



Railtalk Magazine

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Submissions & Contributions

Railtalk Magazine, a magazine written by the Enthusiast for the Enthusiast. So why not join the team. We are always looking for talented photographers and writers to join us at Railtalk. Be it though pictorial submissions or via a written article featuring an event or railtour, we greatly appreciate any contributions to the magazine however big or small.

Photographic Contributions

All Photographic contributions should to be sent to us via email, post or via the members section page on our website. Contact addresses are provided above.

All images should be provided at a resolution of at least 2400px x 1700px at 240dpi.

Welcome to Issue 220

In the news this month, is that the Secretary of State for Transport has written an open letter to the ORR regarding open access.....

The letter sets out the expectations of the Secretary of State for how the government's vision for open access operates alongside a publicly owned railway.

These expectations will be considered by the ORR when making access decisions regarding new open access applications.

In the letter Heidi Alexander said: "Whilst this letter does not replace the formal guidance currently in place and holds no formal legal standing, I hope it will be helpful to the ORR by setting out my expectations for how the Government's vision for Open Access operates alongside a publicly owned railway.

"I also intend to consider amendments to my Secretary of State guidance. This will build upon the policy position set out in this letter, as well as wider consideration of how a reformed sector - as it moves towards a single directing mind and public ownership - provides better value for passengers and taxpayers.

"I recognise the benefits that can be provided by Open Access operators in the right circumstances and that both existing and new Open Access operators can open up new markets,

drive innovation and offer choice to passengers.

"However, there is a balance to be struck to ensure the benefits provided by Open Access operators outweigh the impacts they have on taxpayers and the ability to operate the network efficiently. We need to be mindful of the impacts of Open Access such as the level of revenue they can abstract from contracted services and the associated implications for passengers and taxpayers. I am also aware of the additional pressures new services can create on already constrained network capacity and their impact on the value secured from public investment in infrastructure. While Open Access operators pay variable access charges to Network Rail to cover the direct costs incurred running their trains on the network, unlike government contracted operators they do not fully cover the costs of fixed track access charges towards long-term maintenance of the network and central support costs. Currently only one Open Access operator contributes towards fixed costs via an Infrastructure Cost Charge, and taxpayers are left to fill shortfalls.

"I want to ensure appropriate balance between these elements, and my priority is to see the network move to a financially sustainable model which maximises benefits and value for passengers and taxpayers while

delivering improved performance as we move towards public ownership. As such I would like to make clear my expectation that you give due consideration to the priorities I set out in this letter whilst respecting your statutory duties. I wish to see the impacts on the taxpayer and on overall performance for passengers – such as potential congestion on the network – given primacy when considering open access applications.

"I look forward to meeting you and working together to improve the railways for customers and taxpayers. My officials will reflect the position set out above in responses to the applications that you are currently considering and remain ready to work with you."

Will this mean a reduction on open access operators, or will they face higher charges, it remains to be seen.

Once again, thanks for all the photos sent in this month, we really appreciate the time taken to send them to us. Until next month, stay safe.

Andy

This Page

Great Western HST power cars Nos. 43094 and 43122 are seen on Eardington Bank with 13:05 Bridgnorth - Kidderminster service on December 30th. [Keith Davies](#)

Front Cover

Class 40 106 and 50 035 descend Eardington Bank with the 13:50 Bridgnorth - Kidderminster service on a sunny December 30th. [Keith Davies](#)





Class 66 615 with the 6B71 06:29 Tunstead to Northampton stone working passes Dordon (near Atherstone) on December 30th. *John Alsop*

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With Thanks

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These issues wouldn't be possible without contributions from:
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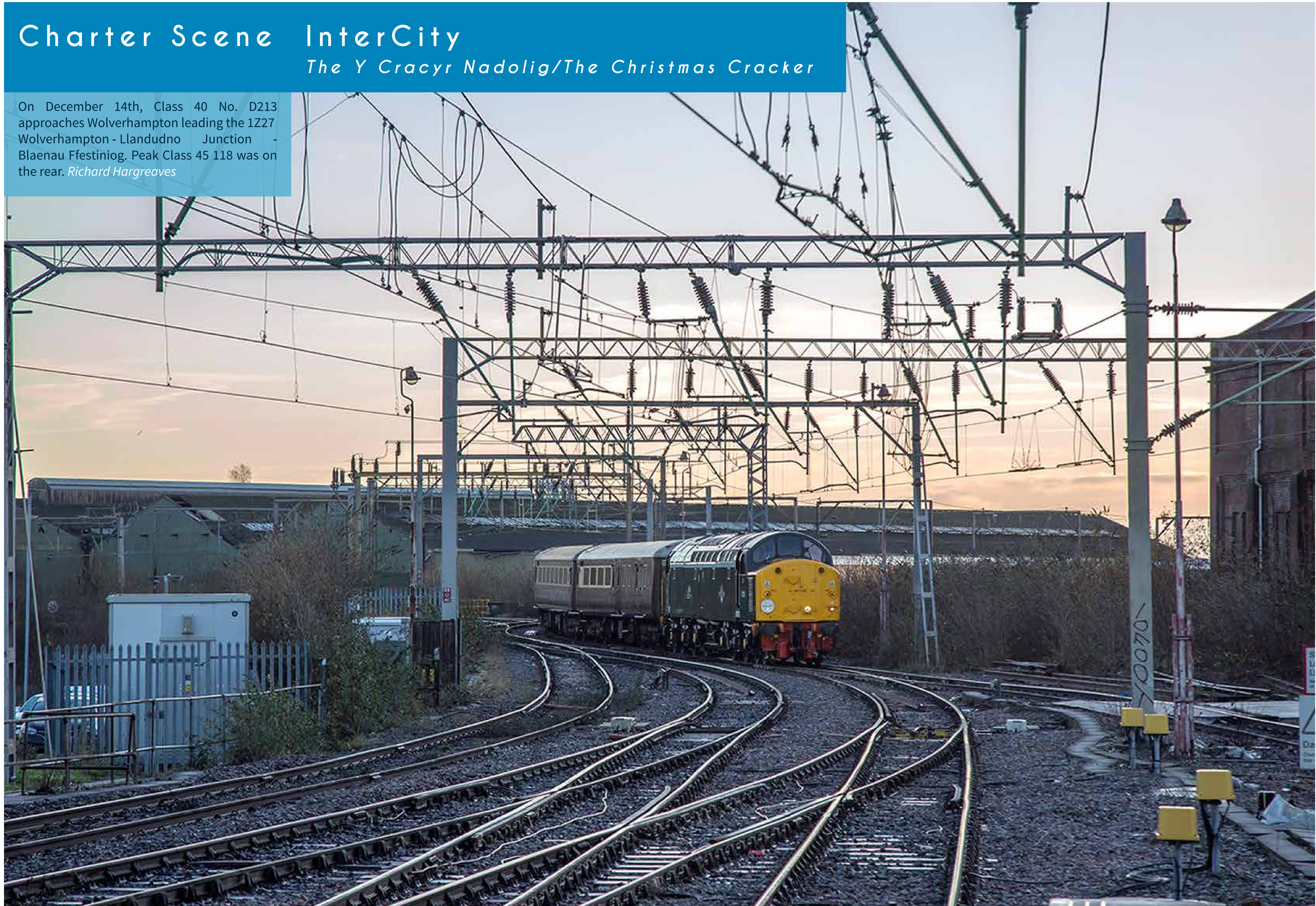
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Charter Scene InterCity

