

6 December 2021

Timetable Changes From 12 December 2021



West Midlands Railway has announced that a small number of changes will be made to the Stourbridge line timetable from 12 December.

The following services will serve Worcester Shrub Hill rather than Worcester Foregate Street

Monday to Friday

- 1140 Whitlock's End to Worcester
- 1308 Worcester to Whitlock's End
- 1340 Whitlock's End to Worcester
- 1506 Worcester to Whitlock's End
- 1742 Whitlock's End to Worcester
- 1913 Worcester to Birmingham Snow Hill

Saturday

- 1540 Whitlock's End to Worcester
- 1706 Worcester to Whitlock's End
- 1740 Whitlock's End to Worcester
- 1905 Worcester to Whitlock's End

Monday to Saturday

- Off-peak services to Worcester Foregate Street that currently depart from Birmingham Snow Hill at xx:36 will now depart at xx:39 and operate later throughout. The return services from Worcester Foregate Street will depart at xx:42 rather than xx:41.

Sunday

- The 10:14 Kidderminster to Dorridge service will start from Worcester Shrub Hill at 09:53 and call additionally at Droitwich Spa at 10:00 and Hartlebury at 10:08
- The 09:07 Whitlock's End to Great Malvern will call additionally at Hartlebury at 10:10

Thus, Hartlebury gains a Sunday service for the first time in about 60 years, albeit a skelton service. SLUG has written to West Midlands Railway commending this action and suggesting that additional services should stop at Hartlebury in the future to promote leisure travel to and from Hartlebury.

7 November 2021

Stourbridge Junction Wins World Cup of Stations



After narrowly losing the title to Glasgow Queen Street last year, Stourbridge Junction turned the tables on the Scottish city this year by beating Glasgow Central in the final. Aviemore and St Ives also reached the final but finished well behind the two leaders.

The tournament took place during the week from 11 to 15 October, with 48 teams nominated and split into 12 groups of four. Our group included three "heavyweights" in Crewe, Swindon and York.

Having won this group, Stourbridge Junction took on the pride of Yorkshire in Huddersfield and Hull, again coming out triumphant.

Thanks must go to the leader of our campaign who can be seen celebrating his victory above.

31 October 2021

SLUG Statement On The Current Level Of Service Cancellations



For nearly two years, Stourbridge Line User Group has been concerned about the standard of service provided by West Midlands Railway on our line. SLUG accepts that driver training has been delayed by the Covid crisis and accepts that drivers had to self-isolate at the height of the Covid crisis. What it can't accept is that the situation regarding cancellations is getting worse rather than better.

SLUG has been monitoring all cancellations on a spreadsheet since late 2019, when the Metro Mayor threatened to demand that the West Midlands Trains franchise be terminated. It has also been monitoring late running and short forming of services since July and has been posting the results on its Facebook page since September.

However, many sources claim that all train operators are affected just as badly. Therefore, on 26, 28 and 30 October, SLUG compared the level of Snow Hill cancellations with those on other lines :-

- all other lines served by West Midlands Railway
- all services operated by London Northwestern Railway (part of West Midlands Trains) through New Street station
- all services operated by other operators through New Street, Moor Street and Worcester Shrub Hill stations
- all services operated by GWR through Bristol Temple Meads – this was selected because the Covid infection rate in local authorities around Bristol were by far the highest in the country at over twice the national average, thus potentially causing driver shortages.

The results were as follows.

Station	TOC	Route	Cancellations 26/10	Cancellations 28/10	Cancellations 30/10	Total Cancellations
Birmingham Snow Hill	West Midlands Railway	All	37 (Note 1)	61 (Note 4)	37 (Note 9)	135
Birmingham New Street	West Midlands Railway	Cross City	0	14	21	35
Birmingham New Street	West Midlands Railway	Shrewsbury	16	5	14	35

