

Dear Friend

I hope you are staying safe.

I invite you to our meeting on **Wednesday 14th January 2026 at 19:30 on Zoom**; I am targeting a finish by 20:45; definitely by 21:00.

Our next three meetings are then:

- **Tuesday 10th February at 19:30 on Zoom.**
- **Saturday 7th March in person at 11:00** – Meeting at our usual local location, St Pauls Church, Hatfield Road, St Albans. Finishing at 13:00 and followed by lunch.
- **Thursday 9th April 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. (reminder: below – other meetings)
3. Current campaigning issues (all more below)
 - TfL & GN Inners
 - Contactless payment for LSE Rail Journeys
 - East West Rail
 - Station count on the Marston Vale
 - Watford to Zone 6
4. Luton LTP
5. The revised reprise of local campaigning priorities (more below)
6. Performance (more below)
7. Round table

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East Midlands meeting with Catherine Atkinson MP – Derby, 1pm Saturday 31st January

An update from our colleagues in the East Midlands

Railfuture East Midlands Branch is arranging a meeting on **Saturday 31st January 2026, from 1pm, at the Aston Court Hotel (York Suite), near Derby station**. The speaker is Catherine Atkinson, MP for Derby North and a former member of the House of Commons Transport Select Committee. Exact details are still to be confirmed, but she will be speaking about the future of UK rail and perhaps the work of the Select Committee, and will no doubt include Great British Railways.

This is not a public meeting. Rather, it will be for members of Railfuture and affiliated groups plus selected invitees from the rail industry, local authorities, and other relevant people. We are hoping also to make this event available online on Zoom.

We are anticipating the opportunity to ask questions. With that in mind, we shall be inviting attendees to send questions to us in advance of the meeting, so that these can be collated and the best use made of the time available.

So, save the date! More details to follow, but please put this in your diary if you are available. You will be warmly welcome.

With kind regards and all good wishes for the New Year,

Steve J.

Steve Jones

Secretary – East Midlands Branch

Railfuture – Campaigning for better services over a bigger rail network

e-mail: steve.jones@railfuture.org.uk

If you are interested in attending, please let Steve know by email.

Other Railfuture meetings you might be interested in

Thu 27 Jan, 7pm	Railfuture LSE Metro Division	Alan Baxter Gallery, 75 Cowcross Street, Farringdon
Sat 19 April, 11am (time TBC)	Railfuture LSE Annual Meeting	Wesley's Chapel, City Road, London
Sat 4 July, 11am (time TBC)	Railfuture National Annual Meeting	Priory Rooms, Birmingham

TfL seeking control of GN Inners

Since my mini update on 7 December, there has been no “official” news, but two useful topics have developed:

1. I spoke to GTR at their Stakeholder event on 8 December. Their preference is:
 - An increase in frequency for Hertford Loop services.
 - For the ECML, to make the Welwyn – Sevenoaks service an all day one (currently it is peak hours only). For larger stations between Finsbury Park and Welwyn GC this has the advantage of offering all day direct access to important interchange stations such as Farringdon and St Pancras (and also offers more access to the Thameslink core for other Kings Cross services). The downside is for smaller station such as Hadley Wood is that frequency remains as is.
 - Not in our patch, but this option also has the advantage of meeting a long standing aspiration for 4 trains per hour on the Catford Loop.

It does seem to me that this option will, overall, increase revenue for the railway as increased options such as all day Hatfield to the Thameslink Core (and the Catford Loop increases) are appealing and should lead to passenger increases, but whether it is a net increase after the higher costs is unknown.

2. Lord Hendy spoke at the Transport Select Committee on [7 January](#). This focused on the Rail Reform bill generally. Q349 onwards dealt specifically with devolution. The GN Inners were not discussed specifically, but I think I detected a general view of lots of cooperation promised, but a dislike of more devolved operators. There is also mention of a partnerships advice guide being published “within the coming weeks”. It is possible no decision will be publicised before this is released.

My next steps are to follow up with TfL, GTR and see if, via Ian Brown, I can get something in front of Lord Hendy.

And to recap, TfL's response to my 10 questions is [here](#) and the redacted business case [here](#).