The Y Cracyr Nadolig/The Christmas Cracker

On December 14th, Class 40 No. D213 approaches Wolverhampton leading the 1Z27 Wolverhampton - Llandudno Junction - Blaenau Ffestiniog. Peak Class 45 118 was on the rear. *Richard Hargreaves*



Class 40 No. D213 (40013) heads InterCity tours 'Y Cracwr Nadolig' Wolverhampton - Blaenau Ffestiniog alongside the sea at Abergele on December 14th. *Chris Morrison*



InterCity

The Y Cracyr Nadolig/ The Christmas Cracker

▶ Class 40 No. D213 is seen running round its train at Blaenau Ffestiniog on December 14th. *Richard Hargreaves*

▶ Class 40 No. D213 is seen on the rear of 1Z29 Llandudno to Crewe at Wolverhampton on December 14th. Class 45 118 was leading the service. *Richard Hargreaves*

▶ Class 45 118 waits departure time at Wolverhampton on December 14th working 1Z29 Llandudno to Crewe. *Richard Hargreaves*



On December 14th, Class 45 118 brings the return Llandudno - Crewe tour into Chester where the train reversed with Class 40 No. D213 then leading towards Wrexham. *Chris Morrison*



Class 40 No. D213 is seen heading the Blaenau Ffestiniog - Llandudno leg of the tour at Deganwy. *Chris Morrison*



Charter Scene

Vintage Trains

The Polar Express

Great Western Castle Class No. 7029 'Clun Castle' with 'The Polar Express' headboard passes Shirley with the 19:24 Whitlocks End - Birmingham Moor St. on December 20th.
Chris Morrison



Charter Scene Northern Belle

Northern Belle *Northern Belle*

On December 13th, Class 57 315 and 57 601 are seen at Swindon working 1Z27 Swansea to Swindon. *Ken Mumford*



Charter Scene Northern Belle

Northern Belle

On December 12th, West Coast's Class 57 601 top'n'tail with 57 315 arrive at Crewe, working the Northern Belle from Liverpool Lime Street - Holyhead via Crewe (reverse) and Chester.
Michael Lynam



Class 37 407 passes Bradley with a one-way charter from Preston to Stevenage on December 13th. *John Sloane*



The Midland Pullman set containing power cars Nos. 43055 and 43059 passes through Charnock Richard cutting on December 10th on a Holyhead to Edinburgh excursion.

John Sloane



Charter Scene Railway Touring Company

The York Yule-Tide Express

On December 11th, LMS Black 5 No. 44871 turned a good few heads as it passed through Doncaster working 1Z21 Norwich - York, with Class 47 812 tagged on the rear end.

Steve Thompson



Charter Scene ECS and Light Engine Moves

With Class 57 315 dutifully following at the rear of the train, 57 601 cautiously approaches Golborne Junction on December 5th. The train is an empty Northern Belle working from Carnforth to Manchester Victoria for an afternoon jolly to Blackburn. *Jeff Nicholls*



Charter Scene ECS and Light Engine Moves

'Royal Scot' top'n'tail with Class 57 002 working ECS move 5Z70, the 06:56 Crewe H.S. to Southall Loco Services Ltd passes through Northampton on December 2nd. *Derek Elston*





Avanti West Coast bids farewell to the Super Voyager

Avanti West Coast's Super Voyager trains bow out of service as the new Evero fleet is rolled out.

New timetable marks end of Super Voyager's 22-year service on the West Coast Main Line

**Over one hundred million miles travelled in England, Wales and Scotland
Trains replaced by Avanti West Coast's new £350m Evero fleet**

Avanti West Coast has bid farewell to its Class 221 Super Voyager train after 22 years' service on the West Coast Main Line.

Introduced in 2002, the fleet amassed over 109 million miles whilst serving routes from London to the West Midlands, North Wales, Blackpool and Scotland.

Famous for their tilt capabilities, Class 221 105 and 221 106 had the honour of working the last train on Saturday December 14th - the 18:16 from London Euston to Birmingham New Street. Both trains then made their way to Alstom's Central Rivers depot in Burton-upon-Trent - where the fleet has been maintained since its first day on the west coast.

The change coincided with the introduction of Avanti West Coast's enhanced December timetable, which has seen the rollout of the £350 million Evero fleet - with the new trains due to run around a third of all services.

Stacy Thundercliffe, Head of Fleet and Engineering at Avanti West Coast, said: "The Class 221 Super Voyagers have played a key part in the transformation of long-distance services on the West Coast Main Line.

"A true workhorse, ably cared for by the team at Central Rivers depot. We owe both the train and Alstom our thanks and now look forward to the next exciting chapter for rolling stock on the west coast route with the introduction of our Evero fleet."



Campaign to promote affordable, greener travel to Cumbria wins national award

The “Let’s go car free” scheme, which was set up by Avanti West Coast in partnership with Stagecoach Cumbria and North Lancashire and Cumbria Tourism, won the ‘Marketing Campaign of the Year’ at the national awards.

The judges praised the green focus of the campaign by helping to support local Cumbria Tourism’s objectives to increase visitor numbers sustainably to the region.

The initiative, which ran from September 2023 until November 2024, advertised Cumbria as a destination to visit, whilst encouraging tourists to have a more sustainable trip by leaving their cars at home.

It highlighted the ease of travel by rail to get to the tourist spot, as well as connectivity to local bus routes around the region. The campaign, which has seen an increase in visitors to the county, helped dispel the perception that it is difficult to get to the region by rail or bus, which was a finding from Cumbria Tourism’s independent research last year.

As part of the collaborative work between the three organisations, the Cumbrian town Keswick was also added to railway journey planners this summer so visitors could travel seamlessly across train and bus on a single

integrated ticket.

Avanti West Coast are currently reviewing with Stagecoach Cumbria and Lancashire the feasibility of bringing the scheme back in the new year.

Avanti West Coast’s Head of Commercial Partnerships, Richard Wareing said: “This campaign had a huge positive impact for sustainable tourism to Cumbria and it is fantastic to see it recognised at the UK Bus Awards.

