SLUG News - 2016

31 December 2016

Christmas Quiz 2016 Answers

The answers to the Christmas Photo Quiz were as follows :-

1. Dawlish
2. Edinburgh Waverley
3. Knaresborough (North Yorkshire)
4. Harlech
5. New Romney (Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway)
6. Berwick-upon-Tweed
7. Portsmouth Harbour
8. Saltash (Royal Albert Bridge)
9. Bristol Temple Meads
10. Kingswear
11. Newcastle-upon-Tyne
12. St Ives (Cornwall)
13. London St Pancras International
14. Bath Green Park
15. Ryde (Isle of Wight)
16. Forth Bridge (Dalmeny Station)
17. Conwy
18. Teignmouth

17 December 2016

Station Footfall Totals For 2015/2016 Published

The station footfall totals for all stations in the United Kingdom for 2015/2016 have been published. The totals for stations along the Stourbridge line are as follows.

Station Name	2015/16 Entries and Exits	Interchanges	2014/15 Entries and Exits	2007/08 Entries and Exits	% Change from 2014/15 to 2015/16	% Change from 2007/08 to 2015/16
Birmingham Moor Street	6,874,222	450,609	6,521,272	687,439	5	900
Birmingham Snow Hill	4,713,174	242,863	4,538,108	2,407,283	4	96
Jewellery Quarter	427,182	0	392,502	116,840	9	266
The Hawthorns	439,912	0	422,750	157,170	4	180
Smethwick Galton Bridge	639,594	508,494	577,222	130,607	11	390
Langley Green	180,990	0	169,866	60,891	7	197
Rowley Regis	1,015,508	0	921,116	325,009	10	212
Old Hill	189,452	0	185,406	83,113	2	128
Cradley Heath	772,658	0	740,842	288,333	4	168
Lye	90,408	0	82,104	46,413	10	95
Stourbridge Town	545,700	0	497,736	278,813	10	96
Stourbridge Junction	1,434,312	459,278	1,323,834	499,584	8	187
Hagley	544,318	0	480,456	332,555	13	64
Blakedown	97,028	0	91,698	61,109	6	59
Kidderminster	1,619,928	0	1,561,914	963,041	4	68
Hartlebury	50,088	0	39,350	13,614	27	268
Droitwich Spa	561,908	71,752	533,268	385,958	5	46
Worcester Shrub Hill	618,467	128,983	595,402	625,971	4	-1
Worcester Foregate Street	2,293,021	202,911	2,207,508	1,252,971	4	83

As you can see, passenger numbers have increased at every station compared with the previous accounting year.

The largest increase is at Hartlebury with 27% more passengers than the previous year, a vindication of SLUG's campaign to get off-peak and evening services to stop at the station. Hopefully, this increase will encourage the next franchisee to further improve services, with Sunday services being the next priority.