Birmingham New Street	West Midlands Railway	BHI Shuttle	0	0	16	16
Birmingham New Street	West Midlands Railway	Rugeley – BHI	0	3	10	13
Birmingham New Street	West Midlands Railway	Hereford	6	2	3	11
Birmingham New Street	West Midlands Railway	Walsall and Wolverhampton	0	0	8	8
Birmingham New Street	London Northwestern Railway	Northampton and Euston	6	5	12	23
Birmingham New Street	London Northwestern Railway	Crewe and Liverpool	0	2	9	11
Kenilworth	West Midlands Railway	NUCKLE	0	2 (Note 5)	11 (Note 10)	13
Birmingham New Street	CrossCountry	All	0	0	9 (Note 11)	9
Birmingham New Street	Transport for Wales	All	2 (Note 2)	6 (Note 6)	0	8
Birmingham New Street	Avanti West Coast	All	0	0	2 (Note 12)	2
Birmingham Moor Street	Chiltern Railways	All	0	2 (Note 7)	2 (Note 13)	4
Worcester Shrub Hill	Great Western Railway	All	0	2 (Note 8)	2 (Note 14)	4
Bristol Temple Meads	Great Western Railway	All	7 (Note 3)	11	16 (Note 15)	34

Notes

1	Last five trains of the day from the Stourbridge line to Birmingham cancelled meaning the last train was the 2020 from Foregate Street.
2	One round trip BHM-BHI-BHM cancelled due to a late arrival from Wales
3	Includes one train cancelled due to passenger being taken ill.
4	37 services totally cancelled, 24 services partially cancelled.
5	Final round trip of the day 2101 LMS-NUN, 2224 NUN-LMS cancelled
6	Three round trips BHM-BHI-BHM cancelled due to late arrivals from Wales
7	One round trip BMO-BSW-BMO cancelled due to a late arrival from Marylebone
8	One round trip PAD-HFD-PAD cancelled due to crew issues
9	22 services totally cancelled, 15 services partially cancelled. Last 2 trains to and from Stratford-upon-Avon cancelled. Gap in services from Snow Hill to Stourbridge from 1336 to 1454 – luckily Albion were away!
10	27 train services scheduled to stop at Kenilworth – 15 stopped at the station, 11 were cancelled, 1 ran through without stopping. All other scheduled services operated using replacement buses.
11	6 cancellations on Leicester/Stansted Airport services, 1 service to Derby and 1 to Leeds cancelled at New Street
12	0645 Wolverhampton to Euston, and final arrival from Edinburgh at 2259
13	1514 Moor Street to Marylebone and 1937 Marylebone to Kidderminster cancelled.
14	1 round trip Cheltenham – Worcester – Great Malvern – Worcester – Gloucester cancelled due to problems with the doors
15	8 cancellations due to severe flooding south of Bristol

However, the fact that Avanti West Coast and CrossCountry could operate 287 services through New Street on 28 October without a cancellation whereas West Midlands Railway cancelled 61 of its 133 Snow Hill line services emphasises how bad our service is.

In order to provide a united stance, SLUG has been in conversation with three other rail user groups.

- Cotswold Line Promotion Group, who represent passengers in the Worcester area
- Shakespeare Line Promotion Group, who represent passengers on the line to Stratford-upon-Avon via Henley-in-Arden
- Solihull & Leamington Rail Users Association, who represent passengers on the line through Solihull and Dorridge

Together, the four groups have produced a mutually agreed, and strongly worded, letter to the West Midlands Rail Executive, with a copy to the West Midlands Metro Mayor, demanding that action is taken to improve the current situation. This was done as it was thought that a co-ordinated campaign by four well respected groups would carry more weight than four groups acting independently. The letter may be read by clicking on the button below.

We await replies to this letter. However, please be assured that SLUG will not be resting on its laurels but will be exploring other avenues to campaign for the restoration of the decent reliable train service that our passengers deserve.

7 October 2021

Worcestershire County Council Launches Blakedown Station Car Park Consultation



Worcestershire County Council has announced that a public consultation on plans to extend Blakedown station car park will run from 11 October until 7 November 2021. Two public drop-in sessions have been organised at Blakedown Parish Rooms, 20 Belbroughton Road, Blakedown, DY10 3JG as follows :-

- Wednesday 13 October 2021 from 2.00 pm to 5.00 pm
- Friday 15 October 2021 from 4.30 pm to 7.00 pm

The proposals will see a new car park with 87 spaces provided in Lynwood Drive. It is anticipated that the car park would open in early 2023.

An information brochure detailing the proposals has been produced. This document also gives details on how to comment on the proposals.

29 August 2021

Increased West Midlands Railway Timetable From 30 August 2021



West Midlands Railway is re-introducing the 20 services that were withdrawn on 2 August. These changes take effect on 30 August.

