

Dear Friend

I hope you are staying safe.

I invite you to our meeting on **Tuesday 10th February at 19:30 on Zoom**; I am targeting a finish by 20:45; definitely by 21:00.

Our next two meetings are then:

- **Saturday 7th 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.
- **Thursday 9th April at 19:30 on Zoom** – this may change to Wednesday 8th, as I have a potential clash – more next month (and also below).

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88450315544?pwd=d3krdCtiUHlrMExQcGtMWm1zVU9Qdz09>; alternatively join manually via <https://zoom.us/join>, then Meeting ID: 884 5031 5544 & Passcode: 910342.

If your PC doesn't have a microphone, then use the link above to open (and download, if needed) the software and, once connected, click the up arrow next to the microphone or join audio icon (bottom left) and follow the "switch to phone audio link" If you don't have a PC, tablet or Smartphone available, call one of the 3 numbers below, enter the Meeting ID [then '#'] at the first prompt; at the second prompt just press '#' and at the third prompt, enter the password [then '#']. Phone numbers to dial: 0131 460 1196 | 020 3481 5237 | 020 3481 5240.

Topics for meeting

1. Welcome
2. Luton Local Transport Plan (more below)
 - Update from Luton Borough Council
 - Round table
3. Other current campaigning issues (all more below)
 - Access for All
 - Contactless payment for LSE Rail Journeys
 - East West Rail
 - Station count on the Marson Vale
 - TfL & GN Inners
4. Performance (more below)
5. April meeting – Tue 7th or Weds 8th?
6. Round table

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Luton Local Transport Plan Revision

Luton Borough Council has their '[Local transport plan \(LTP\) 5](#)' out for consultation until 19 February.

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, I envisage that there will be a Railfuture response to this – written by Herts & Beds. I did get invited to a series of workshops by LBC during the preparation of LTP5, but calendar clashes meant I unfortunately only made a handful of them.

I was going to have a more detailed analysis of their proposals in this newsletter, but the website was being maintained when I had time for this. So instead I am now planning on doing this on Monday night, ready for our Tuesday meeting.

I am expecting that our comments will be generally supportive and may well make specific comments on the rail stations in the Borough (Leagrave, Luton Town and Luton Airport Parkway). I expect to recommend that they keep the door open for the return of some long distance services to Luton Airport Parkway – a combination of the new EMR Auroras and potential for a wider recast of long distance services concurrent with EWR and Universal openings. Personally, I see little chance of long distance services also stopping at Luton Town (other than their current Sunday morning calls before EMR Connect services start [and on that the bigger aspiration is for Connect services to start earlier on a Sunday]).

The meeting will include an update from Luton Borough Council. In advance of the meeting they write:

Consultation on Luton's Draft Local Transport Plan 5: Rail Highlights

Luton Council has published its draft fifth [Local Transport Plan](#), open for consultation until 19 February 2026. Feedback can be provided via the [online survey](#). The plan covers the period to 2040 and supports the council's ambition for a carbon neutral town.

Luton is served by three stations on the Midland Main Line:

- Leagrave Railway Station
- Luton Railway Station, and
- Luton Airport Parkway

An hourly overnight rail service to Luton Airport Parkway already operates. The recently opened Direct Air Rail Transit (DART) people mover provides a connection between Luton Airport Parkway station and the airport terminal. Rail currently accounts for only 3% of travel to work journeys, compared with 55% by car.

Station Improvements

The council proposes a feasibility study into the regeneration of Luton Railway Station to support improved bus interchange facilities and secure cycle parking.

Services and Connectivity

The plan supports enhanced Midland Main Line stopping patterns, alongside additional late night and early morning services to Luton Airport Parkway. It also seeks to maximise East West Rail connectivity, including improved first and last mile links and potential direct services to Oxford and Cambridgeshire from Luton Parkway.

Electrification

Policy 20 supports the completion of Midland Main Line electrification through to Sheffield, enabling all services through Luton to operate using electric traction.