Contactless Payment for journeys

My [Press Release on Contactless](#) generated quite a few media appearances, with the story focusing on the use of the 9:30am cut off for the start of the off-peak. The media story focused on Redhill and Reigate:

	Redhill (Contactless [and Oyster] for many years)	Reigate (Contactless from December 2025)
Contactless Peaks to London	06:30-09:30	06:30-09:30 – but see below on PM peak.
Contactless Peaks from London	06:30-09:30 & 16:00-19:00	06:30-09:30 & 16:00-19:00
National Rail Single Peak	London Arrival after 09:45, so	04:29-09:30
National Rail Travelcard Peak	04:29-08:59	London Arrival after 09:45, so 04:29-08:37

My next step is to write a short paper suggesting how contactless should evolve, focusing on four features:

1. Railcards
2. Bespoke times for off-peak start and end (see below)
3. A third fare band (for weekends)
4. Support for Child Fares

On '2', so far as I can tell, the choice is AM only, or AM and PM. I've received suggestions that there are already exceptions for off-peak to start before 09:30 – with particular reference to Amersham, but when I checked TfL's Single Fare Finder, this isn't the case. If anyone is aware, please let me know.

I will then send this out as a Press Release and to MPs in the Doughnut around London.

More locally, I had an email from GTR on 19 December advising of incorrect contactless charges – Details are on the [Great Northern website](#). These include incorrect evening peak charging from Southern stations including Reigate and, more locally, journeys that involve passing through the gatelines at Stevenage and Welwyn Garden City (which is essential for some platform combinations). It also refers to other journeys – if anyone has examples please send them my way.

I don't believe the gatelines issue will apply on the West Coast Main Line, but if anyone is aware of any issues, please let me know.

East West Rail

I'll admit I am yet to read in detail all the (extensive) documentation that has recently been issued, most notably the full EWR 'You Said, We Did Report' [report](#).

Generally, our local wants are clear – and some are promised (up fast platform on the up fast Midland Mainline at Bedford) and others remain aspirations (eg full electrification). But I don't think there is consensus on the choice of Marston Vale stations – do we support (or not) the EWR's current preference:

“Our new, larger, easy-to access stations at Woburn Sands, Ridgmont, Lidlington and Stewartby, along with the relocated Bedford St Johns station”.

I've read their explanation, and “big picture” it makes sense, in particular the challenges of changing many of the existing stations in a way that will increase passenger numbers, make them safe and accessible – and also the wider capacity reductions involved in running trains that call all 9 existing stations.

The ‘You Said We Did Report’ does highlight the goal of making the new stations easy to get to without using a car and we definitely need to continue to champion the importance of this (including that this is funded within the core programme).

Read the EWR plan [here](#) (scroll down to / search for 4.6.1); I'm interested in thoughts on both the EWR plan and my precis / view.

EWR between Milton Keynes and Oxford

This has now been confirmed as a 2026 opening – and there has been no recent breaking news. When it does open, subject to my diary, I hope to ride it on the first day. The view of the October 2025 meeting was others want to do the same and so I will organise an outing once everything is clear.

Luton Local Transport Plan Revision

Luton Borough Council has their '[Local transport plan \(LTP\) 5](#)' out for consultation until 19 February.

I envisage that there will be a Railfuture response to this – written by Herts & Beds. I did get invited to a series of workshops by LBC during the preparation of LTP5, but calendar clashes meant I unfortunately only made a handful of them.

I suspect our comments will be generally supportive and may well make specific comments on the rail stations in the Borough (Leagrave, Luton Town and Luton Airport Parkway). I expect to recommend that they keep the door open for the return of some long distance services to Luton Airport Parkway – a combination of the new EMR Auroras and potential for a wider recast of long distance services concurrent with EWR and Universal openings. Personally, I see little chance of long distance services also stopping at Luton Town (other than their current Sunday morning calls before EMR Connect services start).

Comments are welcome now, and I plan that our February meeting will have a more in-depth session.

