

Railfuture - London & South East Branch

Metro Division

Campaign Newsletter June 2026



Charing Cross Station will be closed for 22 days this summer. Most services to the south east of London will be affected

FOCUSSING ON THE POSITIVES

As a campaign group, perhaps inevitably many editions of the Metro Newsletter reference the numerous problematic issues affecting London's railways, expressed not as complaints but to highlight issues and to seek change.

However we must not forget the numerous successes and improvements, and this edition illustrates some of the good things that are happening here in the capital.

The lead article refers to the expansion of mobile coverage over the London Underground network, led of course by TfL. This involves a combination of improved Wi-Fi connectivity at Underground stations, in conjunction with mobile connectivity through the tunnel network. The aim is for 100% of the tunnels within zone one to be fully connected by the end of 2026.

In our last edition our lead article related to the sorry state of accessibility on the Underground, with only about one-third of Underground stations fully accessible. Whilst we rightly campaign to rectify that, we should not forget the many improvements we are seeing on our network. For example, GTR has recently issued a press release as to £3.4 million of funding from the DfT over 2 years to facility a multitude of small station improvements. Other important station improvements should also be lauded, such as the vast improvement to Hither Green station with a new footbridge and assess points being created, and the go ahead for improvement works at Kew Bridge and at Peckham Rye stations.

These improvements should encourage us. Of course there is much that could be better, and those responsible for the operation of our railways would like nothing better than the funding to improve.

Campaigning has many aspects. Some involves discussions and seeking changes from operators, however much revolves around highlighting the positives of our railway, and ultimately playing our part in pressurising those who provide the finance to pay for necessary improvements. Our influence and success lies in working with the rail industry, not against it.

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MOBILE PHONE AND WI-FI IMPROVEMENTS ON THE LONDON UNDERGROUND

TfL is working hard to improve mobile connectivity throughout the Underground, in particular in the most sticky points, being those parts of the network that are actually underground. At present around 60% of stations that are underground now have coverage with more being added all the time, and work is on-going within the tunnels to cover the whole of the network in zone one by the end of the year.

There is essentially two aspects to the work. Mobile coverage of uninterrupted 4G and 5G mobile coverage is being rolled out to cover the tunnels using Distributed Antenna System (DAS) technology. An enhanced Wi-Fi system is also being made available at all Underground stations, most London Overground stations, and the central core of the Elizabeth line.

The technical work is being undertaken by Boldyn Networks which has successfully introduced mobile connectivity to underground transit systems in a number of USA cities including New York. All four major mobile network operators, Three UK, EE, Vodafone, and Virgin Media O2, are taking part so the system is neutral in terms of mobile operator. Once coverage on the Underground is complete, TfL intends that Boldyn will provide coverage to those sections of the Docklands Light Railway that are underground, and also the Windrush line between Highbury and Islington, and New Cross.

Seb Dance, Deputy Mayor of London for Transport, said: 'It's brilliant to see this continued progress on the Mayor's promise of delivering 4G and 5G across the London Underground, with more mobile coverage for passengers across an ever-growing network of lines and stations. In an increasingly digital world, we're committed to ensuring that all Londoners and visitors have the connections they need - even whilst on the move - as we build a better London for everyone.'

Mobile coverage (4G or 5G) should work everywhere. As to station Wi-Fi, devices with a sim card should automatically pick up the Wi-Fi signal when a passenger is in a Wi-Fi enabled station. There is no Wi-Fi signal in tunnels, which as stated is covered by 4G/5G, but a phone will connect to the signal at the next Wi-Fi enabled platform.

GTR PRESS RELEASE ON SMALL STATION IMPROVEMENTS

GTR has released a press release detailing a raft of small improvements across railway stations in London, the Home Counties and the South East that it has completed or is planning over its network.

So far, more than £1.7 million has been invested into improving stations across the Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern network in the past year, with an additional £1.7 million secured for future improvements in the coming year. The work is funded by an annual 'Minor Works and Station Improvement Fund', allocated by the DfT, to enhance station environments and ease passenger travel. Improvements include new interactive information screens, more secure cycle storage and improved accessibility at stations.

Louis Rambaud, Chief Customer Officer at GTR, which operates the three mentioned train brands, said: 'While these changes may seem modest on their own, it's the little touches at our passengers' local stations which will be noticed the most. Things like information screens in the right places, better access for those who need it, and our work to encourage sustainable transport for the 'last mile' all add up to something much greater than the sum of its parts. Having completed 60 projects in the past year, this continued investment delivers tangible benefits to commuters, leisure travellers and visitors alike.'

