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Editor's message

I have delayed writing this newsletter until we had some clarity on the threats of WMT losing its contract, now postponed, deadline for improvement was 31st January and the long promised HS2 which has now been announced.

Colin Major

AGM.

West Midlands AGM is to be held on the morning of Saturday, 25th April 2020 in the Priory Rooms, Bull Street, Birmingham.

It's that time of year again! The one occasion when we can all get together, vote for your committee and discuss issues of importance.

It's also an opportunity for you to raise formally any issues about running the branch or topics you'd like your committee to take up, for instance campaigns that you'd like us to actively pursue.

If you would like to nominate yourself or someone else for the committee a Nomination Form is attached or to raise a motion for discussion please contact the **Railfuture Returning Officer, 40 Walton Close, Coventry, CV3 2LJ**. Email: - mjtombs49@gmail.com

All committee positions are elected each year, including Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. Nominations and motions must be received by Saturday, 28th March. Details of nominations and any motions will be sent to you on 11th April.

Steve Wright chairman

WEST MIDLAND TRAINS.

Following much pressure from ourselves, passengers and the WM Mayor who set a deadline of 31st January for improvement of services. West Midlands Railway (WMR) invited your Secretary to a Round Table Conference to review the challenges of recent months and plan for 2020.

WMR have announced a five-point Improvement Plan:

1. Make the timetable simpler

In May 2019, they tried to provide thousands of extra seats, more frequent services, and better connections across the network. But an ambitious plan proved too complex to deliver reliably. So, they will roll back some of these changes, to help avoid delays and improve reliability.

2. Hire more traincrew and improve availability

The more intensive timetable has made it harder to cover sickness and holidays using voluntary overtime – and to keep delivering services when things go wrong.

They are adding an extra **80 drivers, senior conductors and traincrew managers**. This will give more flexibility to cover holidays and sickness; and provide additional management support to help increase productivity.

3. Improve the way they maintain trains to keep more carriages out on the network

The new timetable, an industry-wide bottleneck in the supply of new trains and carriages, and the need to refurbish some of the rolling stock, have meant that each of the trains now has to cover 20% more mileage. Those extra hours on the move have reduced time available for routine maintenance. The upshot is shorter trains on busy services, and an increase in delays due to minor faults.

4. Improve the ways they respond to delays

The complexity of the May 2019 timetable has magnified individual delays and increased the time it takes to get the service back to normal. This has had a big impact on evening commuter services, even several hours after incidents have been resolved.

They will **reset services at lunchtime when necessary**, so that delays in the morning don't disrupt journeys home in the evening

Recruit **19 more people** into our performance, control, resourcing, and station teams to help us improve the way we handle service disruption.

5. Work with Network Rail to reduce congestion at Euston and increase line speeds at New Street.

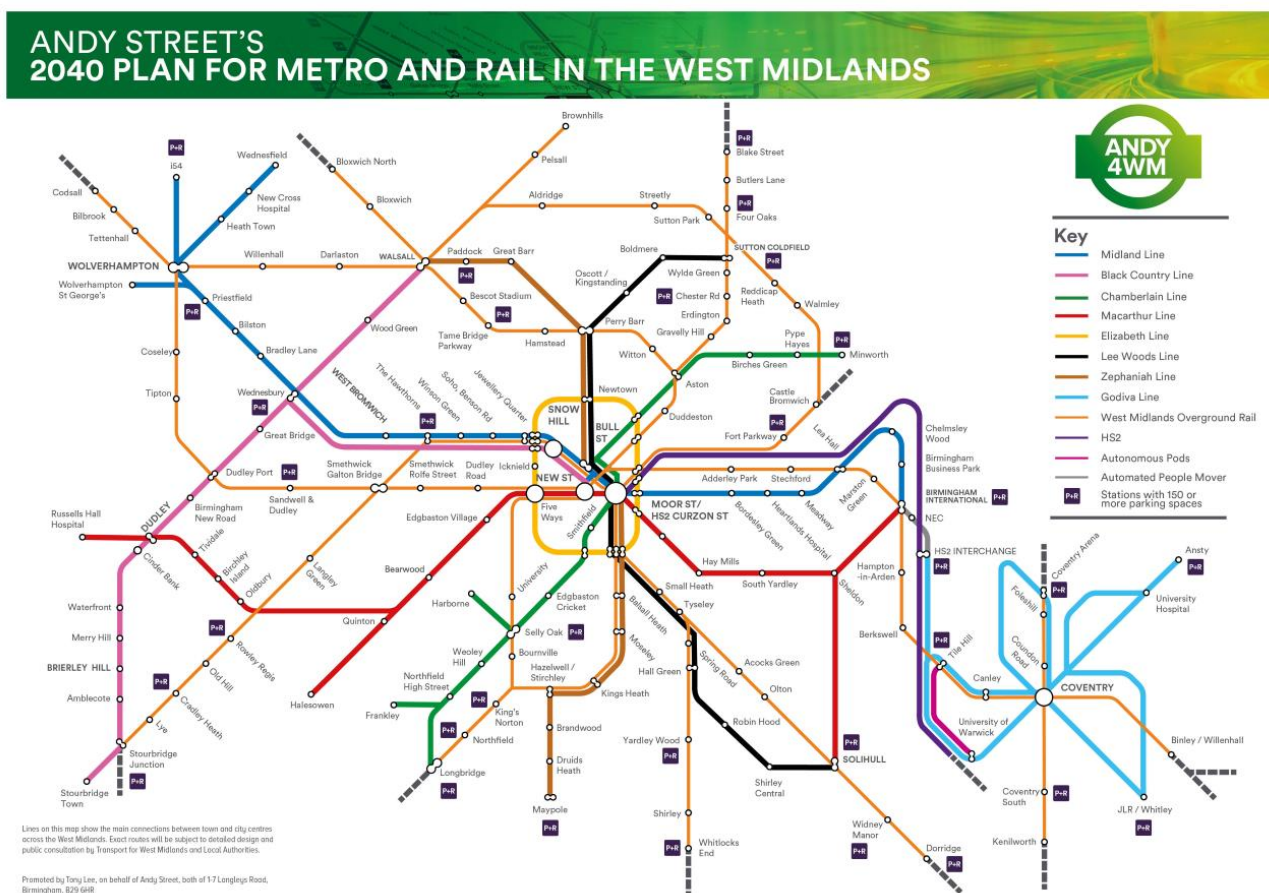
TfW.