Watford – Campaign to be in Zone 6

[Local Politicians in Watford](#) are campaigning for Watford to be moved from its current Zones to Zone 6. This is a follow up from their 2023 campaign. Apparently, the London Mayor has already said No. My own instinct is that this is very unlikely to succeed – effectively suggesting that London tax payers should collect less money from Watford residents and instead contribute more is, I think, a non-starter.

Indeed it is this theme that is the one of the significant downsides of TfL running GN Inners. Also, if I was a local politician in Epping, I would be worried – it is very easy to see that if change is made, the answer will be “It's an anomaly that Epping is in Zone 6, but Watford isn't – we'll solve that by putting Epping in Zone [8].”

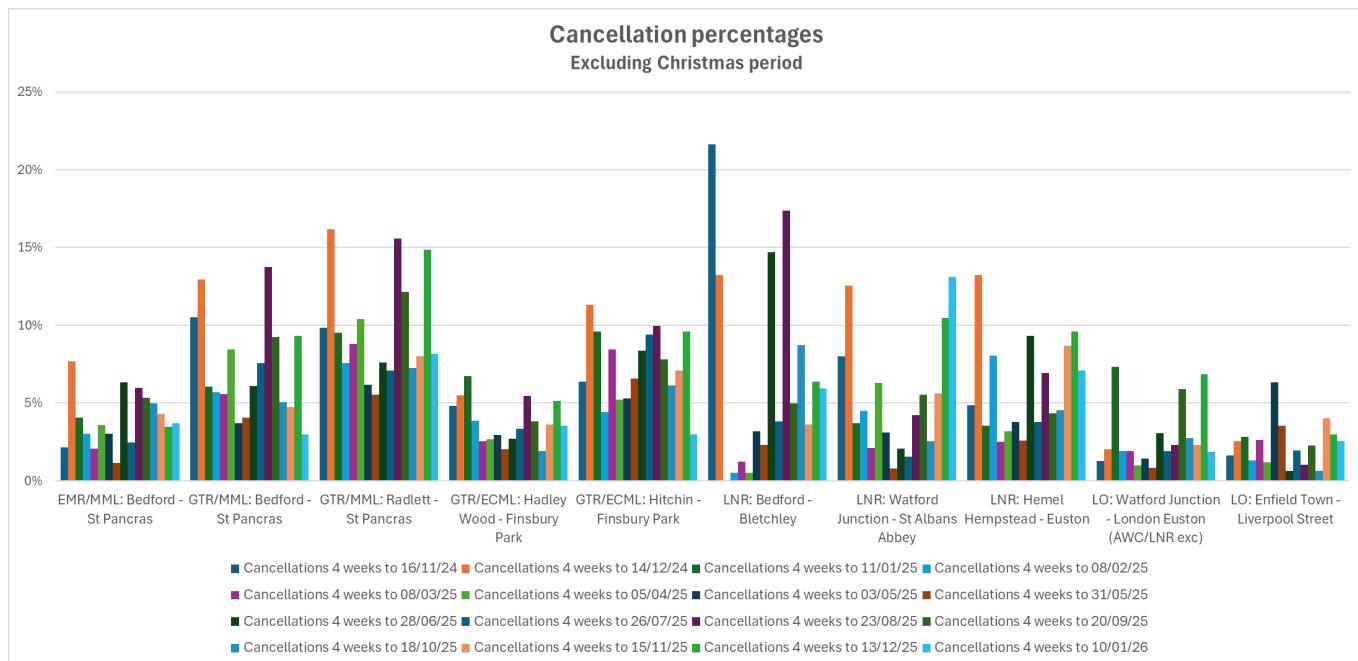
A reprise of local campaigning topics

I've updated the [list of campaigning priorities](#) we have compiled. With the exception of reacting to the breaking news of TfL's bid for the GN Inners, there are no substantive changes. Comments are welcome.

