



West Midlands Branch eNews

Issue 7 - January 2015

Readers who received eNews by e-mail also received the following attachments

- Rail User Express, Dec 2014
- Rail User Express, Jan 2015
- SLUG Newsletter, Winter 2014-15 and Supplement

We welcome contributions from branch members, other Railfuture members, or the public, with any interesting news or pictures. So if you've learnt about something the West Midlands rail scene, or if you've been on an interesting/unusual journey, let us know and we'll include whatever we can.

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Railfuture West Midlands branch Annual General Meeting

- Advance Notice - 18th April 2015, 1030 am - 1pm, Carrs Lane Centre, Birmingham

We will be holding our annual members meeting on April 18th in the Margaret Rowland Room at Carrs Lane Centre, Birmingham (opposite Moor Street Station). There we'll be telling you more of what we've been doing since last time and you can have your say on this and any other pressing topics. You will also be able to elect your branch committee for the coming 12 months. Not only that but we are planning a special guest to speak to us about some major railway topic. This is still being organised so more details will appear shortly.

Other Local News

Dudley Light Rail

You may have read elsewhere that Dudley Council are interested in an ultra-light rail scheme to Dudley Port. Little detail is known as yet and your chairman is seeking a meeting with Dudley Council for clarification. Although we welcome all rail based developments in the West Midlands we don't want this to jeopardise future heavy rail use of this line.

See <http://www.expressandstar.com/news/2014/12/01/new-20m-rail-link-between-sandwell-and-dudley/>

Western Route Study

This is a private project (i.e. not Network rail) and involves re-opening the Stratford to Honeybourne with chords to the Cotswold Line in both directions to enable trains to operate to/from Stratford from Worcester and Oxford. Some interesting ideas but it seems the main plan is for tourist traffic from London. We think local travel (work and leisure) offers a much greater potential market and we will be raising our concerns with the relevant bodies.

London Midland Trains Franchise Extension (by Direct Award)

This extension will run from April 2016 to June 2017, when a new franchise will take over (hopefully West Midlands Rail). For the extension we would like to see improved are:-

- more and longer trains on Sundays
- trains on Boxing Day
- longer opening hours for booking offices
- larger stations to be staffed whenever trains run
- ticket machines to sell all types of tickets at all times of day
- where two or more TOCs operate on the same route, clock face timetables be altered to remove irregular differentials.

What we have already seen and wish to have continued are:-

- good stakeholder relationships (such as last year's conference)
- improvements made to semi-fast trains on the WCML.

We formulated a response which was approved by the Railfuture Board and then forwarded to the Department for Transport.

Cross Country Trains Franchise Extension (by Direct Award)

The present franchise expires October 2016 and the extension will run until October 2019. We are at the start of the direct award process and, in conjunction with Railfuture's TOC Liaison Officer, are in the process of formulating proposals to put to Cross country Trains for their forthcoming negotiations for the franchise extension.

Currently our main issues are overcrowding, 'on the day' seat reservations, gross inadequacy of their current rolling stock.

Freight

A planning application for rail access has been made for the Pentalva site near Cannock. This will require clearance for largest containers to access from the south (Ryecroft Junc.).

Infrastructure

- DDA access is planned for Stechford
- The opening of the DDA-compliant footbridge at Shirley has been delayed by legal issues.

Light Rail and Guided Bus

- Sprint buses to be introduced in 2016
- Work continues in Wolverhampton to deal with the mine-shaft subsidence at The Royal.

Local Campaigns

As part of our Railfuture Awayday commitments from we are putting together ideas for local campaigns to pursue actively over the next months. We'd very much welcome your views as to what we should be campaigning for.

Meeting with Virgin Trains (Chris Hagyard, Franchise Manager) - 20th January 2015

Ticket Checks and Revenue Protection

We are all concerned about this, notably for shorter journeys within the West Midlands, such as Coventry to International. Personal experience suggests that checks are very rarely made on down

trains once they have entered the conurbation or on up trains until they have left Coventry. It seems to be a bigger problem in the evenings. Virgin made a franchise commitment within their correct direct award to install gate lines at Rugby and International. Also at Birmingham New Street once phase II of the reconstruction is complete later this year. The meeting felt that a strong presence at New Street is key to dealing with most instances of ticket less travel. Apparently Virgin do undertake random ticket checks on trains to cover this issue. The manual inspection of tickets at Euston was welcomed but it was felt that more notices were needed at Euston to prepare passengers for the checks at the foot of the platform access slopes.