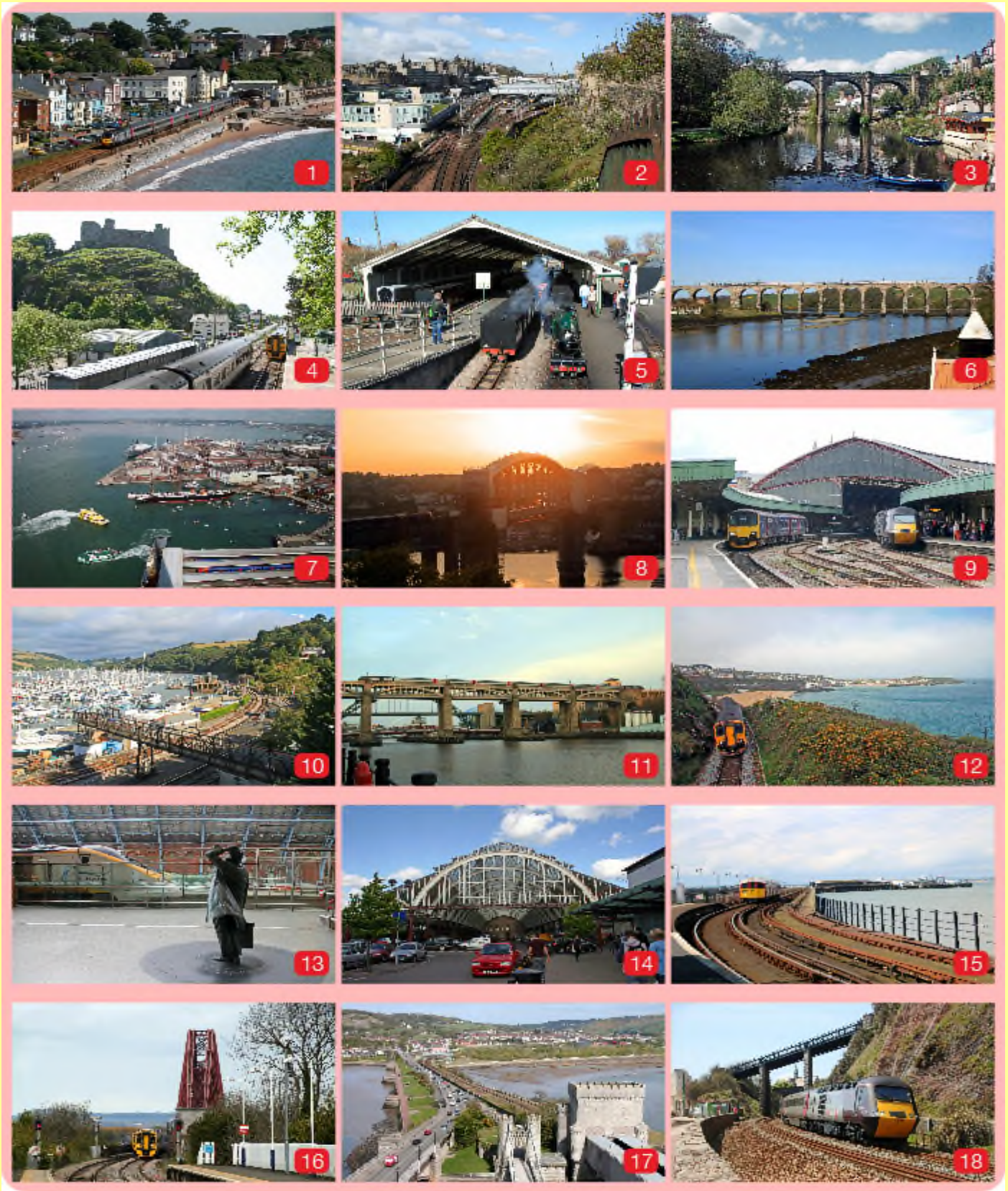
Another station which has seen significantly improved passenger numbers is Lye, where a 10% increase has occurred despite there being no improved services and a significant downgrade in station facilities.

However, the table shows just how much passenger numbers have grown since London Midland took over the franchise in 2007. It shows that the decision to only buy 69 new carriages for the Stourbridge line based on 2007 usage figures has in hindsight proved to be totally inadequate and that more carriages will be desperately needed in the new franchise to cater for the number of passengers that the line is now attracting.

11 December 2016

Christmas Quiz 2016

The following are photographs taken at well-known railway locations in the UK. Larger images can be viewed on the SLUG website. Can you name the locations?



30 September 2016

Changes to Stourbridge line services from 26 October to 6 November

The Stourbridge line will see a few changes to its service pattern from Wednesday 26 October to Sunday 6 November. This is because the line through the new Bromsgrove station will be closed to enable signalling to be updated and a new track layout created to serve all four platforms of the new Bromsgrove station. The changes can be summed up as follows :

Wednesday 26 October to Friday 28 October and Monday 31 October to Friday 4 November. Additional non-stop CrossCountry services will operate via Stourbridge Junction. Hourly services will operate southbound to Devon/Cornwall and to Cardiff Central and northbound to Scotland via the North East and to Nottingham. To accommodate these services, the departure at xx.57 from Stourbridge Junction to Stratford-upon-Avon will not run between Stourbridge and Birmingham New Street from 09.57 and 14.57. Services from Stratford-upon-Avon to Stourbridge Junction that depart Birmingham Snow Hill at xx.23 will not operate between Snow Hill and Stourbridge Junction from 10.23 to 15.23. The trains that depart Stourbridge Junction at xx.07 towards Birmingham, and depart Birmingham Snow Hill at xx.33 towards Stourbridge Junction will make additional stops at Langley Green, Old Hill and Lye. Trains that normally operate between Birmingham New Street and Hereford via Bromsgrove will only operate between Worcester Shrub Hill and Hereford, with through passengers using Stourbridge line services to access Birmingham. Therefore Stourbridge line services to and from Worcester could be busier than normal.

