

27 November 2023

Timetables from 10 December 2023



After the major changes to the Stourbridge line timetable in May, there are only minor changes to the timetable from 10 December.

West Midlands Railway

- An extra early morning service will operate on Mondays to Fridays from Stourbridge Junction to Leamington Spa. It will depart from Stourbridge Junction at 0625 and call at all stations between Stourbridge Junction and Birmingham Snow Hill.
- Two diagrams that currently operate using 3-car sets will be increased in length to 5-car sets
- Two diagrams that currently operate using 4-car sets will be increased in length to 5-car sets

Chiltern Railways

- Chiltern Railways has withdrawn the 0644 Saturday service from Stourbridge Junction to London Marylebone. Instead it will run empty from Stourbridge Depot to Birmingham Moor Street where it will enter service as the 0714 Birmingham Moor Street to London Marylebone service. Both SLUG and West Midlands Rail Executive have contacted Chiltern Railways demanding an explanation for this service being withdrawn, as the Chiltern Railways website does not include this change on its December Timetable Changes page.

The Timetables and Stations sections of this website will be updated with a full set of timetables and arrivals/departures boards on 9 December.

5 October 2023

Prime Minister "promises" £9.6bn Investment in Midlands Transport Improvements

In his speech to the Conservative Party Conference on 4 October, in which he announced the cancellation of phase 2 of HS2 between Birmingham and Manchester, the Prime Minister made promises to divert £9.6 billion of the funds saved by the cancellation into local rail projects. Most of the promises are vague and lack a time scale. In addition, none of the promises are costed and we must ask what will happen after the 2024 General Election.

However, if the promises actually come to fruition, how will they affect passengers in our area.

The major promise is that Midlands Rail Hub will be delivered in full. For the uninitiated, Midlands Rail Hub consists of the following 13 engineering upgrades.

- Bordesley West Chord allowing access to Birmingham Moor Street from South-West and Wales
- Bordesley East Chord allowing access to Birmingham Moor Street from the East Midlands
- Reinstatement of Birmingham Snow Hill platform 4
- Reinstatement of Birmingham Moor Street platform 5
- New platforms A and B on the east side of Moor Street station
- Bordesley viaduct widening
- Improvements around Kings Norton-Barnt Green
- Improvements to Stoke Works junction
- A Malvern Wells turnback facility
- Ledbury – Shelwick partial double-tracking
- Water Orton remodelling
- Nuneaton to Wigston signalling headways
- Freight loops between Nuneaton and Leicester

Of the above, only the reinstatement of platform 4 at Snow Hill benefits the Stourbridge line. The additional three platforms at Moor Street will be terminal platforms for services using the new Bordesley Chords while Stourbridge line services will continue to use through platforms 1 and 2.



What is apparent is that the Midlands Rail Hub claims to allow additional services between Birmingham and Hereford. That cannot be achieved unless the infrastructure and signalling in the Worcester area are upgraded. This would benefit Stourbridge line passengers but, unfortunately, it is not included in the Prime Minister's promises.

The other item that could benefit the Stourbridge area is the promise to uplift the West Midlands mayoral budget by over £1 billion. The document states that this could deal with ongoing Metro cost pressures, with the implication that the extension of the Metro line from Dudley to Brierley Hill would be funded. SLUG feels that the additional funding should also be used to close the gap between Brierley Hill and Stourbridge.

There are also aspirations in the West Midlands Rail Executive and Worcestershire County Council Rail Investment Strategies that would benefit the Stourbridge line. They include electrification of the Snow Hill lines from Stratford-upon-Avon to Worcester, the introduction of through services between Stourbridge Junction and London Paddington via Worcester, and the improvement of Sunday services along the line. SLUG will continue to campaign for these improvements. We hope that these have not been shunted into a siding by one man's desperation to appease the North of England by throwing the majority of the money in their direction.