Integration

The council will work with Great British Railways to support bus and rail timetable integration and multi operator ticketing.

Airport-Related Rail

With plans for London Luton Airport to expand to 32 million passengers a year by 2043, the plan includes policies to ensure sufficient rail capacity for passengers and staff. It also supports enhanced first and last mile links and improved connectivity to Oxford and Cambridgeshire from Luton Parkway.

Inter-Urban Public Transport

Policy 11 outlines aspirations for guided busway extensions to provide alternatives during Midland Main Line disruption with West Coast Main Line and Hertford North rail link.

If can't make the meeting, please let me have any comments – ideally in time for me to relay them to the meeting on Tuesday and no later than Thursday 12th.

Access for All

The good news on Access for All is that Biggleswade now has [lifts](#). I'm told that work is about to start at [Luton \(Town\) station](#) and for [Flitwick](#), the promise is mid-2027.

A [DfT announcement](#) didn't had bad news for Bushey and Legrave, which "will not be progressing at this point" and worse news for Cricklewood & Palmers Green that are "indefinitely deferred as the benefits such upgrades would deliver to users of the station would not justify the significant disruption caused to other users of and the significant costs to passengers and taxpayers".

More generally:

- My understanding is that there is no current avenue to bid for a new station to be added to the Access for All lifts programme, and it isn't clear when there might be. The only current options are to (1) get it included in a much bigger enhancement; or (2) get full external funding.
- I interpret the announcement as meaning that should a prioritised list of every remaining station be created, Legrave and Bushey would still be somewhere near the top – but Cricklewood and Palmers Green are in the middle or towards the bottom of the list.
- I am still expecting the new stations at Wixams / Universal and on the Marston Vale Line to be fully accessible including lifts. For both Wixams / Universal and Stewartby I would hope, and will campaign for if needed, for multiple lifts to be available for access to each platform.

TfL seeking control of GN Inners

There is no new official news on this. TfL's aspiration was in their business plan to 2029/30 and so that generated a new round of news stories.

I have heard that the DfT has commissioned and received an independent assessment of the TfL Business Case and I have send a [Freedom of Information request](#) to request it.

To recap, there are three broad outcomes:

1. TfL's business case is accepted and implemented.
2. GTR's alternative proposal – the same for the Hertford Loop, and that the Welwyn Garden City to Sevenoaks service becomes all day is accepted and implemented.
3. Nothing changes.

The view of the January meeting was that choice 2 was our preferred option.

My next steps are to continue to follow up with TfL, GTR and see if, via Ian Brown, I can get something in front of Lord Hendy. I think though the 80/20 rule very much applies – a little bit of time is justified but making it a big

time consumer is not sensible – the decision is probably going to be driven in good part by national political and perception views.

And to recap, TfL's response to my 10 questions is [here](#) and the redacted business case [here](#).

Contactless Payment for journeys

Contactless related complaints continue to rumble on; it very much seems that the December 2025 stations have caused more bad news stories to appear in the media and Facebook groups. I've made some progress on my plan:

“Write a short paper suggesting how contactless should evolve, focusing on four features:

- Railcards
- Bespoke times for off-peak start and end (see below)
- A third fare band (for weekends)
- Support for Child Fares”

Since my January update there has been one addition to the list of “bad consequences” – the impact on cross-London fares where a journey starts and ends outside Zone 6. The discovery example is Bletchley to Sevenoaks, where the afternoon peak fare starts at 14:40. This is because the measurement point for the start of peak for these journeys is the outward journey from Central London – deemed to be post 16:00 for the 14:40. The solution in this example could include split ticketing – or split tapping.

East West Rail

At last month's meeting we debated:

“Our new, larger, easy-to access stations at Woburn Sands, Ridgmont, Liddington and Stewartby, along with the relocated Bedford St Johns station”.

From the full EWR 'You Said, We Did Report' [report](#).