Saturday 29 October. Additional non-stop CrossCountry services will operate via Stourbridge Junction. Hourly services will operate southbound to Devon/Cornwall and to Cardiff Central and northbound to Scotland via the North East and to Nottingham. However, according to the National Rail website, all Stourbridge line services will operate as normal. Trains that normally operate between Birmingham New Street and Hereford via Bromsgrove will only operate between Worcester Shrub Hill and Hereford, with through passengers using Stourbridge line services to access Birmingham. Therefore Stourbridge line services to and from Worcester could be busier than normal.

Sunday 30 October. In addition to the extra CrossCountry services on the Plymouth to Edinburgh and Cardiff to Nottingham corridors, London Midland will operate its Birmingham New Street to Hereford service non-stop via the Stourbridge line. All Stourbridge line services will operate as normal.

Saturday 5 November and Sunday 6 November. CrossCountry services will not operate as engineering works will be taking place south of Abbotswood Junction, thus necessitating replacement bus services between Birmingham New Street and Gloucester/Cheltenham Spa. London Midland will operate its Birmingham New Street to Hereford service non-stop via the Stourbridge line. All Stourbridge line services will operate as normal.

16 September 2016

SLUG Welcomes Planned Train Service Improvements (Press Release)

A Press Release from the Stourbridge Line User Group.

RAIL GROUP WELCOMES PLANNED TRAIN SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS
But new franchise specification also misses opportunities for Stourbridge/Kidderminster line

The Stourbridge Line User Group has welcomed some of the measures included in the Invitation to Tender document for the next West Midlands passenger train franchise, which starts in October 2017. However, it is not satisfied that some steps that would produce clear benefits for users of the Worcester-Kidderminster-Stourbridge-Birmingham line are not specified.

"We are very pleased to see that the bidders for the next franchise must plan to operate more trains in the evenings and on Sundays," said the group's recently-appointed chairman, Don Barton. "But on Sunday mornings, when the service starts up woefully late, it seems that they are not required to make any improvements, so we will be carrying on campaigning to change that. The fact that earlier Sunday services are specified for several other routes in the West Midlands makes this look unfair to people living along the Stourbridge line."

The Stourbridge Line User Group represents and campaigns on behalf of train passengers on the line between Worcester and Birmingham via Kidderminster and Stourbridge. It takes a keen interest in the quality of the passenger service and in connections to other routes available along the line, and is encouraged by suggestions in the Invitation to Tender that a strategy on ticket-checking is required and that improvements to Worcester-Cheltenham-Gloucester connections (which give access to long-distance trains serving south Wales and south west England) are to be investigated. However, it notes that no hard requirements are specified on these aspects.
"Clearly we must continue our campaigns to achieve a high-quality train service for Stourbridge Line users," continued Don Barton. "As an active user group we engage with the rail industry on many levels to make the case for improvements, and although this news is encouraging it also shows that our group and our members need to keep on doing this to achieve more than the minimum standard that has been laid down here."

At a recent meeting the group have challenged the recently formed West Midlands Rail, who will ultimately manage the rail franchise in our area to explain why our route is excluded from the benefit of earlier Sunday services. It seems other West Midland routes will, this has to be to the economic and social detriment of the people of North Worcestershire and the South West of the Black Country.

30 August 2016

West Midlands Rail Franchise Invitation To Tender Document Published

The Department for Transport and West Midlands Rail today published the Invitation for Tender document for the new West Midlands Rail Franchise that is scheduled to start in October 2017. This document specifies the minimum service requirements for the new franchise.

The two companies shortlisted to run the new franchise (Govia and Abellio) will submit their bids based on the Invitation to Tender by this November and the winner will be announced next June.

The following is specified in the document for the Stourbridge line.

