

Dear Friend

I hope you are staying safe.

I invite you to our meeting on **Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> July at 19:30 on Zoom**; I am targeting a finish by 20:45; definitely by 21:00 (note, not Weds 16<sup>th</sup>).

Our next two meetings are then:

- An **in-person social on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> August** on the Marston Vale line – Details below.
- **Wednesday 8th October at 19:30 on Zoom.**

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. Summer social (more below)
3. Government announcements, including accessibility at local stations (more below)
4. East West Rail, Universal and Wixams (more below)
5. Performance (more below)
6. Contactless (more below)
7. Just in case
  - ECML December 2025 Timetable
  - Fares (generally)
  - Hadley Wood Toilet
  - Long Blockades
  - Written updates
8. Round table

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### **Summer social – 30 August at Ridgmont Tea Rooms**

The discussion last time confirmed a visit to Ridgmont on Saturday 30 August. I propose that we converge on the [tea rooms](#) via the 12:09 arrival from [Bletchley](#) and the 12:11 arrival from [Bedford](#) and aim to leave on the services 2 hours later. I'll see whether there is any appetite for a ride over the whole line at the meeting on Thursday. Doing so involves a 24 minute wait at Bletchley or a 13 minute wait at Bedford. And, also, whether this should be before or after. In terms of other things to do at the station, there is the heritage centre, but the station at Ridgmont is some distance from the village.

I'll fine tune the detail based on feedback on Thursday (or drop me an email before then with thoughts) and then send out an invite in early August.

### **Government announcements**

The Government announced "[Green light for over 50 road and rail upgrades supporting over 39,000 new homes and 42,000 jobs](#)". The link includes an interactive map.

The focus was generally away from London and the south east. Locally, we got investment on the East Coast Mainline for signalling, more funding for EW Rail (I haven't worked out how much of a reannouncement this is...) and for improved performance on the West Coast Mainline south. On the Midland Mainline there was mention of Kettering to Wigston electrification (but that's already basically complete, so a probable repeat). And electrification north from Wigston was (unfortunately) paused.

Locally Legrave and Bushey (near Watford) are on the list for feasibility studies for accessibility improvements.

It will be worthwhile spending a bit of time on Thursday working out which local station that is not on any of the lists today deserves accessibility improvements.

### **East West Rail**

Our key campaign for EWR continues to be for recognition that Bedford Midland needs platforms on the Midland Mainline fast lines for EMR services, to reduce the time impact of stops there.

On a good news note, EWR are clearly taking accessibility seriously – see their [latest](#) update.

### **Universal Studios, including the Wixams station**

Universal have now submitted their planning application. This is not via the usual route of an application to the Local Authority – instead they have applied to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government for a 'Special Development Order for the Proposal under Section 59 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990'.

The MHCLG [web pages](#) have all the detail; there is a consultation open until midday on 31 August. Together with Roger Blake (with his national Infrastructure 'hat' on), we are likely to make a submission – if nothing else, to highlight the importance of early delivery of the station at Wixams – see below.

It has been a bit of a struggle to find anything rail related in the documentation, but to be fair, it is a struggle to find anything detailed at all – the fine detail of a typical planning application just isn't there (compare and contrast last month's mention of the Liverpool Street application...)

I have found relevant content on page 9 of the "[Description of Development](#)". This does confirm a 4 track station on the Midland Mainline. It refers to railway station in the singular. Thus the station / stations on East West Rail are not listed. I don't take from this that they (the EWR stations) won't be happening, but do take from it that they will gain formal approval via EWR processes – this is supported by this [diagram](#) which mentions EWR Station safeguarded land (although to be pedantic, it implies only a Bedford bound platform as nothing is safeguarded on the Bletchley side).

## Wixams station (near Bedford)

Our campaigning hope on this is threefold:

1. For bus services to Flitwick and Bedford stations to be in place “now”.
2. For the outline design to be finalised as soon as possible and for more detailed design for any revised slow line platforms to then immediately commence. From the above, design of this revised station is within the scope of the Universal Special Development Order.
3. For there to be a commitment to commence construction for the slow lines in 2026. The talk is for construction of Universal itself to commence in 2026.