Our conclusion that my comments from last month all made sense:

I've read their explanation, and “big picture” it makes sense, in particular the challenges of changing many of the existing stations in a way that will increase passenger numbers, make them safe and accessible – and also the wider capacity reductions involved in running trains that call all 9 existing stations.

The 'You Said We Did Report' does highlight the goal of making the new stations easy to get to without using a car and we definitely need to continue to champion the importance of this (including that this is funded within the core programme).

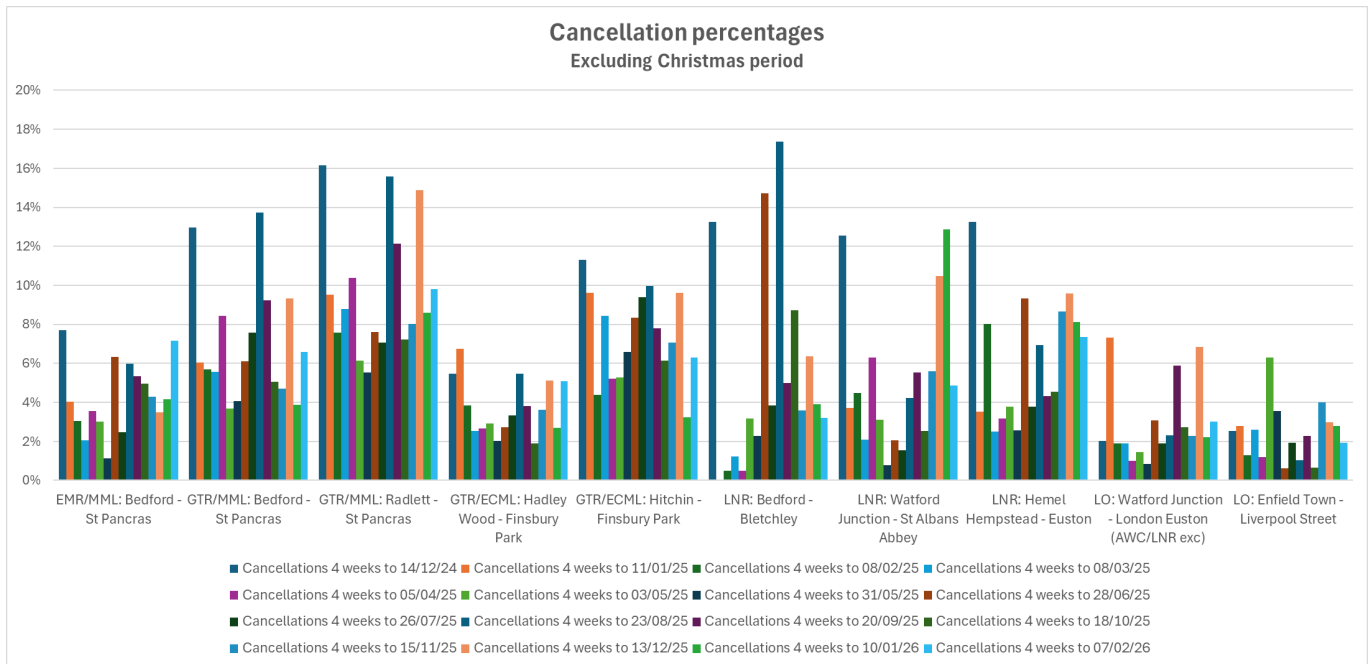
EWR between Milton Keynes and Oxford

Still no news; I think it is mired in a wider dispute about the expansion (or not) of DOO (Driver Only Operation) and/or DCO (Driver Controlled Operation), where there is a second member of staff and the driver opens and closes the doors. I still hope to ride it on the first day. The view of the October 2025 meeting was others want to do the same and so I will organise an outing once everything is clear.

