every year.

When complete, the new glass-fronted facility will be twice the size of the previous incarnation.

Jonny Wiseman, customer experience director for West Midlands Railway, said: "This project will improve the travelling experience for passengers, create a more welcoming gateway to the Severn Valley Railway and boost the local economy."



Services continue to run through Kidderminster while the new building takes shape.

New WMT managing director unveils improvement plan after difficult 2019



New managing director Julian Edwards.



The new managing director of West Midlands Trains has unveiled his plan to improve train performance following a difficult second half of 2019.

Julian Edwards was appointed to the top job at the company in January and quickly unveiled a five-point improvement plan to get the service back on track.

Writing for *Business Update*, Mr Edwards said: "Our train performance across the entire WMT network over the last six months of 2019 was simply unacceptable.

"The disruption last year was down to a variety of factors, but the result was the same – people not being able to get to work or school and personal appointments being missed. The human cost has been unacceptable and cannot happen again.

"It has been a difficult time for everyone who depends on our railway and we're more disappointed than anyone that we've not yet been able to deliver the vision we outlined at the start of the franchise.

"Despite these circumstances, it was an honour to be appointed as the new managing director for WMT in January. Although still only a few weeks in, it's clear there is a wealth of experience in the business at all levels and it's a privilege to lead such a committed group of people.

"Having been deeply involved in WMT

when it began in 2017 and an executive director for its predecessor, London Midland, I'm confident the best possible team is now in place to get services back to where everyone wants them.

"As a way of saying sorry we have announced a series of discounts on season

"Our performance in the second half of 2019 was simply unacceptable."

- Julian Edwards

tickets and leisure travel - the details are below this article.

"Just as importantly, we've committed to immediate service improvements alongside this compensation.

"And we've broken through established industry timelines to make this happen, bringing forward a number of important planned changes from May to March – two months early.

"Our customers have seen some

improvements already. Since December we have seen a significant rise in the proportion of trains arriving 'on time', as defined by the Public Performance Measure. (See Page 8)

"We appreciate there is more to do. The improvement plan we have devised sets out our promises to our customers to make this happen.

"We are in the process of delivering five big commitments as part of this:

- Making the timetable simpler
- Improving how we respond to delays
- Hiring more traincrew and improving their availability
- Improving how we maintain trains to keep more carriages on the network
- Improving performance at Euston and New Street with the help of Network Rail

"The plan also sets out the huge benefits still to come from our £1bn investment in the network, including £700m in the new and refurbished trains we will start to see some of our new trains enter service later this year.

"I have heard loud and clear your frustrations. We understand what you expect and, rest assured, the whole team is committed to giving you back the reliable services you deserve, as quickly as possible."

Follow progress at wmr.uk/puttingthingsright and lnr.uk/puttingthingsright

Customer discounts unveiled as company says sorry

Season ticket holders on West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway have been given a 3% discount on the cost of their season ticket following poor performance in 2019.

The discount was announced at the start of the year and applies to weekly, monthly and annual season passes bought throughout 2020. It more than offsets the average 2.8% national price increase which came into effect in January.

Elsewhere, the operators have also announced that off-peak journeys in July and August 2020 will be discounted by 10%, meaning non-season ticket holders will also be able to benefit financially from the compensation package.

A sales promotion in February 2020 offered customers the chance to buy discounted fares to London and Birmingham.

Julian Edwards, managing director, said: "Our performance in the second half of 2019 was unacceptable. The compensation measures we have announced are one of the ways we are saying sorry to our customers.

"Ultimately the best way we can say sorry is to put all our efforts into restoring the reliable railway our customers deserve and that is what our sole focus is on."

For details of the compensation measures, visit our websites at www.wmr.uk and www.lnr.uk



Company backs 'Brew Monday' campaign to improve mental health on the railway

From the station platform to company headquarters, staff from across the West Midlands Trains family took time out to support the 'Brew Monday' mental health campaign run by Samaritans.

Timed for Monday 20 January - claimed to be the 'most depressing' day of the year - staff members reached for the kettle to brew up a storm and look out for their colleagues' well-being.

Newly-appointed managing director Julian Edwards (above, second from right), was among those taking part in the campaign.

He said: "Working on the railway is always busy and it is so important that we all remember to look out for each other.

"Brew Monday is a fantastic campaign to raise vital funds for the Samaritans, whose work is highly valued across our industry."



'Stations as Places' community programme begins

A programme of study looking at how stations across the WMR and LNR network integrate within their community is under way.

A series of workshops under the 'Stations as Places' are being held, with one of the first - at Stourbridge - already complete.

Members of the West Midlands Station Alliance visited the busy West Midlands town to discuss Stourbridge Junction, Stourbridge Town and Hagley stations with stakeholder groups.