In relation specifically to London, new and improved information screens are being installed at Drayton Park, Essex Road, Alexandra Palace and Gordon Hill. Interactive information screens have been installed at City Thameslink and at Blackfriars.

Station redecorations are happening at Reedham and Alexandra Palace. Accessibility improvements are happening at Hendon and improved seating at Coulsdon Town. Ticket office relocation is happening at Elephant and Castle to improve visibility for passengers amid redevelopment of the wider area. CCTV provision has been improved based on crime data and more detailed 3D maps of stations have been produced to improve station accessibility helping people plan their journeys.

Plans for 2026/2027 period include improved customer information screen provision at Finsbury Park, design study for accessible toilet at Alexandra Palace, further accessibility enhancements at Hendon station car park, improved train service information in London Underground booking halls at Moorgate, Old Street, Highbury & Islington, and new online 3D station maps at Elstree and Borehamwood and at Gipsy Hill.

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CLOSURE OF CHARING CROSS STATION FROM SUNDAY 26TH JULY TO SUNDAY 16TH AUGUST 2026

Charing Cross and Waterloo East station will close for 3 weeks this summer due to extensive engineering works, including replacing one mile of old track, structural repairs to the Hungerford bridge over the Thames and Waterloo East pedestrian bridge, upgrading drainage systems and rebuilding sections of platform at Charing Cross.

During the closure, no trains will serve either station. Southeastern services that would normally run into Charing Cross will instead terminate at London Bridge or be diverted to London Victoria, Cannon Street or Blackfriars. By consolidating the work into a 22-day closure, the work can be completed more quickly with less disruption overall than the alternative options of 60 weekend closures or four to five 9-day closures.

The effect on services to Charing Cross are as follows:

- Hastings and Ashford via Paddock Wood Line

Charing Cross to Ramsgate, Dover, Tunbridge Wells and Hastings trains will start and terminate at London Bridge. Some Tunbridge Wells trains will operate to and from Victoria, with additional hourly trains running between peak periods. Peak-only additional trains to Charing Cross will not operate.

- Orpington - Grove Park local services

Trains that usually run between Charing Cross and Orpington or Sevenoaks will instead start and terminate at London Bridge, with some trains diverted to run via Lewisham. Cannon Street trains to and from Orpington will continue.

- Bromley South Line

Victoria to Orpington trains will run every 30 minutes instead of every 15 minutes. Peak-time trains between Blackfriars and Beckenham Junction will continue to operate, but at revised times.

- Maidstone East Line

Charing Cross - Maidstone East trains will operate to and from London Victoria instead, calling additionally at Bromley South. Other Victoria trains on the route will continue to run but run at different times.

- Hayes Line

Charing Cross - Hayes trains will start/terminate at London Bridge or run to London Blackfriars. Trains scheduled to skip Lewisham will instead be diverted via Lewisham, run fast to Elephant & Castle and terminate at Blackfriars. Trains routed via Lewisham will terminate at London Bridge.

- Woolwich Line

Trains on the Woolwich line will continue to run into London Cannon Street, some at revised times. A few peak time trains will be retimed, cancelled, or diverted via Blackheath instead of Greenwich.

- Sidcup Line

Trains between Gravesend and central London that normally skip Lewisham will start and terminate at London Bridge and will run via Lewisham instead. Cannon Street circular trains will continue with amended times.

Bexleyheath Line

Trains will continue to run between Cannon Street and Barnehurst, and between Victoria and Gravesend, with some changes to timings. Additional Cannon Street trains will run in the morning peak.

Medway Valley and Highspeed

All trains on the Medway Valley lines will operate as normal, as will Highspeed trains via Ashford and Gravesend.

REDUCED SUMMERTIME TRAINS

One feature of summertime in recent years has been a reduction of rail services from mid-July to the end of August on parts of our network. In recent times this has effected parts of London, in particular the south west and south east. The excuse given for these reductions is that travel patterns change over the summer as fewer people use peak time services and the demand for off-peak services changes too, where some routes see fewer people travel during the day or demand for early morning trains to key airports increases as people go on holiday.

It is, however, rather bizarre that these summertime reductions are not consistently applied around the country or between operators, or from one year to the next, which raises obvious questions. Last year, just months after South Western Railway was nationalised, it suffered service reductions accounting for nearly 5% of its 1,600 daily services. Reduced customer journeys were given as the reason, together with driver training for the new Arterio trains.

This year it appears to be the turn of GTR, which was nationalised as recently as 31 May. Pressure to reduce subsidy from the DfT and HM Treasury has resulted in numerous GTR services being reduced. Between 18 July and 29 August, services between Rainham and Luton are cut from every 30 minutes to one an hour on Saturdays and during the middle of the day throughout the week. Trains will still run every half hour during peak times. The route, which begins in Kent at one end, passes through Greenwich and Bexley and stops at major transport hubs such as Abbey Wood and Woolwich Arsenal.