Performance

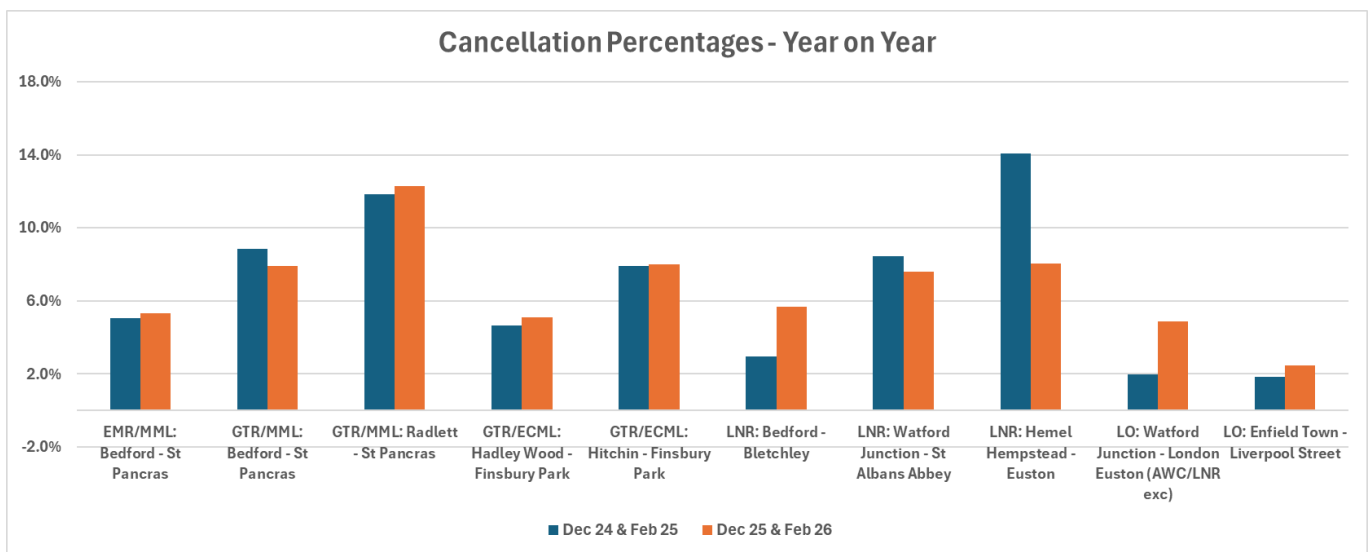
I have continued to collect the performance data for our main services via Recent Train Times.

