

Dear Friend

I hope you are staying safe.

I invite you to an in-person meeting of Railfuture Herts & Beds on **Saturday 7th March at 11:00 (until 13:00) in person**. It will be at St Paul's Church, Hatfield Road, St Albans (more details below). Then, I plan to go on for lunch at one of the venues between the Church and St Albans City station (probably our 'usual' – The Crown) – all are welcome.

Our next two meetings are then:

- **Wednesday 8th April at 19:30 on Zoom** – a change of date.
- **Thursday 14th May at 19:30 on Zoom**

Our Venue

We will be returning to St Paul's Church on Hatfield Road in St Albans ([AL1 4JP](#)) ~ in Garden Room **One**. The Church is in walking distance for most of us from St Albans City station (0.5 miles / c 10 minutes). From St Albans Abbey station it is around 1.5 miles / 30 minutes. There are direct buses from City station; from Abbey station, a change is required. If you are driving, the Church is at the junction of Blandford Road; this often has free spaces; failing that, Brampton Road (at the far end) should have plenty of spaces. Neither have restrictions on a Saturday, unlike Hatfield Road.

Topics for meeting

1. Welcome
2. Luton Local Transport Plan (more below)
3. TfL & GN Inners (more below)
4. Contactless payment for LSE Rail Journeys (more below)
5. Fares more generally (more below)
6. East West Rail (more below)
7. Performance (more below)
8. Round table

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Luton Local Transport Plan Revision

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

Railfuture Herts & Beds made a response – that can be read [here](#); it was very much along the lines we discussed last month.

TfL seeking control of GN Inners

There is no new official news on this. I heard that the DfT has commissioned and received an independent assessment of the TfL Business Case and I have send a [Freedom of Information request](#) to request it – in theory their response is due on Friday.

To recap, there are three broad outcomes:

1. TfL’s business case is accepted and implemented.
2. GTR’s alternative proposal – the same for the Hertford Loop, and that the Welwyn Garden City to Sevenoaks service becomes all day is accepted and implemented.
3. Nothing changes.

The view of the January meeting was that choice 2 was our preferred option.

My next steps are to continue to follow up with TfL, GTR and see if, via Ian Brown, I can get something in front of Lord Hendy. I think though the 80/20 rule very much applies – a little bit of time is justified but making it a big time consumer is not sensible – the decision is probably going to be driven in good part by national political and perception views.

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

Contactless Payment for journeys

Contactless related complaints continue to rumble on; it very much seems that the December 2025 stations have caused more bad news stories to appear in the media and Facebook groups. I’ve made a little bit more progress on my plan:

“Write a short paper suggesting how contactless should evolve, focusing on four features:

- Railcards
- Bespoke times for off-peak start and end (see below)
- A third fare band (for weekends)
- Support for Child Fares”

Issue 157 of TfL’s internal [Ticketing and Revenue Update](#), provided with some redactions under FOI (my thanks to Mary Lowe for letting me know it was available) has a good read on Project Proteus – the contract where Indra Group is replacing Cubic. In particular it describes at a high level “Account-Based Ticketing” – or ABT.

ABT is a fundamental architectural change, moving the ticket from your device to your account in the cloud. TfL comment:

WHAT ARE THE KEY GOALS OF PROJECT PROTEUS

Account-Based Ticketing (ABT):	→ Transition from an account on a physical card, to linking directly to customer accounts, reducing reliance on older tech (see more below).
Seamless Contactless:	→ Allow passengers to tap in with different devices (card / phone / watch) and tap out with another without extra charges.
Future-Proofing:	→ Support emerging transport models like Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS).
Data & Analytics:	→ Utilise fare collection data for better service planning and commercial opportunities.
National Rail Expansion:	→ Work with the Department for Transport (DfT) to extend contactless PAYG to National Rail in the Southeast (Project Oval).

A key question I want to understand is sequencing – will, for instance, current systems be improved to support Railcards for Contactless, or is this a Project Proteus delivery.

I met TfL Rail yesterday (with Richard Bowry and Charlie King from Metro), mainly on Rail inside in Greater London, but TfL have agreed an action to follow up on a meeting on ticketing and fares.

Fares more generally

At the start of the week [it was announced](#) that for flexible daily tickets purchased on or after 1 April will only be refundable up to 23:59 the day before travel. Previously this was possible up to 28 days after travel. The reason quoted is an estimated £40m of fraudulent refunds per annum from individuals who travel then also claim a refund.

For more local travel, the main pain is imposed on those who are less technical, do not use a phone etc. Whilst I personally often travel on GTR's KeyGo (so on post pay) I also regularly buy a ticket as I walk to the station, so my habits don't need to change and a last minute trip cancellation / deferral is not an issue, But if I wanted a paper ticket I would be more inclined to buy shortly ahead of time to avoid 'queue risk'. And for those that don't use e-tickets that's not a choice, it's their only option. I'd be interested in the view of others.

