



West Midlands Branch eNews

Issue 21 - March 2018

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

- Railfuture's Yorkshire Rail Campaigner – Issue 40 – March 2018
- Railfuture's Railaction – February 2018
- Railfuture's Rail User Express – September, October, November and December 2017
- Report of Railfuture West Midlands meeting with HS2 Ltd on 5 January 2018
- Severn Dee News (Shrewsbury Chester Rail Association) – Issue 85 – Winter 2018
- Cross Country's In Focus magazine – Issue 29 – January 2018

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.

In this issue:

Railfuture West Midlands Annual General Meeting on 21 April 2018
We Want to Hear from You
Publicity and Media Contact

Campaigns and Consultations

Cross Country Services from 2019
Fares and Ticketing
Train Seats in New Trains

Local News

"West Midlands Rail Renaissance"
Derby Diversions
Kenilworth station update
Henley in Arden station
Wolverhampton tram extension
Wolverhampton Station
Wolverhampton First Class Lounge
University Station
Arriva Club55
Sustrans has got it wrong

RAILFUTURE WEST MIDLANDS BRANCH MATTERS

Annual General Meeting – 21 April 2018 - Special Guest - MD of West Midlands Trains

The Railfuture West Midlands 2018 annual members' meeting will be on Saturday 21 April at the National College of High-Speed Rail, 2 Lister Street, Birmingham, B7 4AG (photo of venue on next page), with coffee/tea and biscuits at 10:00.

We shall have the college premises to ourselves and the Event Organiser has very kindly offered to show us around the building, with many of the teaching aids and modelling software programs available to look at and, in some cases, use. This will include a unique chance to experience driving a High-Speed train using the simulator, set up in a former Eurostar driving cab.



A brief resume:

- Jan Chaudry-van der Velde, the MD, will discuss West Midlands Trains plans and progress
- Report on branch activities in 2017 and plans for 2018
- Election of officers - new Chairman needed
- Media Officer sought

Branch Meetings

Railfuture West Midlands committee meet most months on the second Wednesday of each month, usually in an office at Birmingham Moor Street station, courtesy of Chiltern Trains. Members are welcome to attend as observers.

We Want to Hear from You

Railfuture wants to hear from members and other rail users on three topics

- What You as a member would like us to concentrate our efforts on?
- What events and where you would attend if we were to arrange them?
- Would it be useful to hold Committee meetings in your locality?

Please send your ideas to the Branch Secretary, Colin Major at colin.major@railfuture.org.uk

Railfuture West Midlands Publicity and Media Contact

We are looking for someone to cover some or all media outlets - radio, TV, newspapers and social media – who would pro-active in preparing article and press releases about our campaigns to stimulate the press and the public to take an interest in our activities.

The existing committee members have a list of contacts with various media so the person taking on this role would not be starting from a completely blank sheet. They would not be expected to attend every monthly committee meeting although might find it useful to do so initially. They would need to submit a report every 3 months about their activities and any particular successes.

Anyone interested in this role should contact our Secretary, Colin Major to discuss this further.
(colin.major@railfuture.org.uk)

RAILFUTURE CAMPAIGNS AND RAIL CONSULTATIONS

Cross Country Services from 2019

Railfuture's Liaison Officer for Cross Country Trains is intending to start consultation on what Railfuture members and other rail users want from the next Cross Country franchise, to start in October 2019. Some things are fairly obvious – longer trains to give more seats – but, with the Department for Transport (DfT) now more interested in value-for-money and growth than taking the best financial bid for no growth, this is an opportunity to enable Cross Country Trains to develop its existing routes and possibly add more destinations.

However, the first question to address is “What is Cross Country for?” Should it remain broadly as is, or should it concentrate on high quality long distance inter-city services? If it isn't to operate local or semi-fast services, such as between Birmingham and Leicester, who should?

Fares and Ticketing

Railfuture's Steve Wright, with his Passenger Group hat on, is also developing a new more detailed policy on both the structure of rail fares and methods of ticketing. Of particular interest are any fare anomalies or ticketing difficulties that you have experienced.

Comments and aspirations on either or both to steve.wright@railfuture.org.uk.

