



## **West Midlands Branch eNews**

### **Issue 18 – February 2017**

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

- Railfuture's Rail User Express bulletin - January 2017 issue
- Railfuture's Yorkshire Rail Campaigner – Issue 35 – December 2016
- Severn Dee News (Shrewsbury Chester Rail Association) – Issue 83 – Autumn 2016

*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 TRANSPORT DEBATE IN BIRMINGHAM**

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#### **Transport Debate – Thursday, 6<sup>th</sup> April 2017 18:00-21:00 Birmingham Council House, Banqueting Suite**

You may be aware (or maybe not) that in May residents of West Midlands will be voting for a new Mayor. This is part of the deal for some financial and decision-making devolution from Westminster/Whitehall to our region. The mayor will have a say in how the delegated budget of £8 billion is to be used and one of her/his prime responsibilities will be for transport.



Railfuture West Midlands thought it would be a good idea to probe the mayoral candidates' views on their transport policies and priorities. So we are in the process of organising a "Question Time" type debate about transport on 6th April 2017 in Birmingham Council House, starting at 6 pm.

We have already had acceptances from four of the main five candidates. The event is free to all and we hope many Railfuture members and the public will attend. It should be of interest to all even if you don't live in the West Midlands itself as many decisions made here are likely to have impacts on neighbouring counties.

Details will be provided on the Railfuture website – [www.railfuture.org.uk/West+Midlands+branch](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/West+Midlands+branch).

This will contain up-to-date details of the event and where you record any questions that you would like to put to the candidates. Our aim is that these should focus on all forms of transport, not just rail-based, and that they should not be party political.

So put **Thursday 6th April 2017 from 6pm** in your diaries now

## **RAILFUTURE WEST MIDLANDS AGM**

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### **West Midlands branch AGM – Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2017**

It's that time of year again! The one occasion when Railfuture West Midlands branch members can all get together, vote for your committee and discuss issues of importance. We have a guest this year - Christian Wolmar has agreed to come and give us a talk about sundry railway thingies. Fingers crossed he manages to make it this time.

It's also an opportunity for you to raise formally any issues about running the branch or topics you'd like your committee to take up, for instance campaigns that you'd like us to actively pursue.

If you would like to nominate yourself or someone else for the committee or to raise a motion for discussion please contact the Secretary for a Nomination and/or Motions Form – [steve.wright@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:steve.wright@railfuture.org.uk) or Railfuture West Midlands, 6 Barron Road, Birmingham, B31 2ER or telephone 0121 475 4005.

All committee positions are elected each year, including Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. Nominations and motions must be received by Saturday, 1<sup>st</sup> April 2017. Details of nominations and any motions will be sent to you on 8<sup>th</sup> April.

## **LOCAL NEWS**

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### **Kenilworth station progresses**

The detailed design of Kenilworth station is complete with design reviews and approvals on going. Construction is ongoing of the piling platform on the west side of the LSC2 railway line. More detail is available at the following website (all of the following):

<https://kenilworthstation.wordpress.com/2016/12/16/kenilworth-rail-station-update-december-2016/>

### **Bromsgrove's four platforms open early**

Using the October 2016 half-term enabled Network Rail to finish remodelling the track into and out of Bromsgrove's new station enabling all four platforms to be used. The work which finished earlier than the deadline also involved renewing signalling between Five Ways and Ashchurch.

The work was highly visible to the public, attracting media and locals' attention, though with a very low level of complaints from neighbours following extensive consultation and some careful scheduling of noisy work like tamping.

The watching public saw 6,000 tons of material removed by train on the first day and were fascinated by the arrival of prefabricated switching rail panels carried at 45 degrees on trains.

Level crossings were also renewed at Dunhampton, Wadborough and Pirton.

This is the second phase of enabling work have left the Barnt Green to Bromsgrove corridor 'electrification-ready' with a new layout and immune signalling.

The electrification project team, having already installed 90 piled bases, will continue using Saturday night possessions over the next nine months, with energisation scheduled for September 2017, first electric Bromsgrove passenger trains in December 2017, and full 3tph in May 2018.

One historic note is that the last train from the work site on Friday 4th November ended the use of Saltley PSB which was then closed.

Our congratulations to Network rail on a job well done, finished earlier than planned and look forward to electrification in 2017.

Report by Colin Major

### **TRAVELINE: A USEFUL TOOL - BUT..... (by Les Fawcett)**

People may be aware of Traveline ([www.traveline.info](http://www.traveline.info)), an online tool for planning public transport journeys. Traveline now covers all of England but also has its faults. A recent request for a journey to Bermuda Park should have sent me to the new Bermuda station but Traveline told me to take a train to Bedworth and walk 40 mins to Bermuda. TfWM are trying to correct the fault. A more recent travel plan to Solihull sent me on a bus that doesn't go where I wanted to go.