Cancellations over time



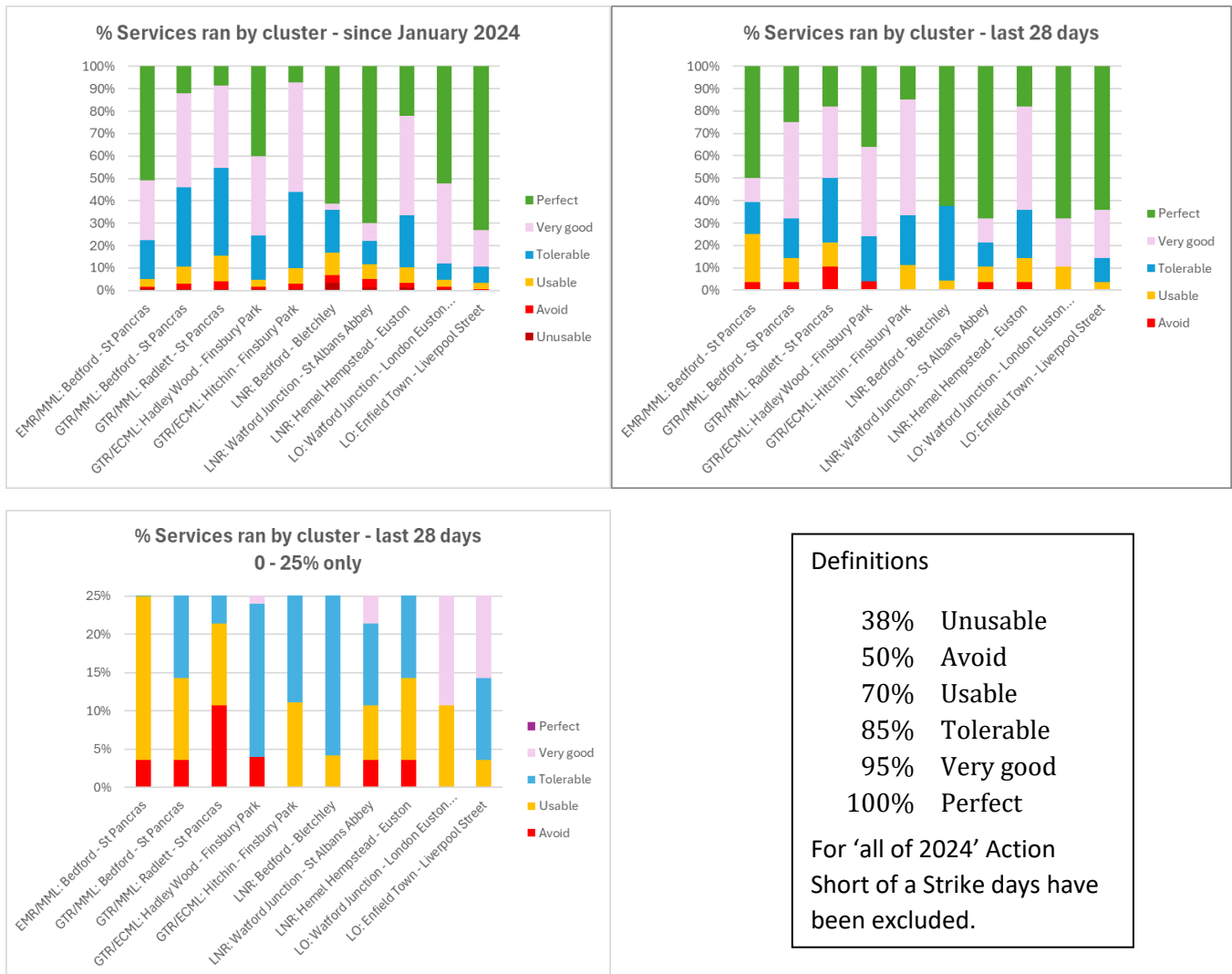
This graph is also available in landscape at the end of the newsletter.

Cancellations year on year



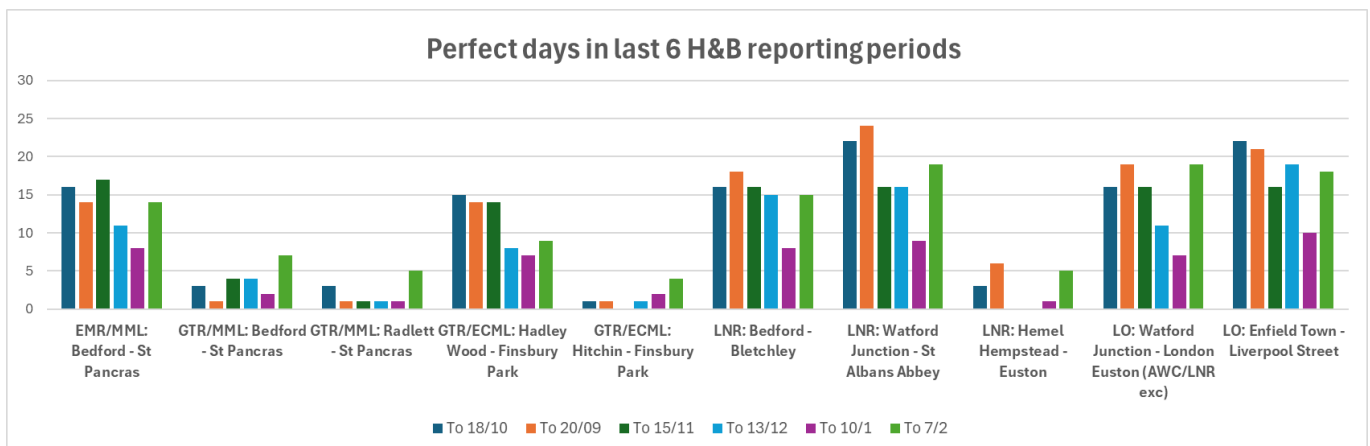
Note: This graph effectively compares before & after Christmas & NY for the 2 years. Performance between mid December and mid January is excluded.