A question I don't yet have an answer to is whether it is always possible to make a seat reservation without a ticket (for longer distance journeys [where the TOC allocates seats]). I will ask Railfuture members in other branches for the answer to that one.

More generally, I see all this as a rather incoherent approach to fares reform – the current mantra seems to be “make it more difficult and uncertain”. I'd also like to test this out and I am contemplating a press release.

East West Rail

Still no news on the service between Milton Keynes and Oxford; I think it is mired in a wider dispute about the expansion (or not) of DOO (Driver Only Operation) and/or DCO (Driver Controlled Operation), where there is a second member of staff and the driver opens and closes the doors. I still 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.

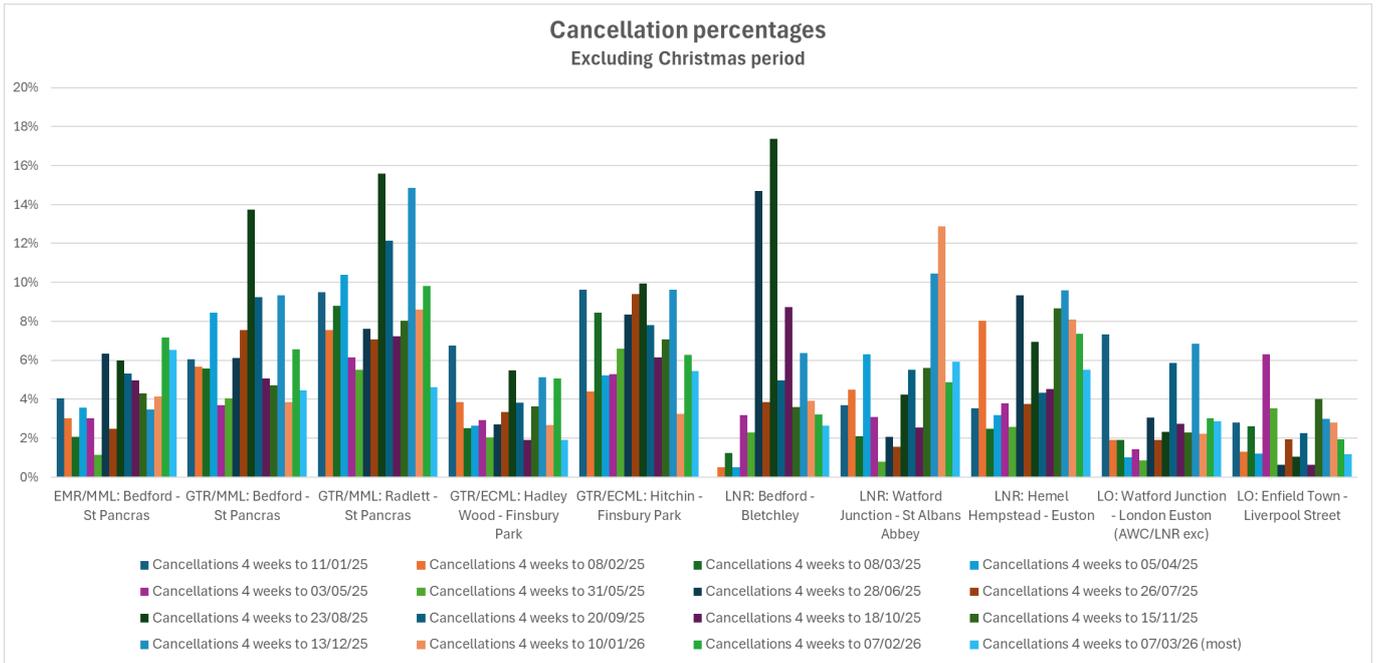
A Rail Magazine [article](#) published today is headlined “East West Rail: still no passenger service 500 days after line opened to traffic” – which says it all.

