

Dear Friend

I hope you are staying safe.

I invite you to our meeting on **Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> June from 11am – an in person ‘social’ at the Bricket Wood Team Room**; more details below. I expect we will be there until just before lunchtime.

Our subsequent meetings are then:

- **Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> July at 19:30 on Zoom** (note: last month I listed Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> July, which won't exist until 2031...).
- **Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> August at 19:30 on Zoom.**
- **Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> September in person from 11:00** at St Paul's Church, Hatfield Road, St Albans, followed by a 'social' lunch.

## Our meeting this month

We will meet from around 11:00 at the Tea Room at Bricket Wood station - <https://thetearoombricketwood.co.uk/> - Bricket Wood Station, Bricket Wood, AL2 3PE. The station has been restored by the Bricket Wood Station Heritage Trust - <https://bricketwoodstationtrust.org.uk/>.

**If you are planning to come, please do let me know** (Saturday morning is fine if that is when you decide).

There won't be a Zoom option.

In terms of getting to Bricket Wood Station, the main options are:

1. Naturally, the Abbey Flyer - <https://www.londonnorthwesternrailway.co.uk/destinations/abbey-line>.
2. The 361 Bus, which passes near to Bricket Wood station.
3. The 321 and 724 Buses, both of which have a stop on the North Orbital Road on the edge of Bricket Wood, which is about 25 minutes' walk. For anyone coming from the Watford direction I recommend alighting at the stop adjacent to the Black Boy PH as there is an adjacent overbridge.
4. I will probably catch the 10:41 from St Albans Abbey but may end of driving – see below.
5. The car.

Intalink is recommended for public transport journey planning: <https://www.intalink.org.uk/> for the Hertfordshire part of your journey.

For anyone who would normally take Thameslink to St Albans as part of their journey, be aware there are no train services on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> (hence the increased possibility that I will drive...).

The Tea room has hot drinks, cake and similar available – they said: “We have sandwiches and toasties as follows: Cheese, ham and caramelised onion toastie ♦ Mozzarella, pesto and tomato panini ♦ Jalapeño hummus, roasted pepper and salad; bread options - whole meal, sourdough or multigrain” - Let me know if you're likely to want any of those”. You can do this by letting me know or emailing them [direct](#).

## Topics for meeting

We will not have a formal agenda, but no doubt many of the items in this newsletter will come up.

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### Other Railfuture meetings you might be interested in

Sat 4 July, 11am | Railfuture [National Annual Meeting](#) | Priory Rooms, Birmingham

### East West Rail

As outlined last month, we did make a submission to the EWR consultation and that can be read [here](#); that has my name on it, but the real work of drafting it was undertaken by Tom Watts and Peter Wakefield of the East Anglia branch – my thanks to them for all their work.

On Monday I went to the All Party Parliamentary Rail Group at Westminster. East West Rail were there. Based on the questions I and others asked:

1. On full electrification, EWR consider this unnecessary given their remit – which is to allow trains to operate between Oxford and Cambridge (only). They think that battery EMUs are suitable for this. They did emphasise that their plans do allow for future full electrification. To me, the most productive way forward on this is to lobby for the remit / mandate to be changed to include it. They mentioned around £250m being needed for full electrification. It seems to me that we shouldn't give up on this, but we do need to pursue alternative lobbying routes. And see below on some thoughts on discontinuous electrification.
2. On the start of trains between Oxford and Milton Keynes we were teased with a promise of a “root cause” explanation. The first part of the answer was to observe that they (EWR) were ready for services to start and that the decision was between Chiltern, their staff and the DfT. Very much the party line. On the ‘root cause’ we got a correct, but not that immediately useful, answer – which was that sorting out operations was started far too late and were promised earlier action for future phases.
3. It does seem that the rail service start programme is now: (a) Oxford to Milton Keynes; (b) Oxford to Stewartby; (c) Oxford to Bedford, and (d) Oxford to Cambridge.
4. On an earlier start date for Bedford to Cambridge, there were no new promises, but it is clear that the planning process, even after recent changes will take quite some time.

### On Discontinuous Electrification

Our bias for busy railways is for continuous electrification. When I asked the question on #1 above, I emphasised the importance of non EWR electric power, particularly freight and services such as that suggested by the Northampton South MP from there to Stewartby (which if they ever exist might well be existing electric stock owned by LNWR<sup>1</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> The small print – actually this service would be possible with non-battery stock as all of the MVL is due to be electrified. But the service couldn't make it to Cambridge...