Performance

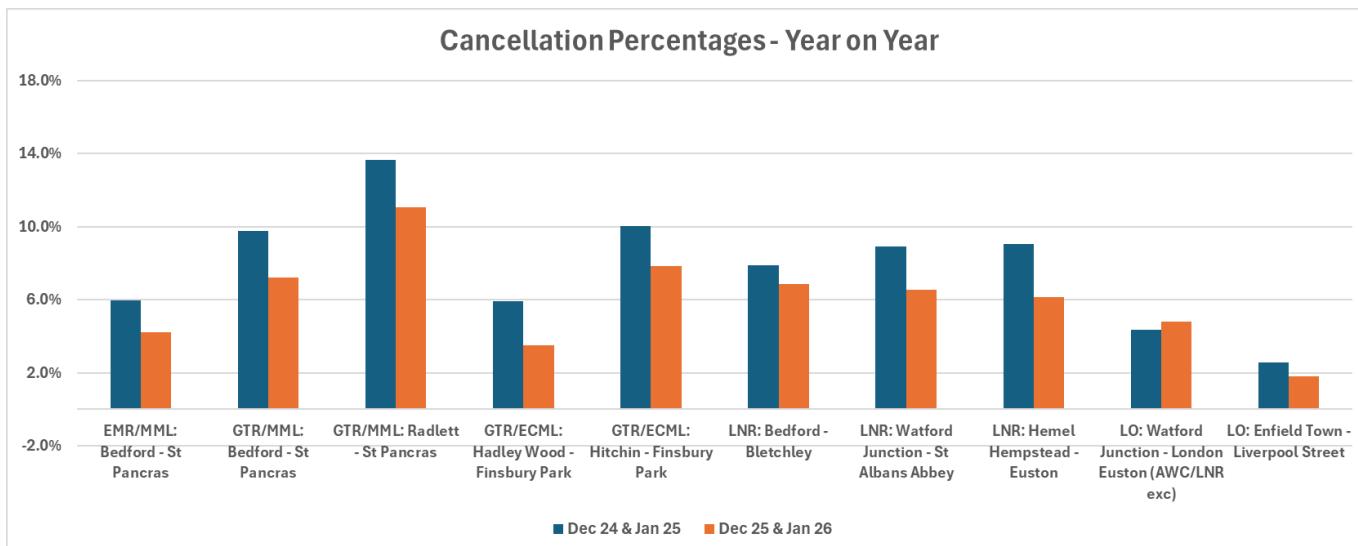
I have continued to collect the performance data for our main services via Recent Train Times.

Cancellations over time

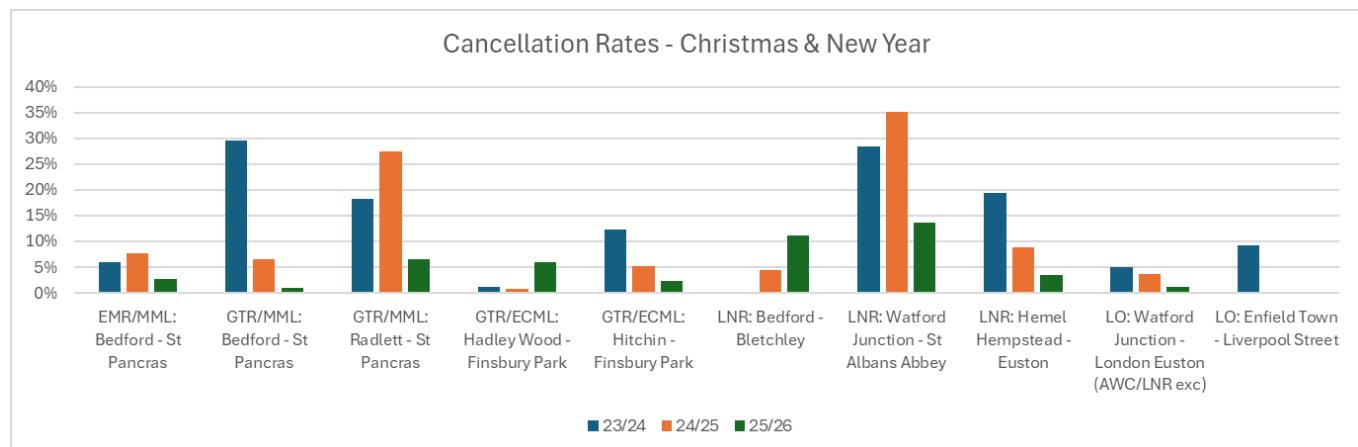


This graph is also available in landscape at the end of the newsletter.

