

Dear Friend

I hope you are staying safe.

I invite you to our **in-person social at Kings Cross station from 12:15 this Saturday (6<sup>th</sup> December)**.

Our next three meetings are then:

- **Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> January 2026 at 19:30 on Zoom.**
- **Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> February at 19:30 on Zoom.**
- **Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> March in person at 11:00** – Meeting at our usual local location, St Pauls Church, Hatfield Road, St Albans. Finishing at 13:00 and followed by lunch.

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### **Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> December lunchtime social**

We will meet at the Platform 9/10 gateline at Kings Cross at 12:15. I will then promptly head off to the nearby [Parcel Yard](#) Pub. It's on the first floor, but there is a lift. If we're lucky we'll be able to grab a table in easy view of the entrance, but if you are late be aware there are also rooms overlooking Platform 0 to 8. I don't have a set end time, but I am not in a rush.

It is useful, but not essential, if I know you are coming in advance.

### **TfL seeking control of GN Inners**

TfL has made a bid to operate the GN Inners – see, eg, the [Passenger Transport](#) website.

Following the last newsletter I had comments to the effect that TfL has a good track record, and we should support them. And I definitely agree that they have a good record – just look at their chart topping performance in the Charts I produce. So there are distinct pluses, but what wasn't at all clear is how this fits into a mixed traffic railway.

So rather than supporting – or objecting, I issued a '10 questions' press release – that can be read [here](#). The content was based in part of an update given at Hertfordshire County Council's Environment, Transport & Growth Cabinet Panel on 5 November – A recording is available [here](#) (start at 2:09:30).

The Press Release was sent to the Media (local, specialist and national), to members of the Herts CC Environment, Transport & Growth Cabinet Panel and to GTR and TfL. Geoff Hobbs from TfL contacted me to suggest a meeting



("Thanks for your message. Yours are perfectly reasonable questions"), which took place last week. I have a version of the 10 questions with draft answers [here](#).

My own instinct is that it will be an essentially political decision ('For' and 'Against' being my interpretation of the DfT stance):

- For – Shift financial risk from the DfT to TfL.
- Against – The 'embarrassment' of allowing a private sector concessionaire to take over from GBR.
- Against – Worries about setting a precedent for GBR to Mayoral transfers (think Manchester etc).

With one exception, I think we have done what we can, and now we wait for the decision. That one exception is to see what I can find out at the GTR Stakeholder Session next week and react accordingly.

### **GTR Stakeholder session**

GTR have a session on Monday 8<sup>th</sup>. If there is anything Thameslink or Great Northern related you would like me to follow up on, please let me know. Already on my list are:

- Performance
- Hadley Wood Toilet opening hours (with reference to Northern Trains unattended toilets
- Crowding on the GN, particularly when there are sporting events
- TfL's bid for the GN Inners
- Lift Performance – St Pancras and elsewhere
- GTR being part of GBR at the end of May
- Contactless and more Advance fares
- Wixams station timing

The nature of these sessions is that I don't get to speak to all of the key names at GTR, so no guarantee that all topics will be covered.

### **Contactless**

After last month's newsletter, I received the unwelcome news that the additional stations that were due to get contactless this month will be on the standard Project Oval pricing model – I removal of existing fares and the new binary choice of peak and off-peak singles for National Rail Journeys – Travelcards continue as before, possibly with some timing changes.

This is disappointing, but is a Project Oval decision, not a GTR one.

Going forward, my immediate attention is to issue a Press Release that is primarily consumer advice centred – mainly along the lines of "How to check for the best price...". So consider National Rail tickets, using a Travelcard, Split Ticketing etc. I'll be writing that imminently to get it out at the start of next week in time for the launch of Contactless on the 14<sup>th</sup>. It will be for all parts of the South East not just Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire.

And on that launch, Mary Lowe has tipped me off (thank you) that it has been postponed for 6 months for [Greater Anglia stations](#) due to "During detailed testing, issues were identified that could have affected journeys and the price paid on Greater Anglia services and prevented the technology from working as intended".