The stations are used by a combined two million passengers

each year and among the topics covered were ideas to improve accessibility, the wider station environment and methods of promoting sustainable rail travel.

Following completion of the stakeholder workshops, a prospectus will be produced for every station in the 'Stations as Places' programme, covering all the key facts, issues and opportunities for development at the site.

For more information email accessibility@wmtrains.co.uk

Proposed electric train depot is set to bring 100 jobs to the West Midlands

Plans for a new state-of-the-art depot to house future generations of passenger trains have been unveiled by West Midlands Trains.

The proposed development is an essential part of the company's £1 billion investment programme and will provide more trains for passengers in the West Midlands and across the network.

The depot, which is proposed to be built on an existing freight yard in Wednesbury, will also create more than 100 brand new jobs in the Sandwell area.

When it has been constructed the depot will house a new fleet of electric trains which are now being built in Derby.

The investment will enable WMT to deliver a 25% increase in train capacity by 2021, with longer carriages and improved facilities.

This will help make rail travel easier and better across the West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway regions.

West Midlands Trains projects director Jane Fisher said: "These new trains represent a step change in local rail services.

"This development is a state-of-the-art depot which will bring



An artist's impression of how the new depot may look.

over 100 new jobs to the area.

"We have met with members of the local community and we are fully committed to working with people in Wednesbury to address any concerns they have as we develop our plans.

"We want the community to have them as part of shaping the future of our local transport services."

The plans are unconnected with a previous Network Rail sleeper facility proposal at the same site.

West Midlands Trains has pledged to a full programme of public engagement and held a public meeting at nearby Walsall Football Club on February 5.

Further events will be announced in due course. No decisions have been made, and WMT is in the very early stages of preparing a formal planning application

All planning is subject to approval from Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council.

To keep up to date with the project, visit www.wmr.uk/newtraindepot or see www.lnr.uk/newtraindepot



An example of the trains which will be housed at the new maintenance depot (LNR).



An example of the trains which will be housed at the new maintenance depot (WMT).



The site of the proposed new electric train depot at Wednesbury in the West Midlands.

Big turnout for stakeholder events

The improvement plan to increase the reliability of West Midlands Trains was the hot topic at two annual stakeholder conferences at the start of 2020.

Across the two events - one for West Midlands Railway and one for London Northwestern Railway - more than 100 people turned out to hear



West Midlands Trains managing director Julian Edwards.

from new managing director Julian Edwards.

Organisations represented included Rail User Groups, local authorities and Community Rail Partnerships.

Other topics up for discussion among guests included revenue protection; new trains; bringing station buildings back into use; smart ticketing; train reliability and availability of train crew.

Fay Easton, head of community and stakeholder for WMR, said: "It was a pleasure to welcome so many interested stakeholders and hear their views.

"The opinions of our customers are incredibly important to us, which is why events like these are so important."

Vicky Cropper, head of community and stakeholder for LNR, said: "We know that our performance in the second half

of last year was not good enough, which made this event even more important.

"Our message is loud and clear - we are sorry and we have a detailed plan in place to improve our performance."

To see the slides from the events, visit <http://news.wmtrains.co.uk/documents>



Guests ask questions at the West Midlands Railway event.

Cycling scheme at Dudley Port picks up top award



Ben Whitehouse, Rob Goode and Michael Byrne from West Midlands Railway.

A major scheme to install dozens of safe cycling spaces at Dudley Port station in the West Midlands has picked up a top prize at the national Cycle Rail Awards.

The initiative, which brought in 66 spaces at the site, below, was named 'Best Small Project', with awards handed out by rail minister Chris Heaton-Harris MP.

Mr Heaton-Harris said: "Making it easier to travel to and from railway stations by bike will get more people cycling, and help clean up the quality of our air."



Smethwick lifts revamp

A major refurbishment programme of passenger lifts at Smethwick Galton Bridge station has begun.

Network Rail engineers will complete the work in two phases at the multi-level station in the heart of the West Midlands.

The works mean lifts at the station will be out of action until July 2020.

Passengers are advised to replan their journeys and instead change at Birmingham Moor Street or New Street stations.

- Work to install brand new lifts at Lichfield Trent Valley station is nearing completion with a date for entry in service expected in the coming weeks.

Station planned at Aldridge

A new railway station could be opened at Aldridge after a study backed the project.

Bosses at Transport for West Midlands are keen to add the station to the line serving Wolverhampton and Walsall.

New stations are planned at Dalaston and Willenhall and Mayor Andy Street has now ordered a business case to be prepared for Aldridge.

Mr Street said: "I am delighted the feasibility study has come back positive and we can press ahead with getting it built and open as soon as possible.

"Aldridge station is one of a number closed in the Beeching cuts which I want to reopen.

"New and reopened stations provide better transport links and also help to drive significant economic growth."