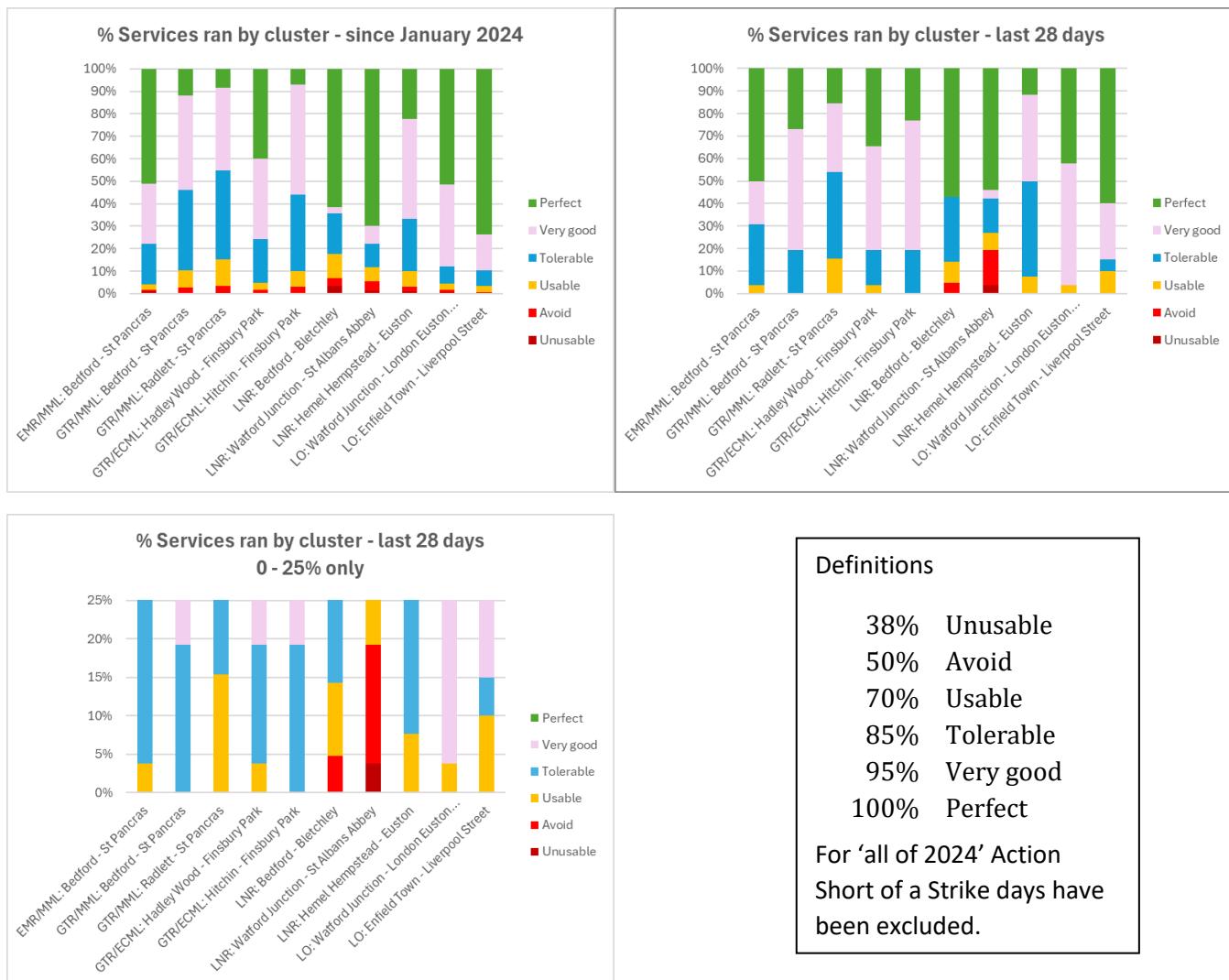
Cancellations year on year



And for Christmas / New Year

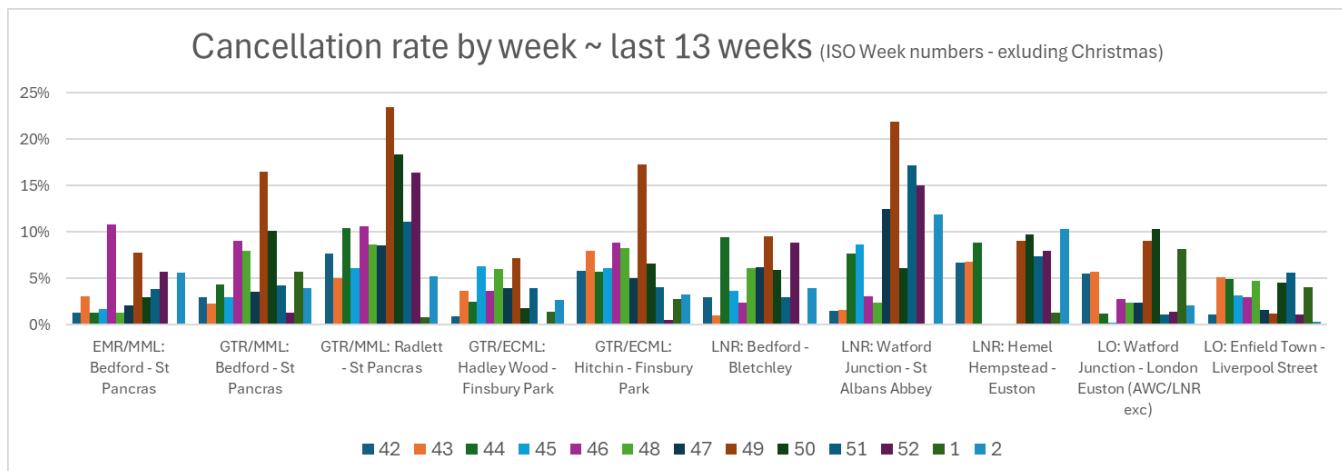


Spread of cancellations



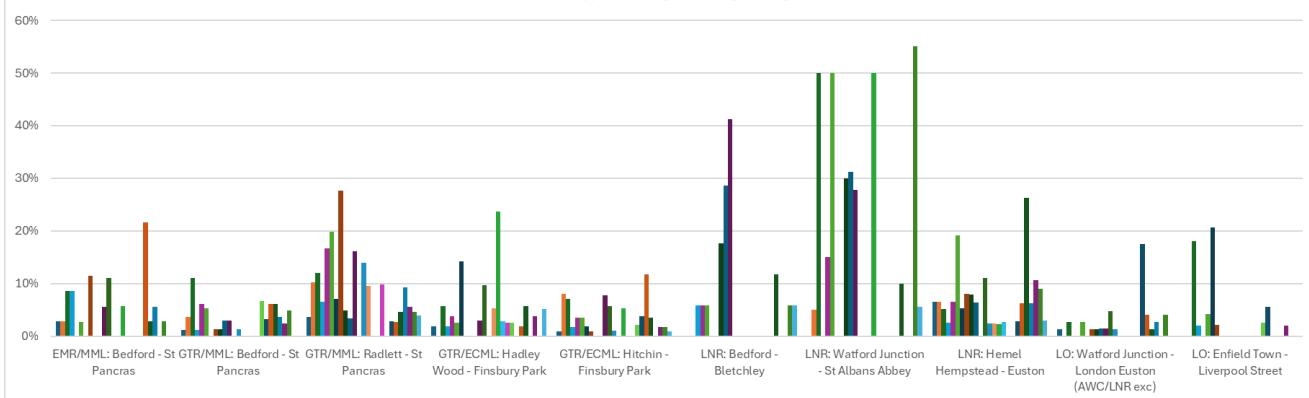
Because I am measuring this statistic across at the “whole of day” level, I do not detect long gaps within the day.

Cancellations by week / day of the week



Cancellation by day - last 28 days

Excludes likely post midnight, pre engineering works



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Stay Safe.

Neil

Neil Middleton

Director (with responsibility for Communications) | **Convener, Railfuture Hertfordshire & Bedfordshire** |

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Cancellation percentages Excluding Christmas period