On our patch that impacts Bishops Stortford and Sawbridgeworth.

More strategically, the Railfuture ask on Contactless is:

1. For Railcards to be supported. As a byproduct of my GN Inner discussion, I've now had it confirmed that this is in the scope of Project Oval, but there is still no date.
2. That a third price tier be introduced for the weekends.
3. That TOCs start to regularly sell Advance tickets.

And more strategically, there is the challenge of Contactless or App based data collection for the price calculation and the need for products for families, children etc.

## East West Rail

During the month there was a significant update on East West Rail – DfT Press Releases are [here](#) and [here](#). And there's a lot of detail in EWR's 'You Said, We Did Report' [report](#). Railfuture responded with an initial broadly welcoming [press release](#) (this was sent out before the You Said, We Did report had been issued).

I'll admit I am yet to read in detail the (extensive) documentation that has now been issued. But a couple of key points:

1. An up fast platform is now planned for Bedford.
2. The proposal is now for 4 new stations on the Marston Vale - Woburn Sands, Ridgmont, Lidlington and Stewartby, to replace the 9 existing ones (and also Bedford St Johns).
3. Still no continuous electrification (justified much more by through running than dedicated services between Oxford and Cambridge).

#1 is welcomed; #2 and #3 require digesting.

## EWR between Milton Keynes and Oxford

This has now been confirmed as a 2026 opening. When it does open, subject to my diary I hope to ride it on the first day. The view of the October meeting was others want to do the same and so I will organise an outing once everything is clear.

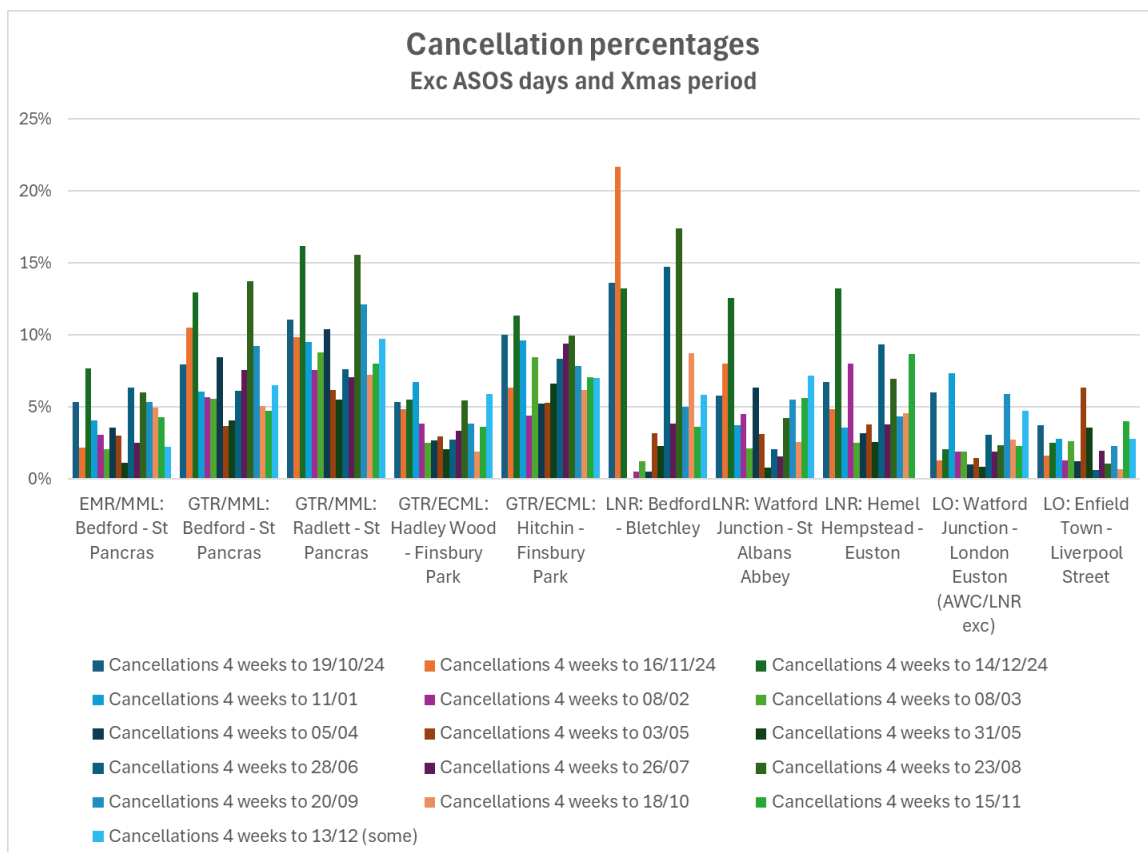
## A reprise of local campaigning topics