Station award for Acton Bridge in Cheshire



Pictured, from left, are: Vicky Cropper of LNR; Gordon Bayley and Hazel Bayley of the Friends of Acton Bridge; Kulvinder Bassi from the Department for Transport; and Mark Barker from Cheshire Best Kept Stations.

Dedicated volunteers who dedicate their time to keeping a community station in top shape were honoured with an award.

The Friends of Acton Bridge group received the Art Project Award from the Cheshire Best Kept Stations organisation.

The award recognised the group's efforts in arranging for pupils from nearby Crowton Primary School to decorate the

walls of the booking office at the much-loved station.

Vicky Cropper, head of stakeholder and community for London Northwestern Railway, said: "Our station groups are remarkable people who give up their time to help make the railway a welcoming and attractive place. It is always very pleasing for them to receive deserved recognition like this."

Abbey Line community group hailed



Members of the Abbey Line Community Rail Partnership completing an art project.

Members of the Abbey Line Community Rail Partnership are celebrating after being awarded accredited status by the Department for Transport.

The status acts as recognition that the group is operating to a high standard with the full support of the Government.

Vicky Cropper, head of stakeholder and community for London Northwestern Railway, said: "Accreditation provides assurance to others, including potential funders and partners, that the CRP operates to high standards of governance and financial propriety.

"It also recognises that its members adopt a collaborative approach, are worthy of trust by others and are a suitable entity for receiving public funds.

"It is a tremendous achievement and recognises the hundreds of hours of time that members have invested into the line."

Safety session for beavers at Milton Keynes

Station staff at Milton Keynes welcomed dozens of young beaver scouts for a session promoting the safe use of the railway.

The youngsters travelled from Milton Keynes to Bletchley and back on the day of the visit.

Sarah Higgins, head of stations for LNR, said: "Promoting safe use of the railway at all times is crucial and there is no better place to start than with the next generation of our passengers."



Beaver scouts visiting Milton Keynes.

Performance update

Period 9 - 10 Nov - 7 Dec

PPM
68.1%

MAA
82.2%

Reliability - 90.6%

Period 10 - 8 Dec - 4 Jan

PPM
74.7%

MAA
81.3%

Reliability - 90.0%

Period 11 - 5 Jan - 1 Feb

PPM
83.1%

MAA
80.8%

Reliability - 96.6%

- 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.

Performance in the first reporting period of 2020 saw a significant uplift following a very difficult few months in the lead up to Christmas 2019.

Several operational incidents allied with train crew shortages resulted in a significant number of cancellations in November and December, affecting overall service performance.

Particular operational incidents affecting PPM included points failures, signalling issues and fatalities.

January saw a much-improved picture on the network, with the number of train cancellations down dramatically.

Storm Ciara and Storm Dennis are expected to hit Period 12 performance.



Engineering work planned

Mon 24 Feb - Thu 27 Feb 2020
Northampton

Overnight engineering work is taking place all week, so services will not call at the station after 10pm. Some other minor timetable alterations will apply.

Sun 22 March 2020
Birmingham Snow Hill to Stratford
Engineering work is taking place between the stations, meaning rail replacement buses will be in operation.

Easter Weekend
Sat 11 April - Mon 13 April 2020
Wolverhampton
No trains will call at Wolverhampton over the Easter weekend due to major engineering works. Rail replacement buses will be in operation.

For the latest information check
nationalrail.co.uk

Timetable changes in March

A number of timetable changes will come into effect in March in order to help improve train performance.

From Monday 2 March there will be a reduced number of services calling at some stations. Changes include:

- Five fewer off-peak Liverpool-bound services will call at Coseley on weekdays;
- Six fewer off-peak trains heading to Crewe or Wolverhampton will call at Smethwick Galton Bridge on weekdays;

- The 0710 from Stourbridge Junction to Whitlocks End will no longer call at Jewellery Quarter (previously 0737).

From Monday 16 March, fewer direct trains will run from Rugeley Trent Valley to London via the Chase Line to address a drop in performance on this route.

The frequency of trains will not change but one train per hour will now terminate at Birmingham International or Coventry instead of continuing to London.

About us - West Midlands Trains

We operate over 1,300 train services a day over our West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway networks, manage 149 stations and provide over 80 million passenger journeys each year. We are investing £1 billion into our rail network to deliver new trains, improved routes and station upgrades. This will include 413 new train carriages across the network and space for an extra 85,000 passengers into Birmingham and London at peak times.

Central to our delivery of rail services are the communities we serve. We are looking to improve integration, sustainable travel and developer engagement as well as expanding our community rail partnerships. We also hope to increase the number of adopted stations and regenerate station environments while making the railway accessible for everyone.

If you ever have any questions or feedback on what we're doing in your area, please contact:



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