London - Shrewsbury Services

We welcomed the start of these services. However it was felt that more traffic could be tapped if a different operating pattern was adopted. This would be to start a double 221 Super Voyager set from Euston and run fast to Stafford. There to divide, with one unit calling at Crewe, Chester, Wrexham (G), (Gobowen?), Shrewsbury, (Wellington?), Telford (C), then via the Oxley chord back to Stafford. There it would re-join the other unit which has gone the other way round the loop. This service to be seen as a bolt on to the London - Chester rather than to the London - West Midlands service. Gains could include

- a removal of the slow travel time from Wolverhampton to Coventry
- better connections at Shrewsbury from the Cambrian, Marches and Heart of Wales lines
- as this service would serve Wrexham (4th largest town in Wales), some Welsh Government help might be forthcoming.

Perturbation Consequences on London / West Midlands / Scotland Services

The joining of London / Wolverhampton and West Midlands / Scotland services was welcomed as it provides extra through journey possibilities, notably from Coventry and International. However when up trains are delayed, this can interfere with the clock face departures from New Street to Euston. This is currently xx10 (from Scotland), then xx30 and xx50 (New St starters). There have been reports of significant overcrowding on the xx30 as a consequence. Apparently VT can move up the xx30 to run at xx10, leaving the late running Scotch train to take xx30's original path. However, Chris Hagyard advised us that these trains did not have a worse performance despite their routing via the West Midlands

We also requested that thought be given to earlier trains on Sunday mornings. All involved felt that this first meeting was useful and we should meet again at quarterly intervals.

Peter Rowland, January 2015

Meeting with CENTRO - 20th January

Attendees at Railfuture's meeting included Cllr. Roger Horton from the CENTRO Committee, senior officials from CENTRO, and Toby Rackliff, West Midlands ITA.

Rail Devolution Update

The proposal concerning the future shape of the existing London Midland franchise went to the DfTp last October from CENTRO on behalf of the core area of the region, plus the surrounding shire counties. The general plan proposed is well known. It is expected that investigatory meetings will be held with the DfTp in February, leading to a formal response from the Secretary of State,

probably in March. The current LM franchise expires in April 2016. It is anticipated that a 'direct award' will be negotiated with LM for the period from then until June 2017. CENTRO is currently considering what improvements could be built in to this 15 month interim period. These will include the opening of new stations in Bromsgrove and Kenilworth, as well as improvements to the Coventry - Nuneaton service. Planning and development work will continue for the Chase line electrification.

Midlands Connect

Little to report on this to date. The autumn 2014 report identified connectivity gaps between major locations and the economic benefits that should arise once these are dealt with.

Snow Hill Improvements

Birmingham city council has put forward plans to improve Birmingham Snow Hill station. These will include the removal of the multi-storey car park and the creation of more office space. CENTRO supports the reinstatement of platform 4 once the Metro is diverted. This to be a doubled ended loop, signalled, as are the other lines for bi-directional running. Provision of this extra platform would allow the termination of more Chiltern trains and also allow capacity for extra services to the reinstated up side bay platform at Rowley Regis.

Ultra-Light Rail Project, Dudley Port to Dudley (old station site).

This is project for the installation and testing of an ultra-light weight rapid transit system using part of the track-bed and partly sponsored by Warwick University. If developed, it is anticipated that it will not interfere with any Metro or heavy rail project.

CENTRO Projects

- Acocks Green - Access for all project now complete.
- Extra park-and-ride spaces (a) 360 at Rowley Regis (b) 213 at Stourbridge Junction, (c) 96 at Kings Norton, (d) 50 at Four Oaks [a decking scheme]. There will also be more at Longbridge.
- Cradley Heath interchange. To be completed by March 2015.
- There is the possibility of increasing facilities at University.

Peter Rowland, January 2015

Our next meeting with CENTRO will be on 23rd March 2015 and with Virgin in April 2015. Let us know in good time if there are any topics you would like us to raise.