“Public transport plays such an important role in driving tourism growth across the regions we serve, so being able to come together with Stagecoach and Cumbria Tourism to attract new visitors to the Lake District has created a fantastic example of what collaborative working can achieve.”

Cumbria Tourism’s Managing Director, Gill Haigh said: “Let’s Go Car Free has shown that working in partnership with other businesses can prove to be particularly fruitful. Encouraging visitors to travel to and around the county in a more sustainable way and ease traffic on our roads is a key ambition of our Destination Marketing Plan. Avanti West Coast and Stagecoach Cumbria & North Lancashire have helped us show just how easy and cost effective it is to enjoy Cumbria without a car.

“Earlier this year the partnership took a step further as Avanti announced a new virtual train station at Keswick, effortlessly linking both companies to provide a seamless ticketing service for passengers to book tickets that took them directly to Keswick via Penrith.”

Stagecoach Cumbria and North Lancashire’s Managing Director, Tom Waterhouse said: “It was humbling to be recognised as part of a multi-operator marketing campaign at this year’s UK Bus Awards, gaining the gold for Marketing Campaign of the Year. As highlighted by the judges, working cross-sectionally in the transport industry is something rarely done, so to win an award for our work alongside Avanti was an accolade for both businesses.

“This campaign has not only emphasised the power of collaboration in the sector, but that thinking outside the box and working along the local tourism board is something we should focus on in the future to further strengthen the ‘car free’ messaging for visitors and residents in the national park.”



Avanti West Coast champions local people and places at Community Rail Conference

Avanti West Coast has celebrated initiatives designed to bring the railway closer to the people it serves as part of its annual Community Rail Conference. Bringing together representatives from Community Rail Partnerships (CRPs), this year's event, which took place in Stafford, focused on the theme of connections.

The intercity operator showcased initiatives delivered across the West Coast Main Line and the value it has brought to local communities – highlighting collaborations with different organisations and people, including artists, poets as well as schools. It also championed projects that have transformed redundant spaces to offer facilities that engage people in the railway, such as cafes and wildflower meadows.

Attendees heard from Avanti West Coast's Managing Director, Andy Mellors,

and Social Value and Accessibility Manager, Dr Theresa Robberts, as well as representatives from Community Rail Network. During the conference CRPs discussed the importance of connecting people with the railway and offered practical tips on how to do this. They also took part in a session to create ideas for Railway 200 – a year-long nationwide campaign starting in January 2025 to celebrate 200 years of the modern railway – to encourage applications for funding to deliver activities associated with the celebrations.

As part of its commitment to support local Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs), Avanti West Coast welcomed Just Crisps from Rugeley Trent Valley, to share how their product came to be stocked as part of the First Class offering, and what it means for their business. In a nod to the community, this year's event took place at The White Eagle Club – a venue managed by the Stafford and District Polish Association and used by people in the local area.

Andy Mellors, Managing Director at Avanti West Coast, said: "Our annual conference was a great opportunity to bring people together to share ideas, make new connections and gain an insight into projects that have benefitted places we serve.

"Community Rail initiatives help bring communities closer to the railway - whether it's for learning, cultural activities, or tackling social needs – and we're proud to play a role to deliver these. By shining a spotlight on the people, places and businesses that have been supported by Avanti West Coast and the value they've brought to their communities, we hope to inspire others to get involved in their railway, so they can make even more of a positive difference locally."

Avanti West Coast

▶ An Avanti Pendolino burst out of the gloom at Euxton with a London Euston service on December 10th. *John Sloane*

▶ Class 805 004 and 805 009 stand at Stafford, running 30mins late with 1D83 09:02 London Euston to Holyhead service on December 17th. *Derek Elston*

▶ Class 390 114 speeds south through Bradley on December 13th with a Glasgow to London Euston service. *John Sloane*



Class 70 803 runs through the bleak looking cutting at Charnock Richard on December 10th with an empty log train from Chirk to Carlisle. *John Sloane*









CrossCountry

Class 220 024 operating 1S47 08:40 Penzance -
Edinburgh Waverley passes through Saltash on
January 3rd. *Barry Beeston*



DB Cargo

On December 19th, Class 66 076 sees the setting sun as it crosses Stockport Viaduct working 6H59 Ashburys to Dowlow Briggs sidings. *Barry Longson*



DB Cargo

Class 66 142 'Maritime No. 3' approaches Rainford with 6E26, Knowsley FT to Wilton EfW refuse train on December 9th. *Brian Dobbs*



DB Cargo

▶ Class 66 012 creeps across Crow Nest Junction on December 2nd with the Tees to Knowsley empty binliner train. *John Sloane*

▼ Class 66 021 working the Seaforth to Mossend intermodal on December 10th dawdles along the slow line at Euxton as it approaches a red signal. *John Sloane*



DB Cargo

Class 66 168 passes Heaton Norris Junction on December 19th, working 6E26 10:51 Knowsley to Wilton loaded waste.

Barry Longson

Class 66 652 is seen shunting 6M53 Swindon Store to Totons sidings at Swindon on December 12th.

Colin Pidgeon

Class 66 162 working 6C03 Northolt to Severnside, heads through Swindon on December 11th.

Colin Pidgeon



DB Cargo

On December 12th, Class 92015 passes through Crewe station on a test run from Crewe - Stafford. *Michael Lynam*

Class 66 102 leads 6M45 06:51 Dollands Moor to Daventry International Railfreight Reception Rfd passes through Northampton on December 30th. *Derek Elston*

On December 4th, Class 66 130 departs Tunstead Quarry sidings light engine for Peak Forest Up Sidings with Freightliner Class 66 551 and 66 613 in the background. *Michael Lynam*



DB Cargo

Class 66 143 and 66 003 sit at Cemex Quarry sidings waiting their departure slots with loaded aggregate, while Class 66 130 passes with a rake of empty hoppers from Warrington Arpley - Tunstead on December 4th.

Michael Lynam

Class 66 130 passes Peak Forest on December 4th with a rake of empty hoppers from Warrington Arpley - Tunstead. Class 66 186 and 66 004 are on the fuelling point.

Michael Lynam

Class 66 076 arrives at Peak Forest with four empty box wagons from Toton North Yard - Peak Forest Up Sidings on December 4th.

Michael Lynam



Class 66 148 'Maritime Intermodal Seven' working 6V06 11:59 Burton on Trent West Yard Maurice Hill to Acton T.C. heads through a murky Northampton on December 13th.
Derek Elston



DB Cargo UK opens new ETCS training facilities

DB Cargo UK has officially opened a new training centre of excellence at its HQ in Doncaster in preparation for the introduction of the new in-cab signalling system, ETCS – the European Train Control System. The new centre houses a Class 66 full cab simulator as well as six ultra light simulators, two instructor stations, training rooms, an agile breakout area, study rooms and kitchen.

