

Business Update

May 2022



Operated by West Midlands Trains



COMMUNITY FUND OPENS FOR BIDS

Meet the new MD

02

Community fund launch

03

Diversity award success

07

New MD: Collaboration essential for future of railway

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this edition of *Business Update*, which is my first since taking post as managing director of West Midlands Trains.

It is an exciting time to be joining the business as the rail industry continues to welcome passengers back to the railway in increasing numbers after the pandemic.

I would like to place on record my thanks to my predecessors Julian Edwards and latterly Lawrence Bowman who have steered WMT through the pandemic.

My priority is to build on the strong foundations they have laid as the industry collaborates to provide a service which matches the emerging new travel patterns of our passengers. I'm looking forward to getting out and about on the network to meet colleagues and customers - if you see me on board please say hello.

As I will be a new face for many of you, I thought I would let you know a bit about me. Although my surname is Scottish, I was born in Birmingham and lived in Northfield in my early years before moving up to Lancashire. I have worked in the rail industry for over a decade in various roles including periods at fellow operators ScotRail and Greater Anglia.

I live on the West Midlands Trains network in St Albans and I have three boys aged between eight and 14 who, as you might imagine, keep me very busy - not least as I coach one of their junior football teams!

One of my priorities coming into West Midlands Trains is to make sure we work as effectively and efficiently as we can with the rest of the rail industry.

Collaboration is something of a buzz word at the moment as we move towards the Great British Railway era but working in partnership with our stakeholders and our industry partners is vital to



Ian McConnell

building a sustainable future for the sector that meets the needs of our customers.

A great example of this in action was the work between WMT and Chiltern Railways during the pandemic to keep services running for key workers where we share network routes - see **Page 7**.

Meanwhile, the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham get under way at the end of July. With more than a dozen venues spread across the West Midlands and over a million tickets sold there is a real logistical challenge for transport operators to make sure we keep everyone moving.

We have worked closely with TfWM and transport operators to ensure we provide the best possible service for those attending the Games and our existing customers who rely on our services daily.

We have been busy tweaking our timetables to provide additional carriages at some of the key times and locations during the Games. We'll also have a significant number of volunteers on the network to make sure everyone has a great Games experience.

In that spirit of collaboration, Network Rail will also have their own Games volunteers at Birmingham New Street to create a joined-up experience.

Elsewhere, we're continuing to make progress catching up our driver training programme which was delayed during the pandemic.

As each month passes more trainees become fully-qualified which in turn reduces the possibility of cancellations due to a lack of available train crew.

I encourage you to take a look at our dedicated blog at wmr.uk/snowhillplan which explains the challenges we face and how we're tackling them.

I wish you all an enjoyable summer and I look forward to meeting many of you soon.



Major fund for innovative community projects returns

Community projects across the West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway networks are being invited to apply for the *Your Community, Your Fund* grant scheme.

It is the second time WMT has run the fund, which is provided by the Department for Transport. Previous schemes have seen art and planting projects at stations as well as support for homeless communities.

Last year reggae legends UB40 were guests of honour at the launch of a *Your Community, Your Fund* project celebrating the musical heritage of the West Midlands at stations.

Fay Easton, head of stakeholder and community for WMR, said: "Communities are the lifeblood of the railways and this fund allows local community groups to lead their own projects and create schemes that will also benefit our customers."

"After the success of the first round of funding, we are keen to see new



A previous community scheme at Jewellery Quarter station.

ideas from the communities and look forward to the applications coming through."

Tim Bellenger, LNR head of stakeholder and community,

added: "This is a great chance for our dedicated station adopters and stakeholders to apply for funding to bring their enterprising ideas to life."

Eligible projects cannot be for commercial gain, must have a clear community focus and measurable outputs.

Applications are welcomed from not-for-profit social enterprises and community-led partnerships.

Applications must be submitted by 12noon on 11 May.

For more information, visit wmr.uk/ycyf or lnr.uk/ycyf



Music legends UB40 at the 'Musical Routes' launch last year.

Timetables change on May 15 - check your journeys

Passengers are being reminded to check their journeys as some timetables change on May 15.

While the frequency of services on most routes will not change, departure times on some parts of the network will move to aid other operators.

For example, departures on the Cross-City Line will change to aid traffic via Birmingham New Street.