Train Seats in New Trains

It isn't just Railfuture members and readers of Rail and Modern Railways that dislike the seats in the new class 700 or 800/1/2 trains. There has been so much adverse comment on the 800s that the DfT are having to replace the seats they themselves specified at considerable expense – much more than if they had specified better seats at the outset.

There is now an on-line petition aimed at getting all seats up to a decent standard – <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/213213>

We urge all our members to sign this. Note that you will receive an acknowledgement that you have to send back to complete the signing. Make sure this doesn't go into your junk box.

NEWS AND VIEWS

A six-page article in **RAIL** magazine entitled “**West Midlands Rail Renaissance**”, based on an interview with Malcolm Holmes and Toby Rackliff (West Midlands Rail) and Peter Brunskill (Midlands Connect HS2 lead), featured well-covered ground but the following may be of interest:

- Midlands Connect have been awarded £17 million by DfT to develop plans to improve transport infrastructure and improve integration with HS2.
- DfT have given £5 million to work up an outline business case for improvements including the Bordesley Chords, new stations at Moseley, Kings Heath and Hazelwell.
- Peter Brunskill is involved in the plans to link Curzon Street with New Street and Moor Street. The number of passengers walking between the three stations is estimated to be between 1.4 and 2.3 million in 2026 (a difference of some 64%). Based on a “One Station” Birmingham City Interchange with improved walkways between the three. So, no vision of tram use!
- The article also has aerial photos of ground work already underway at Curzon Street.

Derby Diversions – by David Harby

There will be a lot of disruption summer 2018 whilst the track layout at Derby is modernised.

NE/SW Cross Country services are using the Erewash route via Toton for much of the disruption and even when they do call at Derby journey times are extended. East Midlands Trains have only one train per hour from Sheffield to St Pancras and this will also use the Erewash route. The other Sheffield to St Pancras service becomes a Derby to St Pancras. Quite a lot of disruption to EMT local services.

The <https://www.eastmidlandstrains.co.uk/derby2018> website page explains everything to passengers. Also expect to see plenty of posters etc on stations.

Kenilworth station update

In early March 2018 Warwickshire County Council's Joint Managing Director, Monica Fogarty, clarified the reason for delays to Kenilworth station opening. Although the station was completed months ago there remained several tasks which had to be completed before the ORR could sign off the station as 'fit for business'. Forms were submitted on 20 March 2018 and the council is awaiting confirmation that trains can begin to stop at the station.

Ms Fogarty said: "We are nearly there. I know it has been frustrating for residents who are looking forward to using the station. We would like to thank everyone for their patience. It will be a fantastic facility and we should celebrate the fact that Kenilworth will have a station that will connect the town to the wider area. After all the hard work by everyone involved, we can now look forward to Kenilworth having a station for the first time on over 50 years." She was also able to say that 'with a fair wind', the station would be open for business in the coming weeks."

Henley in Arden station – by Peter Kennard

Following a site visit on 12th March 2018 a footbridge and two lifts have been installed, together with a platform extension, thus alleviating the previous access problem. However, a further difficulty may arise, because if there is a lift failure of any type, it will need to be reported remotely as Henley in Arden is now unstaffed.

Wolverhampton tram extension

The next phase of Wolverhampton's £150m tram extension will kick off in March 2018. In a statement, the Midland Metro Alliance, a consortium of companies responsible for the expansion of the network on behalf of the West Midlands Combined Authority, announced that it will soon start work on the extension of the existing tram route just before the current terminus at Wolverhampton St. George to Wolverhampton station

It is part of the multi-million-pound Wolverhampton interchange project, which aims to regenerate the city's transport hub and create a 'gateway' for visitors entering the city by national rail, tram or bus.

After all the works have been delivered, and after the construction of the new station, trams will pass through two additional stops, at Piper's Row and at Wolverhampton station. Whilst works are ongoing, Pipers Row will be closed to vehicular traffic until the second phase is completed in summer 2018.



Wolverhampton Station – Colin Major

We have had difficulty in getting detailed information online of the plans to redevelop Wolverhampton Railway station but from the drawings and a virtual trip around the proposed station (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGtpHIeJYS0>) only the booking hall is being redeveloped. The new hall will be built where the old car park is at the front of the station and it would appear that all other parts of the station will not be redeveloped.