Overview of what's changing (Monday – Saturday)

- All services between Kidderminster and Stratford-upon-Avon via Solihull and Dorridge will be reinstated.
- This means that a half-hourly service will operate from the Stourbridge line to/from Stratford-upon-Avon.
- In addition, two trains per hour will operate from the Stourbridge line to Solihull and Dorridge.

Stourbridge Line User Group will continue to monitor the level of cancellations to ensure that it does not reach the unacceptable level reached in July.

28 July 2021

Reduced West Midlands Railway Timetable Introduced From 2 August



West Midlands Railway is making temporary changes to its timetables from Monday 2 August. It says the changes are necessary as Covid 19 has had a major impact on the ability to get new drivers trained to operate services. It claims that the timetable revisions will improve the reliability of the service provided, and you can be assured that SLUG will continue to monitor the level of service provided to ensure that the number of cancellations is far less than the level of cancellations in July.

Overview of what's changing (Monday – Saturday)

- Between 10.00 – 18.00 the hourly xx.15 departure from Kidderminster to Stratford-upon-Avon via Dorridge will no longer run.
- In the opposite direction, the xx.01/03 departure from Stratford-upon-Avon to Kidderminster via Dorridge will no longer run.
- Some other services (or parts of some services) will also be cancelled.
- Rail replacement transport will be provided between Dorridge and Stratford-upon-Avon.
- Chiltern Railways will be adding additional calls at Widney Manor, Lapworth, Acocks Green, Olton, Small Heath, Dorridge and Tyseley in some hours of the day.

23 May 2021

A Great British Railway?



On 20 May 2021, the Government published the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail. The major proposals for the future of the rail industry will see the creation of a single authority, Great British Railways, headed by professional railwaymen rather than civil servants at DfT to manage the running of the railways. Franchising will be abolished and replaced by Passenger Service Contracts. There is also a commitment to simplify the complex fares structure.

The plan contains 62 commitments, which are listed below.

Integrating the railways

- A new public body, Great British Railways, will run the network in the public interest.
- Great British Railways will be the single guiding mind and leader that the railways currently lack.
- Great British Railways will be given the means to think and plan for the longer term.
- There will be a national brand and identity to emphasise that the railways are one connected network.
- Great British Railways will be a new organisation, not just a larger version of Network Rail.
- Great British Railways will be given a binding mandate to have as its primary focus serving the interests of passengers, freight customers and taxpayers and growing rail usage.
- Great British Railways will be mandated to increase efficiency and co-operation.
- The government will hold the railways' leaders accountable for meeting the needs of the customers and communities the network serves.
- A 30-year strategy will provide clear, long term plans for transforming the railways to strengthen collaboration, unlock efficiencies and incentivise innovation.
- Great British Railways will be made up of powerful regional divisions, with budgets and delivery held at the local level, not just nationally.
- In England, new partnerships with Great British Railways' regional divisions will give towns, cities and regions greater control over local ticketing, services and stations.
- Devolved railways will be strengthened, with closer collaboration with Great British Railways improving services, consistency and co-ordination across the country.
- Community rail partnerships will be empowered to strengthen rail's social and economic impact.
- Station management will be integrated within Great British Railways to improve accountability for long-term investment in stations.
- Opportunities to better unlock housing, local economic growth and social value will be explored.
- Transport Focus will be reformed to become a passenger champion, advising the Secretary of State on passenger priorities.
- Performance and efficiency will be independently scrutinised by the statutory regulator, the Office of Rail and Road.
- Current safety and security rules will remain in place across the rail network. A consultation will be undertaken to ensure safety roles, rules and standards are appropriate for the future.
- Cross-sector organisations will be consolidated and integrated to enable the railways to operate more effectively and efficiently.
- Track access will be overhauled to make the best use of the rail network in the overall public interest.

Replacing franchising

- Franchising will be replaced by new Passenger Service Contracts.
- Passenger Service Contracts will focus operators on meeting passengers' priorities and will incentivise them to grow rail usage.
- Each Passenger Service Contract will be designed to support the needs of passengers and the whole network, as part of an integrated system.
- Passenger Service Contracts will be different across the network and will not take a one-size-fits-all approach, including on contract length.

- Operators will have greater commercial freedom on some parts of the network, with revenue sharing arrangements where appropriate. New open access services will also be explored where spare capacity exists.
- The geographic and financial size of Passenger Service Contracts will reflect local markets and needs.
- Competition for Passenger Service Contracts will be greater than for franchises and Great British Railways will aim to compete all contracts.
- If operators fail, the government will be ready to step in and take control where needed.
- The government will work with the sector and potential new market entrants to develop and implement these changes.