Some of the reductions are meant to be peak time only, but peak reduction can also effect non-peak trains because trains removed are often on round trips, which may be peak journeys in one direction but off-peak on their return. Redhill corridor services are badly hit, seeing peak trains reduced from 6tph to 4tph and south of Redhill from 4tph to 2tph. However for five hours in the off-peak this is also reduced from 6tph to 4tph and south of Redhill to 1tph. Calculation is not easy, but it seems to us that the overall reduction is around 2% although on the Redhill corridor is about 4%.

STRIKE - WHAT STRIKE?

We reported in our last edition that many people were managing without much difficulty the RMT strike by its Underground train drivers. The same was evident when visiting London on Tuesday 2 June, a strike day. It was apparent that office workers, many of whom have the flexibility of working some days from home, simply didn't travel into London at all on that day.

It seems that those that did travel into London found alternative ways to get around. Use of the Underground was down by 41% on that day, but Oyster and contactless card taps were only down by around 10% across the day, showing that Londoners and visitors to the city were simply changing to Thameslink, the Elizabeth Line, the Overground, national rail services or buses to get around despite the strike action.

TfL acknowledged the drop in Underground usage, but noted also that passenger figures for buses, the Overground and Elizabeth line were up by 5%, 9% and 19% respectively.

SOCIAL EVENTS – RAILWAY WALKS PROGRAMME

Our multi-walk programme 'London Railways Termini Walks' undertaken in conjunction with the Railway & Canal Historical Society continue. Our first joint walk was in April 2026 covering Waterloo and all things LSWR. Our second was in June 2026 and covered Victoria and all things London, Brighton and South Coast Railway. Both were fully booked.

Our next walk is Blackfriars and all things London, Chatham and Dover Railway to be conducted on Wednesday 16 September 2026 starting at 11am at Blackfriars station and will include discussion of the extraordinary success story of Thameslink. To attend you must pre-book, email Richard Bowry on richard.bowry@railfuture.org.uk.

OUR THANKS TO PAUL BEST OF NETWORK RAIL

We would like to thank Paul Best, Senior Strategic Planner (Kent & Sussex) Southern Region, Network Rail, who gave us a presentation (read it [here](#), or download it [here](#)) at our last Metro meeting on 21 May 2026, which was fully attended. Paul covered a number of areas, in particular current London issues and strategic planning, both historical and current. Issues and concerns covered were familiar to attendees, including various capacity issues and potential resolutions, all of which of course needs expert planning and support.

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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, primarily because their focus is on train services to London. These include:

- Marylebone Travellers' Association
- Sevenoaks Rail Travellers' Association
- 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?

RAIL USER GROUP: MEETINGS

Chesham & District Transport Users Group

Next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 4 August 2026, and will be held in Chesham Town Hall starting at 7.30pm.

Watford Rail Users Group

Next meeting is the group's AGM followed by a joint open meeting with the Abbey Flyer Users' Group, scheduled for Monday 22 June 2026 being held in the Training Room at Watford Junction Station. The AGM will commence at 6pm and the open meeting shortly thereafter at around 6.30pm. Individuals are asked to state their intention to attend by emailing wrug2@hotmail.co.uk beforehand.

MEETING SCHEDULE FOR 2026

Due to availability issues at our venue (Front Basement Room, Alan Baxter Gallery, 75 Cowcross Street, Farringdon) some changes have been made to our meeting schedule for 2026. Our meetings will continue to be held once every two months (in January, March, May, July, September and November) on Thursdays, however they will no longer be set for the third Thursday of the relevant month. Actual meeting dates are as follows:

- Thursday 23 July 2026
- Thursday 17 September 2026
- Thursday 12 November 2026

Please join us at our Thursday 23 July meeting when we will be discussing our current campaign priorities.

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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.

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 now issued quarterly, in March, June, September and December.

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

Our current campaigns include:

- Turn up and go services throughout London of at least 4 trains per hour
- Introducing a passenger service on the West Orbital Route
- Extension of the Docklands Light Railway to Thamesmead
- Extension of the Bakerloo Line from Elephant & Castle to Lewisham
- 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

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.

The Metro Division of Railfuture is dedicated to improving services in London - if these services effect you - join us.

Are you an individual with concerns about your railway? Are you a Rail User Group looking for support from Railfuture and connections with other affiliated groups? Are you a commuter or leisure traveller?

Join the UK's leading independent railway campaign group today.

Use this link to our membership page: <https://railfuture.org.uk/join>

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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