Your Chairman has held meetings with senior TfW management to press for solutions to the issues raised at our very well attended October Open Meeting in Shrewsbury this together with lobbying by local User Groups has resulted in services stopping at Gobowen in the off-peak but not as yet shown in timetables. However, buses still replace trains stopping at Ludlow and Craven Arms. It does raise concerns that despite the Marches Line running and achieving significant revenues from passengers in Herefordshire, Shropshire and Cheshire services to Welsh stations appear to be the priority of TfW perhaps in breach of the agreement between the DfT and Welsh assembly when the line was allocated to TfW

HS2.

The decision to go ahead with Phase1 and part of Phase 2a. to Crewe builds on the work already carried out at Curzon Street and Washwood Heath where the only. We are concerned with the suggestion that to save costs (probably £100K the Handsacre Junction would not be built. without this connection the non-Birmingham bound inter-cities would have to continue to use the West Coast Line and thus not be able to release any useful capacity for local services in Staffordshire and further across the Midlands. With the use Handsacre most of the “planned” HS2 services can be introduced and release the desired capacity on the WCML.

Andy Street 20year vision for Rail.



We welcome the West Midlands Mayor’s ideas for improving rail connectivity in the next 20 year. The plans would create a total of 21 new stations in the West Midlands by 2040, including re-opening the Sutton Park Line a measure we have campaigned for starting with Aldridge station, re-opening Pelsall and Brownhills stations, and building a new station at Tettenhall. In Coventry, there are plans for four new stations at Coundon Road, Foleshill, Coventry South and Binley / Willenhall, and there are plans for new Birmingham stations in Balsall Heath and at Dudley Road.

The total cost of these plans would be around £15 billion, or around £750 million per year for the next twenty years. These costs would be met by additional funding from central Government, contributions from housing and commercial developers and borrowing against the future income from ticket sales on the Metro.

Birmingham Eastside Tram extension:

When complete the Birmingham Eastside extension will run from the existing Metro line at Bull Street to High Street Deritend in Digbeth, via the HS2 Curzon Street Station.

Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), which is part of the WMCA, has put together a £227 million funding package to build the 1.7kilometre line, purchase battery powered trams and carry out extra work to improve Digbeth High Street.

The funding has come from central Government, grants and the tram network itself through borrowing against future West Midlands Metro profit. Local taxpayers will not be called on to fund this.

The Department for Transport approved the Transport and Works Act order for the extension last month and can now be presented with the full business case for final approval.

Detailed analysis has shown that every £1 invested in the extension will generate £3 in economic value for the region through improved journey times, attracting more visitors to the area and supporting new commercial and housing development.

Expected to open by the end of 2025, the new tram line will also offer people a high quality and convenient alternative to the car when visiting Digbeth and the city centre

County's first new station in over 100 years to open



Photo credit: Worcestershire County Council

Worcestershire's first new railway station in over 100 years opened to passengers on Sunday 23rd February. The station has fully accessible lifts to its' three platforms giving access to both the Great Western Railway (GWR) Worcester – London Paddington route and the Cross-County Cardiff – Nottingham route; the latter being a new service to Worcester which does not stop at any other station in the county.

Users of the station will benefit from a 500-space car park and those arriving at the station by bike will experience a much-improved cycle way from Woodbury Lane and plenty of cycle parking including a two-tier bike rack near platform 2.

The station will also help to remove traffic from the county's main roads and motorways as currently, there are many commuters who drive the entire journey or drive to larger stations out of county.