In our November newsletter I provided a list of local campaigning topics which was then reviewed at the meeting. I hope the list below now reflects these updates. I aim to refresh this in January or February.

## Performance

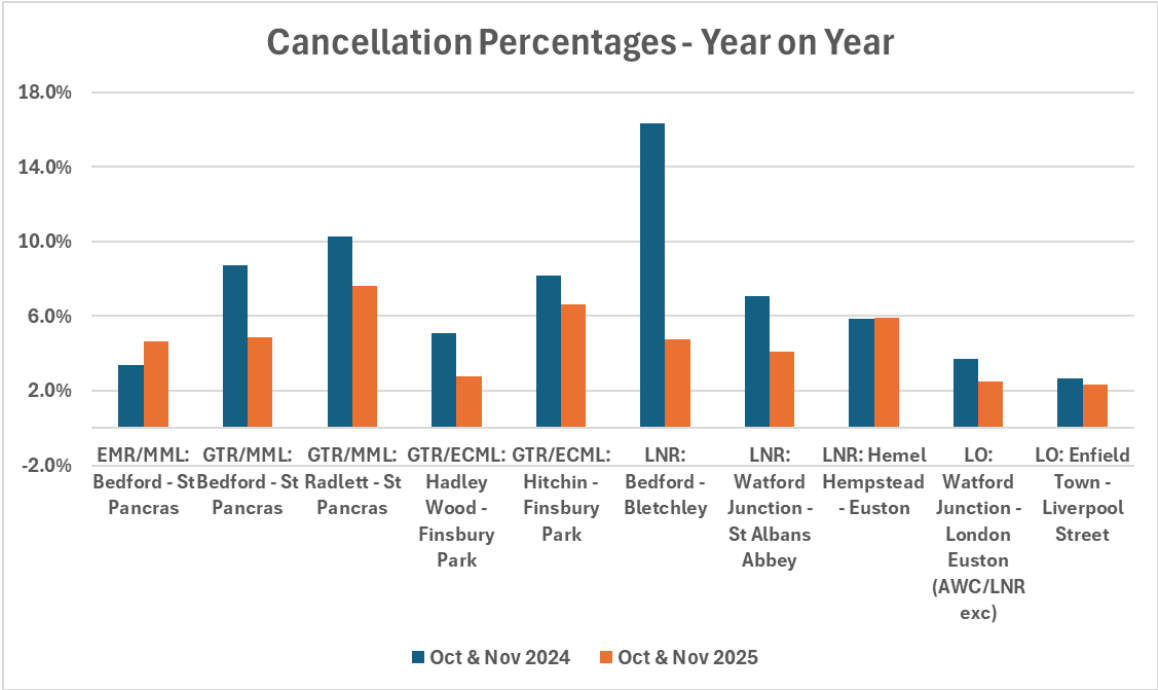
I have continued to collect the performance data for our main services via Recent Train Times.