Environmental sustainability has been at the heart of the planning, design and construction of the new facility, using products made from recycled materials wherever possible and the most energy efficient technologies.

DB Cargo UK's Chief Operating Officer Neil Ethell said the new facility would deliver critically important ETCS training to drivers, groundstaff, maintainers and engineers alike.

"Doncaster has a long and rich association with the rail industry, so it is entirely fitting that we chose our headquarters in the city to host one of our new training centres of excellence," he said.

"At DB Cargo UK we have more than 600 drivers, more than 400 groundstaff

and over 600 engineers, so it's fair to say that this centre, and the others we have developed with funding from Network Rail, will play a pivotal role in training a new generation of rail staff," he added.

As well as the centre in Doncaster, DB Cargo UK has also invested in a second facility at its depot in Wembley, North-West London, and a Mobile Training Facility (MTF) which will be deployed to key strategic locations across England, Scotland and Wales.

Ed Akers, Industry Partnership Director at the East Coast Digital Programme, said: "Digital in-cab signalling will enable rail freight to operate more efficiently and reliably, contribute to its growth and help reduce carbon emissions.

"The success of ECDP depends on drivers, groundstaff, maintainers and engineers all being equipped for 'next generation' railway operations. Facilities like this one in Doncaster are critical to enabling people to flourish and enjoy confidence in new ways of working. I thank our DB Cargo partners for all their efforts in making this happen."

The training facilities have been funded through the long-term deployment programme enabling the freight sector to be ready for ETCS implementation. It has been set up in partnership with East Coast Digital Programme which is pioneering the next generation railway in the UK.

About the East Coast Digital Programme:

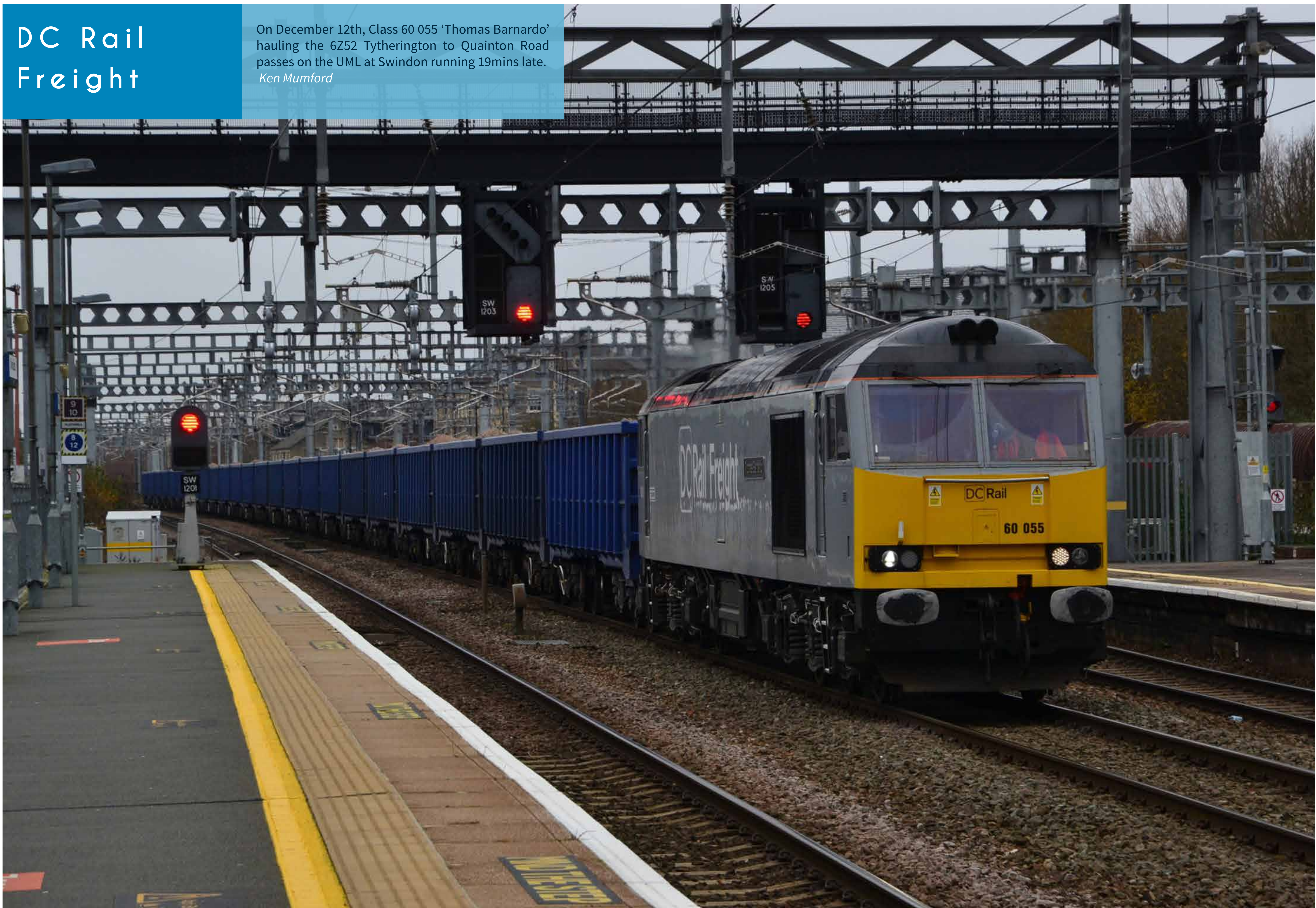
The East Coast Digital Programme will see the first introduction of ETCS to an intercity mainline in the United Kingdom and will provide the foundation for future expansion of digital signalling across the network.

In the first stage, digital signalling has been introduced on the Northern City Line, between Finsbury and Moorgate. It is then being progressively rolled out on the southern section of the East Coast Mainline between London King's Cross and the Stoke Tunnels, near Grantham.

It is expected that the first trains to operate on the East Coast Mainline using digital signalling technology will run in late 2025.

DC Rail Freight

On December 12th, Class 60 055 'Thomas Barnardo' hauling the 6Z52 Tytherington to Quainton Road passes on the UML at Swindon running 19mins late.
Ken Mumford



Direct Rail Services

On December 27th, Class 66 433 was routed via Stoke due to engineering works at Crewe and is seen approaching Cheadle Hulme in foggy conditions while working 4H43 the 09:40 Daventry to Trafford Park Tesco liner. *Barry Longson*



Direct Rail Services

On December 12th, Class 68 015, 68 005 and 57 308 are seen stabled on Gresty Bridge TMD.
Michael Lynam

'DRS London On A Mission' headboarded Class 68 018 'Vigilant' grows through Northampton homeward bound as 0Z10 09:41 Eastleigh Arlington (Zg) to Crewe Gresty Bridge on December 19th.
Derek Elston

Class 68 018 'Vigilant' hauls 57 309 'Pride of Crewe' through Northampton as 0Z09 08:47 Crewe Gresty Bridge (DRS) to Eastleigh Arlington (Zg) on December 18th.
Derek Elston



Class 66 613 and 66 551 are seen stabled in Tunstead Quarry Sidings on December 4th.

