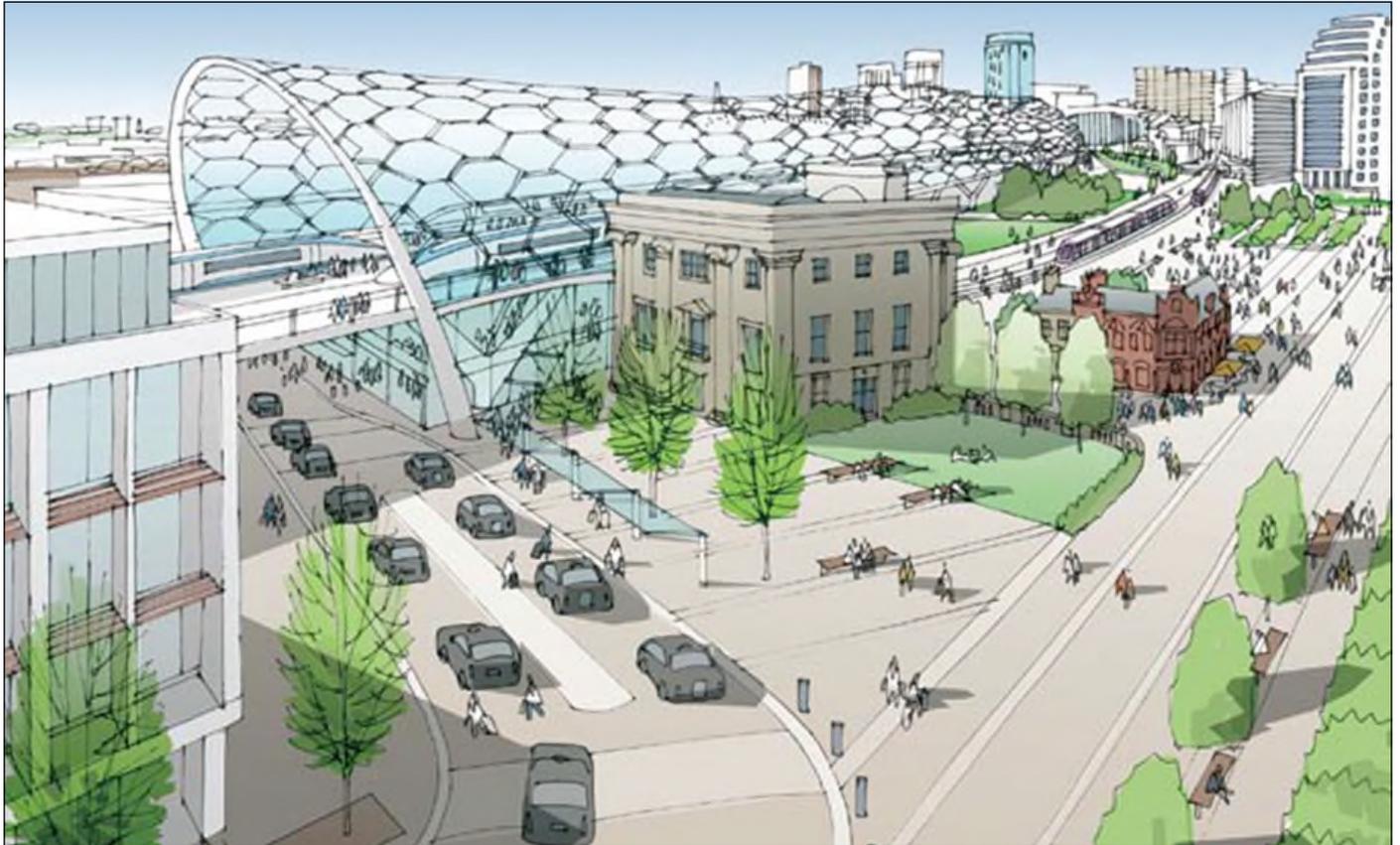


West Midlands

Rail User



Issue 8

JUNE 2014

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The voice of *Campaign for Rail* in the West Midlands

COMMENT

Imagine buying a vacuum cleaner and taking it back next day because it didn't work. 'Were you trying to use late afternoon? It's not valid at that time. We didn't tell you when we sold you it.'