16 July 2023

SLUG Strongly Opposes Proposals To Close Ticket Offices



Having attended presentations given by West Midlands Trains and Chiltern Railways and spoken with concerned action groups, SLUG strongly condemns the proposal to close nearly every ticket office in England, but not in Scotland and Wales where the rail operators are controlled by devolved governments and not by the current government at Westminster. The proposals have ostensibly been made by the Rail Delivery Group representing the rail operators, although it is barely veiled that the ultimatum has come from the Treasury who have instructed the Department for Transport to make the rail industry cut costs.

It would appear that West Midlands Trains are trying to hide the proposals as no mention is made of them or the public consultation on the home page of the West Midlands Railway website, thus forcing people to dig down in order to find details. In addition, our local MPs seem to have gone into hiding.

Each operating company seems to have interpreted the demand for change differently, which will create inconsistency and confusion as passengers use stations operated by different operators.

The West Midlands Trains proposal is to close every ticket office but create 6 regional customer information centres which would offer additional customer support when buying tickets. These would be at Birmingham Snow Hill, Worcester Foregate Street, Wolverhampton, Walsall, University and Sutton Coldfield.

All other stations would be staffed by new mobile teams who would be deployed on a flexible basis to undertake customer service, passenger assistance, safety and general upkeep duties. Staff would not be based at one particular station but would be allocated to a group of stations. WMT claim that they would use technology to determine times when a particular station needs more or less staff presence. However, a question from SLUG regarding the hours at which stations would be staffed has received no reply to date. In addition, a question about the level of staff cuts has also received no reply to date.

Tickets would be available from ATMs and from "local convenience stores" which means that the expertise that ticket office staff possess would be totally eradicated. In addition, cash ATMs would not be available at all stations and the advice at the meeting was that passengers who need to use cash could purchase tickets from the senior conductor on the train. Given that there is more chance of encountering the Loch Ness Monster on a Stourbridge Line train than

the senior conductor, and there is a chance that a member of the Revenue Protection Team could catch you without a ticket on the train, this seems a futile suggestion.

At present, passengers know where to go if they want advice and that is the ticket office. The proposal is that staff would be on the platform. There is also no guarantee that these staff would be available throughout the day or if they would be provided with handheld ticket machines for the purchase of tickets via cash or the purchase of tickets that the ATMs do not support. We were told at the meeting that we could go to Snow Hill for these tickets. Who wants to make an unwanted journey to Snow Hill?

Many experienced public transport senior managers and campaign groups also strongly oppose the proposals. One such person is Roger French who, as Managing Director of Brighton and Hove Buses for over 25 years, turned that company into the best operator in the country by giving the Brighton public the service that they wanted. His blog on the subject of ticket offices closures may be read on the link below.

[Ticket Office Closure Con](#)

In addition, an on-line petition has been set up. This needs 100,000 signatures to ensure that the proposals are debated in parliament. SLUG is asking you to sign this petition at the link below.

[On-line Petition to Parliament Opposing The Proposals](#)

SLUG emailed its response to Transport Focus on 18 July and it can be read by clicking on the link below.

[SLUG Response to the Ticket Office Closures Consultation](#)



However, our response will only count as a single reply, so we are asking everybody who reads this page to respond to the consultation by Friday 1 September 2023. The more responses that Transport Focus receives opposing these proposals, the more chance that a rethink will take place. Details are on the Transport Focus website at the link below.

[Transport Focus Instructions For Responses To Consultation](#)