Michael Lynam

Class 66 621 eases the 6H50 13:14 Wembley Receptions 1-7 to Tunstead Sidings (Fhh) service through Northampton on December 19th.

Derek Elston

Class 66 502 'Basford Hall Centenary 2001' working 6R93 the 10:37 Willesden Euroterminal to New Bilton (Cemex) passes through Northampton on December 18th.

Derek Elston



Freightliner

▶ Class 66 415 'You Are Never Alone' approaches Northampton with 4L46 11:48 Lawley Street F.L.T. to London Gateway on December 19th.
Derek Elston

▶ Class 66 553 working 6B71 07:16 Tunstead Sidings (Fhh) to Northampton Castle Yard heads through Stafford on December 17th.
Derek Elston

▶ Class 90 009 and 90 014 'Over the Rainbow' with 90 040 and 90 008 dead in the consist of 4M88 09:32 Felixstowe North F.L.T. to Ditton (O'Connor) heads through Northampton on December 13th.
Derek Elston



Freightliner

▶ Class 66 617 runs through Woodgrange Park on November 21st at the head of a heavy Earles to Dagenham cement working. *John Sloane*

▶ Powerhaul liveried Class 66 504 passes through Woodgrange Park on November 21st at the head of an unidentified liner. *John Sloane*

▶ On November 21st, Class 66 533 whisks a London Gateway to Doncaster service past Stratford. *John Sloane*



Freightliner

▶ Class 66 951 approaches Northampton working 4L67 10:20 Trafford Park F.L.T. to Felixstowe North F.L.T. on December 19th. *Derek Elston*

▶ Class 66 589 approaches Stratford at the head of a Garston to Felixstowe liner on November 21st. *John Sloane*

▶ Class 90 007 and 90 043 pass Stratford on November 21st with a Felixstowe to Ditton working. *John Sloane*



Freightliner

Class 90 006 and 90 013 pass through Stratford station at the head of a Felixstowe to Trafford Park liner on November 21st. *John Sloane*

Class 66 953 heads a Chelmsford to Wembley working through Stratford on November 21st. *John Sloane*

Lowgeared Class 66 621 forges past Woodgrange Park with a West Thurrock to Tunstead service on November 21st. *John Sloane*







FREIGHTLINER SUPPORTS UK SUPPLY CHAINS WITH A COAL WAGON FLEET REPURPOSING PROJECT

On December 19th, Freightliner announced a partnership with WH Davis and Porterbrook to repurpose a residual coal fleet into aggregate box wagons, supporting the UK supply chain and driving sustainable innovation in the rail industry.

This partnership will see wagon conversions being carried out at the WH Davis factory in Mansfield, bringing new life and service to an otherwise redundant fleet.

The repurposed wagons will be funded by Porterbrook, a leading British rolling stock company, and leased to Freightliner. This collaboration aims to meet customer needs and enhance rail freight growth.

Andy Houghton, Managing Director – WH Davis Ltd, added, “This is a fantastic opportunity to demonstrate what can be achieved by giving redundant fleets a purpose for the next 30 plus years, it’s a truly sustainable option that also gives UK manufacturing a boost to enable the creation of UK jobs in the industry. I really can’t wait to see our latest box wagon design in traffic for Freightliner in 2025”

Mark Wyborn, Head of Freight at Porterbrook, said, “With freight volumes in the construction sector on the rise and expected to continue growing, we are proud to support the industry through our partnership with Freightliner and WH Davis.

This agreement highlights our commitment to investing in the long-term growth of rail freight while providing affordable, innovative, and sustainable rolling stock for the UK railway.”



Freightliner

On December 19th, Class 66 524 is seen working 6J34 11:16 Runcorn to Brindle Heath at Heaton Norris Junction. *Barry Longson*

Class 59 101 with the 7B12 Merehead to Wootton Bassett is seen running wrong road through Swindon on December 12th. *Colin Pidgeon*

On December 11th, Class 59 204 heads through Swindon hauling 6C31 Theale to Whatley. *Colin Pidgeon*



Freightliner

▶ Class 66 547 passes through Altrincham on December 5th, with a bin train from Bredbury RTS - Runcorn Folly Lane. *Michael Lynam*

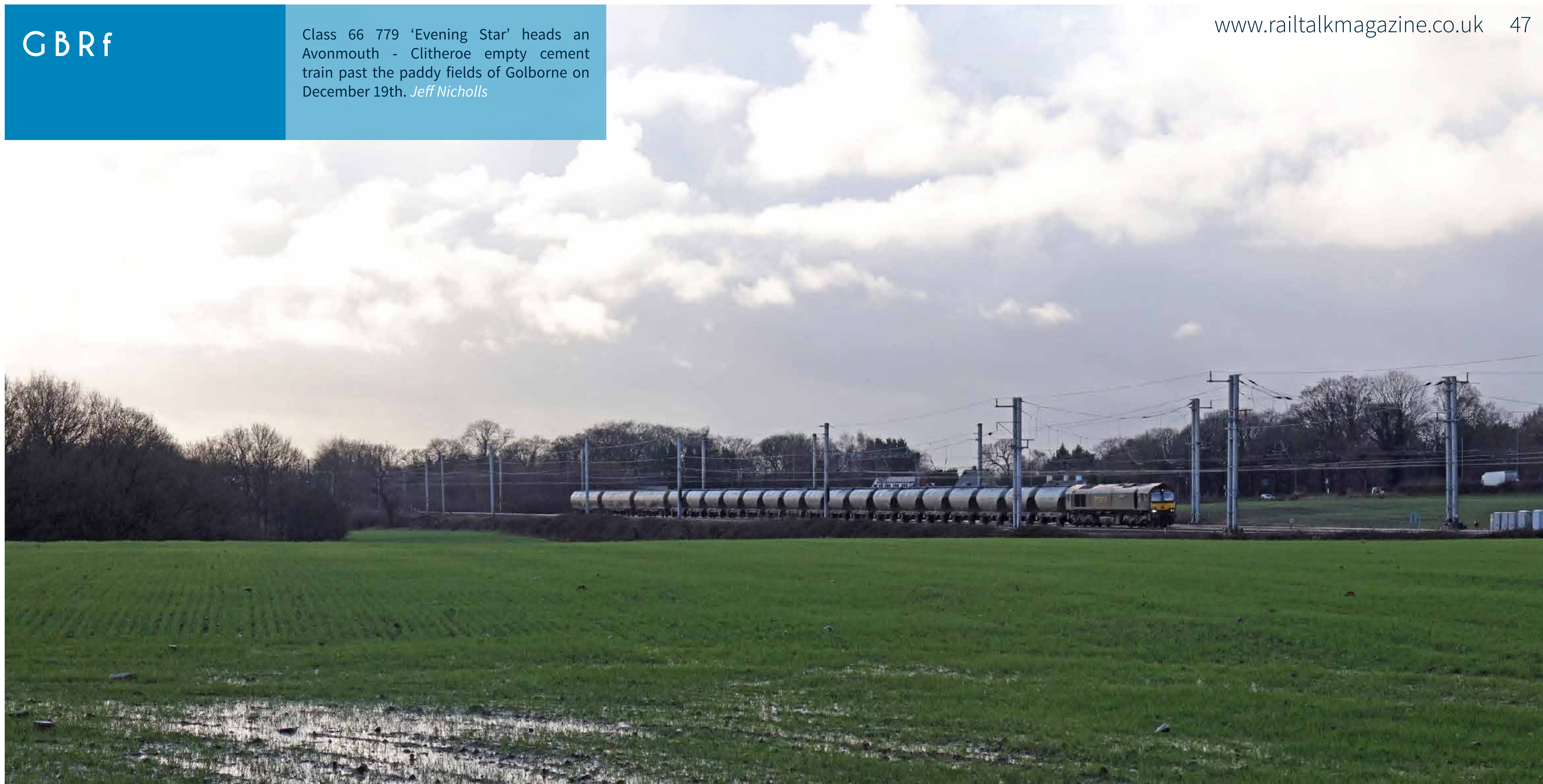
▶ Class 66 610 with the 6242 Tytherington to Appleford passes through Swindon on December 18th. *Colin Pidgeon*