## Cancellations over time

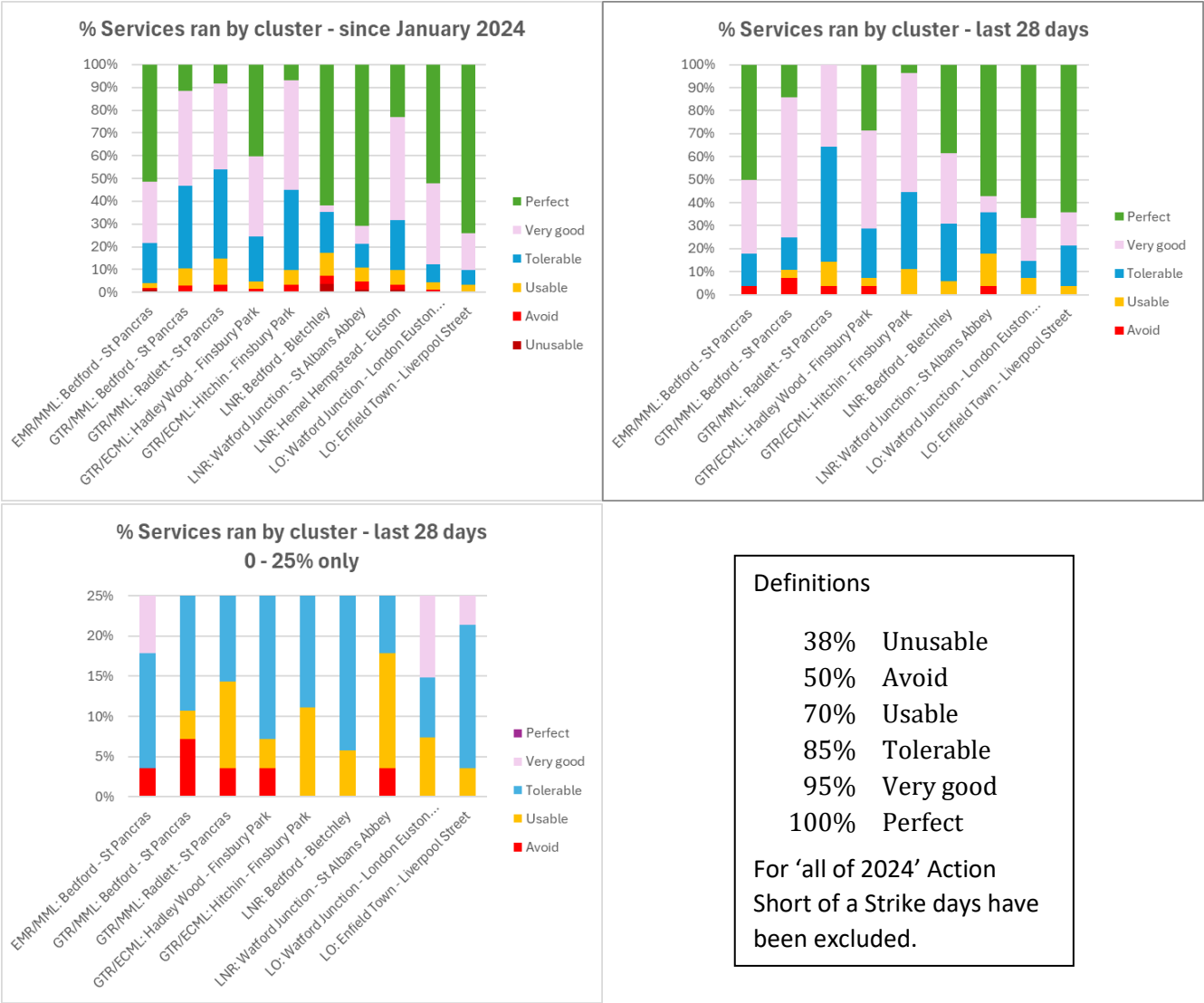


This graph is also available in landscape at the end of the newsletter.