Other changes taking effect on the West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway networks:

- A full service will resume on the Marston Vale Line between Bedford and Bletchley
 - Some peak-time services between Watford Jct and London Euston will be withdrawn as a result of timetable changes by other operators
 - Sunday services which start/terminate at Great Malvern will instead start/terminate at Worcester Foregate Street, in line with the weekday service
- See wmr.uk/timetable and lnr.uk/timetable

Spotlight on Sophie for International Women's Day

Women considering a rail career should "not waste time doubting and just do it", according to a female leader at West Midlands Trains.

Sophie Morris, head of customer experience strategy, was speaking as part of a blog marking International Women's Day earlier this year.

She said: "The best way to overcome [any doubts] is to throw yourself into it and you'll be amazed of what you're capable of."

"The rail industry is one of the best there is and has changed so much over the years."

"There's an emphasis at WMT in making sure everyone knows the opportunities are open to everyone."

Sophie, who has been with the business since 2015 and previously worked for the British Transport Police, added: "'Whenever I have moved in a more senior role, I have received lots of support, advice and guidance."

"Some of it I have asked for and some given off the cuff, but it has always been given welcomingly and received with open arms, too."

To read the full blog and find out more, see <https://bit.ly/3PbQ6cD>



Sophie Morris.



Railway Journeys returns

Broadcaster Michael Portillo has been out and about on the West Midlands Trains network filming the next series of *Great British Railway Journeys*.

The former politician is pictured, left, with driver instructor Dave McGuinness at Leamington Spa in front of a West Midlands Railway service.

As well as Leamington, locations expected to feature in the new series include Wolverhampton, Worcester Foregate Street and Stratford-upon-Avon.

The series is expected to air next year.

Performance Update - West Midlands Trains

Railway Period	T3 %	MAA %	Reliability %
12: February 6 - March 5	82.6%	85.9%	98.0%
13: March 6 - March 31	85.3%	85.2%	98.0%
01: March 31 - April 30	84.6%	84.6%	94.0%

- T3 is the % of trains arriving within three minutes of advertised times.
- MAA (Moving Annual Average) is the average T3 over the last year to date.
- Reliability is the % of trains that ran for the whole of their journey.

Three significant storms in a six-day period during February impacted performance across the network.

Storms Dudley, Eunice and Franklin led to the cancellation of hundreds of services, with WMT issuing a 'do not travel' warning for Friday 18 February.

Elsewhere, the impact of Covid-19 continues to affect levels of available train crew.

Elsewhere, incidents affecting T3 in Periods 12, 13 and 1 included overhead wire issues close to Wolverhampton and engine problems on the Class 139 trains serving the Stourbridge branch line.

Engineering works over the Easter period led to a number of planned service alterations but all works were completed on time without significant overrun.

Raffles and free travel as rail staff support Ukraine crisis

Staff and passengers across the West Midlands Trains network have come together to show their support for the Ukraine crisis at a series of events.

Station staff at Wolverhampton joined with passengers to hold a raffle and fundraising drive on the concourse.

Station manager Mel Bryett said: "The whole team have been touched by the events in Ukraine and wanted to do something to support and raise money."

The event was supported by representatives from Avanti West Coast, CrossCountry, Midland Metro Alliance and Wolverhampton BID.

Separately, members of train crew at Birmingham New Street held a collection of clothing and essentials which were transported to Poland for onward distribution in Ukraine.

Elsewhere, WMT has joined with all UK rail operators to provide all Ukrainian refugees arriving in Britain with free rail travel to their final destination.

The operator provided free travel to the production team of the televised *Concert for Ukraine* at Birmingham's Resorts World Arena, which raised money to help those impacted.



Colleagues at Wolverhampton Station at the Ukraine Appeal event.



Concert for Ukraine performer Ed Sheeran.

Major engineering feat as Leamington bridge replaced

West Midlands Railway passengers travelling between Leamington Spa and Nuneaton will have safer journeys following a £2.4m bridge replacement.

The line was closed for four days over Easter while Network Rail carried out the work, which involved removing the previous 372-tonne structure and replacing it with a modern version.

Previously trains had been restricted to travelling at 20mph over the bridge, which spans the A445 Rugby Road.