▶ On December 5th, Class 66 588 passes through Navigation Road station with a bin train from Runcorn Folly Lane - Brindle Heath RTS. *Michael Lynam*









JOHN SMITH AWARDED OBE IN THE NEW YEAR HONOURS LIST

John Smith, Chief Executive Officer of GB Railfreight (GBRf), has been made an OBE in the King's New Year Honours List for services to the rail freight industry.

John is among the list of people who the King has honoured for the role he has played throughout a lifetime dedicated to the railway. John has driven the growth of GBRf, one of the country's leading rail freight providers, since it was formed in 1999.

The business has played a critical role in supporting the UK's supply chains and driving employment opportunities across the country.

In addition to his role as Chief Executive Officer of GB Railfreight, John is a trustee of the Settle and Carlisle Railway Trust and has been at the forefront of GBRf raising over £1m for charitable causes including Alzheimer's Society, Prostate Cancer UK, Headway and current partner, Great Ormond Street Hospital Charity.

John began his career in the railway in 1977 as a 16-year-old Technician Apprentice at British Rail before working at the carriage works in York.

He went on to work in management roles at Anglia Railways, where he became Deputy Managing Director, before forming GBRf in 1999. He is a member of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers and a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport.

On hearing of his award, John said: "I am hugely surprised, honoured and thrilled to be recognised in the New Year Honours. It's something I could never have considered when I began my career on the railway.

This award is a recognition of the efforts of everyone who has worked at GB Railfreight over the last 25 years to whom I am hugely grateful."

▶ Class 66 723 approaches Great Rocks with a rake of empty hoppers from Washwood Heath - Tunstead sidings on December 4th.

Michael Lynam

▶ Class 66 756 'Royal Corps of Signals' works a lightly laden 4M22 10:26 Felixstowe South GBRf to Trafford Park Euro Terminal GBRf service, pictured at Northampton on December 19th.

Derek Elston

▶ Class 66 306 'SCS Logistics' working 6G92, the 08:28 Hindlow GBRf to Small Heath Lafarge GBRf heads through Stafford on December 17th.

Derek Elston



Normally the building sector shuts down over Christmas, but on December 27th, Class 66 307 was seen taking the Stoke line at Cheadle Hulme in charge of 6G92 08:28 Hindlow to Small Heath loaded stone.
Barry Longson



GB RAILFREIGHT'S NEW LOW-EMISSION SHUNTERS BEGIN SERVICE AT CELSA STEEL UK

GB Railfreight has introduced three new Zephir 'LOK 16.300' depot shunters into service at CELSA Steel UK in Cardiff.

The shunters, which are owned by Porterbrook, are expected to reduce emissions by c.40% and will be used to move steel billets from an electric arc furnace to CELSA's rolling mills where it will be used to make metal sections, bar and rods.

These product are then transported to sites across the country where they are used in construction and infrastructure projects.

GB Railfreight and CELSA Steel UK have decided to open a series of competitions to name the three vehicles, which will be launching early next year.

John Smith, Chief Executive of GB Railfreight, said: "It's great to see these clean, green new shunters enter service at CELSA Steel UK. They're another example of how the rail freight sector plays a critical role in decarbonising the UK's supply chains.

"I'm looking forward to seeing the nominated names for the new shunter locomotives – we're hopeful we can use this to raise some money for charity and make people smile."

Gabriella Nizam, Head of Sustainability & Public Affairs at CELSA Steel UK, said: "CELSA Steel UK proudly welcomes GB Railfreight's low-emission shunters, contributing to a greener supply chain. We're excited about the naming competitions for these shunters, engaging our charity partners and the public, all while supporting worthy causes."

Mark Wyborn, Head of Freight and Route Services at Porterbrook, said: "Providing sustainable assets for depot operations is an important step in reaching the UK's net zero target so it's fantastic to see these Zephir shunters begin operating at CELSA Steel UK. We look forward to working alongside our partners to roll out more affordable, innovative and sustainable rolling stock for the industry."



▶ An empty Biomass from Drax to Liverpool passes Highfeld Moss crossing on the Chat Moss route with Class 66 772 in charge on December 4th. *Jeff Nicholls*

▶ Class 66 758 hauling the 6M32 Southampton to Hams Hall intermodal passes Bentley crossing on December 20th. *John Alsop*

▶ Class 66 758 'The Pavior' working 4M16 00:36 Southampton Western Docks to Ditton (O'Connor) heads through Stafford on December 17th. *Derek Elston*





GB RAILFREIGHT AGREES EXTENSION WITH AGGREGATE INDUSTRIES

GB Railfreight (GBRf) and Aggregate Industries have agreed a four year contract extension to move aggregate materials from source points at Bardon Hill and the Isle of Grain enabling the development of some of the UK's biggest infrastructure projects.

