

Railfuture - London & South East Branch

Metro Division

Campaign Newsletter October 2025



Class 230 battery train at West Ealing bay platform, on experimental running to Greenford, which could soon be in regular passenger service

FAST-CHARGE BATTERY TRAINS NEARING A REALITY ON THE GREENFORD BRANCH

Breaking news in August 2025 was the world record attempt for the longest railway journey by a battery powered train on a single charge. The Class 230 battery-electric multiple unit train operated by Great Western Railway (GWR) travelled overnight along a 200-mile route from Reading and back again, via London Paddington and Oxford, achieving that record, with plenty of juice to spare.

This was no publicity stunt. The GWR is a complex rail network with a mix of main line, secondary lines and branch lines, some electrified but much that is not. In the current economic environment, completion of the electrification of the GWR main routes seems a distant prospect, and its branch lines just a dream. Enter 'Project Churchward', a joint initiative between GWR and Network Rail to develop a 'track and train' solution to replace the ageing diesel multiple unit fleet with greener trains. Battery power is seen as an essential component to achieve that change.

Over the last 18 months the Greenford branch has seen a Class 230 battery-electric multiple unit train operate experimentally with fast-charge equipment installed in the bay platform at West Ealing. This involves a specially designed conductor rail that becomes live only when a train is above it. This is then used to charge the lithium-ion batteries on the train. The trial revealed a charging time of only 3 to 4 minutes, using a bank of batteries installed adjacent to the West Ealing platform, with an operational cost comparing favourably against the current diesel operation.

GWR has now applied to the DfT for a dispensation to enable the battery powered trains to start passenger operation on the Greenford branch. This could be granted as early as next month. Railfuture has supported that application.

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In Railfuture's view, a primary aim for the rail industry going forward must be 100% electric or hybrid operation across the rail network, a difficult task bearing in mind the complexity of the network and economic realities. Railfuture commends GWR for looking over the horizon and providing leadership including the potential of converting existing vehicles to battery electric or electric, battery hybrid operation, and in taking the lead on operating fast charge electric battery technology.

We take the view that the industry must build on this and move away from yet more diesel multiple units in order to bring the benefits of cost effective electric operation to important feeder routes, so critical in bringing rail service benefits to wider catchment areas.

With successful passenger operation on the Greenford branch, a second phase of development could see the technology used on the Thames Valley branch lines, (namely the Slough - Windsor line, the Maidenhead - Marlow line and the Twyford - Henley line) and then further afield on the many branch lines operated by GWR.

TfL APPLIES TO TAKE OVER GREAT NORTHERN MOORGATE SERVICES FROM GTR

Railfuture understands that TfL submitted a formal application on the 30 September 2025 to take over running of those Great Northern services that operate to and from Moorgate.

The Mayor's manifesto had a pledge to takeover more national rail services in London and in accordance with the Government's 'Rail Reform' consultation of February 2025, the Secretary of State for Transport will likely be given powers to devolve certain national rail services to regional mayors.

This particular proposal has been suggested twice before when Boris Johnson was London Mayor, but never materialised, and again in Sadiq Khan's first term, but the transfer was effectively vetoed by the then Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling MP.



Entrance to west side of Moorgate Station
Andy F: Creative Commons Attribution License

The TfL application coincides with the issue of the 'New Towns Taskforce Report to Government' issued on 28 September 2025, which recommends Crews Hill and Chase Park, Enfield, as a location for a new town, with up to 20,000 new homes. Crews Hill is on the Hertford Loop in TfL zone 6. The Taskforce Report states that *'the train frequency at Crews Hill would need to be increased beyond the current 2 trains per hour during off-peak times and 4 trains per hour during peak-times. The government would need to explore options with the GLA and Transport for London (TfL), including the potential to devolve the Great Northern line, as previously happened with Greater Anglia.'*

TfL clearly believes that it is the right entity to make this happen, hence its wish for Moorgate services to be transferred to it.

Only Moorgate services currently operated by Great Northern would be transferred, being the Hertford Loop services and the Moorgate - Welwyn Garden City services. The Great Northern services out of Kings Cross - those to Cambridge, Peterborough, and King's Lynn - would remain with national rail.

Railfuture has long campaigned for London suburban services to be directed by the Mayor; past takeovers have shown impressive improvements after the TfL takeover. The GN Inners currently benefit from integration with other GTR services and we need to see a business case that shows real benefit to travellers and that delivers the right balance between users who live in London and Hertfordshire; we hope this can be the case.

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BAKERLOOP BUS IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR THE BAKERLOO LINE EXTENSION

In our February 2025 Metro newsletter we stated the following:

‘The extension of the Bakerloo Line from Elephant and Castle to Lewisham (and beyond) remains an aspiration of the Mayor. Experience with other London Underground extension schemes suggest this will happen at some point in the future, but that it could take a considerable number of years. Recognising this, a long-term rail replacement bus service is now being proposed to run along the intended Bakerloo extension route. Like the new Superloop services, this is intended to be an express service, which will run between Waterloo, Elephant & Castle and Lewisham with stops also at Burgess Park, Old Kent Road and New Cross Gate. There is no doubt that an improved bus service will be of benefit to residents along this corridor, although it is no substitute for the railway extension. Railfuture is committed to the extension of the Bakerloo Line from Elephant & Castle to Lewisham, and encourages all those wishing to see this happen to join our bi-monthly Metro Division meetings in Farringdon.’