I recommend that members who have internet access try Traveline, be wary of its limitations, and let TfWM know if you find anything wrong at [traveline@centro.org.uk](mailto:traveline@centro.org.uk). Apart from being useful to members, Traveline will encourage people to use public transport if we can get it working properly.

On a separate subject has Railfuture West Midlands discussed the plethora of names: Centro (still appearing in various places), TfWM, Network WM. Is there some prize for confusing the public and putting them off using public transport?

## **STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS**

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### **Transport for West Midlands (from a meeting on 21/10/2016 – by Peter Rowland)**

#### **1. University Station**

The unsatisfactory nature of this station due to chronic overcrowding had been raised on many previous occasions in the TfWM forum and elsewhere. Local development at the University and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, not to mention the anticipated move of the Children's Hospital all contribute to overcrowding. It is generally recognized that the station is now 'unfit for purpose'. Footfall is now about three million a year.

A partnership body has now been set up to try and solve this problem. One potential solution is to re-site the station to the south of the existing one, but no funds are currently allocated. Any solution needs to take into account all modes of transport, not just rail.

#### **2. Snow Hill Tram Stop**

In the absence of a straightforward access from the Snow Hill tram stop to Snow Hill station, this tram stop has been renamed St. Chad's and tram passengers are directed to use the Bull Street stop as the access point to Snow Hill station.

There is no inter-visibility between Bull Street and Snow Hill and signage is poor or non-existent. Our ideal situation would be a lift at St. Chad's (which is being installed – ed) leading to an access point into the second Snow Hill entrance, which currently only opens onto Livery Street. We also raised the need for through ticketing over the Metro for all passengers, including those whose rail journeys started or finished outside the West Midlands area.

### Virgin West Coast (from a meeting on 21/10/2016 – by William Whiting)

#### 1. Train Announcements

Railfuture West Midlands is concerned that on-board announcements are pre-recorded and passengers need more (especially real-time) information about connecting trains. Whilst we recognise that you cannot give details of all connections at Birmingham New Street, at most other stations along the route this should be possible. For instance, at Oxenholme passengers need to change for Windermere. However, many passengers will be tourists and not know about connecting trains.

#### 2. Revenue Protection

Virgin Trains (VT) cannot issue a Penalty Fares Notice where a passenger has failed to produce a valid ticket/pass at Birmingham New Street. London Midland have revenue protection staff who are able to issue penalty fares at their stations. Railfuture's Virgin contact was not aware of this anomaly but thought that as Virgin do not operate a Penalty Fares Scheme their staff are not authorised to issue penalty fares.

#### 3. Car parking charges at stations

There has been a significant increase in car parking charges at stations operated by VT. VT's response was that this was to deter people parking who do not intend to use the station. VT are to look into using smart technology to make it easier for rail passengers to find parking spaces by number plate identification reserving spaces.

#### 4. Stopping patterns at Rugby and Milton Keynes for northbound trains

Whilst this is recognised as a gap in the timetable it is unlikely that stopping patterns will change in the course of the present franchise which runs to 2018.

### West Coast Rail 250 (from meeting on 13th October 2016 – Peter Rowland)

(Railfuture West Midland is, by invitation, a member of this organisation. WCR250 mainly represents local authorities from along the WCML from Euston to Scotland, as well as some user groups. Full details can be found on their website [westcoastrail250.co.uk](http://westcoastrail250.co.uk) )

At the October 2016 meeting, presentations were made by Virgin Trains, Network Rail and TransPennine Express.

From Virgin Trains, the main item for discussion was the massive increase in charges for their car parks. This has not found favour. VT informed the meeting that the need for change for change included the need to price local non-rail users out. Suggestions made from the floor included requests to pre-book spaces, to introduce car-park entry control and to be able to deduct the car-park charge from ticket price. Concerns over car-park charges were made concerning Runcorn, Wolverhampton, Rugby, Coventry, Birmingham International and Oxenholme.

Network Rail representatives mentioned HS2. The new Secretary of State has re-committed the new Government to HS2 with emphasis on HS2 delivering extra capacity focused on 3 main traffic flows:- (a) commuter flows, Euston to Milton Keynes, (b) intermodal freight growth and (c) providing for new service paths (e.g. as proposed by Alliance rail to Blackpool, Huddersfield and Leeds). Phase 1 of HS2 is due to provide 10 trains per hour (tph) which should replace 8 tph on the fast lines of the WCML south of Rugby. There is significant new demand for more west to east services along the route of the WCML in the north (such as proposed along the Liverpool – Hull corridor as proposed by the Northern Hub as ‘HS3’), between the east and west Midlands (as proposed by Midlands Connect) and in the south east (such as between Oxford and Cambridge (EastWestRail)).