Instead of vacuum cleaner, read 'off peak rail ticket'. Twice recently I have bought rail tickets from booking clerks who have only asked if I am travelling after 09.30. In both cases, I later discovered they were not valid for my afternoon return journey. The problem is with Cross Country. It has decided some afternoon trains are 'peak' but it doesn't identify them in its timetables and Cross Country unhelpfully only tells us, 'off peak times vary by route'. As the *i* newspaper said about rail tickets recently, 'Peak time is now more difficult to define in a sentence than the Higgs boson.'

Equally useless from Cross Country is, 'Break of journey is generally permitted unless prohibited for the journey you are making.' Each ticket says, 'Route: Any permitted' and 'Validity: See restrictions.' But where?

A CfR member tried to buy a ticket to Kidderminster which involved going south via Bromsgrove to Droitwich Spa and then doubling back. The booking clerk refused – even threatening to call the police! Many months later, London Midland admitted it is a permitted route, [though no apology was offered], and claimed booking clerks are not able to give information on permitted routes or ticket restrictions!

It seems even Cross Country's revenue protection staff aren't privy to their employer's peak time secrets too. On both journeys, I had my ticket inspected and accepted. Or perhaps they could just tell I would refuse to pay a surcharge on a ticket bought and used in good faith.

The law would probably not be on my side. Railway by-laws go back to the Regulation of Railways Act of 1889, when Edmondson card tickets were visible proof that the fare had been paid. The by-laws are built on the principle that the rail user should have checked. The rail user is always responsible. But how can we check? How do we know that we need to check? There must be a moral responsibility on the train companies to make that, not only possible, but easy. At the moment, it's one of Donald Rumsfeld's 'unknown unknowns'!

Keith Flinders, Editor

Cover picture: Curzon Station will be the largest building in the city of Birmingham, at the heart of redevelopment in Eastside and a refocussing of local transport networks.

Picture: HS2 Ltd.

BIRMINGHAM CURZON



The site of Birmingham's city centre HS2 station, now likely to be known as 'Birmingham Curzon', is seen from the top of Millennium Point, with the new East-side City Park in the foreground. The 1838 Curzon Street Station building is prominent right of centre. This is retained in the new station plans, with seven platforms to be built alongside it. The length of the platforms, 415 metres for 18 coach trains, can be judged from the Rotunda in the top right of the picture, which is close to the Moor Street Queensway station entrance, next door to the existing Moor Street station. Originally, six platforms were proposed. The seventh is to have customs and security facilities for direct trains to Continental Europe, although the link in north London to HS1 has been removed from plans. CfR was quoted at length in RAIL, calling for a new double track link to replace it. As well as through trains to Europe, there is a strong business case for domestic trains across London.

The main entrance to the station will be alongside the Thinktank Science Garden and City Park, with a Midland Metro stop underneath the new platforms in the very centre of the photo, next to The Eagle and Tun public house. Trams will run to here from Wolverhampton, taking the route presently under construction as far as Bull Street / Corporation Street corner, then continuing straight on. Centro has consulted on two route options this spring, one via Carr's Lane and the other via Albert Street. The plan is to extend further through Digbeth to the Airport and Birmingham Interchange HS2 station.

Words: Keith Flinders Photo: Nigel Cripps

CROSS CITY SOUTH ENHANCEMENTS UPDATE

Two of the three fully committed North East Worcestershire rail enhancement projects are up and running, with passive provision earmarked for the third.

Redditch Branch Line Upgrade: Groundworks have commenced at respective points along the existing single line branch, in preparation for the construction of a 3km dynamic loop, resulting in an improved 20 minute service against the present 30 minute frequency, on the line's exclusive Cross City service, between Redditch and Longbridge, from where the existing 10 minute service will be maintained.



At the heart of the dynamic loop, Alvechurch station will have a second platform (footings are already in place), enabling bi-directional working, whilst both trains simultaneously call at the station. The enhancement will create greater service robustness, whereas at present, any Redditch bound train running irretrievably late, will likely be terminated at Barnt Green, so as not to inhibit single line working through to Alvechurch and Redditch.

Bromsgrove Station Relocation: A similar, but less progressed picture is also emerging at Bromsgrove, with an initial site clearance and turf cutting ceremony having already taken place at the former Midland Railway goods yard site, ready for the construction of the £17 million plus new Bromsgrove station complex. The new location is some 250 metres south of the existing station and will feature much needed all round improvements, not least, four 6 car long platform faces, with provision for expansion to nine car, together with lifts and covered bridge and stair access to both island platforms.