Performance

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

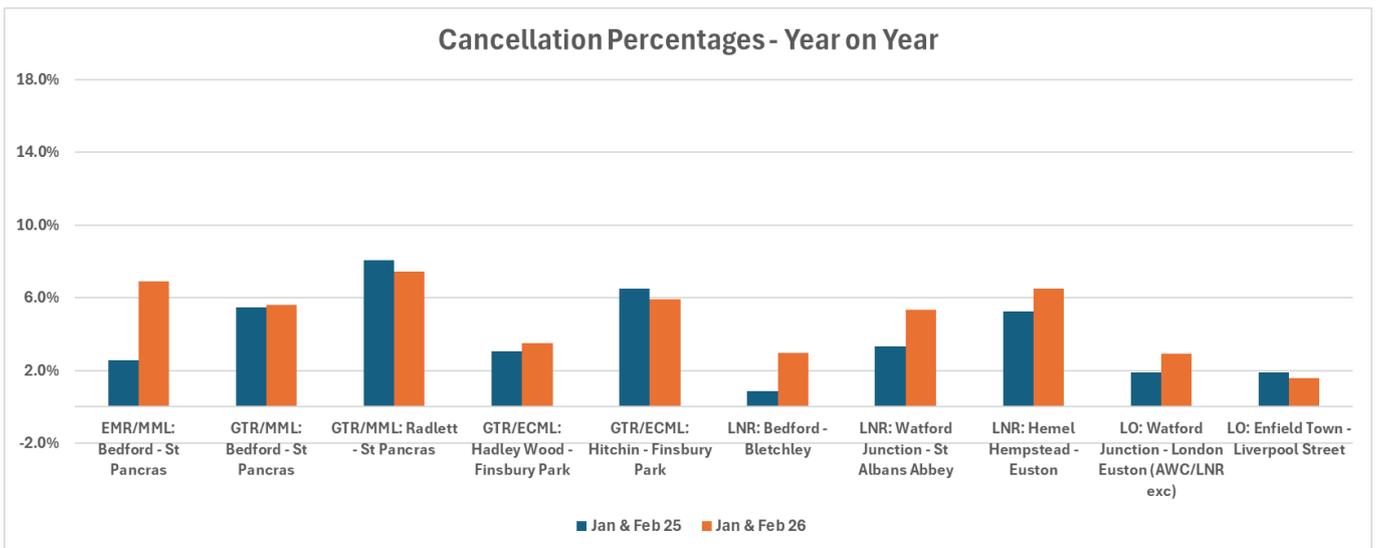
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Cancellations over time



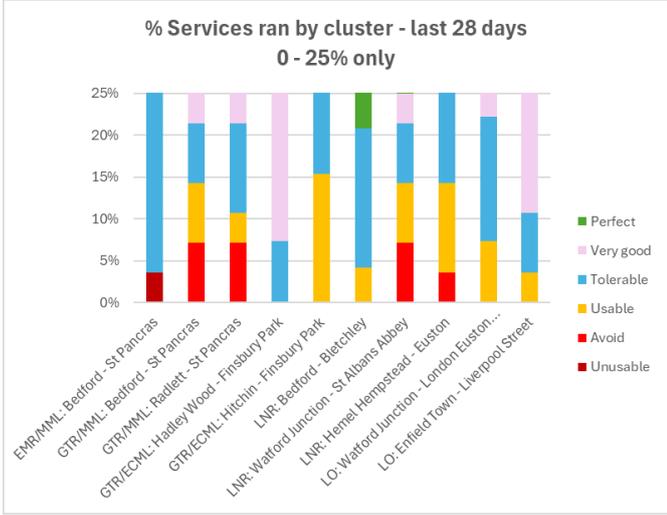
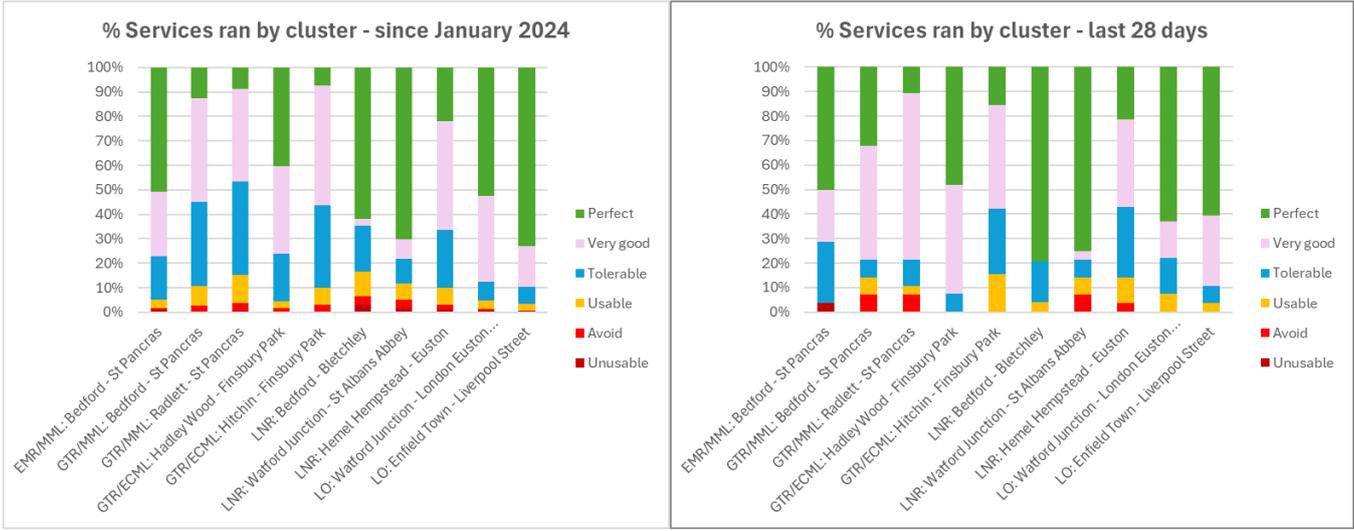
This graph is also available in landscape at the end of the newsletter.