Spread of cancellations

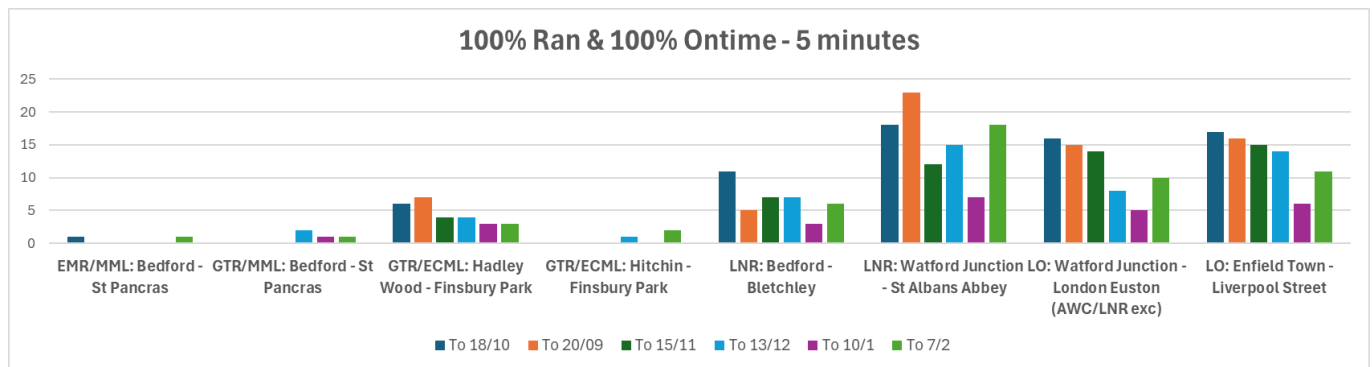


Because I am measuring this statistic across at the “whole of day” level, I do not detect long gaps within the day.

This month, as an extra, I have taken a look at the number of ‘perfect’ days (using the cancellation metric across the last 6 months):



The next graph (also a special) counts the number of days with no cancellations and every service achieving 0 to 5 minutes delay.