On ‘2’ and ‘3’ I am trying to get Network Rail to engage with us and seeking a way they can do that without risk of giving away unpublished information about the new station.

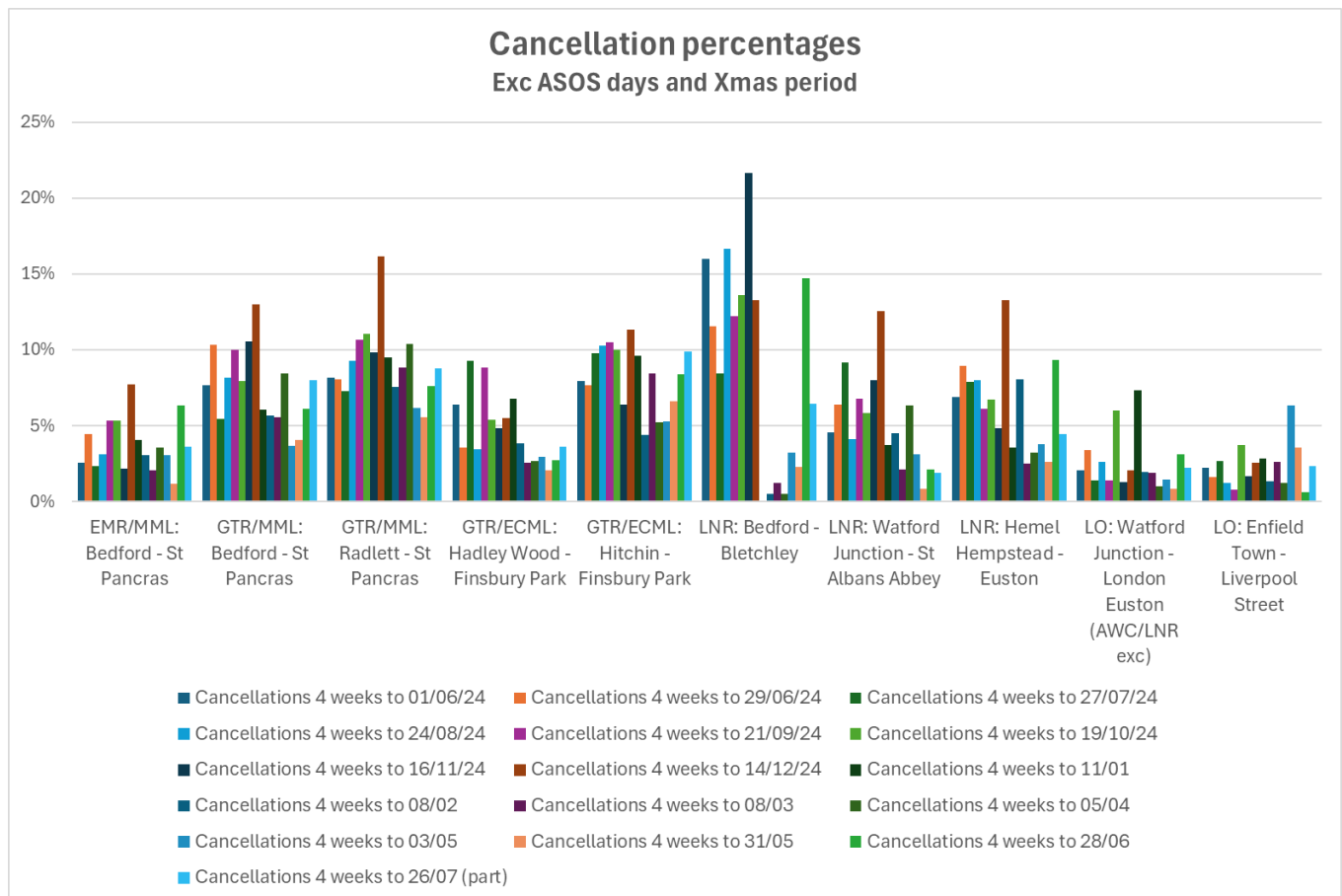
## Contactless

Nothing to report this month, unfortunately.