A new deal for passengers

- Easy, frictionless payment options for every journey will be introduced across the network.
- Pay As You Go journeys will be expanded outside London to make millions more trips straightforward.
- Digital tickets will be introduced across the network.
- A new Great British Railways website and app will create a personalised travel experience.
- Customer service at stations will be modernised, with one-team working expanded across the network.
- Fares will be simplified.
- Affordable fares and season ticket caps will continue to be protected.
- Off-peak services will be protected.
- New flexible season tickets will be introduced to reflect changing working patterns.
- Journeys across rail, bus, tram and bike will become seamless in the future.
- Getting to the station on a bike and taking it on a train will be made easier.
- Trains will be made more pleasant to travel on and easier to work aboard.
- Compensation will be simpler and easier to claim, with a consistent, modern process right across the network.
- Passengers will receive clear, consistent information before, during and after their journeys. Their experiences will be monitored more effectively.
- The first robust national accessibility strategy and long-term investment programme will improve inclusion and access for all.

Unleashing the private sector's potential

- The economic and environmental benefits of rail freight will be supported by a new, customer-focused approach, modern track access rights and new safeguards.
- Operators will take a lead role in improving services and performance by innovating with private partners, including train-leasing companies.
- Modern contracts will be introduced to increase competition, reduce costs and help to attract private investment for new technologies.
- Partnerships with other key infrastructure providers, such as broadband innovators, will help to boost the country's drive towards a revolution in connectivity.
- New, locally-led innovation schemes will unlock smarter working and support growth.
- Local engagement will better support small-and medium-sized enterprises and start-ups.
- Contestability across operations will be increased, but sub-contracting will need to deliver real value for money.

Accelerating innovation and modernisation

- Electrification of the network will be expanded, and alternative technologies such as hydrogen and battery power will help to achieve zero emissions from trains and reduce air pollution.
- The contribution of the railways to the nation's green recovery will be strengthened, including through a comprehensive environment plan by 2022 that will establish rail as the backbone of a cleaner future transport system.
- Energy efficiency, renewable power production, tree-planting and other green initiatives across the rail estate will be accelerated.
- Long-term investment in climate resilience will be prioritised, supported by smarter forecasting, planning and technology.
- An 'open by default' approach to data sharing will better inform journeys, improve transparency and unlock new technology.
- Research, development and innovation funding will be simplified to make it more outcome focused and to improve collaboration.
- SPEED will accelerate the delivery of improvements, making more efficient results the new normal.

Empowering rail's people

- A new joined-up, cross-sector training and skills offer will support people at every career stage to develop skills and bring in experience from outside the rail sector.
- A sector-wide workforce plan will be developed to assist employers and build system-wide resilience.
- Diversity across the sector will be improved through the inclusion of stretching measures in contracts to actively promote and increase recruitment and retention of a diverse workforce.
- Comprehensive data on productivity and pay will be collected and published by ORR, which will report on the data and compare it with that of other sectors and labour markets.

6 May 2021

Stourbridge Line Public Meeting on 11 May



A Public Meeting, open to both SLUG members and non-members, will take place on Tuesday 11 May 2021 and will commence at 7.30 p.m.

The Guest Speaker will be Ian Baxter who is the Strategy Director at SLC Rail. Ian will be well-known if you have attended previous public meetings where he has spoken on behalf of both Chiltern Railways and Worcestershire County Council. He had two spells at Chiltern Railways, interspersed with a brief spell at Network Rail, and finished as Customer Services Manager at Chiltern before joining SLC Rail in 2012. At SLC Rail, his projects have included the new stations at Bromsgrove and Worcestershire Parkway, and the new station building at Kidderminster. Pre-Covid, he was instrumental in producing the Rail Investment Strategies for both Worcestershire and West Midlands, and is now updating these strategies in light of the Covid crisis. His talk will be titled "What will the West Midlands Rail Investment Strategy and the Worcestershire Rail Investment Strategy look like post COVID 19."

26 April 2021

Improved Stourbridge line services from 16 May



West Midlands Railway has announced an improved timetable for the Stourbridge line to take effect from 16 May.

Although the basic pattern of 4 trains per hour off-peak along the line will not be increased, stations south of Stourbridge Junction will see a much improved service.