I am no expert, but running 5 four car trains per hour in each direction in around 5 years' time with discontinuous electrification might have a business case. However, it is electric freight that is the biggest reason for continuous electrification.

## Cambridge South opening date – a reminder

Hertfordshire stations will have a new [destination](#) from Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> June with an opening ceremony the following day.

## Summer service reductions

GTR have cut a number of services over the summer, apparently in response to strong pressure from the DfT. For Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire, this involves:

- On the GN the loss of 1 peak service in each direction (partly mitigating by extending another service) Mondays to Fridays.
- On Thameslink Bedford to Three Bridges services, the loss of 6 in each direction each day Mondays to Fridays.
- On Thameslink Luton to Rainham services these will switch to hourly Monday to Saturday except in the Monday to Friday peak when they will remain every half hour.

Locally, I think this is mainly brand damage – I – and every other passenger can't assume for these 6 weeks that "there'll be a service in 15 minutes". However south of the river I think it is generating significant disincentives to travel – the switch from every 30 minutes to every 60 is a meaningful discouragement to travel by train.

I hope to get some more background at the GTR stakeholder session – see below, then follow up with a commentary that this is an unwanted loss.

## Class 700 refurbishments

Thameslink have asked me to a session tomorrow to "We are also considering replacement of the seat cushions, and we invite you to try the options and share your views". We have been asked not to talk about the detail, so other than knowing it is on the agenda, there won't be any detail in later newsletters.

## TfL seeking control of GN Inners

There is no new official news on this. A reminder that as regards milestones, a key one is around September when the window closes on bids for the May 2027 timetable (when shadow running is envisaged) – before then TfL will want to know there will be enough drivers available, even after allowing for the segmentation of the available drivers between GN Outers/Thameslink and GN Inners. I suggested to Geoff Hobbs, TfL's Director, Public Transport Service Planning that we chat again in early July and he has accepted that.

## HERT Public engagement

Last month, I went to the St Albans public engagement session on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> May (and met Mary Lowe there, by coincidence). She and I had a good chat with one of the project team. Key points were:

1. It is definitely still early days.
2. The focus will be travelling via city & town centres – and their railway stations.
3. Their trial of their 'trackless tram' didn't have problems getting up the main hill in St Albans (Holywell Hill) nor round the relatively small roundabout near St Peters.
4. Although the proof of concept was an Irizar bendy bus, that choice was driven by said bus already being in the UK (apparently it went to Liverpool) and, presumably, Irizar seeing benefit in making it available for HERT.
5. The Abbey line is shown as remaining as is – but the big challenge is that HERT is supposed to be turn up and go and a 40 minute minimum interval railway line doesn't fit into that model.

A consultation is relatively imminent, and until that (and the more detailed material) arrives, I don't see it as productive to spend more time for now.

More on the Hertfordshire County Council [website](#).

## Fares

I've not been able to pursue moving the contactless debate on this month and am planning post meeting activity.

## GTR stakeholder session now Friday 31 July

GTRs have another of their lunch time stakeholder sessions coming up. Now at the end of next month – as always matters to be discussed as encounters on the day allow – I'll be referring to our campaign [campaigning priorities](#).