## LETTERS

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### From Steve Wright, Northfield

#### Re: Split Ticketing

I had thoughts of making a day trip to Appleby to travel behind Tornado and found an amazing variation in possible train fares. I would have had to leave Birmingham on the 0803 to Leeds so at least some of it was bound to be at Anytime fares:

- Birmingham to Appleby (Anytime Return) - £186.00
- Split-ticketing at Leeds - £127.00 (AR to Leeds, OPDR to Appleby)
- Split-ticketing at Derby, Chesterfield and Leeds - £73.70 (all day returns)

Now I realise that not many (any?) people want to go to Appleby for the day but I was staggered to found this degree of savings.

(PS The Tornado runs were all fully booked so I didn't make the journey anyway!)

## MORE WEST MIDLANDS NEWS

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### Grand Central or New Street Station?

Railfuture contacted Transport for West Midlands last month to ask why they had named the Midland Metro stop outside New Street Station “Grand Central”. The response received was:

*I have confirmed with our Metro project managers that this was a joint decision by ourselves, Network Rail and Birmingham City Council.*

*Extended discussions took place a number of years ago to decide this; New Street Station Stop was considered but was rejected by Network Rail and local Councillors as the stop is neither in the station nor on New Street itself. Stephenson Street was also considered, however there were concerns that the stop would be unknown to passengers visiting Birmingham. Grand Central was decided as this is associated with a city landmark known to many visitors to Birmingham.*

## **Releasing Capacity at New Street** (from Rail User Express October 2016)

In the personal view of Don Payne, a member of both Railfuture's Passenger and Infrastructure Groups, the West Midlands and Chilterns Route Study missed an opportunity by constraining itself to existing franchises, and overlooking other ideas such as a frequent electric service serving East Birmingham, with closely-spaced stations. Little thought seems to have been given to developing alternative routes, other than re-opening the Camp Hill line and constructing chords at Bordesley.

Diverting the ATW service to Birmingham International via Soapworks Junction and Perry Barr would reduce New Street traffic; local stations between Wolverhampton and Shrewsbury would still have the London Midland service. Both ATW and the New Street - Rugeley line could serve a reopened station at Soho Road, Handsworth, whilst a chord at Winson Green linking the Soho – Perry Barr and Jewellery Lines would allow through running between Wolverhampton and Snow Hill. *(any further thoughts? – ed)*

## **BRANCH MEETINGS**

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The West Midlands branch committee meets each month, often on the second Wednesday in an office at Birmingham Moor Street station, courtesy of Chiltern Trains. Any member of the West Midlands Branch of Railfuture is welcome to attend but please let the branch secretary ([steve.wright@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:steve.wright@railfuture.org.uk)) know if you want to come to ensure there is enough space and to arrange to escort you into the building. The next meeting is Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

We would be interested in bringing our meetings out to other centres in the West Midlands if local members would be interested in joining us.

## **WEBSITES OF INTEREST**

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Two articles appeared quite recently in the local press which may be of interest.

- <https://coventryobserver.co.uk/news/exclusive-plan-return-trams-coventry-streets-link-hs2/>
- <http://www.coventrytelegraph.net/news/coventry-news/11m-extra-rising-cost-redeveloping-12501601> (Redeveloping Coventry station)
- Previous issues of Rail User Express (Nov & Dec 2016 issues)  
<http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Rail+User+Express>
- Midlands Connect News  
<https://www.midlandsconnect.uk/news/>
- Midlands Connect has received official endorsement from DfT to publish the Emerging Strategy for the Midlands. This is an important milestone as MC work towards submission of the Full Strategy in March 2017. The Emerging Strategy report can be found at

<https://www.midlandsconnect.uk/publications/>

- Transport Focus news

<https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/news-events-media/news/>

- Railfuture Thames Valley Branch Newsletter December 2016

<http://www.railfuture.org.uk/dl1473>

**Railfuture warmly welcomes contributions to these newsletters – any local news we missed, your opinions, photos or articles about interesting trips. Send your content to your branch secretary [steve.wright@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:steve.wright@railfuture.org.uk).**

The next Railfuture West Midlands eNews will be issue 19 in April 2017.

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Other issues of *Railfuture* West Midlands eNews are available at  
[www.railfuture.org.uk/branches/?branch=West+Midlands](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/branches/?branch=West+Midlands)

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