

Disappointing News

Please see, below, an announcement issued today on behalf of the rail industry by the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) concerning plans for the December 2018 timetable. In essence, the improvements we had planned for December will not now happen until May 2019.

We have already put a lot of work and preparation into the timetable improvements planned for December this year, and our preparations are on schedule.

We are therefore disappointed that we will not be able to go forward with these plans until May, but understand that these decisions have been made to reflect the network wide situation.

The new West Midlands Trains timetable, when it does come into effect, will benefit thousands of passengers with extra trains and new journey opportunities, and is designed to support the progress and prosperity of the regions we serve.

What this means specifically for West Midlands Trains' services is that we will not have the following from December :

- New cross-Birmingham linkages creating better connectivity to London and Birmingham International from Liverpool, Stoke, Crewe and Rugeley via Walsall
- Faster journey times between the West Midlands and London Euston
- Faster journey times between Crewe and London Euston
- Significant uplift in capacity, particularly 8 car trains from New St to London Euston
- Additional services between Crewe, Stoke and Birmingham New Street
- Electric services on the Chase Line
- Better evening services on most routes
- Uplift in Shrewsbury Line frequency on weekdays, Saturdays and Sundays
- Later services on Coventry, Cross City North and Wolverhampton lines
- Through services Nuneaton-Coventry-Leamington Spa

I know you will be disappointed that we are unable to bring in the planned improvements sooner. If you would like to discuss the implications of today's announcement or any other matter relating to West Midlands Trains' services, please do not hesitate to get in contact.

Francis Thomas
Head of Corporate Affairs
West Midlands Trains

The RDG statement is as follows

The rail industry has reviewed its plans for the winter timetable following disruption in parts of the country after the May timetable change and will make fewer changes to ensure people get a more reliable service.

Every year, the national timetable is routinely changed twice – for the summer (in May) and for the winter (in December) to allow services to adapt for seasonal variations and to enable new services to be introduced as a result of investment in the infrastructure and in new trains.

The timetable change in May 2018 was the largest in recent railway history. As a result of today's announcement, the December 2018 timetable change will be of a similar scale to the smaller changes of recent years.

Customers in many parts of the country will still see changes to their timetables this winter, while elsewhere a more cautious approach will be taken with some planned improvements being introduced more gradually.

This approach – supported by Network Rail and train operating companies – has been adopted following the difficulties encountered with the May timetable. The rail industry has reviewed its plans for December and is acting now to make sure that changes can be introduced smoothly, and that passengers can plan their journeys with confidence.

The government has accepted the rail industry's recommended approach.

The majority of operators will introduce a new December timetable. Others will continue with their May timetable, which will still require additional work to be done. Where this is the case, minor adjustments and small locally-based changes that have limited wider impact may be made if possible.

Sir Peter Hendy, Chair, Network Rail, said:

"The railway industry has taken a long hard look at its plans for the next timetable change in December and, taking into account recent painful lessons, the industry has scaled back its ambition and tempered it with a more cautious, phased approach to introducing the new timetable.

"While there will still be new services introduced this December, other new services will now be introduced more gradually over the next few timetable changes to help smooth their introduction and maintain a reliable service for passengers and businesses alike.

"The railway is too vital for the health and wealth of our country to risk a repeat of the mistakes of May and this more balanced approach of ambition and caution is absolutely the right thing to do for the millions who rely on our railway everyday."

Paul Plummer, chief executive of the Rail Delivery Group, said:

"In parts of the country, many people have suffered unacceptable disruption following the introduction of the new timetable in May for which we are sincerely sorry. The industry is determined to learn the lessons from what went wrong. After careful consideration, Network Rail and train operators are acting now to make sure people get a reliable service when the December timetable is introduced, which means some improvements will be delivered more slowly than originally planned.

"As part of our long-term plan to change and improve, we will still be introducing thousands of new carriages and delivering a 10 per cent increase in the number of trains running. Our ambition to deliver a once-in-a-generation step change in the quality of rail services is right but reliability for customers must come first and that's what today's announcement aims to ensure."

Operators introducing a new December TT	Operators continuing with the planned May TT
Arriva Trains Wales ¹ c2c Caledonian Sleeper ¹ Chiltern Railways East Midlands Trains Grand Central ² Greater Anglia Heathrow Express ² Hull Trains ² London North Eastern Railway Merseyrail ¹ Scotrail ¹ South Eastern TfL Rail ¹ Virgin Trains West Coast	CrossCountry Govia Thameslink Railway Great Western Railway London Overground ¹ Northern South Western Railway TransPennine Express West Midlands Trains

Table Notes:

Not all national rail network train operators are engaged through Department for Transport rail franchise contracts. The table also includes the expected position, for:

¹ services provided under contract to devolved authorities; and

² services provided through Open Access contracts independent of public authority.

Notes to editors

- The Secretary of State for Transport and the Chair of Network Rail asked Andrew Haines, Chief Executive Designate of Network Rail, to review the industry's plans for the new winter timetable due to be brought into operation on 9 December. Mr Haines considered the plans for the new timetable, especially in light of recent disruption following the May timetable change, and to better balance ambition and caution for December.
- Mr Haines consulted with Network Rail and operators up and down the country, and made a series of recommendations that maximise the benefits of new services for December and also gives industry and passengers a very high degree of confidence in delivering any change smoothly and without the major disruption seen with the summer timetable.

- The government has accepted these recommendations, which will see some operators move forward with a change of service in December while others will continue with May's full planned timetable that will in effect, last 12 months rather than six.
- Mr Haines also recommended that where possible, planners should try and make small adjustments to the summer timetable planned for Northern and GTR to reflect passenger and stakeholder feedback to improve service patterns and frequencies.
- Freight operators are liaising directly with Network Rail over decisions about their timetables.
- This announcement means that returning to a position of confirming timetables to customers 12 weeks ahead where these are altered at weekends, known as informed traveller, will take longer than previously planned. The industry will be working hard to return to the full 12 weeks ahead confirmation window as quickly as possible and hopes to do so by May 2019.