Paul Randall, from Network Rail, said: "I'm hugely proud of the team who gave up their Easter bank holiday to carry out this major work to improve railway journeys through Leamington."



A rail bridge similar to this one has been installed in Leamington.

New drive to celebrate positive impact of railway staff

West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway have unveiled a new initiative to celebrate the positive day-to-day impact of railway staff.

Titled 'Rail Stars', the move will see individual staff members highlighted for their actions in providing excellent customer service or helping others.

One of the first to be celebrated is Tom Harty, right, whose calm, caring manner helped a passenger at Wolverhampton during a mental health crisis.

Look out for 'Rail Stars' on WMR and LNR social media channels - @LNRailway / @WestMidRailway



West Midlands Mayor Andy Street praised the work of station adopters during a visit to Tyseley.

Mr Street met with adopter Jean McLeod, pictured right, following a visit to West Midlands Railway's nearby depot.

Writing on Twitter, inset, Mr Street said: "[It was] fantastic to see the work the local community have put in to improving the aesthetics of the station."

For more on how to adopt a station, log on to wmr.uk/communityrail or lnr.uk/communityrail



News Round-Up + News Round-Up + News Round-Up

- Passengers at **Lichfield Trent Valley** should allow extra time for their journeys while Network Rail carries out essential repairs to Platform 3.

The high-level platform was closed for safety reasons at the start of May, meaning Cross City Line trains are currently unable to call at the station.

There is also no interchange between Platform 1 and 2 with a shuttle bus in operation. A bus is running to Lichfield City station to connect passengers with Cross City trains. See @WestMidRailway for updates.

- Communities across the West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway networks are planning to celebrate **The Queen's platinum jubilee**.

Stations along the 'Shakespeare Line' between Birmingham and Stratford-upon-Avon have been planted with red, white and blue flowers and special flags will be flying at Birmingham New Street.

Benches on the Abbey Line in Hertfordshire will also be decorated for the occasion. You can send your pictures to us via @LNRailway or @WestMidRailway.

- Members of the **WMT Stakeholder Equality Group** will be out and about in coming weeks filming new training material for our colleagues.

The 'Accessibility Matters' refresher training will be used to reinforce staff awareness of how they can best assist passengers using the network.

Industry award hails collaborative pandemic response

West Midlands Trains and Chiltern Railways have been hailed for their collaborative work during the pandemic.

The operators were given the 'Silver Whistle' award for 'Outstanding Operating Team' at the Golden Whistle Awards.

The judging panel heard how the operators, whose networks overlap, found new ways of working as Covid-19 squeezed resources.

WMT alliance project manager Peter Dobbin was seconded to work within Chiltern Railways as part of the collaboration.

Meanwhile, WMT head of drivers Sarah Higgins received an individual award, being named 'Outstanding Operator of the Year'.



Staff from West Midlands Trains and Chiltern Railways. Inset: Sarah Higgins.

West Midlands Trains honoured for inclusive working

West Midlands Trains has been hailed for its commitment to running an inclusive workplace at a prestigious national awards ceremony.

The company has been nominated in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion category at the 2022 Women in Rail Awards, which showcase individuals and organisations who have made a significant contribution to improving gender balance and inclusivity within the rail industry.

WMT HR director Jo MacPhail said: "Every employee should feel respected and welcome at work and to do that we put equality, diversity and inclusion at the heart of our business."

The award winners will be named in May.



New accessibility role for Pete at West Midlands Trains



Pete Williamson has been appointed as WMT's accessibility lead on a permanent basis.

Pete, left, has been leading on accessibility matters on an interim basis since joining the business in June 2021.

He has now formally taken up his post as Accessibility Strategy & Projects Manager - see contact details on Page 8.

Rebecca Preece has left WMT to take up a new role with Birmingham Cathedral.

About Us

West Midlands Trains

West Midlands Trains has operated services under West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway since the beginning of our original franchise in December 2017. The company is investing £1billion into the rail network to deliver new trains, improved routes and station upgrades.

Our mission is to provide quality rail services and develop sustainable travel. The communities we serve are central to our ethos and we work closely with a regional network of volunteers and community rail partnerships. We are proud to work with our dedicated station adopters who take huge pride in their neighbourhood stations.

If you ever have any questions or feedback on what we're doing in your area, please contact:



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