The proposed station building will feature a unique round structure, complete with ticket office and separate ticket machines, toilets, waiting area and a small retail kiosk. The station will be revenue secure and manned, and is due to be operational from next April (2015).



Redundant track being removed at Bromsgrove. The new station building will be where the buffers are. The present station is top right

A long history of inadequate parking provision causes a great deal of local resident anguish, with upwards of some 250 rail user vehicles parked within the surrounding roads, which, to address satisfactorily, will require local authority parking restrictions, or a cultural change on behalf of car owners. This will be a particularly prickly subject, as they will be expected to add £3.50 a day to their current travel costs. However, ten times, the existing 30 odd parking spaces, at the new station, should not restrict where they choose to park.

Lickey Incline Electrification: 2016 will see the new station more fully utilized, following the extension of the overhead wires down the Lickey from Barnt Green and the corresponding introduction of a 20 minute Cross City Line service from Bromsgrove (alternating with the 20 minute Redditch service). Incidentally, early onward electrification to Bristol is understood to be a major aspiration of Network Rail.

Together with the existing Hereford-New Street service, the luxury of four trains an hour to Birmingham is only half of the story, as access to the south west remains the fundamental aspiration of *Bromsgrove Rail User Group*.

Stopping the hourly Nottingham-Cardiffs at Bromsgrove, enabling desperately needed multiple interchange opportunities via Cheltenham Spa, is a key justification for the £17m station investment. A surrounding catchment, estimated at half a million, awaits the new Bromsgrove station, which ambitiously, has been accredited the title, 'Interchange' by the project sponsors. However, that potential to act as an interchange will only be realised, with additional Cross Country service trains helping to address the current wholly inadequate southbound situation.

Text and photos: Tony Woodward

24 HOURS IN THE LIFE OF NEW STREET STATION

Andy Knowles, Senior Operations Manager at Birmingham New Street, the busiest station outside London, will take us through a typical day—if such exists!

SATURDAY 7 JUNE

Meet at Network Rail Reception on the concourse, next to Marks and Spencer Simply Food at 10.50. There will be a safety briefing before the presentation at 11.00. This will be followed by questions and the AGM, which will include updates on Campaign for Rail's campaigns. The meeting will finish about 13.00.

Please note as capacity is limited, you **MUST** pre-register by email or phone [campaignforrail@gmail.com or 0121 440 7092] by Monday 2 June.

THIS MEETING IS STRICTLY PRE-REGISTERED MEMBERS ONLY.

TRIPLE TRIUMPH FOR STOURBRIDGE GROUP

Three successes in six months is a record for CfR's Associate Member, Stourbridge Line User Group [SLUG]. For years, Hartlebury only had a handful of peak time calls, four to Birmingham and three to Worcester in the early morning, and three back from each in the evening peak. SLUG has campaigned for an all-day service for this expanding village for over 10 years. We argued that Hartlebury could be a railhead for the larger settlement of Stourport-on-Severn and the villages and hamlets southwards along the A449.

London Midland introduced a new timetable on the Snow Hill lines last December and filled the gap at Hartlebury between the peaks, giving it an hourly service. Evenings however were not included and the last train of the day from Birmingham Snow Hill was 17.53! (Passengers had been given honorary off-peak status prior to the new timetable.) SLUG continued to campaign and London Midland has added an evening service to Hartlebury from 19 May. The last trains of the day, Monday to Friday, now arrive at 22.43 from Birmingham and 22.42 from Worcester.

An unforeseen consequence of last December's timetable change for trains through Stourbridge Junction was its effect on connections from Stourbridge Town. With the Parry People Mover arriving at xx.x7, and four of the six trains an hour to Birmingham leaving at xx.x7, a frustrating 10 minute wait became normal. It even had a detrimental effect on precious car park spaces as SLUG knows of a commuter who used to walk to Stourbridge Town, but decided to drive to the Junction to avoid the frustration!



Again London Midland listened – and acted quickly. The Town Branch timetable was nudged back by two minutes to give good connections. Usually only December and May see timetable changes, but SLUG gives credit to LM, especially Route Manager, Terry Oliver for listening to the User Group and pushing this change through to begin on 3 March. Even one of the early Saturday morning departures from Town was adjusted at SLUG’s suggestion to match the arrival times of the first buses at the adjacent bus station.

