

20 October 2020

Timetable Reductions From 26 October 2020



West Midlands Railway has announced that the Snow Hill lines timetable will be reduced from 26 October in order to provide a reliable service to passengers on the line.

The new Snow Hill timetable features a reduced number of departures compared to the previous timetable but all trains will run with as many carriages as possible.

All departure times on the Snow Hill routes will change under the new timetable and customers are therefore advised to check their journeys carefully before travelling.

Under the new timetable, the majority of trains from Birmingham Snow Hill to Worcester will now start and terminate at the city's Shrub Hill station, rather than Foregate Street as before. Some peak time trains will continue to call at Foregate Street.

With a number of schools and colleges situated along the Snow Hill lines, the timetable has been designed to provide extra services at the beginning and end of the school day.

The weekday service pattern will be as follows :-

- Stourbridge-Stratford-upon-Avon – two trains per hour (one via Dorridge and one via Whitlocks End). Both trains will call at all stations except Small Heath and Tyseley
- Kidderminster-Whitlocks End – one train per hour calling all stations
- Worcester Shrub Hill-Dorridge – one train per hour calling all stations

16 October 2020

Stourbridge Junction Pipped in World Cup of Stations

During the week from 12 to 16 October, the Rai Delivery Group organised a poll which it called the World Cup of Stations to determine the Station of the Year.

48 stations were nominated and were split into 12 groups. The winner of each group moved forwards into the semi-finals which consisted of 4 groups of three. The four winners of the semi-finals competed in the final.

Stourbridge Junction romped through its initial group and beat two "heavyweights" (Bristol Temple Meads and Cardiff Central) to reach the final.

The final was very close with Stourbridge Junction leading until the last 15 minutes when it was pipped by Glasgow Central by only 0.3% of the vote.

Although it is disappointing to have lost by such a small margin, we must be proud that a relatively small station should be named as the second best station in the country. Thanks must go to the leader of our campaign who can be seen drowning his sorrows below.



The full results were as follows :-

Round 1 (winners of each group in capitals)

NORTH EAST - Middlesbrough, NEWCASTLE, Chathill, Blaydon

NORTH WEST - Ainsdale, CREWE, Hindley, Wigan North Western

SCOTLAND - Aberdeen, GLASGOW QUEEN STREET, Motherwell, Wemyss Bay

EAST - Bedford, CAMBRIDGE, Kempston Hardwick, Welwyn Garden City

EAST MIDLANDS - Leicester, NOTTINGHAM, Bottesford, Spalding

YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER - Cleethorpes, HUDDERSFIELD, Hull, Mytholmroyd

SOUTH WEST - Barnstaple, BRISTOL TEMPLE MEADS, Sherborne, Worcestershire Parkway,

WALES - CARDIFF CENTRAL, Newport, Pontypridd, Swansea

WEST MIDLANDS - Leamington Spa, STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION, Tamworth, Warwick Parkway

LONDON - Elmstead Woods, Falconwood, LONDON KINGS CROSS, London Waterloo

NRA BEST STATION WINNER - Chirk, Norwich, PENRITH, Reading

SOUTH EAST - Aylesbury, Hedge End, Sandown, SEVENOAKS

SEMI-FINALS

NORTH – Crewe, GLASGOW QUEEN STREET, Newcastle

EAST – Cambridge, HUDDERSFIELD, Nottingham

WEST – Bristol Temple Meads, Cardiff Central, STOURBRIDGE JUNCTION

SOUTH – LONDON KINGS CROSS, Penrith, Sevenoaks

FINAL

GLASGOW QUEEN STREET (31.3%), Huddersfield (15.8%), London Kings Cross (21.9%), Stourbridge Junction (31%)

26 August 2020

Timetable Improvements from 6 September



West Midlands Railway has announced improvements to the Stourbridge line timetable which will be introduced to coincide with the start of the new school year.

It will see the restoration of the six trains per hour service as far as Stourbridge Junction in off-peak hours. However, a small number of peak services which had proved unreliable in the past will not be restored.

These changes will almost completely restore services to pre-Covid levels.

6 trains per hour will run between Birmingham and Stourbridge Junction

4 trains per hour will run between Birmingham and Kidderminster

2 trains per hour will run between Birmingham and Worcester.

2 trains per hour will serve Langley Green, Old Hill, Lye and Blakedown

3 trains per hour will serve Hagley

1 train per hour will serve Hartlebury

At the other end of the line,

2 trains per hour will terminate at Dorridge

2 trains per hour will terminate at Whitlock's End

2 trains per hour will terminate at Stratford-upon-Avon (1 via Dorridge and 1 via Shirley).

All departures are planned to run with Class 172 trains, with the older Class 170 and 153 trains retired from this route.

West Midlands Railway has now posted a Snow Hill lines timetable booklet for the period from 6 September to 12 December on their website.

However, SLUG has been notified by Pre-Metro Operations that the timetable quoted for the Stourbridge Town branch in this booklet is incorrect and has provided a link to its own timetable for the same period. At busy times there will be a queuing system introduced at Junction and Town. Security Guards will only be allowing a maximum of 15 onto Shuttle platforms for boarding.

14 July 2020

Worcestershire Community Rail Partnership launches initiatives

Since its instigation last November, the Worcestershire Community Rail Partnership has been busy promoting initiatives to involve local communities in the improvements of local stations and services. The following may be of interest to you.