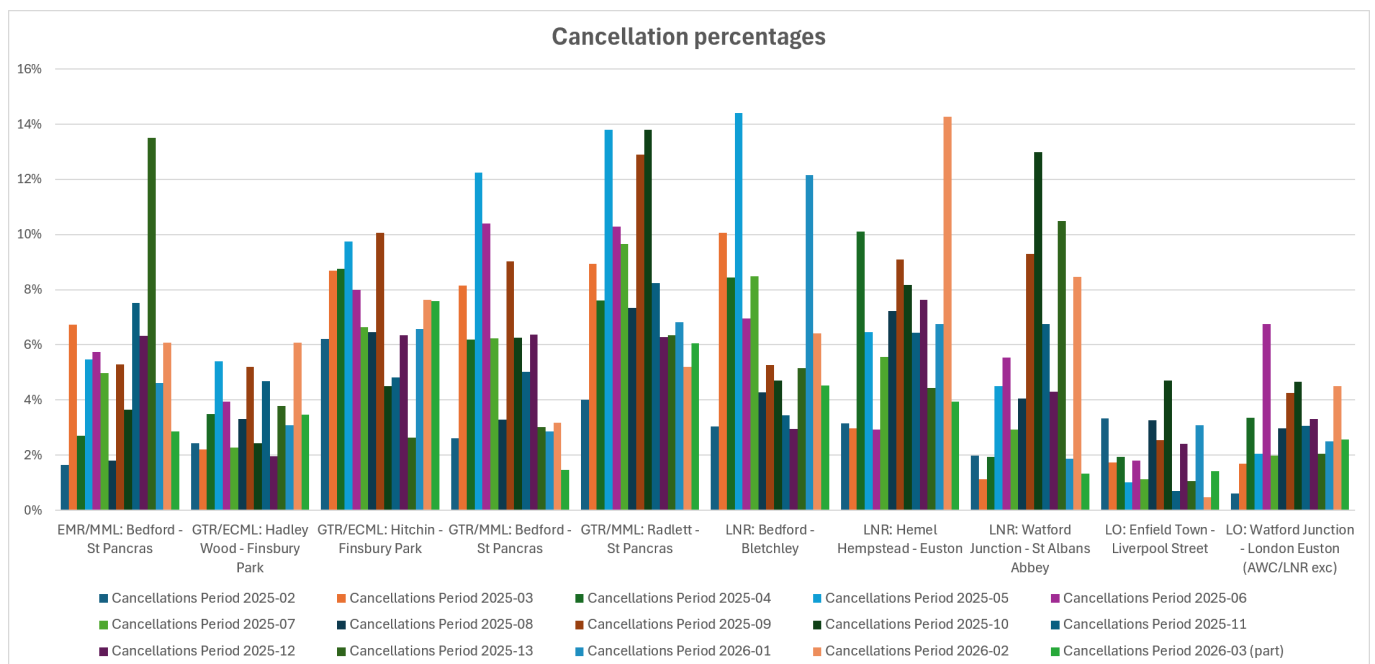
## GTR moves to the DfT Operator on 31 May

I've seen little change this month, other than the service reductions – which are no unique to DfTO owned operators – has anyone seen anything of note.

## Performance

I have continued to collect the performance data for our main services via Recent Train Times. This month, I've made a shift in time periods – I have been using 4 week periods since I started and have now switched to using Railway accounting periods (also 4 weeks), except around the railway's year end of 31 March, where instead I use the nearest Saturday. This should have no meaningful impact in the data but does mean it should more match the data we get from TOCs.