It shows how stakeholders and train operating companies working together can produce mutual benefit. Well done to both!

Words: Don Barton, Photo: Roger Davis

CREDIT WHERE IT'S DUE



Campaign for Rail presented a letter, to Patrick Verwer, London Midland’s Managing Director, congratulating the company on the speed of its response to Stourbridge Town Rail Users, in implementing the timetable change and commending the work of Terry Oliver, Snow Hill Lines Manager.

LOCAL RAIL SERVICES: LOCAL DECISIONS

There are three ways rail services can be provided as a result of privatisation. The first is an open access operator, seeking to compete commercially. We used to have one: Wrexham Shropshire and Marylebone Railway. The second is a franchise operator, running services specified by the Department for Transport. Currently this is how all trains in the West Midlands are provided, with timetables and standards tightly controlled from London. The third is to run rail services as a concession, with decisions made locally. So far, only Merseyrail and London Overground are concessions, but they have better quality stations, less anti-social behaviour and less ticketless travel, and better integration with the bus networks than franchised areas.



In March, Campaign for Rail organised a forum at Centro House for Rail User Groups in our region to hear from Stephen Rhodes about Centro's progress in negotiating the devolving of control of rail to the West Midlands.

The region's shire counties, unitary authorities and the metropolitan districts have come together to set up **West Midlands Rail**. The first stage is likely to be involvement with what are now some of London Midland's services within the region, such as Cross City, the Snow Hill lines, the Chase Line, from Birmingham to Hereford and local trains to Shrewsbury. The LM franchise was due to end in September 2015. A six months extension, then a direct award agreement is expected up to June 2017. From then, local control should gradually increase.

The network of services in the region is far from discrete. In fact, even between Wolverhampton and Birmingham with four franchisees, more seats are provided by long distance trains than local services. Many trains provide local services within the region, then continue beyond it, such as LM at Northampton. West Midlands Rail is seeking to specify these and the Birmingham to Liverpool service with DfT. Eventually, the same may apply to Leicester and Derby.



A challenge to be faced is the provision of enough suitable trains. The growth of Cross City requires more 323s. Threading its way through Bescot Yard is one of the boomerang service [Walsall to Wolverhampton via New Street]. Three extra 350s are releasing 323s, but the speed of their door mechanisms means station stops are increased by 50%. On the Coventry line, alternate station stops are time-tabled for a full minute, but headways on the Wolverhampton line are too tight for that. Plus the 323s need to be made DDA compliant by 2020.

Transfer of control will be gradual. After DfT's fingers were burnt over the West Coast refranchising, it favours a staged handover of control. There is the need to feel confident that West Midlands Rail has the ability to run the local network efficiently and cost effectively. Proposals will be presented to DfT in late summer this year, ahead of its negotiations with LM over its direct award. Preparation for the splitting of the LM contract will be built into this. LM's Trent Valley services to London and Crewe would not involve WMR and from Birmingham to Liverpool and to Northampton would be jointly specified. It is possible that DfT could decide to subsume these services into a new West Coast franchise, in a similar way to Great Western's main lines and branches franchise. The Direct Award of West Coast to Virgin is due to expire in April 2017, just two months before London Midland's.

West Midlands Rail is likely to be a co-signatory as part of the first stage of the hand over. Local control should increase from 2017, with more decisions made within the region about using capacity released by HS2, integrating local services with HS2, integration of rail, metro and bus, station facilities and fare levels.

Words and photos: Keith Flinders.

LOCAL PASSENGER GROWTH

The annual Station Usage figures were published by the Rail Regulator in March this year and show modest growth in passenger numbers in most counties of England and Wales, despite the recession and the exceptional winter of 2012/13.

Growth was strongest in London (5.0%) and the Eastern region (4.1%) followed by Yorkshire & Humberside (2.3%), the South West (2.0%), the South East (1.6%) and West Midlands (1.5%) but growth in the East Midlands (0.8%), North East (0.3%) and North West (-1.7%) has clearly slackened.

The detailed picture in the West Midlands is complex, with many stations showing a fall in passenger numbers from a peak in 2011/12 whilst at others growth has continued unchecked. In general the number of passengers travelling to London appears to have continued to rise with many stations on the Chiltern Line, Cotswold Line and West Coast main line showing significant growth.