Birmingham – Stourbridge – Kidderminster – Worcester

- Increased evening frequency Monday to Saturday between Birmingham and Stourbridge Junction to three services an hour by December 2018.
- Increased evening frequency Monday to Saturday from Birmingham to Kidderminster from one to three services an hour by December 2018.
- Increased evening frequency Monday to Friday from Kidderminster to Birmingham from one to two services an hour by December 2018.
- Increased Sunday frequency between Stourbridge Junction and Birmingham from two to six services an hour by December 2021.
- Increased Sunday frequency between Kidderminster and Birmingham from one to four services an hour by December 2021.
- Increased Sunday frequency between Worcester and Birmingham Snow Hill from one to two services an hour by December 2021.

Stourbridge Town – Stourbridge Junction

- Increased Sunday frequency between Stourbridge Town and Stourbridge Junction from four to six services an hour by December 2021.
- A requirement to address crowding problems encountered on the service.

Unfortunately, no mention is made of earlier Sunday morning services on the Stourbridge line, and this is something that SLUG will be pursuing as soon as possible.

To view the Invitation to Tender document, click on the link below.
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/549246/wmf-itt.pdf

7 May 2016

Stourbridge Junction Car Parking Restrictions (9 May - 12 June)

Resurfacing work will be taking place on the main Brook Road car park at Stourbridge Junction from 9 May until 12 June.

From 9 May until 10 June, 140 car parking spaces will be unavailable while the resurfacing work takes place. Blue badge parking will be maintained but the spaces may be relocated during the works. Pedestrian access will also be restricted and passengers are advised to use the underpass near the station and enter via the ticket office.

From 9 May to 13 May, the pedestrian access from Lutley Drive will be closed.

Finally, on 11 and 12 June, the main car park will be closed completely.

8 April 2016

West Midlands and Chiltern Route Study

The route study takes a 2043 view of the world and asks how this would fit on the current infrastructure, including the impact on level crossings and station capacity. Its scope does not include reopened lines or new stations.

It is based on the fact that there has been a 49% growth in the number of rail passengers since 1998 up to 1.46bn passengers. It is estimated that the West Midlands demand growth will be 49% by 2023 and 114% by 2043. The Marylebone demand growth will be 22% by 2023 and 76% by 2043. Freight will see a demand growth of 2.9% per annum up to 2043.

The following items relevant to the Stourbridge line are expected for Control Period 6 (between 2019 and 2024).

- Hopefully, the Worcester area will be resignalled although infrastructure improvements (i.e. Rainbow Hill Junction reinstatement) would be subject to funding being available.

For 2026 (HS2), the following are in the draft document

- Central Birmingham enhancements including Camp Hill chords, opening Moor Street platforms 5 and 6 and the reinstatement of the Kings Norton island platforms.
- Birmingham Snow Hill platyfoirm 4 reinstatement and provision of a bay platform at Rowley Regis.

Between 2026 and 2043.

- It is expected that the Chiltern Line rolling stock and signalling will be life expired by the late 2020s. This would be the right time to electrify the Chiltern Route, plus the other Snow Hill lines.
- The route study does not believe that freight demand from the West Country will rise enough to give a cost benefit large enough to reopen the Stourbridge Junction to Walsall line or freight. However, this would have no adverse effect on plans to reopen Wednesbury to Brierley Hill as a Metro line and to introduce tram-train operation on Stourbridge Junction to Walsall.

The draft route study was published on 30 June 2016. It may be viewed by clicking on the link below.

https://16cbgt3sbwr8204sf92da3xxc5m-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/West-Midlands-and-Chilterns-Route-Study-Draft-for-Consultation-1.pdf

7 April 2016

SLUG Public Meeting and Annual General Meeting on 10 May 2016

The 2016 Annual General Meeting of the Stourbridge Line User Group will take place on Tuesday 10 May 2016 at the Severn Valley Railway Station at Kidderminster. The event will be held in the Refreshment Room (at the rear of the King and Castle Public Bar) and will commence at 7.30 pm.

As per custom, the AGM will be preceded by a Public Meeting, which is open to members and non-members alike.

The last few years have seen new trains on both the Stourbridge main line and the Stourbridge Town branch, improved trains services at Hartlebury and improved facilities at many of our stations. Planning work has started on the project to rebuild Kidderminster station and its environs.

The last few months has seen consultations taking place on the new West Midlands Rail Franchise which is scheduled to start in October 2017. In addition, the formation of the West Midlands Combined Authority with an elected mayor will release funds for public transport projects, including the building of the Metro route from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill which is hoped to be completed by 2022 or 2023. In addition, a tram-train line from Stourbridge Junction to Walsall is on the cards as a longer term project.