The relationship between GBRf and Aggregate Industries has been forged over the past ten years, with a shared ambition to collaborate, drive growth and provide a best-in-class service. The partnership will see GBRf move in excess of five million tonnes of aggregate materials over the lifetime of the contract. These services will reduce the carbon footprint of the UK's supply chains, helping the government hit its 2050 net zero obligations with ambitions to increase goods moved by rail freight by 75% by 2050. The benefits of moving goods by rail are well known, with an aggregate service removing up to 100 long-distance HGV moments from our congested roads and at the same time reducing emissions by 76%.

In total, across all its aggregate services, GBRf moves over five million tonnes of aggregates and sand, in addition to 600,000 tonnes of cement every year. These materials are critical in supplying the construction industry and helping the Government achieve its target of building 1.5m homes over the next five years.

John Smith, Chief Executive Officer – GB Railfreight, said; "I am delighted that Aggregate Industries have committed to extending our partnership. This is a long-standing relationship which we hope will continue for many years, reducing the carbon footprint of moving construction materials essential for building homes across the country in addition some of the UK's biggest infrastructure projects."

Simon Blake, General Manager (Rail) – Aggregate Industries, said; "Extending our partnership with GB Railfreight recognises the close working relationship

forged between the two companies and the importance of shared goals. We value the professionalism, enthusiasm and innovation demonstrated daily by the staff of GB Railfreight in delivering our services. Together with GB Railfreight, Aggregate Industries are committed to providing excellence in customer service and making sustainable construction a reality."

Photo: Class 66 711 in Aggregate Industries livery passes Lewes. ©Toby Radziszewski



▶ Looking absolutely disgraceful after its RHTT duties, Class 69 012 drifts round the back of Doncaster station on December 11th working 0N71 Down Decoy - Tyne Yard. *Steve Thompson*

▶ Class 57 303 working 5Q87 Long Marston to Eastleigh heads through Swindon on December 12th, hauling SWR unit Class 701 018. *Colin Pidgeon*

▶ Class 66 701 passes Bentley crossing, Dorridge working 6M26 Southampton to Mountsorrel on December 20th. *John Alsop*





NEW CLASS 99 LOCOMOTIVES TO RUN EXCLUSIVELY ON RENEWABLE POWER AND ELECTRICITY

GB Railfreight (GBRf), one of the UK's leading transporters of consumer and business goods has announced that its latest locomotive, the Class 99, will operate solely on electricity or renewable fuels such as HVO (Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil). The Class 99s are set to enter service in late 2025, marking a major milestone in sustainable rail freight transport.

The Class 99 will be the first heavy-haul freight locomotive capable of transporting significant volumes at mainline speeds on both electrified and non-electrified sections of the UK rail network. Rail freight is already the least carbon intensive solution for UK supply chains. The new locomotives will significantly reduce emissions by at least 58%. Exclusively available to GBRf customers, the Class 99 offers an innovative solution for sustainable

freight movement across the UK.

John Smith, Chief Executive Officer at GB Railfreight, said: "With the Class 99s running exclusively on HVO on non-electrified lines, we can now provide our customers with a fully decarbonised solution for freight transport. This breakthrough is pivotal to our decarbonisation strategy and will help reduce the emissions associated with delivering goods to homes and businesses across the country. This marks the next step on our journey to lead the rail freight sector towards a greener future."



On November 21st, Class 66 724 heads a lengthy intermodal service heading for Wakefield through Woodgrange Park. *John Sloane*

Class 66 716 runs into Barking with a Rotherham to London Gateway service on November 21st. *John Sloane*

Class 66 779 'Evening Star' displays its now somewhat scruffy condition as it runs past Coppull on December 6th at the head of a Gloucester to Clitheroe empty cement working. *John Sloane*



▶ Class 66 795 creeps around Carpenters Road Curve with a working from Bow Depot to Tonbridge West Yard on November 21st.

John Sloane

▶ Class 66 759 passes London Overground's Class 710 270 as it runs into Woodgrange Park with a service to Hams Hall on November 21st.

John Sloane

▶ Class 66 708 'Glory to Ukraine' speeds through Euxton at the head of the 4S57 working from Hams Hall to Mossend on December 10th.

John Sloane



▶ In fading light on December 19th, Class 66 742 slows to cross Heaton Norris Junction while working 4H88 08:46 Hams Hall to Hindlow.
Barry Longson

▶ Class 47 727 'Edinburgh Castle' on 5Q87 Eastleigh TRSMD to Long Marston with South Western Railway's Class 701 049 heads through Swindon on January 2nd. *Colin Pidgeon*

▶ Class 66 759 rolls down Miles Platting Bank and through Manchester Victoria, working 6M36 09:54 Drax to Liverpool Docks on an overcast December 11th. *Barry Longson*



Grand Central

One of the Grand Central acquisitions from the West Coast, Class 221 142 is seen rather curiously arriving in platform 3b on 1D71 London King's Cross - Bradford Int. service. *Steve Thompson*



Greater Anglia

▶ Class 745 002 departs Stratford with the 09:00 from Norwich to London Liverpool St. on November 21st. *John Sloane*

▶ Class 745 010 approaches Stratford with the 10:30 from London Liverpool St. to Norwich on November 21st. *John Sloane*

▶ Class 720 572 passes an Elizabeth line train as it departs Stratford for London Liverpool St. on November 21st. *John Sloane*



Greater Anglia

Class 720 584 stands at Stratford with a service to Bishops Stortford on November 21st.

John Sloane

On November 21st, Class 720 547 approaches Stratford with a Southend service. *John Sloane*

Class 720 565 departs Stratford on November 21st with a service from Southend to London Liverpool St. *John Sloane*



Great Western Railway

Showing some of its internal workings, Class 80029 heads across Malvern Common towards Great Malvern station to begin a service to London Paddington on December 19th.

Neil Pugh

Class 802 106 working 1A16 Bristol (Temple Meads) to London Paddington service is seen at Swindon on December 19th. The first three coaches at the London end, advertising Paddington Bear's 3rd film 'Paddington in Peru'. *Ken Mumford*



Great Western Railway

Class 166 204 'Norman Topsom MBE' awaits departure from platform 3 with 2M28 Swindon to Westbury on December 20th. Who is Norman Topsom MBE? This train was named after him in 2010 when he retired as stationmaster of Twyford station west of Reading. *Ken Mumford*



Great Western Railway

Class 800 007 working 1G19 London Paddington to Cheltenham Spa passes Purton (Collins Lane) at dusk on December 14th. *Ken Mumford*



Great Western Railway

The 'Shania Train' working 1A15 Weston-Super-Mare to London Paddington calls at Swindon on December 19th. Broadcaster Nick Grimshaw unveiled GWR's 'Shania Train' promoting travel on its services to the 2024 summer's concerts by Queen of Country Pop, Shania Twain. Shania performed at the Glastonbury Festival, Chepstow Racecourse and BST Hyde Park. When the broadcaster, known as 'Grimmy', found out that a Swiss train had been named 'Shania Train', he suggested pinching the idea for a British train running to Castle Cary, the station local to Glastonbury. *Ken Mumford*