They do this to access better parking facilities and faster services to major cities.

Gary Woodman, Chief Executive of Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (WLEP), said: "The opening of Worcestershire Parkway will have a positive impact on the local economy. Not only will it provide local commuters with improved access and journey times to and from Oxford and London, but it will also improve the overall connectivity of Worcestershire to the national network.

"The brand-new direct services arriving at the station from Cardiff, Derby and Nottingham, will reduce congestion on the roads of commuters who travel to stations such as Birmingham International and Warwick Parkway to make these connections. This station will make Worcestershire a more attractive destination to invest as better connectivity is key to unlocking more local economic growth."

Community Rail Partnerships;

We now have three Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs) in the West Midlands and Peter Chapman Partnership Officer of our latest, the Worcestershire CRP, has kindly written the following outline of their role.

Community Rail Partnerships focus on bringing stations into the heart of the communities which they serve. Normally they are made up of the Train Operating Company or Companies, the local county and / or district councils, representatives of Rail User Groups for the area they cover, and ACoRP, the national body which oversees and accredits, their work on behalf of the Department for Transport.

Under the latest guidance (<https://communityrail.org.uk/community-rail/community-rail-partnerships/>), there are four 'pillars' to the work of a CRP:

- Promoting understanding, use of and access to the railways, such as communicating service improvements, running visits and workshops, and promoting tourism by rail;
- Helping communities engage in and have a voice in railway development so it meets their needs, such as coordinating and supporting volunteers and station '[friends](#)' to enhance stations, or advising train operators on timetabling;
- Bringing disused station property back into use, such as by achieving renovations, setting up community group spaces, or running social enterprises;
- Running a range of activities to bring people together and promote social inclusion linked to the railways, such as local events, creative projects and educational programme

It is the role of the paid Partnership Officer(s) to enable volunteers to help achieve these aims within the CRP area. Naturally grants are available so that the volunteers are not out of pocket.

Within the West Midlands, there are three CRPs with more to come. To get involved, contact one of the following depending on where you live:

North Staffs CRP <http://www.northstaffsrail.org.uk/>

Heart of England CRP <http://www.shakespeareline.com/community-rail.html> Worcestershire CRP peter.chapman@worcestershirecommunityrail.org.uk / @WorcsCRP

Future CRPs are being delivered by West Midlands Trains working with their partners. Contact Fay.Easton@wmtrains.co.uk for more information

North Cotswold Line Task Forces.

Chaired by Lord Faulkner of Worcester, the North Cotswold Line Task Force is a partnership of five local authorities/transport authorities, five Local Enterprise Partnerships and the Cotswold Line Promotion Group. It is supported by attendance from the Department for Transport (DfT), West Midlands Rail Executive, Network Rail and the Great Western Railway. District Councils are engaged via sub-groups across the geography of the 5 counties.

Executive Summary—Long term strategy



The options tested in this SOBC are for the first stage in a multi-faceted longer term strategy, which includes:

- A four trains per hour service between Oxford and Hanborough
- New connectivity to Stratford-upon-Avon
- Direct connectivity between the North Cotswold Line and Birmingham (which could be via Kidderminster as illustrated, and/ or via Stratford-upon-Avon and Solihull in a 'Snow Hill Lines Circular service, or via Bromsgrove)

The NCLTF would seek to consider the case for these further developments together with key partners as and when the core scheme proposed in this SOBC is committed.



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The Preferred Train Service- the provision of 2 trains per hour (TPH) between Worcester, Oxford and London Paddington (extensions of Oxford-London services) operating on a skip-stop pattern so that the optimum balance of journey time and frequency improvement can be delivered across the route. One of these services is extended to/from Great Malvern (and Hereford in some hours), and the other to/from Kidderminster.

Journey times reduced to 2 hours Worcester- Paddington and three hours Hereford to Paddington.

Enhanced Infrastructure — To enable reliable delivery of this solution, infrastructure options have been identified that involve the reinstatement of 4 miles of double track between Wolvercote Junction (Oxford) and Hanborough Station, 5 miles between Evesham and Pershore, and second platforms at Hanborough and Pershore stations. The capital cost estimate with optimism bias applied is £199m.

A Compelling Business Case — More frequent, faster services will generate nearly 400,000 new passenger trips each year. The scheme will deliver a **Benefit Cost Ratio of 4.46:1 representing 'Very High' value for money for the £199m investment**, and £33m of new Gross Value Added (GVA) per annum to the UK economy together with 750 new jobs.

Fuller details can be found on <http://www.clpg.org.uk/blog/cotswold-line-200m-upgrade-plan/>

Your views Matter

We would like to hear from **you** about any matters you believe your Committee and Officers should be working on. So please don't hesitate to get in touch with me on colin.major@railfuture.org.uk.

Almost every week we receive information on new developments, and we post these on: -
<https://www.facebook.com/RailfutureWestMidlands>

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