The new Bakerloop express bus service (numbered BL1) is now with us, having started on Saturday 27 September. It mirrors the route of the proposed Bakerloo Line Extension, connecting Waterloo, Elephant and Castle and Lewisham, running along the Old Kent Road (A2) and Lewisham Way (A20). The electric double-decker bus operates as an express service between 5am and midnight, with stops at Burgess Park and Old Kent Road, New Cross Gate, Lewisham national and DLR station and Lewisham town centre. The buses run every 12 minutes Monday to Saturday and every 15 minutes during Sundays.

The Mayor of London Sir Sadiq Khan said: ‘A Bakerloo line extension will take years to build, and I don't want to wait any longer to improve transport connections for Londoners.’

Our message to the Mayor: This is welcome but it is not good enough.

As welcome as the Bakerloop is, it is not replacement for the Bakerloo Line extension, which was first proposed prior to the First World War. A century later, South East London is still waiting for an Underground rail service.....surely it has waited long enough. Central government funding will be required for the Bakerloo rail extension, as it was for many other rail extensions in and around London, and it is surely time for both central government and the Mayor to prioritise this particular line, running as it does through one of the most deprived and poorly linked areas of London.

DATES FOR THE NATIONALISATION OF GOVIA THAMESLINK RAILWAY AND WEST MIDLANDS TRAINS NOW SET

On Friday 26 September 2025, the Department for Transport (DfT) announced its nationalisation programme for 2026.

- West Midlands trains (which includes London Northwestern Railway services from Euston up the West Coast Main Line), will be nationalised on 1 February 2026.
- Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR), which is in fact the UK's largest train operator, will be nationalised on Sunday 31 May 2026. GTR of course operates a vast network in the south of England, comprises services under the Thameslink, Great Northern, Southern, and Gatwick Express brands.
- Chiltern Railways and Great Western Railway will follow in 2026 on a date soon to be announced.

The Chief Executive Officer of GTR, Angie Doll, said: ‘I am immensely proud of what we have achieved for the millions of customers who rely on us, and for the communities we serve. As well as helping people travel, our purpose is about building a railway ready for the future, with people and communities at the heart of making that happen....Our transition to public ownership comes at a time when GTR is at the forefront of key initiatives, essential to building a thriving sector under GBR and a stronger economy for Britain's future.’

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CAMPAIGN MEETING - GATWICK EXPRESS AND BRIGHTON MAIN LINE CAPACITY

The main campaign of the LSE branch at present relates to the lightly used Gatwick Express services and the consequent overcrowding on the Southern and Thameslink trains to the airport, as well as capacity issues on the London - Gatwick line, part of the London - Brighton Main Line, one of the busiest in the country. Those in the know avoid the Gatwick Express due to its premium pricing, and in consequence many of its trains are partially empty. Indeed our own research suggests that only around 12% of passengers travelling from Gatwick to London by rail choose the Gatwick Express. This results in passengers standing, due to over-crowding, on the cheaper Southern and Thameslink trains.

As part of our campaign, a report has been prepared by branch committee member and Metro vice-chair Charlie King, a full version of which has been submitted by way of letter to the Minister of State for Rail, Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill CBE, copied to Members of Parliament for Crawley, Dorking, Reigate and Croydon East, Thameslink Govia Railway, and Network Rail, among others. A copy of the report can be found [here](#) and a copy of the letter to the Rail Minister [here](#).

Railfuture is now in campaign mode.

Metro Division is joining our Surrey and Sussex Divisions on this campaign.

Consequently the Metro Division meeting that would ordinarily be held on 20 November at the Alan Baxter Gallery in Farringdon will be a joint Surrey/ Sussex/ Metro Division meeting and will be held near to Gatwick Airport, at Salfords Village Hall. There will be no meeting in Farringdon on that date.

Date and time of Meeting: 20 November 2025 starting 7.30pm

Venue: Salfords Village Hall, 5 Honeycrook Lane, Salfords, Redhill RH1 5DG

All those having concerns as to these issues are urged to join our meeting in Salfords on 20 November.

NEW CHELMSFORD STATION TO OPEN ON 26 OCTOBER 2025

Beaulieu Park Station is a brand-new rail station in Boreham, North East of Chelmsford and is expected to open on Sunday 26 October 2025.

The station is just one stop away from Chelmsford, and it's the first new station to open on the Great Eastern Mainline in over 100 years. It will provide a flexible service with three platforms, more than 700 car parking spaces, a public transport interchange, more than 500 cycle spaces and new track for passing trains.

At time of press the service pattern of trains was still uncertain, however it is understood that there will be four trains an hour during peak times and two trains per hour off-peak, with trains to Liverpool Street taking just 40 minutes.

Railfuture will be attending the official grand opening on the following day, Monday 27 October.