## Performance

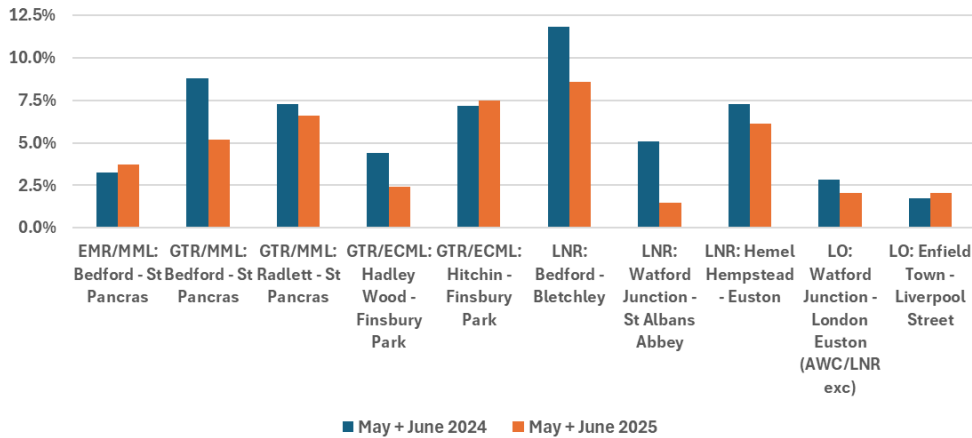
I have continued to collect the performance data for our main services via Recent Train Times.

### Cancellations over time



I have this time a new graph: this compares 8 weeks in May/June last year with May/June this year:

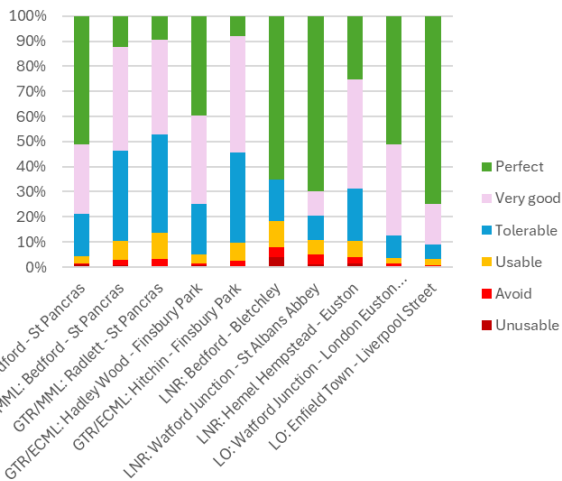
## Cancellation Percentages - Year on Year



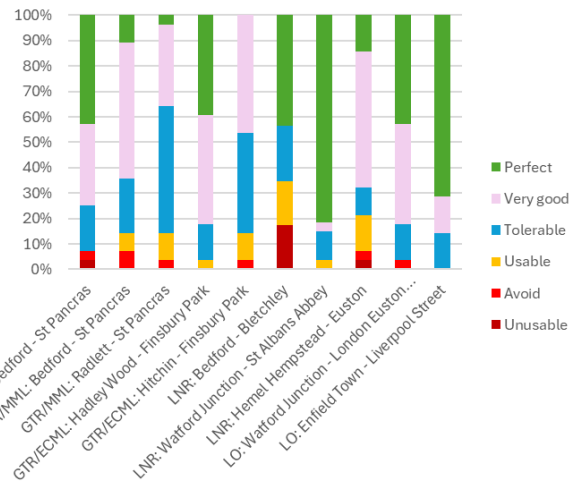
In the graph, Orange is this year and Dark Teal last year. I can't exclude from my data infrastructure and other major failings so it should be treated with caution. But as a generalisation there is more good news than bad news – some noticeable reductions in cancellation rates and where there are increases, they are not large.