Cancellations year on year

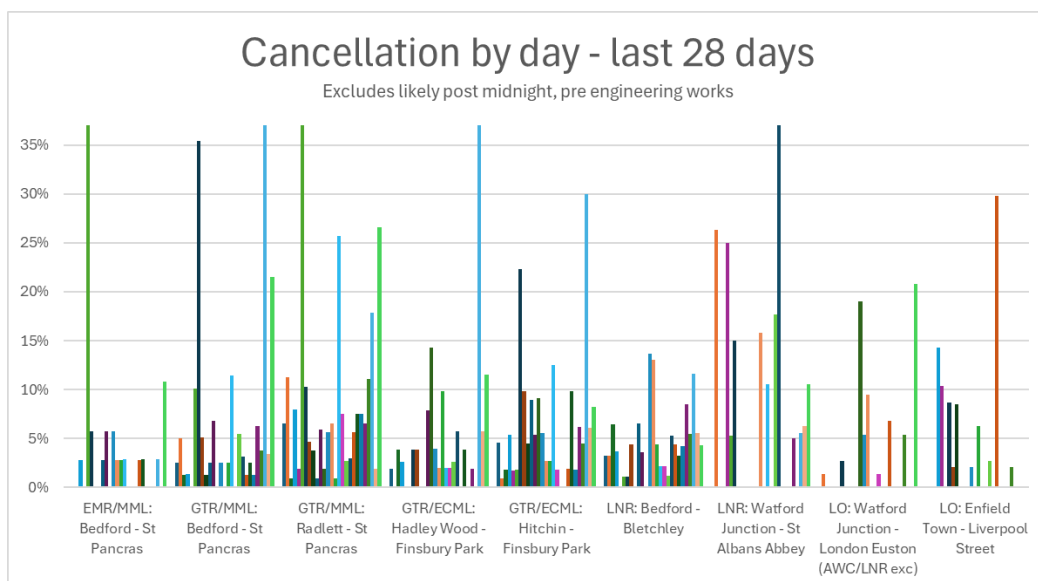