PROPOSED NEW STATION AT SURREY CANAL ROAD

The prospect of a new station at Surrey Canal Road on the London Overground has now moved closer, following receipt of finance for design work being provided by Lewisham Council.

The new station would be on the Windrush line between Surrey Quays and Queens Road Peckham and would serve a new housing development in the vicinity of the Millwall football ground, it being estimated that the station would support in the area around 8,400 homes and over 1,200 jobs.

To pay for the station build, TfL has sought section 106 contributions from property developers, which could raise around £25 million. However this still represents a shortfall to the likely cost of the new station. If the balance monies are found, it is possible that the new station could be open by 2030.

METRO DIVISION: AFFILIATED RAIL USER GROUPS

Railfuture affiliated Rail User Groups within our area comprise:

- Cambridge Heath and London Fields Rail Users' Group
- Chesham & District Transport Users Group
- Chingford Line Users' Association
- East Surrey Transport Committee
- Hadley Wood Rail User Group
- Watford Rail Users Group

We maintain regular contacts with our Metro located affiliated rail user groups, attending some of their meetings and assessing how we may aid their campaigns. Many of them also attend our regular Metro Division meetings in Farringdon. A number of rail user groups located outside our area maintain contact with us, primary because their focus is on train services to London. These include Sevenoaks Rail Travellers' Association and Tonbridge Line Commuters.

Call to Affiliated Groups: Should any of our affiliated rail users group wish to discuss rail issues with us, please contact our chairman at richard.bowry@railfuture.org.uk

Not Affiliated? Please contact us and let's chat how we can work together. About half of all rail user groups in the UK are affiliated to Railfuture. Why not join us?

Interested in Rail User Groups?

Take a look at Railfuture's monthly magazine, 'Rail User Express' dedicated to rail user groups.

<https://railfuture.org.uk/Rail+User+Express>

RAIL USER GROUP: MEETINGS

Chesham & District Transport Users Group

Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 4 November 2025 and will be held in Chesham Town Hall starting at 7.30pm.

VISIT BY CHILTERN RAILWAYS

On Thursday 18 September 2025 we held a joint LSE Branch and Metro Division event, welcoming Joshua van Haaren, Stakeholder Manager of Chiltern Railways, who gave us a presentation on Chiltern's latest plans

This represents a change for Metro Division, in that all its 'guest speaker' meetings will in the future be marketed as joint Metro/ Branch events albeit organised by Metro Division. Future speakers may therefore come from outside the Metro region.

Joshua discussed matters such as rolling stock replacement, additional long distance services between London and Birmingham, local services into Marylebone, ticketing issues, and in response to questions, possible inter-change between Chiltern services and the Central Line at South or West Ruislip.

Our thanks go to Joshua for a very informative evening.

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METRO DIVISION – WHAT WE DO

Chair: Richard Bowry

Vice Chair: Charlie King

Committee Member: Howard Thomas

Metro Division covers Greater London, the London Overground, the Underground, the Docklands Light Railway, all former c2c service areas (e.g., Southend and Shoeburyness), the East Anglia Main Line as far as Witham and the Braintree branch, the former Greater Anglia services from Liverpool St and Shenfield to Southend Victoria and the Southminster branch, the West Anglia Main Line from London to Bishop's Stortford and the London - Stansted Express.

We are active every month

Meetings: We hold meetings in London in January, March, May, July, September and November.

Our venue is the **front basement room of the Alan Baxter Gallery, 75 Cowcross Street, Farringdon**, starting at 7pm.

Newsletter: The Metro Campaign Newsletter is issued in February, April, June, August, October and December.

Campaigning: Much of our campaign work involves discussions with governmental authorities, politicians, rail authorities and rail operators.

Our current campaigns include:

- Extension of the Docklands Light Railway to Thamesmead
- Introducing a passenger service on the West Orbital Route
- Extension of the Bakerloo Line from Elephant & Castle to Lewisham
- Turn up and go services throughout London of at least 4 trains per hour
- KenEx tram (tram link between Grays, Essex, and Ebbsfleet International, Kent)
- Improvement to capacity issue on the Brighton Main Line and changes to the Gatwick Express

Contact: To contact us on any matter concerning Metro Division please email richard.bowry@railfuture.org.uk

LAST MEETING DATE OF 2025

Changes have been made as regards our next and final meeting of the Metro Division for 2025.

The date remains Thursday 20 November 2025, however in view of our campaign concerning the Gatwick Express and for improvements to the Brighton Main Line, the meeting will be held in conjunction with our Surrey and Sussex Divisions near to Gatwick Airport, in Salfords Village Hall, 5 Honeycrock Lane, Salfords, Redhill RH1 5DG, starting 7.30pm. Please join us in Salfords. **There will be no meeting in Farringdon on that date.**

JOIN US (www.railfuture.org.uk/join)

Railfuture is the UK's leading independent organisation campaigning for better rail services. We are a voluntary group representing rail users, with around 20,000 affiliated and individual members.

Metro is a division of the London and South East Branch of Railfuture - the Divisions comprise:

Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire

Kent

London Metropolitan and Eastern (Metro)

Surrey

Sussex and Coastway

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