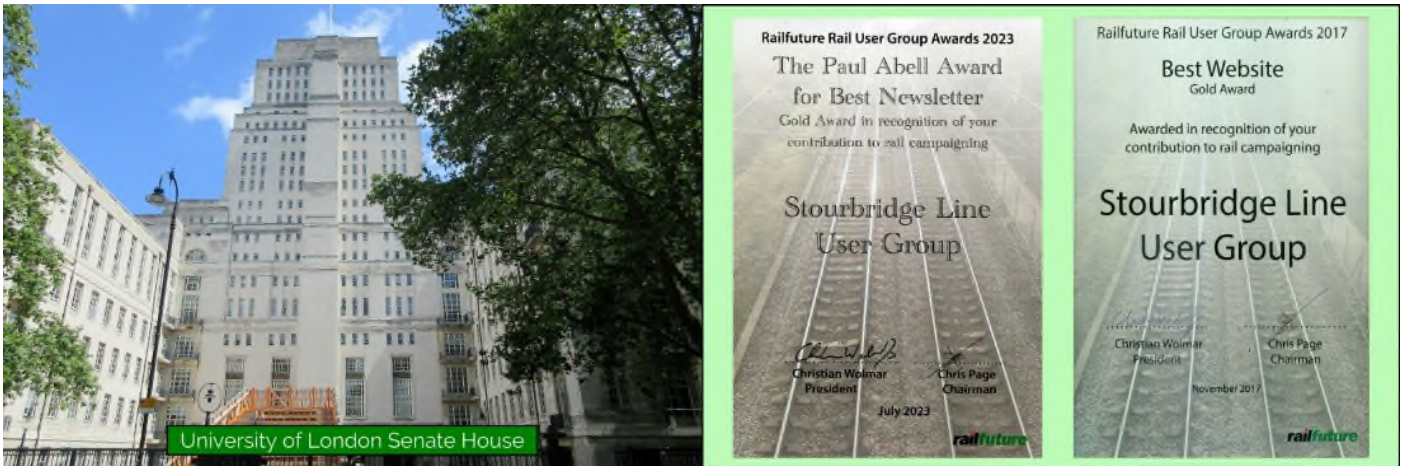
Alternatively, you can respond directly from the link below or, if you prefer, in writing to Freepost, RTEH-XAGE-BYKZ, Transport Focus, PO Box 5594, Southend on Sea, SS1 9PZ

[Email Consultation Response to Transport Focus](#)

These proposals will affect a large number of people who are not computer literate or who still use cash as their primary payment method. West Midlands Trains state that these changes will bring the rail industry into line with facilities offered at supermarkets. It is true that supermarkets have increased the number of self-service checkouts, but they still ensure that customers can use cash and use a checkout till staffed by a real human being. The West Midlands Trains proposals seem to forget that. It is essential that passengers object in the strongest possible terms to these proposals which have been instigated by a Government who have no care for the inconvenience the changes will cause.