In these next graphs, I explore the spread of cancellations (excluding the Christmas period):

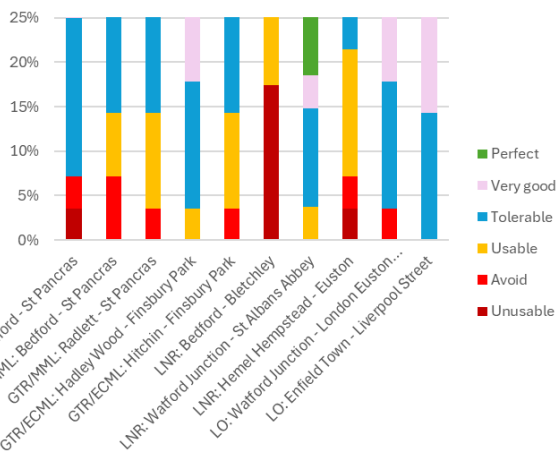
### % Services ran by cluster - since January 2024



### % Services ran by cluster - last 28 days



### % Services ran by cluster - last 28 days 0 - 25% only



### Definitions

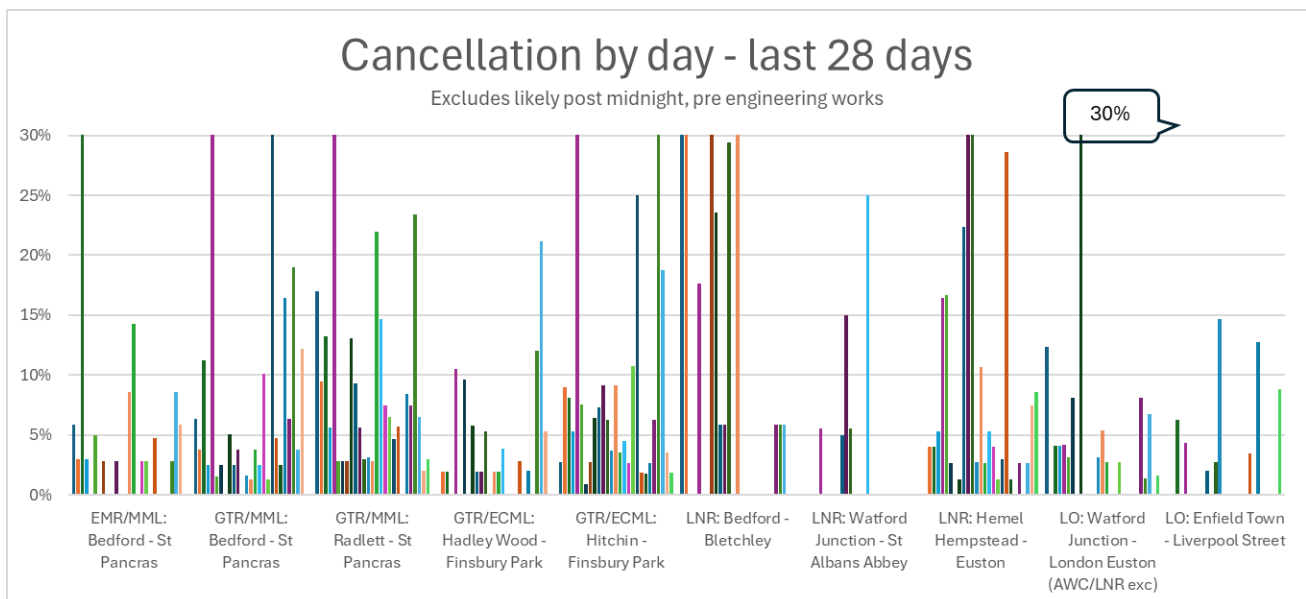
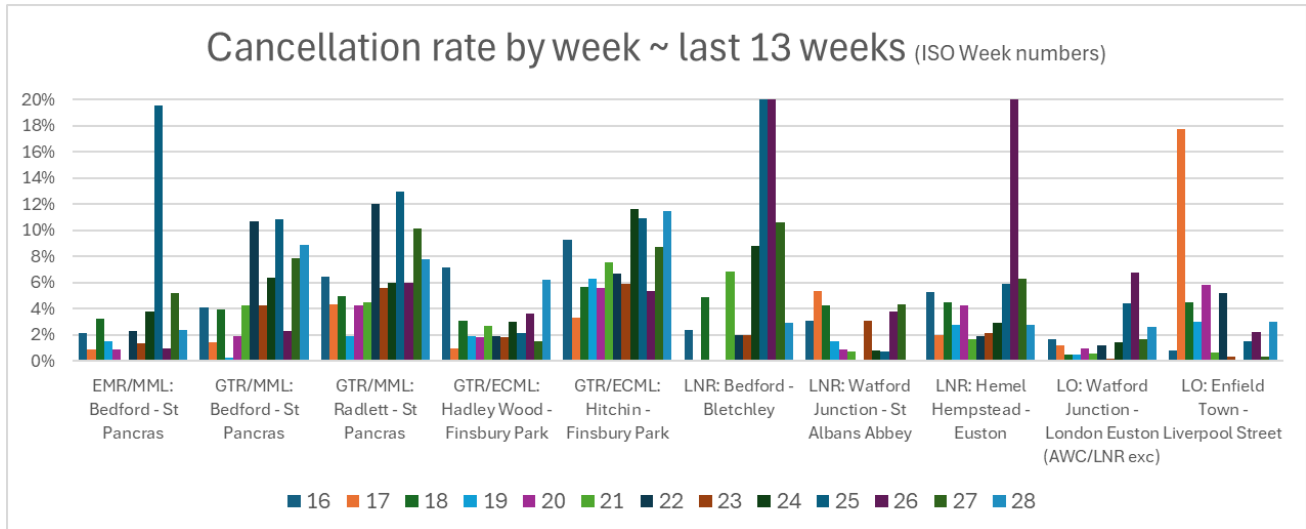
38%	Unusable
50%	Avoid
70%	Usable
85%	Tolerable
95%	Very good
100%	Perfect