You, the travelling public will be able to listen to guest speakers from the rail industry and county travel planning departments and the developments listed above should feature strongly in the presentations. Whether you have praise or criticism of the rail service on our line or you have a suggestion to make or a question to ask, you are most welcome to take part.

The guest speakers at the meeting will be :-

David Balme -Rail Planning Officer, Worcestershire County Council
Pete Bond –Transport Services Director, Centro
Peter Dobbin, Customer Service Manager for the Worcester Lines, London Midland
Malcolm Holmes - Program Director, West Midlands Rail
Brenda Lawrence, Head of Snow Hill Services, London Midland
Alan Riley – Head of on-Train Service, Chiltern Railways

7 April 2016

Latest News - April 2016

There have been a number of developments along the Stourbridge line over the past few weeks.

Ticket Machines at Hartlebury, Blakedown and Lye. As part of the London Midland Direct Award, these three stations will receive card-only automatic ticket machines.

National Concessionary Passes. The gatelines at both Snow Hill and Moor Street now recognise Centro area National Concessionary Passes. Hopefully, this should eliminate the long queues that build up at these stations at about 10 am every morning.

Worcester Blockade. Lines in the Worcester and Malvern areas will be closed from 4-14 June, 18-23 June and 6-10 August to allow 5 mechanical signal boxes to be renewed. From 4-14 June, there will be a restricted service to Worcester Foregate Street with no services to Worcester Shrub Hill. Some services will terminate at Droitwich Spa. From 18-23 June, buses will replace trains between Great Malvern and Hereford. Details of the August blockade will be available shortly.

Improved Services at Hartlebury from December 2016. Two additional services will stop at Hartlebury from the start of the new timetable in December 2016. They are the 0544 Saturday only service from Worcester Shrub Hill and the 2300 Monday to Friday service from Birmingham Snow Hill.

Kidderminster station redevelopment. A preferred architect had been agreed but was still to be officially appointed. This means that detailed work on the project should commence shortly.

Midland Metro to Brierley Hill. The Brierley Hill Metro extension is planned to open in the financial year 2022/2023.

Dudley Very Light Rail Project. The project is still going ahead and it is hoped that it will be operational by 2019. However, it will no longer operate from Dudley to Dudley Port because of the planned Midland Metro extension. Instead it will operate from Dudley though Dudley Tunnel and the site of Blowers Green station and will terminate close to Cinder Bank, just before the point where the Metro leaves the heavy rail formation to head into Dudley Town Centre.

West Midlands Rail Franchise Short List of Bidders Announced. The following three companies have been short listed to operate the next West Midlands Franchise which starts in October 2017.

- London and West Midlands Railway Limited, a subsidiary of Govia Limited (a joint venture between Keolis and Go-Ahead Group);
- West Midlands Trains Limited, currently a wholly owned subsidiary of Abellio Transport Group Limited with East Japan Railway (JR East) and Mitsui & Co Ltd as minority partners;
- MTR Corporation (West Midlands) Limited, a wholly owned subsidiary of MTR Corporation (UK) Limited.

22 February 2016

Silver Anniversary of Last Passenger Train Through Dudley

The following is an extract from a Press Release issued by the Stourbridge Line User Group.

23 February is exactly 25 years since the last passenger train ran along the Stourbridge Junction to Walsall railway line through Dudley Tunnel.

Stourbridge Line User Group Chairman, Rob Hebron said:- “We can’t wait another 25 years for the next train through Dudley. Traffic congestion on our roads is so bad that we need to bring back the trains as soon as possible”.

Back in 1991, a group of enthusiasts called the Branch Line Society paid for a special train from London to come to Stourbridge Junction. Then, with one engine on the front and another on the back, they first went to Pensnett Trading Estate, then back to Brettell Lane and north through Dudley, Wednesbury and Walsall.

As recently as January this year, a charter train passed through Stourbridge Junction and was able to run as far as Round Oak, Brierley Hill, proving that a freight line can potentially carry passengers if stations are provided.