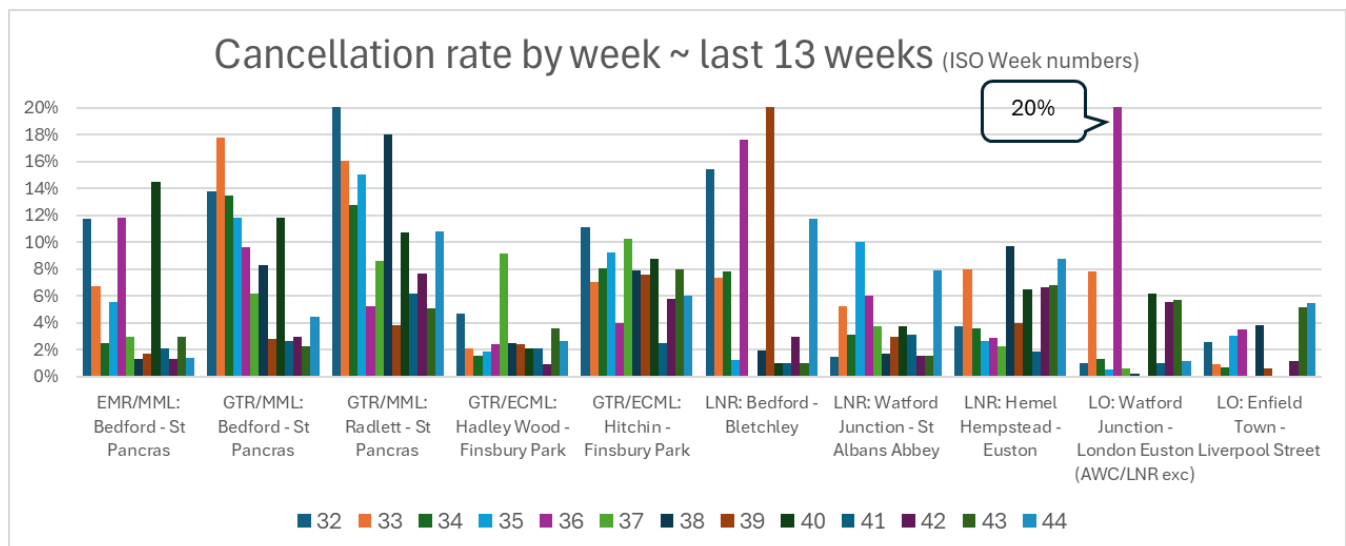
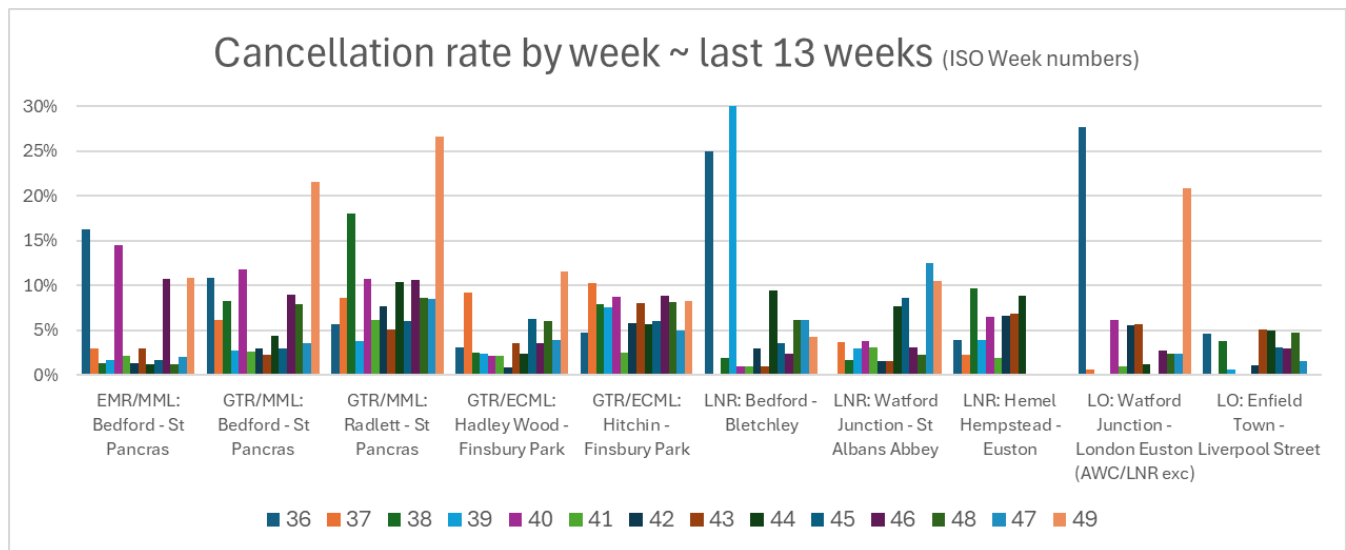