16 July 2023

SLUG Newsletter Wins National Award

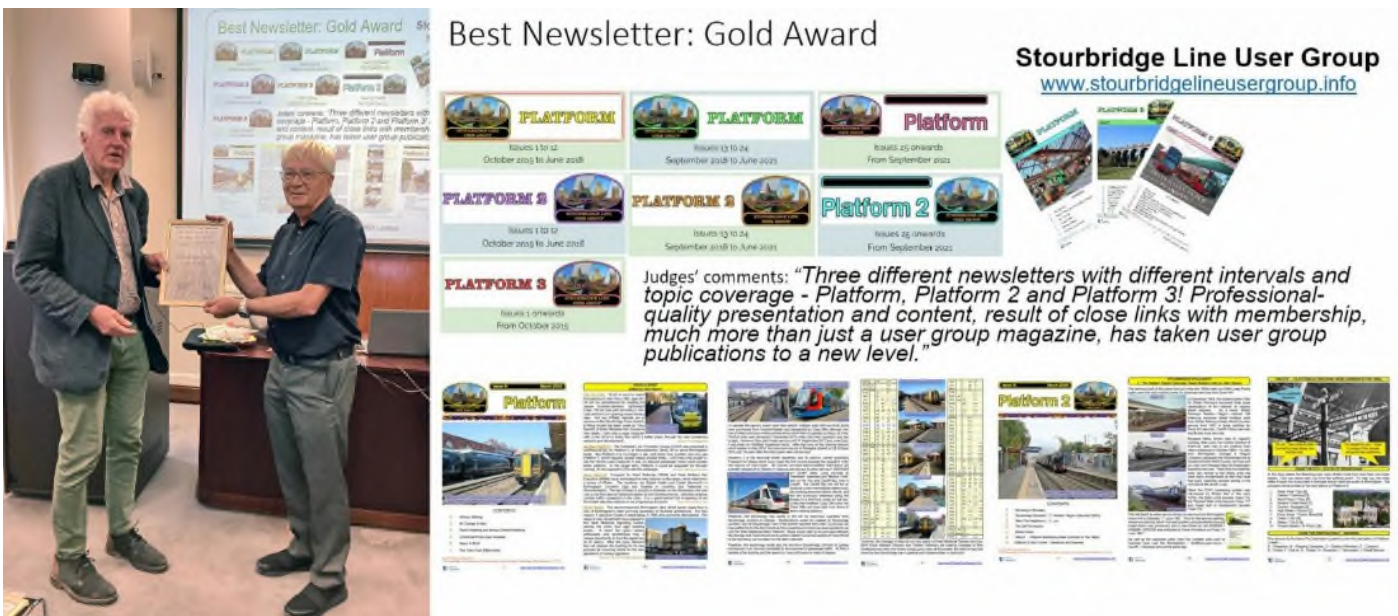


At a National Awards Ceremony in at the University of London Senate House in Central London yesterday, the SLUG newsletters (Platform, Platform 2 and Platform 3) received the award for best National Rail User Group Newsletter.

The voting panel consisted of five leading figures in the rail industry :-

- Ian Brown CBE - Former Managing Director of London Rail
- Roger Ford - Industry and Technology Editor of Modern Railways
- Chris Green - Former Managing Director of Scotrail, Network South East and InterCity and Former Chief Executive of Virgin Trains
- Stewart Palmer - Former Managing Director of South West Trains
- Christian Wolmar - Renowned transport writer and broadcaster

A certificate was presented to SLUG Chairman Roger Davis by Railfuture President Christian Wolmar.



Among the accolades from the judges were comments such as "professional-quality presentation and content", "much more than just a user group magazine" and "has taken user group publications to a new level".

We were very proud when we heard that we had been nominated for the award. To actually win the award and hear the comments that the judges made was amazing and everybody here at SLUG is thrilled to receive this accolade.

It is not the first time, we have been recognised nationally as our website was named as the best National Rail User Group Website in 2017.

20 May 2023

Improved Connecting Services between Worcester and Bristol



One of SLUG's major campaigns has been to improve links between the Stourbridge line and the South West. Ideally, we would like to see this achieved by extending Stourbridge line services to Cheltenham Spa and Gloucester.

However, the May 2023 timetable change has seen Great Western Railway double its services between Worcester and Bristol Temple Meads from every two hours to hourly on Mondays to Saturdays. With fairly decent connection times, journeys from Kidderminster to Bristol are now quicker via Worcester than via Birmingham.

Full timetables for connecting services from Worcester towards both Bristol Temple Meads and London Paddington are available from the [Timetables](#) page on this website.

15 April 2023

SLUG Annual Public Meeting and AGM on 11 May 2023



The Stourbridge Line User Group Public Meeting and Annual General Meeting will be held at the Refreshment Room at Kidderminster Town (SVR) station on Thursday 11 May.

All members of the public are welcome to attend the public meeting which starts at 7.30 pm. After this meeting, at approximately 9.00 pm, the Annual General Meeting will take place for SLUG members only.

The following organisations will be represented at the meeting and will give presentations.

- West Midlands Trains will be represented by Vicky Cropper-Clarke (Head of Stakeholder and Community)
- West Midlands Rail Executive will be represented by Peter Sargant (Head of Rail Development)
- SLC Rail will be represented by Ian Baxter (Strategy Director)
- Chiltern Railways will be represented by Zach Bailey (Stakeholder Manager)

After the presentations by our speakers, attendees will be able to put questions to them.

14 April 2023

Timetable Changes from 21 May 2023



Major changes will be made to Stourbridge line timetables from 21 May and these are summarised below

West Midlands Railway

Frequencies will remain the same - 4 trains per hour as far as Kidderminster with 2 of these continuing to Worcester. However, to improve punctuality, extra train units will be deployed to enable turnaround times at destination stations to be increased significantly - for instance, 30 minutes at Kidderminster rather than 8 minutes, and 18 minutes at Dorridge rather than 3 minutes. Hopefully, this will resolve the current issues of a train skipping stops to make up time, or being terminated short of its intended destination.