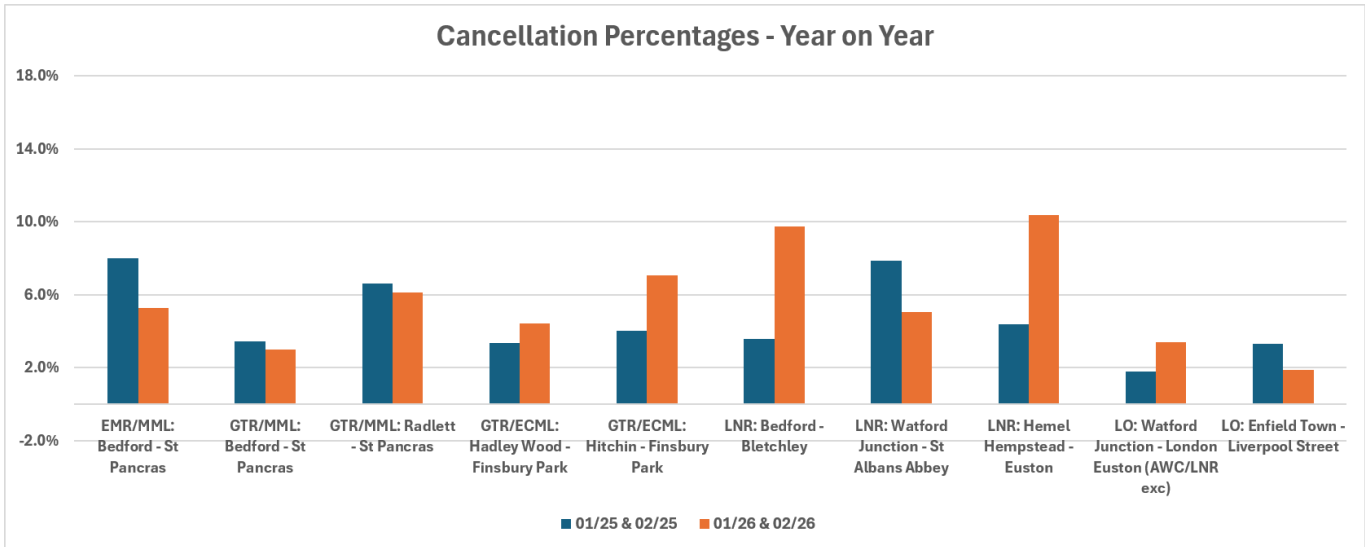
### Cancellations over time



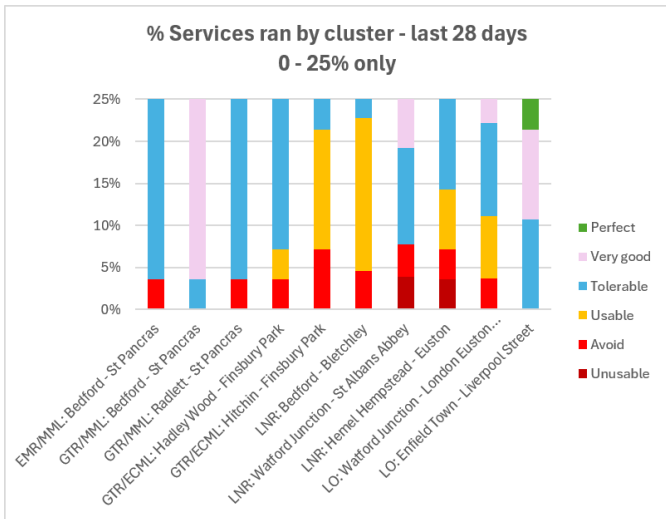
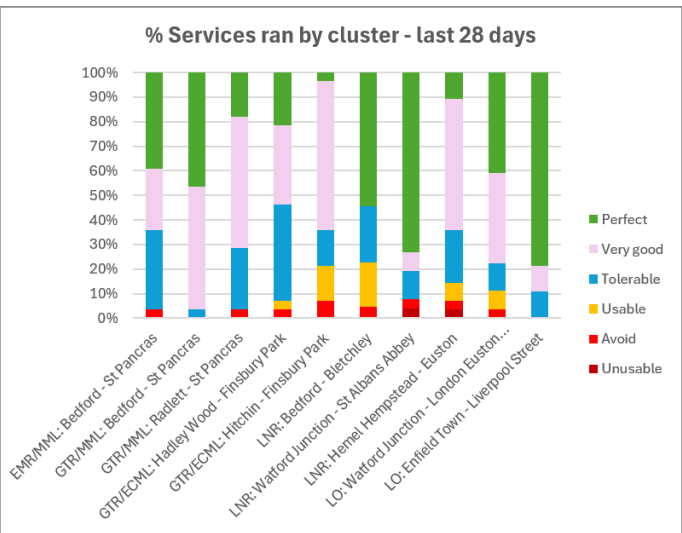
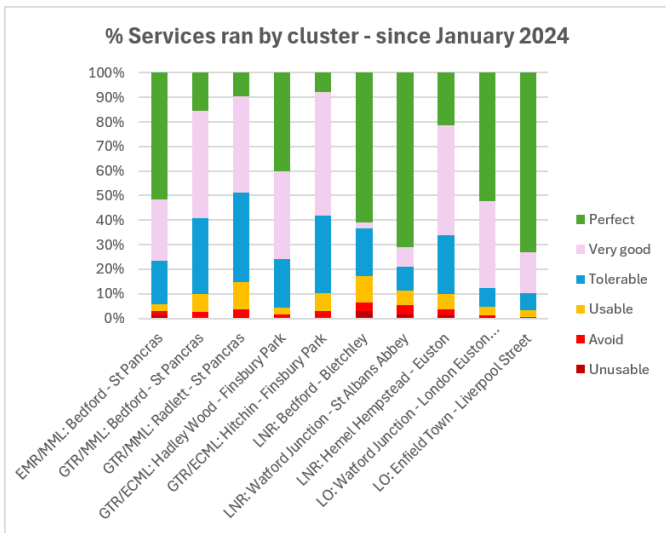
This graph is also available in landscape at the end of the newsletter.