London Midland Stakeholder Conference

- There was a lot of focus on the London/ Liverpool route enhancements especially Watford Junction station and the revised track layout plus the additional rolling stock etc. But little re Centro region other than the track dualling Redditch enhancements.
- The Revenue protection presentation was good but with only six in the new team it seemed inadequate for the franchise.
- Dwell times at stations was raised, especially slowness in door opening compared to other TOCs but as usual they seemed reluctant to change protocols.
- Individual contact was made with Brenda Lawrence, Head of Snow Hill Service Route- Birmingham to Worcester, Leamington Spa and Stratford upon Avon but this doesn't include their so called Cross City Service - Birmingham to Redditch, Lichfield and Rugeley . I raised with her the benefits to passengers of the Worcester Foregate Travel Centre especially for journeys other than to Birmingham however

unfortunately the Centre has been closed due to lack of staff. She replied London Midland were recruiting but so far the Centre is still more often closed than open.

Cross Country Trains News

Saturday/Sunday Diversions 16/02/2015 – 22/03/2015

- Engineering work will be taking place between Tamworth and Derby. Voyager services between Birmingham and the north-east will be diverted via Leicester and journey times extended by 1 hour. Service frequency will also be reduced to hourly between Birmingham and Newcastle, with only a limited XC service at Doncaster.
- Cardiff – Nottingham services will only operate between Cardiff and Tamworth, with a rail replacement bus service operating between Tamworth, Burton and Derby. A hourly shuttle train service will then operate between Derby and Nottingham, which will connect into the Voyager services at Derby where feasible.

On Monday 6th April the revised layout at Reading should be commissioned and Cross Country trains will be subject to some retiming and re-platforming after this date.

Sunday Train Service boost for Worcester and the Malverns

Sunday rail services between Worcester's city centre station of Foregate Street and Birmingham/Malvern will see further improvements from the new London Midland December timetable with the addition of four extra/extended trains.

Building on the success of the two hourly Sunday morning service from Hereford to Worcester and Birmingham New Street via Bromsgrove which was first introduced by London Midland (LM) in December 2012. The latest welcome changes follow on-going discussions between LM timetable planners and the Cotswold Line Promotion Group over improvements to weekend services.

The new/improved services introduced from Sunday 14th December are:-

- Worcester Foregate Street to Birmingham New Street. The current 09.02 Worcester Shrub Hill to Birmingham New Street is extended to start back at Worcester Foregate Street to cater better for earlier day return and longer distance journeys for Worcester city centre customers travelling to Birmingham and the North.
- 09.42 Worcester Shrub Hill to Great Malvern. An additional passenger train calling at Worcester Foregate Street and Malvern Link using an existing empty stock working. This helps plug a 90 minute gap in the Worcester –Malvern timetable.
- 14.31 Worcester Shrub Hill to Great Malvern. A new service calling at Worcester Foregate Street and Malvern Link which plugs another 90 minute gap in the Worcester and the Malverns and offers new connections at Shrub Hill with the First Great Western service to Bristol and the LM service from Stratford, Birmingham Moor Street and Snow Hill via Kidderminster.
- 15.32 Great Malvern to Birmingham Snow Hill/ Moor Street. Existing 15.46 from Worcester Shrub Hill to Birmingham via Kidderminster extended to start back from Great Malvern serving Malvern Link and Worcester Foregate Street but omitting Worcester Shrub Hill. This fills a long break in the service from Malvern and offers customers at Worcester Foregate Street a half hourly service to Birmingham Stations between 14.00 and 17.30

Cotswold Line

Re-doubling

NETWORK Rail is preparing a detailed business plan to complete the long-awaited dualling of the Cotswold Line, it has emerged.

The Government has confirmed that the rail company will carry out the work sometime between 2019 and 2024 between Oxford and Worcester.

The move follows intense lobbying between West Worcestershire MP Harriett Baldwin and the Department for Transport. The transport minister, Baroness Kramer, has written to Mrs Baldwin confirming that the Government is formally looking at how to fund the project from 2019 onwards.