Spread of cancellations



Because I am measuring this statistic across at the “whole of day” level, I do not detect long gaps within the day.

## Cancellations by week / day of the week



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Stay Safe.

*Neil*

### Neil Middleton

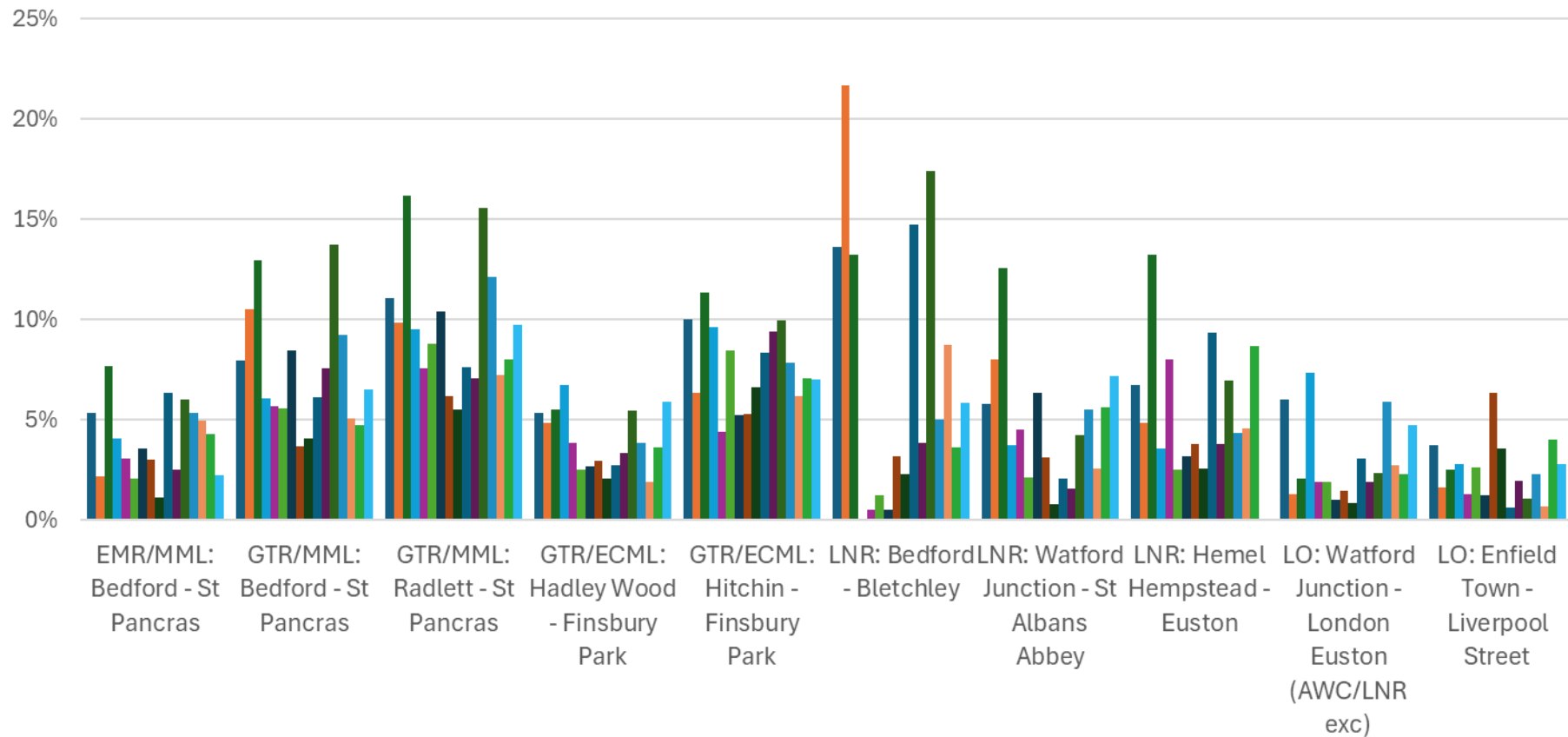
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## Cancellation percentages Exc ASOS days and Xmas period



- Cancellations 4 weeks to 19/10/24
- Cancellations 4 weeks to 16/11/24
- Cancellations 4 weeks to 14/12/24
- Cancellations 4 weeks to 11/01
- Cancellations 4 weeks to 08/02
- Cancellations 4 weeks to 08/03
- Cancellations 4 weeks to 05/04
- Cancellations 4 weeks to 03/05
- Cancellations 4 weeks to 31/05
- Cancellations 4 weeks to 28/06
- Cancellations 4 weeks to 26/07
- Cancellations 4 weeks to 23/08
- Cancellations 4 weeks to 20/09
- Cancellations 4 weeks to 18/10
- Cancellations 4 weeks to 15/11
- Cancellations 4 weeks to 13/12 (some)