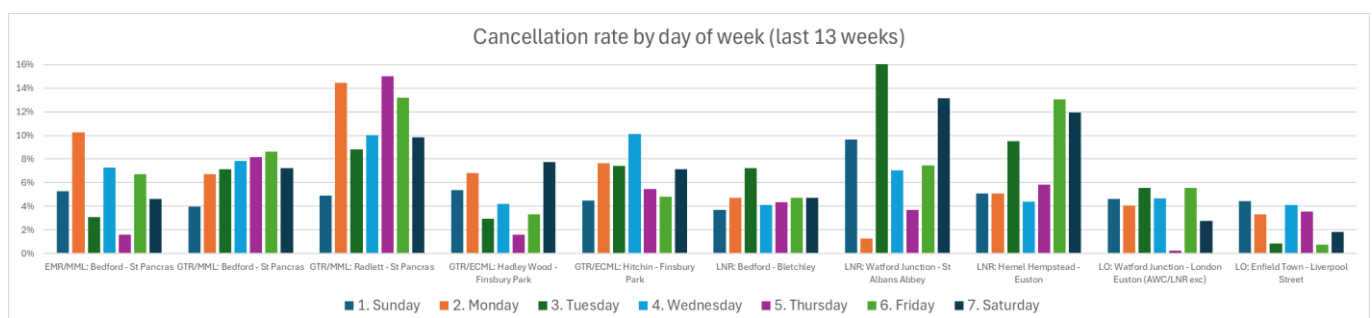
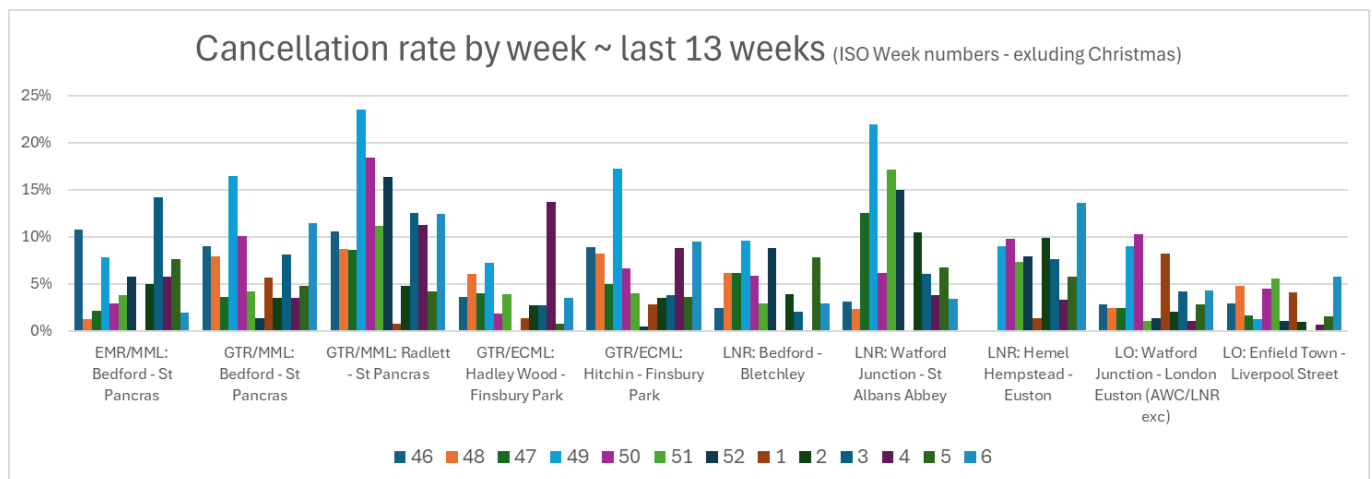


Thameslink Inners and LNW on the WCML had no such days.

I think the key message on this second graph is the benefits of running a largely standalone railway, where external factors have little influence. So the London Overground performance between Enfield Town and Liverpool Street is the standout performance given other LO and GA trains on a greater portion of those lines.

More generally, I think that both these graphs are 'interesting', but the distinction between all trains running and one cancelled and possibly a single six minute delay is very limited for passengers, but significant for these graphs.

Cancellations by week / day of the week



A reprise of local campaigning topics

The [list of campaigning priorities](#) was last updated in January and will next be updated in April. Comments are welcome.

Other Railfuture meetings you might be interested in

Sat 19 April, 11am (time TBC)	Railfuture LSE Annual Meeting	Wesley's Chapel, City Road, London
Sat 4 July, 11am (time TBC)	Railfuture National Annual Meeting	Priory Rooms, Birmingham

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Stay Safe.

Neil

Neil Middleton

Director (with responsibility for Communications) | **Convener, Railfuture Hertfordshire & Bedfordshire** |
TOC Liaison Representative for GTR | Vice-Chair, London & South East Branch
e-mail: neil.middleton@railfuture.org.uk | phone: 07887 628367
our websites: www.railfuture.org.uk | www.railfuture.org.uk/Herts+and+Beds | www.railwatch.org.uk
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All other correspondence to 3 Chandos Court, Martlesham, Suffolk IP12 4SU

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Cancellation percentages Excluding Christmas period