For 'all of 2024' Action  
Short of a Strike days have been excluded.

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

In these graphs, I am trying to see if we can increase our understanding of the volatility of cancellations. Both graphs are quite granular, and the objective is much less to look at week X and understand the rate there and much more to understand does it change a lot. The first graph looks at cancellations by week over thirteen weeks, the second at cancellation by day of the week over the last thirteen weeks and the third cancellations by day over the last 28 days. This last graph is particularly prone to “dodgy data” at the level of granularity in place.



## Commentary

My main view has to be “not getting much better – but at least not getting worse either ~ and quite a lot of volatility.

## GTR’s brands and service changes – disruption and planned engineering work

Nothing to report on this, but a topic I will return to.

## Written updates / Topics ‘on hold’

- [inter-railse archive](#) (the branch’s two page e-newsletter). We recently added many more members to the list of recipients; if you are not already receiving it in your inbox, [email Roger Blake](#). Give your choice from receiving a web link or as a PDF attachment.

## Engineering blockade publicity

The next step is to “convert” the Railwatch article into a position paper. In the article I majored on multi day impacts on commuters, but a common theme of conversations has been that sometimes we organise our lives a lot longer ahead than the railway’s typical 12 week timeframe – and sometimes have choices of dates (will I go to the Panto on the 7<sup>th</sup> or the 14<sup>th</sup>?) and this should be bought into play as a key factor.

## For the record: Performance measures

See Appendix A.

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Stay Safe.

*Neil*

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## Appendix A / Performance measures

1. Lack of notice (when a likely shortage of resources in the near future is reasonably predictable in advance). Two ‘test’ points:
  - a. Shortly before going to the station / in time to get the previous train (our definition: 1 hour before)
  - b. In time to rearrange journeys, appointments etc (our definition: early evening the day before)
2. Loss of first or last train of the day (with the loss of the last train being worse than the first)
3. Gaps of more than 1 hour or cancellation of 2 consecutive services
4. inequity in allocation of lost services – ie better some impact on most service clusters than some service clusters taking most of the impact.
5. Cancellation via skip stopping of the first train post disruption and gaps as per #2 above.