Mrs Baldwin said: "Earlier in the year I took Baroness Kramer on a tour of the county to see some of the infrastructure challenges that commuters face on a daily basis and she travelled to and from London along the very slow Cotswold Line. I wrote to the Department asking for some indication of whether we may see progress on the dualling of the Cotswold Line and I am delighted that civil servants are already working on a business case."

She added: "This dualling will allow Network Rail to add extra, new, services to the line without having to make artificial tweaks to the timetable to deliver quicker services to London. I am pleased that the Government is looking to develop critical projects such as this and it is crucial that we develop a long-term economic plan which will help to fund these major infrastructure plans.

May 2015 Timetable Plans

In spring 2014 First Great Western produced a weekly timetable for consultation for its services between London and Hereford via the Cotswold Line. This timetable has now received approval from the Dept. for Transport and merely requires verification by Network Rail before it is introduced in May 2015.

Most of the trains on the line remain unchanged. However the opportunity has been taken to make better use of rolling stock by making considerable changes to some services.

These include:-

- By omitting the current 15 minute wait in Worcester and a stop at Kingham the present 05.28 Hereford departure can get to Charlbury to form the 0712 departure (replacing the existing 0712 starting from Charlbury) providing long distance passengers (from Hereford and Worcester) with a 21 minute earlier arrival in London at 0830.
- There will be a new train from Moreton-in-Marsh to London at 0711, which will pick up the path currently used by the 0528 ex Hereford. This will include the Kingham stop.
- Of the Moreton-in-Marsh starters/terminators only the 0953 to Paddington will remain. The others will be involved in extended journeys to Worcester and some will be retimed or withdrawn.
- The 0822 from Paddington to Hereford will no longer be a HST. Instead it will be formed by a 6 coach Turbo. On arrival at Worcester Shrub Hill the train will divide with the front three coaches going onto Hereford. The rear three coaches will form the 1123 departure for Paddington taking over from the present 1153 at Moreton-in- Marsh. This train will not call at Pershore or Honeybourne.
- The three car Turbo will return from Hereford at 1211 instead of the present HST departure at 1314.
- The current 0950 from Paddington to Moreton-in- Marsh will no longer run beyond Oxford.
- The 1221 Class 180 from Paddington to great Malvern will become an HST departing at 1222. This train will terminate at Worcester Shrub Hill at 1445 and return to London at 15.20 replacing the present 1553 Moreton-in- Marsh departure.
- The 1332 Paddington to Moreton-in- Marsh will be extended to Worcester Foregate Street.
- The current 1532 from Great Malvern to Didcot Parkway will start at Worcester Foregate Street at 1547 (three minutes later than currently) and will no longer call at Pershore and Kingham.

Comment from a Railfuture West Midlands branch committee on these changes:-
"Whilst this utilises some of the Cotswold Line Promotion Group's knowledge of current rolling stock and paths it still doesn't make use of the opportunities brought about by the redoubling three years ago of the line between Evesham and Charlbury to enhance all services to and from Paddington. Other Paddington/Worcester services are still based on the pre-doubling timetable with dwells of up to 13 minutes at both Evesham and Worcester Shrub Hill and the new proposed 0528 from Hereford shows what could be done if FGW worked harder. Unfortunately it looks as if only minor tweaks will happen until 2017/2018 when the advent of IEP trains might lead to a total FGW recast of the timetables. So Cotswold Line passengers will have waited some six years from redoubling to gain a fast service of two hours to and from Paddington to Worcester (giving an average speed of only 54 mph). Progress seems too low!!"

Ticket Validity if connection delayed

Clarification of a persistent problem of what compensation you are entitled to if a late train causes a missed booked connection.

"Advance tickets are valid only for a specific train. However if you miss the train because the connecting train on which you started your journey was late, then the train operator will accept your ticket on the next available train. The operator should cover you even if you are using split tickets, provided that you allowed the minimum connection time at the split point and that you travel on a train run by the same operator, not just the next train. Note that if the delayed first leg of your journey was by tube, you are covered if the tube and rail journey are on one ticket, but not if they are separate tickets."

Based on the Retail Manual which states that passenger rights are not diminished when using multiple tickets. (courtesy of Chris Page).

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HELP
for rail users here!

www.railfuture.org.uk/Rail+user+help

The next Railfuture West Midlands eNews will be issue 7 in December 2014.

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