Rob Hebron added:-
“The plan now is for trams to run from Brierley Hill, using some sections of the old railway, through Dudley Town Centre, but only as far as Wednesbury. Instead of a missing link at each end, we need trains from Stourbridge all the way to Walsall. By bus, it’s a 90 minute journey, longer in the rush hour, and you need to change buses in Dudley. That’s not attractive for commuting every day. Businesses could draw from a bigger pool of labour if trains were brought back.”

The Stourbridge Line User Group is finalising its response to the West Midlands Rail Franchise consultation. Although SLUG has identified the Dudley Line as a contender for re-opening in its response, there is no obligation within the franchise specification for such a service.

Rob Hebron concluded: - “There are long term plans for a passenger railway on the route, extending as far as Brownhills. We are not knocking at a closed door. I believe that a shrewd new train operator for the Stourbridge Line would see the potential of a strategic rail corridor and fully co-operate with the West Midlands Combined Authority to make it happen. At this moment in time, there is only a vague promise of track access post 2043. The residents of Dudley and surrounding areas deserve better than this.”

4 January 2016

Dudley Line Campaign Update - SLUG Meets Local MPs

The Stourbridge Line User Group can reassure its members and Facebook Group followers that the Dudley Line re-opening campaign is alive and kicking. After receiving disappointing communications from Centro and the local Enterprise Partnership, the Group has begun to engage with local Members of Parliament. Chairman, Rob Hebron and Acting Liaison Officer, Gary Adams have met Mike Wood MP (Dudley South) and Margot James MP (Stourbridge) to press the case for passenger train service over the existing, operational freight line. Although the ultimate aim is to achieve a service from Stourbridge Junction to Walsall and beyond, the focus is now on Stourbridge to Brierley Hill. SLUG is seizing on the missing link in the policies of the Integrated Transport Authority and its partners. As ITA policy documents promote Metro Line Two as a light railway between Wednesbury and Brierley Hill, the obvious gap is from Brierley Hill to Stourbridge.

The recent “Movement for Growth” strategy aims to fund Metro Line Two from HS2 connectivity packages. The reasoning that access to Birmingham Curzon Street may be made easier by Wednesbury-bound route is questionable. On the other hand SLUG believes there is a very strong case for a branch line from Brierley Hill to Stourbridge Junction where passengers resident in Dudley South can connect with six trains per hour to Birmingham Moor Street.

The meetings have been positive but there will inevitably be knock-backs. The Metro Line Two scheme has been on the cards for over twenty years and the ITA does not want to discard all the work that has been put in to it or to lose the running powers. Starting Metro at the Wednesbury end of the line immediately presents problems because an alternative Ultra-Light train is to be tested on tracks at Dudley. These are the same tracks which will be required for Metro. SLUG believes that by starting at Stourbridge Junction with a diesel train service, the extension northwards would be easier to follow on, whether it is diesel based or tram/train operation. Network Rail is protecting the track bed until 2043 and so both options will be possible.

SLUG will publish its progress as the campaign unfolds.

3 January 2016

London Midland New Franchise News

There have been two major developments since the start of December regarding the future of the London Midland franchise.

London Midland Direct Award

The first announcement was made on 3 December when London Midland and the Department for Transport (DfT) signed a direct award agreement that means that London Midland will continue to run services until October 2017.

£13 million worth of improvements are planned over the next 18 months. These include

- Earlier services to central Birmingham on Sunday mornings from surrounding towns including Rugby and Lichfield, with new Sunday services from Longbridge, Dorridge and Whitlocks End.
- Free WiFi on long-distance services between London Euston, Northampton, Birmingham, Crewe, Stoke and Liverpool, with the aim that this will be free on all services when the next fully-competed franchise starts
- New and upgraded ticket machines at selected stations, with new 'click and collect' and contactless payment options;
- New targets to improve customer satisfaction and train punctuality.

London Midland will also have to meet tough new targets to improve train cleanliness install CCTV on cross-city Birmingham services to improve security and equip station staff with tablets to improve the information given to customers. The operator will also be required to work with the Smart Cities Partnership to introduce smart ticketing on trains, building on the existing Swift smartcard scheme, to provide seamless and more convenient journeys.

There is not enough detail for SLUG to determine what, if any, improvements will be made to Stourbridge line services in the period to October 2017. SLUG has contacted London Midland to request this information and will pass this onto members when we receive it. However, it will be very disappointing if the Stourbridge line is omitted from the list of routes that get earlier Sunday morning services.