In the **border counties**, although Hereford (0.4%), Leominster (-0.1%), Telford (0.0%) and Shrewsbury (1.0%) are clearly 'flat-lining', Gobowen (4.6%) and Church Stretton (5.3%) continue to perform well.

In **Staffordshire**, although a fall in passengers has been recorded at a number of the smaller stations (notably Blythe Bridge and Uttoxeter), growth at Stafford (4.2%) and Stoke-on-Trent (3.2%) has continued, whilst growth at Stone (11.4%) is exceptional. There has also been strong growth at Kidsgrove (4.2%) and just over the Cheshire border on the same line at Congleton (5.8%).

In **Warwickshire**, growth at Atherstone (7.4%), Nuneaton (3.8%) and Rugby (4.1%) has continued unabated, almost matched by Coventry (3.4%). But the highest figures in the county are seen at Stratford-on-Avon (4.9%), Coleshill Parkway (12.8%) and Warwick Parkway (18.9%).

In **Worcestershire**, passenger numbers last year at Evesham (17.3%) and Pershore (22.7%) both show exceptional growth, clearly justifying Network Rail's recent investment in redoubling the Cotswold Line. Within the Birmingham 'travel to work' area, Bromsgrove (3.2%), Kidderminster (4.1%) and Malvern Link (4.1%) continue to perform well but in contrast passenger numbers at the southern end of the Cross City line at Alvechurch (-6.0%) and Redditch (-6.6%) appear to have fallen sharply. Does this reflect poor reliability on the Cross-City service recently?

In the **central metropolitan area** passenger numbers at both Moor Street and Birmingham International have grown by 4.0% whilst New Street has grown by 2.7% despite the turmoil caused by rebuilding the station. These figures which are far higher than the regional average of 1.5% suggest that, rather than additional local commuters, the growth has come from increased travel to London.

METRO DEVELOPMENTS

After 15 years of being invisible to most people in Birmingham, Midland Metro is getting a presence in the city. Track has been laid along the extension from St. Paul's to New Street Station and, next year, this will be the route terminus – for the time being. The headshunt up Pinfold Street will be the first part of the extension to Centenary Square. After that, it will be Five Ways, plus two other extensions.

At the Wolverhampton end, a branch to the rebuilt railway station is proposed. CfR has reservations about the provision of a single line with only one tram platform at the railway station, and about the track layout at the other end of the extension, which will mean trams cannot serve both St. George's [the city centre terminus] and the railway station. Initially Centro told CfR that trams would all run to St. George's between 09.00 and 15.00, with none to the station. In the early mornings and after 15.00, they would all run to the railway station. As well as being a poor use of the new infrastructure, it would not give metro users an attractive service.

We had a number of meetings with Centro and suggested putting the new junction in so that all trams reversed at St. George's, so serving both the city centre and station. Centro maintained the time penalty imposed a cost that the business case cannot bear. So 'there will be provision for a tram service outside of the peak to St. George's, during the peak all trams are intended to go to the rail station stop'.

Eventually, tram track should extend from the railway station out to New Cross Hospital and Wednesfield, plus a tram-train service to Walsall. The single platform and single line section will then need to be addressed. Plus unless St. George's junction becomes a triangle, Wednesfield trams would not come to the city centre.

As page 3 notes, another branch has been up for consultation this spring, across to Eastside for HS2. Two routes were suggested, either via Carr's Lane or via Albert Street, but only the latter is shown in Birmingham's HS2 Masterplan, suggesting the choice had already been made.

New Urbos 3 trams have been arriving in the last few months from Spain. Centro has increased the order from 20 to 21, and the first may go into public service in June. However for part of August, the service will not reach Wolverhampton, as worn out rails along Bilston Road are replaced. DfT is providing £5 million for this.

Keith Flinders



PHOTO CHALLENGE

At which of our stations is this?

The answer will be in the next edition!

WHY PAY MORE?

If you are going to Continental Europe this summer, should you book 'in one simple booking' through the website of one of our rail companies or book with Eurostar, DB, SNCF etc. individually, plus separate tickets to London? On the days when Virgin's website link is working, we are offered the West Midlands to London journey at the normal cost – and it includes Underground from Euston to St. Pancras. If you are booking a summer trip as late as this, it's worth looking because on a very few occasions, I have found a cheaper Eurostar fare through Virgin than the Eurostar website is offering.