Cancellations year on year



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Spread of cancellations



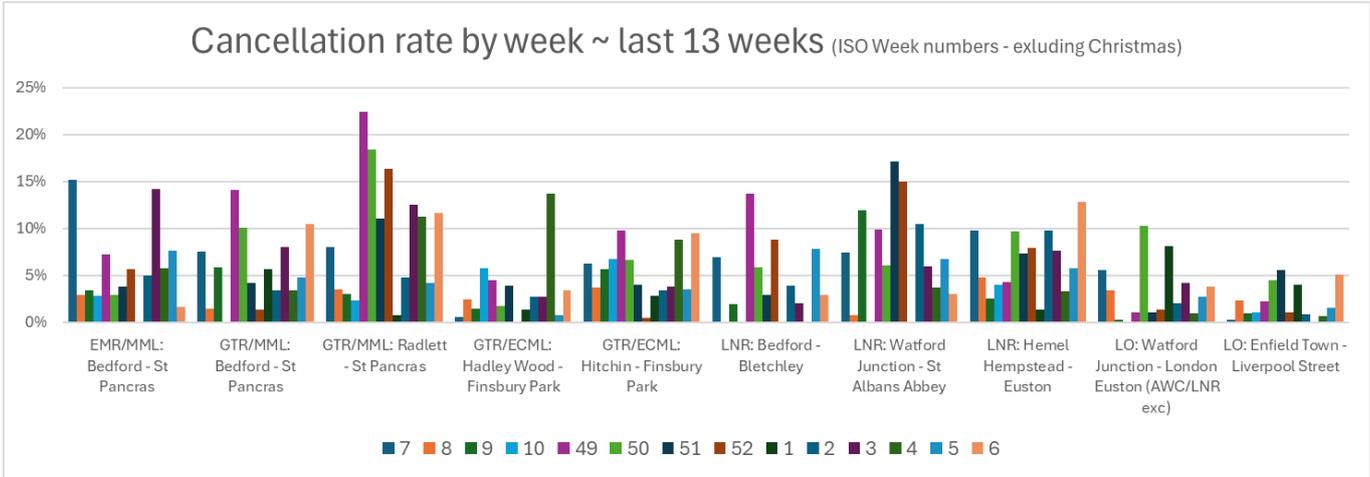
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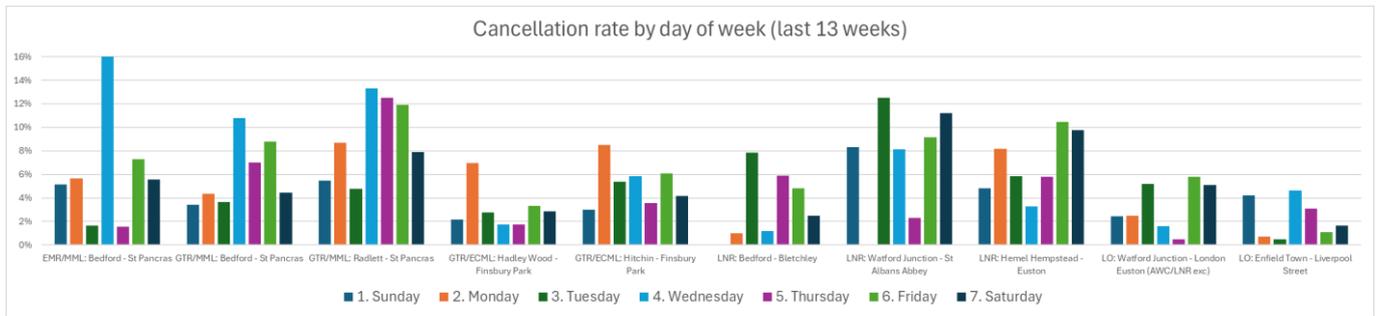
- 38% Unusable
- 50% Avoid
- 70% Usable
- 85% Tolerable
- 95% Very good
- 100% Perfect

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 last updated in January and will next be updated in April. Comments are welcome.

Other Railfuture meetings you might be interested in

Sat 18 April, 11am (time TBC)	Railfuture LSE Annual Meeting	Wesley’s Chapel, City Road, London
Sat 4 July, 11am	Railfuture National Annual Meeting	Priory Rooms, Birmingham

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Stay Safe.

Neil

Neil Middleton

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Cancellation percentages Excluding Christmas period