Wolverhampton First Class Lounge – from WCR250 General Meeting

The question was raised as to why the First-Class Lounge at Wolverhampton Station had been closed. This closure was part of a review that started in early 2017, which was prompted by comments from customers and staff. The review highlighted that fewer than one in 10 of the First Class customers were using the facility. With this in mind, Virgin Trains decided to open up the lounge to all customers to provide a welcoming waiting area for everyone using the station. West Midlands Trains were consulted and fully supportive of the decision to open the lounge up for the benefit of all customers. The decision was not related to the changing management of the station later this year. Any future changes will be made in consultation with stakeholders.

University Station

On 29th March 2018 the first sod of earth was turned on the University station project. This was connected to the archaeological excavations that will precede formal construction. Although there is little to indicate its existence today, the station is located on the site of the former Metchley Roman fort, constructed in the first century AD. The fort is a scheduled ancient monument, one of 13 in Birmingham, and consequently, the construction works must pay due care and attention to the special circumstances at the site, starting with these archaeological works.

Arriva Club55

Cheaper travel for the over 55s on Arriva Trains Wales is back. From only £27 return.

Sustrans has got it wrong, says rail group

Rail campaigners in the Bristol area are fighting back against cyclists who want to block future rail development. Replying to a recent open letter published by Sustrans, Railfuture spelled out its support for re-using the Bristol and Bath railway path for rail, and dismissed the objections put forward by Sustrans.

Railfuture said "Sustrans have always known that they were allowed to operate the railway path on the understanding that they would have to give it back if it was needed for rail. Now it looks like that time might be coming, and they're trying to renege on the deal" said Bruce Williamson from Railfuture. "We all agree that we need solutions to Bristol's gridlock, but only rail has the potential to attract people out of their cars and make a real difference. There simply aren't any realistic alternatives to re-using the old railway line. Tunnelling is monstrously expensive, and any other route would involve mass demolitions and major civil engineering."

This could have implications for us here in the West Midlands in any effort to reopen Walsall to Lichfield rail line for local travel and as part of a Birmingham avoidance route.

USEFUL WEBSITE LINKS

Network Rail Strikes Back on Bridge Strikes (from 'Rail 23-01/2018)

<https://www.railmagazine.com/news/rail-features/bc>

Virgin West Coast Stakeholder News (2018 Issue 1)

- 91% passenger satisfaction – one of the best for long distance operator
<http://virgintrains.newsweaver.com/newsletter/12rin206aljlr5ve090nf?email=true&a=2&p=53086654&t=23808755>
- All Pendolinos are being upgraded to provide free wi-fi for all customer
<http://virgintrains.newsweaver.com/newsletter/dh0ryyikmgvglr5ve090nf?email=true&a=2&p=53086654&t=23808755>
- Record growth between Chester and London – over half a million journeys last year

<http://virgintrains.newsweaver.com/newsletter/1dyfl9rzb13glr5ve090nf?email=true&a=2&p=53086654&t=23808755>

- New bike hub at Coventry station
<http://virgintrains.newsweaver.com/newsletter/2ib6etkck8wglr5ve090nf?email=true&a=2&p=53086654&t=23808755>
- First train driver apprenticeship scheme
<http://virgintrains.newsweaver.com/newsletter/dh0ryyikmgvglr5ve090nf?email=true&a=2&p=53086654&t=23808755>

- MCRUA - Mid Cheshire Rail Report - Winter Edition
<http://www.mcrua.org.uk/uploads/MCRR100.pdf>

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.

The next Railfuture West Midlands eNews will be issue 22 in October 2018.

Other issues of *Railfuture* West Midlands eNews are available at
www.railfuture.org.uk/branches/?branch=West+Midlands

We're on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/RailfutureWestMidlands/>

Railfuture – Promoting Britain's Railway for Passengers and Freight

www.railfuture.org.uk www.railfuturescotland.org.uk www.railfuturewales.org.uk www.railwatch.org.uk

follow us on Twitter: [@Railfuture](https://twitter.com/Railfuture) [@Railwatch](https://twitter.com/Railwatch) and [@RailfutureWMids](https://twitter.com/RailfutureWMids)

Join Online at www.railfuture.org.uk/join

*Railfuture Limited is a (not for profit) Company Limited by Guarantee.
Registered in England and Wales No. 05011634.
Registered Office: 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingsstone, Suffolk IP9 2ND*