The problem is that Eurostar tickets are priced by quota, like Ryanair's, and the cheapest can sell out quickly. You can't get them through Virgin because the through booking does not open until Virgin's domestic tickets go on sale, twelve weeks before travel. Eurostar starts selling through its website six months ahead. All Eurostars, even peak services, start at £39 Standard single [£38 for over 60s]. By the time Virgin begins, peak trains are often £89 or £112, or even sold out.

If you are going beyond Paris or Brussels, the Eurostar website offers some principal stations at a discount compared to split ticketing. In July, for example, London to Perpignan, is currently available at £73 for Eurostar and £43.50 for the TGV [total £116.50] or £101 for a through booking.

So the advantages of splitting your booking are getting your Eurostar seat as soon as it goes on sale, the opportunity to use a railcard as far as London, and the flexibility to choose different classes of travel for some of your journey. From the West Midlands to London with a railcard, first class can be as low as £15.50 and first class on TGV is often only a few pounds more than second – but first class on Eurostar would pay for another holiday!

Keith Flinders

NEW LOCOS FOR CHILTERN

The smoothest ride between the West Midlands and London is on Chiltern's Mark 3 Silver Sets, but the Class 67 locos are unreliable. Before the end of 2014, six Class 68, now being built in Spain will replace them. Services covered are [\[M-F\]](#):

Birmingham Moor Street: 06.55*, 07.11*, 07.55*, 10.55, 12.55, 13.15, 15.55

London Marylebone: 08.45, 10.15, 10.45, 13.15, 16.47, 17.15*, 18.15*, 18.47*

Saturdays: **Moor Street** 07.55*, 09.55*, 13.55. **Marylebone** 17.06, 18.06

Sundays: **Moor Street** 10.55. **Marylebone** 18.06 [* = serves Stourbridge Line]

BUSHBURY JUNCTION

A pinchpoint on the West Midlands rail network is Bushbury Junction, 1.7 miles north of Wolverhampton station. The first railway in the area in 1837 bypassed Wolverhampton, only offering a station at Wednesfield Heath, one mile from the centre. This is the line on the left of the photo, now a busy freight route from Bescot, with typically 30 trains each way daily. The track on the right is the link from Wolverhampton station [known as High Level until 1973], opened in 1873 and the Virgin Voyager is about to pass what remains of the Goodyear tyre factory. On the opposite side of the track to this was Bushbury Engine Shed. It is still a source of carefully noted numbers. Part of the site is now a bingo hall!



There is a third route, visible in the top left of the photo. Originally, this connected to the Great Western at Cannock Road Junction to access Low Level station. This line survived the closure of the Low Level route, but only as far as a headhunt to run round coal trains to Ironbridge Power Station, which then headed up past the site of Stafford Road shed and works to Oxley. Then in 1983, a sharp curve was laid to avoid the Cannock Road reversal. Oxley Chord had been created.

This is the route that Virgin proposed to use for Shrewsbury's through trains to London, with non-stop running from Telford Central to Stafford. Trains would have reversed at Stafford and then taken the Trent Valley line. Virgin's plans to use the Oxley Chord were thwarted by Network Rail, only offering paths through the Trent Valley at commercially unattractive times. Now, from next December, Shrewsbury and Telford will again get through London trains but by extension of existing Birmingham services, using Voyagers, such as at 06.39 from Shrewsbury and 18.23 from Euston.

SNIPPETS

- Chiltern Railways ran a Boxing Day service from London to Bicester in 2013 and CfR suggested extending trains to Birmingham Moor Street on Boxing Day 2014. Chiltern told us that 2013's trains had not covered their costs, but revenue had been affected by their relatively late announcement and the nationwide adverse publicity at the time about weather related disruption. So 2014's trains will again be as far as Bicester, but Birmingham will be considered when the Boxing Day provision has 'bedded in'.
- 360 extra car parking spaces are being added at Rowley Regis at a cost of £3 million. It brings the total to 708 spaces.
- Trains now bring more people into work in Birmingham than buses.
- Commuting from Lichfield Trent Valley to London has grown considerably since London Midland introduced its hourly Crewe – London service. A new 100 space car park has doubled provision. It is on the north side of the station, on land identified for station parking as long ago as 1997, when it was still owned by British Rail Residuary Board. The charge is £7 a day.
- Oswestry in north Shropshire, once the headquarters of Cambrian Railways, has moved a step closer to being joined again to the national network with the acquisition of land for a platform and loop at Gobowen. The line crosses the A5 on the level.
- From 6 July to 1 September, trains will not run between Barnt Green and Redditch, plus Sundays 8, 15 and 22 June for the passing loop at Alvechurch, almost two miles long, and new second platform to be installed.
- Coseley station has gained a book swap. Rail users can choose from a selection in the ticket office and are encouraged to contribute books too.