- The all-stations Stratford-Stourbridge services are extended to/from Kidderminster calling at Hagley and Blakedown (2 tph).
- The Dorridge-Kidderminster service is extended to Worcester Foregate Street and calls at Hagley and Hartlebury (1 tph)
- The Whitlocks End-Worcester Shrub Hill service serves Worcester Foregate Street instead and no longer stops at Hagley and Hartlebury (1 tph)

Thus, service levels off-peak will be Hagley (3 tph), Blakedown (2 tph), Kidderminster (4 tph), Hartlebury (1 tph), Droitwich Spa (2 tph), Worcester Foregate Street (2 tph).

20 February 2021

Engineering Works affecting Stourbridge line services in March 2021



Engineering works on other parts of the West Midlands rail network will indirectly affect services along the Stourbridge line during March.

Saturday 6 March to Friday 12 March inclusive

The Stourbridge Town branch will be closed for these seven days to complete improvements to the track along the branch. Replacement bus services will be in operation.

From Monday 8 March

Chiltern Railways is introducing an extra service
08.07 Kidderminster to Birmingham Moor Street

West Midlands Railway is reinstating the following services

14:45 Birmingham Snow Hill to Kidderminster
15:13 Birmingham Snow Hill to Worcester Foregate Street
15:35 Kidderminster to Dorridge
16:16 Worcester Foregate Street to Dorridge
16:47 Dorridge to Birmingham Snow Hill
17:51 Dorridge to Birmingham Snow Hill

Thursday 11 March

Due to overnight engineering works in the Stourbridge area, the following Chiltern Railways trains are amended as follows:

06.41 Stourbridge Junction - Marylebone will **start at Rowley Regis at 06.52.**

07.21 Stourbridge Junction - Marylebone will **start at Rowley Regis at 07.32.**

Passengers travelling from Stourbridge Junction will need to use an earlier alternative West Midlands Trains service between Stourbridge Junction and Rowley Regis.

Saturday 13 March and Sunday 14 March

There will be engineering works between Solihull and Dorridge.

No Chiltern Railways services will operate along the Stourbridge line on these two days.

West Midlands Railway services to Stratford-upon-Avon via Shirley and to Whitlocks End will operate as normal.

West Midlands Railway services to Stratford-upon-Avon or Leamington Spa via Solihull and to Dorridge will terminate at Birmingham Snow Hill.

Sunday 21 March

Engineering works will be taking place on the route through Bromsgrove.

West Midlands Railway services along the Stourbridge line will operate as normal.

West Midlands services from Birmingham New Street to Hereford, which normally operate via Bromsgrove, will operate from Birmingham Snow Hill and run non-stop along the Stourbridge line.

CrossCountry services from Edinburgh to Plymouth and Nottingham to Cardiff will also operate non-stop along the line.

Sunday 28 March

Engineering works will be taking place on the route through Bromsgrove.

West Midlands Railway services along the Stourbridge line will operate as normal.

West Midlands services from Birmingham New Street to Hereford, which normally operate via Bromsgrove, will operate from Birmingham Snow Hill and run non-stop along the Stourbridge line.

1 February 2021

Stourbridge Town branch closed from 8-22 February for improvement works



The Stourbridge Town branch will close to passengers for a fortnight from Monday 8 February while improvement works are carried out. Passengers will be able to use their tickets on replacement bus services throughout this period.

During the work, the pair of Class 139 trains used on the route will be internally repainted, deep-cleaned and have new passenger grab rails installed. Some seating will also be temporarily removed to aid social distancing on board.

Network Rail will use the temporary closure to inspect the track, remove graffiti and clear vegetation along the line, including overhanging trees which could pose a risk to the safety of trains.

A second closure will take place from Tuesday 9 March to Friday 12 March inclusive to allow further improvements to be made to the track along the branch.

Please click one of the links below to either read the press release from West Midlands Railway or view the timetable for the bus replacement service.

5 January 2021

SLUG Christmas Quiz - Name the TV Show - Answers



1. Midsomer Murders



2. Some Mothers Do 'Ave 'Em



3. Casey Jones



4. Keeping Up Appearances



5. Vera



6. Mr Bean



7. Father Brown



8. I Didn't Know You Cared



9. Casualty



10. The Detectives



11. The Indian Doctor



12. Gavin and Stacey



13. All Creatures Great and Small



14. One Foot In The Grave



15. Inspector George Gently



16. Terry and June



17. Silent Witness



18. Endeavour