West Midlands Railway has posted the following key points on a dedicated page on its website. This page may be read by clicking on the link below.

- A new, more reliable and more consistent timetable that's easier to understand for customers.
- Additional journey opportunities between Worcester Shrub Hill – Stratford-upon-Avon via Birmingham (1 every hour).
- Increased direct journey opportunities to/from Worcester for Old Hill, Langley Green and Lye.
- An extra train per hour in each direction at Small Heath and Tyseley.
- More consistent 30-minute splits between services at Spring Road, Yardley Wood, Shirley, Whitlocks End, Acocks Green, Solihull, Widney Manor, Olton and Dorridge.
- Consistent hourly services at Lapworth.
- The removal of request stops at Danzey, Wood End, Wootton Wawen and The Lakes (meaning all timetabled trains will call here and you'll no longer need to let the Senior Conductor know if you wish to board or alight at these stations).

In addition, one train per hour will operate directly from Droitwich Spa to Worcester Foregate Street while one train per hour will operate between Droitwich Spa and Worcester Foregate Street via Worcester Shrub Hill. Thus, Foregate Street is served approximately every 30 minutes, while Shrub Hill is served hourly.

However, there is a downside that West Midlands Railway initially failed to mention on its website, but which has now been added.



Blakedown and Hagley

- To help our network run more reliably, direct services to/from Worcester will no longer call at Blakedown and Hagley throughout the day.
- Direct trains to/from Worcester will remain in place during key school / college travel times.
- Both of these stations will still receive 2 trains per hour to/from Kidderminster. If you're travelling towards Worcester from these stations you're advised to change trains at Kidderminster.

SLUG opposes the withdrawal of these through services and has suggested an alternative stopping pattern that will allow through services to continue without compromising reliability. Unfortunately, West Midlands Railway has refused to consider these proposals, which SLUG intend to keep on the table for introduction in a future timetable change.

In addition, SLUG has raised concerns about the withdrawal of some Saturday evening services. Again, West Midlands Railway has ignored these concerns.



Chiltern Railways

Chiltern Railways has announced that it is withdrawing all services from Kidderminster, with remaining services running to/from Stourbridge Junction.

Trains will now run as follows :-

Monday to Friday

0614 Stourbridge Junction to London Marylebone (arrive 0842)
1707 London Marylebone to Stourbridge Junction (arrive 1950)
1807 London Marylebone to Stourbridge Junction (arrive 2037)
2102 London Marylebone to Stourbridge Junction (arrive 2349)

Saturday

0644 Stourbridge Junction to London Marylebone (arrive 0915)
0818 Stourbridge Junction to London Marylebone (arrive 1045)
1802 London Marylebone to Stourbridge Junction (arrive 2035)
1932 London Marylebone to Stourbridge Junction (arrive 2205)

Sunday

0935 Stourbridge Junction to London Marylebone (arrive 1212)
1042 Stourbridge Junction to London Marylebone (arrive 1312)
1737 London Marylebone to Stourbridge Junction (arrive 2002)
1837 London Marylebone to Stourbridge Junction (arrive 2102)

5 January 2023

SLUG Christmas Quiz – Watching The Detectives - Answers



1. Dempsey and Makepeace



2. Grace



3. Dial 999



4. Law and Order UK



5. Dalziel and Pascoe



6. Wycliffe



7. New Tricks



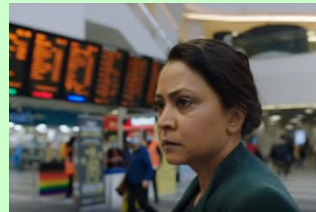
8. Taggart



9. The Mallorca Files



10. Softly, Softly



11. D I Ray



12. Unforgotten



13. Prime Suspect



14. The Sweeney



15. A Touch of Frost



16. Luther



17. The Inspector Alleyn Mysteries



18. McDonald and Dodds