- To confuse foreigners and advertise a new film, Virgin renamed a station on 1 April. Only the signal box retained the name, 'Wolverhampton', which is a legal requirement. The signal box closes over August Bank Holiday weekend, after controlling the five miles south to Watery Lane loops and ten miles north to Penkridge for 49 years. In 2013, rail replacement buses at Wolverhampton were a disgrace. Have any lessons been learned?

Photo: Keith Flinders

THE NEXT STATION IS STONE



Where: 9 miles north of Stafford on the line to Stoke-on-Trent. Population 10,525.

Service: The rail service to Stone was re-introduced in December 2008 and there are now 14 trains each way on weekdays (12 on Sundays). The service, of modern Class 350 Desiros runs between Euston and Crewe, provided by London Midland.

Footfall: 94,784 in 2012/13, growing by 11.4% per annum.

Facilities: The station is unstaffed with a new footbridge providing the only access to the northbound platform. There is a large brick shelter on that platform but the southbound platform is rather exposed with only limited shelter under the original awning. There is CIS, a Permit to Travel machine and a bike shelter .

Other Features: Stone station was opened in 1848 by the North Staffordshire Railway. The Grade 2 listed station building, designed in Jacobean style by Henry Hunt, is in the 'V' of the junction with the direct Euston—Manchester line. Restored by Stone Town Council in 2003, it is now a popular community centre.

Car Parking: Free for about 60 cars on the station approach road.

Recent History: The Colwich line platforms were removed in the 1960s, leaving just those on the branch to Stafford. In 2002, footfall was 16,538 with just 9 trains per day, mostly only between Stafford and Stoke-on-Trent; none on Sundays. All trains were withdrawn in 2003 during West Coast 'refurbishment'. Virgin planned to call in 2006 but the junction signal had moved, so the platform was now too short.

Future: Aspiration for Birmingham trains; station adoption group.

Words: Peter Cousins

Photo: Keith Flinders

Each edition looks at one of our stations that seldom makes the news

NO TRACK TO CAULDON LOWE

Moorland and City's plans to connect the heavy industry of the Staffordshire Moorlands to the national network at Stoke on Trent are being, hopefully temporarily, revised. Track has been removed for the last three miles from the summit of the line at Ipstones to the cement works and quarries at Cauldon Lowe. As the photo shows, much improved drainage will be needed as well as heavier rail



Ipstones – for now, the end of the line – literally.

for freight operations. The plan is for the Churnet Valley Railway to buy the line from Leekbrook Junction to Ipstones to extend its heritage operations, as the merger of Lafarge and Tarmac has led the Competition Commission to require either Cauldon or Tunstead (Europe's longest quarry face, near Buxton) to be sold. Lafarge Tarmac, a French firm, may decide to close Cauldon and supply from France. They currently supply the south east of England from their Le Havre cement works. If they sell to another company, it does not guarantee investment in railfreight, as reserves at Cauldon Lowe are limited compared to other quarries. If a freight contract can be signed, all the route will be relaid. If not, the Churnet Valley Railway will aim for a station in Waterhouses.

Attention is now focussed on reaching Leek, which offers tourism potential and a new headquarters for the railway. A mile of track north from Leekbrook Junction to a new station on the site of the cattle market could be financed by the sale of land at Leekbrook for 89 new houses and a station there. This year should also see CVR trains towards Stoke, as far as Endon.

Words and photo: Keith Flinders

CAMPAIGN FOR RAIL: The West Midlands Region

is a voluntary group lobbying for better rail services and facilities for passengers and freight in the West Midlands Region.

Membership costs just £8 a year. Send your name and address, and, if possible, an email address, with a cheque payable to 'Campaign for Rail' to

CFR Membership Secretary, 116 Stoke Road, Bromsgrove B60 3ED.

Members receive 'West Midlands Rail User' in February, June and October.