Backtrack Anti-Trespass Competition



The CRP is backing a national competition, aimed at 11-18 year olds, to create a short film, script, storyboard or song to warn others of the danger of trespassing on the railway. There are 21 great prizes in 6 Categories, and there are 3 spot prizes for entrants from Worcestershire. The top prizes up for grabs include 6 GoPro Hero8 bundles.

Stitch Train Worcestershire



The CRP is looking for volunteer stitchers to create two 11.5m long Community Artworks featuring trains. 18 tapestry train artworks will be produced for display at stations in Worcestershire during the autumn. After display, all the trains will be linked together to form two massive trains – each 11.5m long – to be exhibited in the first instance at the Worcestershire Community Rail Partnership Anniversary event in November. Each volunteer will be sent a free kit in the post with all that is needed to create one of the individual tapestry pieces which will be combined to form first the station artwork and then the full trains. The trains featured will be the new Class 196 units being introduced by West Midlands Railway on services in Worcestershire later this year, and the GWR Intercity Express Trains which now run on the Cotswold Line. Full instructions are included so even those totally new to stitching can feel confident that they will produce artwork to be proud of. Finished tapestries need to be returned by Friday 4 September.

Scenic Rail Britain



All four of the lines within Worcestershire are now on Scenic Rail Britain. It is hoped that there will be a competition to name each of the northern three in conjunction with Visit Worcestershire during August. We will update this webpage when we receive further information.

23 June 2020

Kidderminster Station Building Opened

The new station building at Kidderminster opened on 7 June, replacing the inadequate building that had served the station for 50 years. The new building is the fifth at the station. The first was a temporary structure that opened with the station in 1852. It was replaced in 1859 by a building that only survived 3 years before it was destroyed by fire. The third building was the iconic mock-Tudor structure that served the station for over a century until it succumbed to dry rot in the late 1960s and was replaced by the “functional” brick portacabin. This survived until last year when it was demolished and replaced by a building more suited to a station with a footfall (pre-Covid) of over 1.6 million per year.



SLUG was able to visit Kidderminster station twice. The first occasion was on Monday 25 May, a fortnight before the station opened and our photographer was pleasantly surprised to witness a Transport for Wales Class 230 unit passing through while on a test run from Long Marston to Stourbridge Junction via Honeybourne and Worcester. These test runs have become a regular occurrence with the units operating additional runs between Stourbridge Junction and Worcester before returning to the Vivarail base in Long Marston in the evening.

The photos below were taken on 23 June and show the completed station building.



1 January 2020

The End Of The Year (Non) Show



You would have to live on the planet Zog not to know that West Midlands Trains are facing fierce criticism from all angles for the appalling service that they are providing at present.

On 23 December 2019, the West Midlands Metro Mayor, Andy Street, tweeted the following:-

The current service provided by West Midlands Trains is WOEFUL. I have lost all faith in WMT's ability to run our network. If not sorted out by midnight 31/01/20, I will formally ask @transportgovuk to STRIP WMT of the franchise.

West Midlands Trains responded with the following statement from Managing Director Chaudhry-van der Velde:-

"We recognise that the May timetable has not worked and apologise to all our passengers who have been affected. Last week we brought in extra carriages and made changes to the timetable to improve capacity and performance. Unfortunately, in that short period, we also experienced many incidents outside our control. These included several track and signalling failures – managed by Network Rail, trespass – including a person being struck by a train – and anti-social behaviour disrupting a very busy service.

"December's changes are only part of a bigger plan to improve performance which we presented to the West Midlands Rail Executive and the DfT last week. We consulted with the Mayor and the DfT extensively on how to speed up improvements already planned. Together, we explored bringing forward next May's timetable with Network Rail but that was not possible due to the impact on the wider rail industry.

"We have committed to an enhanced compensation package for West Midlands rail users which will recognise the planned national fares increase in January. We are discussing with the Mayor and the DfT how best to deliver this. Subject to approval, we will announce details of the package early in the new year."

The use of the May timetable change as an excuse for the pathetic service that has been provided on Snow Hill line services is beneath contempt. The reason for our trains being cancelled is obvious to all of the long-suffering passengers - LACK OF TRAIN CREW. SLUG has every sympathy with the stance taken by the Mayor and has written to West Midlands Trains and the West Midlands Rail Executive to seek face to face meetings with senior officials from both organisations to express the concerns of our members and demand answers. We await their replies.

In the meantime, SLUG has been collating data of all Snow Hill line cancellations and our findings up to 14 December may be viewed on the News page entitled "A Lack of Service". It was hoped that the new timetable starting on 15 December would coincide with improvements to the service but, in the run-up to Christmas, the situation got worse and worse, culminating in the joke of a non-service suffered by Snow Hill line passengers on Christmas Eve.

In fairness to West Midlands Trains, there has been a major improvement since Christmas. In fact, on Saturday 28 December every service operated and only one was over five minutes late. The downward trend of cancellations continued during the last two days of 2019 and one hopes that this will continue throughout 2020. However, SLUG will continue to collate cancellation figures and will press for a permanent solution to the train crew shortage problem. A detailed breakdown of the service provided for each day from 15 December to the end of the year may be viewed by clicking on the appropriate date below. Cancelled services are highlighted and the following colour code is used.