*Continued overleaf*

Cancellations year on year



Spread of cancellations



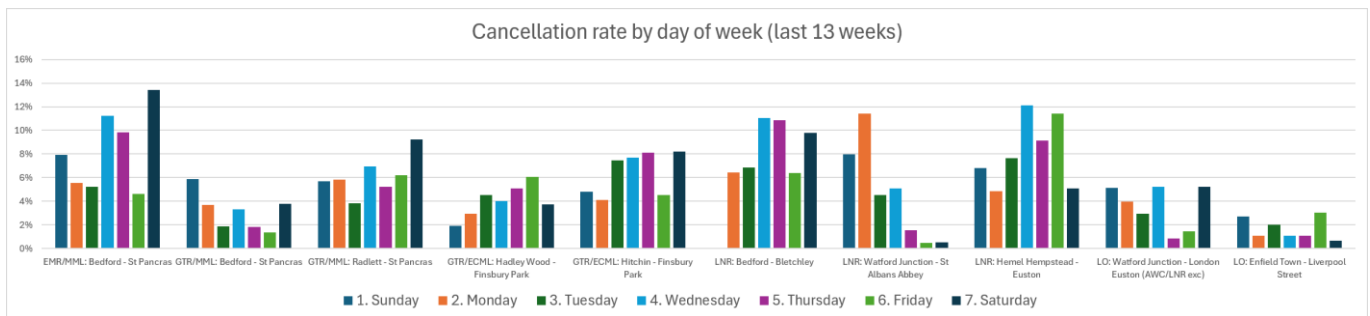
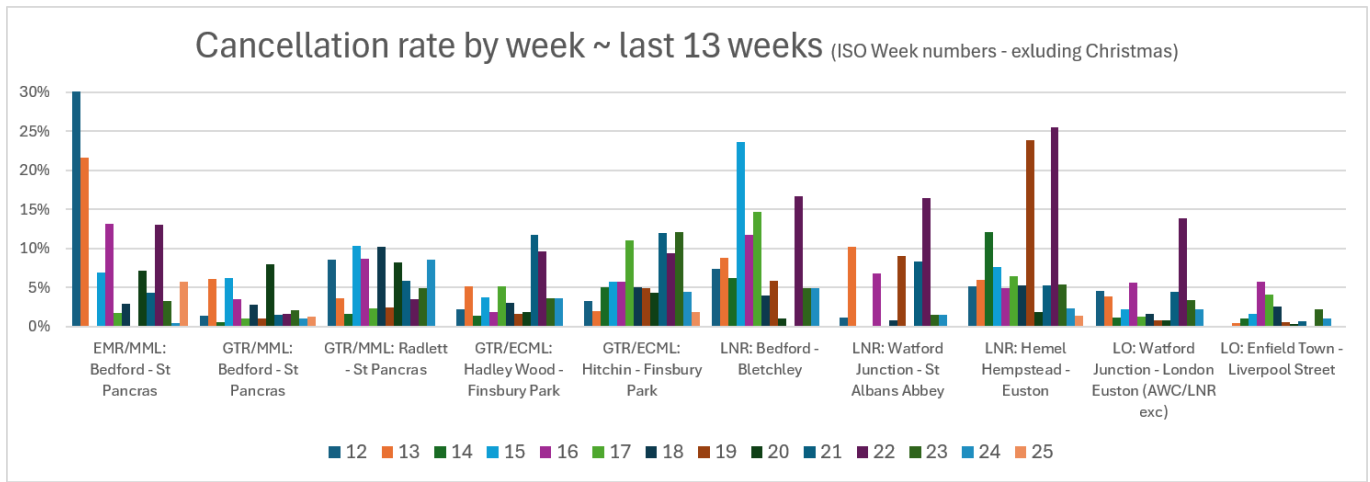
**Definitions**

- 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



### A reprise of local campaigning topics

The [list of campaigning priorities](#) was updated in April; it will next be updated in July. Comments are welcome. Changes last time were small and incremental.

### Can I forward this email to others?

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1. You are a Railfuture member who lives in the area, has provided an email address.
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Stay Safe.

*Neil*

### Neil Middleton

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## Cancellation percentages