West Midlands Rail Franchise from 2017

On 9 December, the Department for Transport issued the prospectus for the new West Midlands Rail franchise. It is expected that the franchise will run for between 7 and 9 years. The new franchise would require the new franchisee to create a separate business unit for the West Midlands area which would be managed from the end of the next franchise by West Midlands Rail.

A public consultation document will be published later this month and stakeholders will have until March 2016 to respond. SLUG will obviously take the opportunity to press for improvements to our service in terms of better Sunday and evening services, better connections at the southern end of the line and maintenance of the current level of service on weekdays and Saturday daytimes. SLUG will keep you informed of our actions.

3 January 2016

Worcestershire County Council's Top 10 Rail Priorities

Worcestershire County Council has published a document detailing their top 10 priorities for improving rail travel within the county. The 10 priorities are summarised below and the full document may be read by clicking on the link at the bottom.

As far as the Stourbridge line is concerned, items 5, 7, 8 and 10 would all directly offer improvements to our line, while item 4 could provide us with the potential to extend our services to the proposed Worcestershire Parkway station (item 1) if implemented correctly and offer our line the benefits proposed in item 9.

1. **WORCESTERSHIRE PARKWAY**. The proposed station would make Worcestershire more accessible by rail. Funding for phase 1 has been agreed through the transport growth fund and construction should start during 2016
2. **BROMSGROVE NEW STATION**. Work has started on site to build a new station at Bromsgrove about 400 yards south of the current basic station. The new station should open to the public during 2015
3. **BIRMINGHAM TO WORCESTER SERVICES**. An improved service on this line with direct links to Birmingham Airport and enhanced capacity on the single line from Droitwich Spa to Stoke Works would greatly improve accessibility and reduce overcrowding
4. **COTSWOLD LINE IMPROVEMENTS**. The redoubling of the single line section from Norton Junction to Evesham via the proposed Worcestershire Parkway station would improve reliability and journey times and allow additional trains to operate
5. **SIGNAL AND LINE CAPACITY ENHANCEMENTS IN WORCESTER**. Currently Foregate Street station has two single lines running through it, rather than a true double track. Restoring true double track around the triangle would improve reliability and improve the scope for new services
6. **CROSS CITY LINE SOUTH IMPROVEMENTS**. The new double line section through Alvechurch and the new Bromsgrove station should allow Cross City line trains to serve Redditch and Bromsgrove three times an hour, thus improving accessibility from North Worcestershire to Birmingham
7. **KIDDERMINSTER STATION**. A certain amount of funding has been secured for 2016 and 2017 to allow some improvements to be made but further funding is required for the complete project to rebuild the station building and improving the forecourt area
8. **CYCLE AND CAR PARKING**. An increase in the number of car parking spaces at many stations in Worcestershire would be of considerable benefit and reduce the number of people who drive to stations like Stourbridge Junction. Cycle parking spaces are also essential at many stations.
9. **BIRMINGHAM TO BRISTOL SERVICES**. Current services between these cities pass through Worcestershire without stopping. An additional hourly service is proposed calling at University, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire Parkway, Ashchurch, Cheltenham Spa, Gloucester, Yate and Bristol Parkway
10. **WORCESTER RAILWAY STATION IMPROVEMENTS**. Although improvement works have recently been undertaken at Foregate Street, further improvements are still needed at both Worcester city centre stations to bring them up to the required standard.

3 January 2016

A Brummie Canary Wharf

Birmingham City Council has produced a 20-Year Snow Hill Masterplan to convert the Snow Hill and Colmore Row areas into the Canary Wharf of the Midlands.

Part of the plan includes the redevelopment of Snow Hill station within the next five years. The good news is that the car park above Snow Hill station will be demolished. The bad news is that they intend to replace it by a series of 15-storey offices.

If this is correct, a dark dismal underground station will be transformed into a dark, dismal underground station.

Full details are available by clicking on the Birmingham City Council link below, while a gallery of artist's impressions can be viewed on the Birmingham Post link below. Unfortunately, none of the artist's impressions show what the architects are proposing at platform level.

There will be a full public consultation on the plans from 9 February to 23 March. That 6 week period must be used by commuters and stakeholders to make it clear to Birmingham City Council that their masterplan must include a light, airy railway station that is a pleasure to use.