Great Western Railway

▶ On January 7th, Class 150 249 approaches St. Dennis Junction whilst operating 2N09 15:10 Newquay - Par. *Barry Beeston*

▶ Power car No. 43187 arrives into Bodmin Parkway on December 10th with 2C36 18:30 Plymouth - Penzance with 43189 on the rear. The set was covering for a DMU failure earlier in the day. *Barry Beeston*

▶ On December 22nd, power car No. 43092 powers through Trelieigh operating 1Z73 15:37 Penzance - Plymouth with 43198 on the rear. The set was covering for an XC unit between Plymouth and Penzance. *Barry Beeston*



Great Western Railway

▶ On January 3rd, power car No. 43189 waits departure time from Saltash with 2P08 08:50 Penzance - Plymouth with 43187 on the rear.
Barry Beeston

▶ Power cars Nos. 43189 and 43187 sit waiting time at Bodmin Parkway with 2P27 18:50 Penzance - Plymouth on December 24th.
Barry Beeston

▶ On December 12th, power cars Nos. 43092 and 43156 sit waiting time at Bodmin Parkway with 2E26 18:15 Penzance - Exeter St. Davids.
Barry Beeston



Great Western Railway

Power car No. 43188 passes over Tregeagle Viaduct while operating 2P15 12:50 Penzance - Plymouth with 43198 on the rear on January 7th. *Barry Beeston*



Great Western Railway

On December 8th, Class 150 207 and 150 265 sit in Chapel Siding. The pair were supposed to work 5N09 to Plymouth but ended up working 2E30 20:25 Penzance - Exeter St. Davids starting at Par due to the adverse weather on the day.

Barry Beeston

On December 8th, power car No. 43093 is sat awaiting departure with 5Z77 15:45 Par - Plymouth with 43097 on the rear. The set had spent the night in Par station due to the weather closing the line at Bodmin Parkway.

Barry Beeston

On December 10th, power cars Nos. 43042 and 43098 are sat waiting time at Bodmin Parkway with 2P27 18:50 Penzance - Plymouth.

Barry Beeston



L.N.E.R.

On December 11th, seen arriving at Doncaster is Class 91 106 leading 1D10 London King's Cross - Leeds service. *Steve Thompson*

Class 91 127 is seen propelling 1Y84 York - London King's Cross service away from its Doncaster stop on December 11th. *Steve Thompson*

A dull old morning on December 11th greeted Class 91 110 as it arrived at Doncaster station at the head of 1D09 London King's Cross - Leeds service. *Steve Thompson*



LNER Funds New Van For FareShare Yorkshire

LNER has provided a new van to FareShare Yorkshire, a charity which redistributes surplus food to foodbanks and community groups.

Every week, FareShare Yorkshire receives and redistributes enough food to feed up to 42,000 people across the region.

The new van, funded by LNER's Customer and Community Investment Fund, has been provided to their distribution centre in central Leeds and will enable the charity to provide good quality, nutritious food to around 40 more organisations, including school breakfast clubs, older people's lunch clubs, homeless shelters, and community cafes in the West Yorkshire area.

In the past year alone, the charity has prevented over 2,000 tonnes of good food from being wasted and enabled it to be turned into 5 million meals. Volunteer drivers currently deliver food to Leeds, Bradford, York, Harrogate, Kirklees, Ryedale, Keighley and Harrogate from the central-Leeds base. The new van will mean the charity can add

an extra eight deliveries per day to their schedule, plus add Selby into the locations they already provide food.

The charity not only receives and distributes fresh, chilled, frozen and ambient food, they also offer food hygiene and preparation training through their FullCrumb Kitchen scheme. The Kitchen provides the opportunity to retrain and gain valuable skills, supporting employment opportunities, as well as offering 'how-to' classes for their volunteer cooks, who are sometimes faced with an ingredient they may not be familiar with.

The FullCrumb Kitchen YouTube channel also shares inventive recipes and cooking tips which make the most out of surplus items and there's also plans to publish a cookbook full of nutritious recipes in the new year.

FareShare Yorkshire's Deputy CEO Jonathan Williams, said: "The new van provided by LNER has given us a valuable lifeline, enabling us to distribute more quality food

to those who need it. We can now make extra runs to our community groups and amazing volunteer cooks, meaning we can enable an extra 12,000 meals per week at full capacity. We know there are many people in need, and the van means we can reach more of them. We're grateful to the LNER Customer and Community Investment Fund for the vital contribution they have made."

LNER Customer and Community Manager, Rachael Wilson, said: "FareShare Yorkshire is a remarkable charity which makes a profound difference in people's lives. The volume of food they receive and manage at their distribution centre is astonishing. LNER is incredibly proud to support them in the



delivery of their vital service and we hope that the new van enables them to provide more meals and feed more people."

FareShare Yorkshire are looking for

volunteers to help them get surplus food to those who need it. More information is available on their website www.fareshareyorkshire.org

LNER Welcomes Transformational Timetable Bringing More Services and Faster Journeys

LNER is welcoming the announcement of a transformational industry timetable for its East Coast route. The new timetable will see extra services between Newcastle-upon-Tyne and London King's Cross, as well as faster journey times between Edinburgh and London, cutting travel time between the two capitals to close to four hours.

Developed through collaboration between Network Rail, train operators and the Department for Transport, the ambitious timetable will introduce an extra 16,000 seats per day on LNER services – around six million seats per year.

In particular, the transformational timetable will see LNER services increase from two trains to three trains

per hour between Newcastle and London King's Cross. As a result, from December 2025 there will be 37 additional LNER services each weekday and more at the weekend too.

LNER hopes faster journeys between Edinburgh and London of around four-hours – coupled with increased public appetite to cut climate emissions – could see rail's share of the travel market between the capital cities rise to 60 per cent.

The benefit will also be felt by the UK economy, with independent research showing the December 2025 uplift will mean at least an additional £108 million per year, on top of the £3.11 billion that investment and spending on LNER services already generates for the

UK economy.

The rail industry will also benefit by an estimated £60 million per year because of the introduction of the timetable. This additional revenue will enable further enhancements on the East Coast route to support the industry's continued growth.

The December 2025 timetable builds on the additional services between Bradford Forster Square and London King's Cross, planned for May 2025, during the year Bradford will be UK City of Culture. LNER weekday and Saturday services will increase from two to seven from May 2025. Sunday services will double from one to two in each direction, with further future enhancements planned.

David Horne, Managing Director at LNER, said: "This transformational timetable will guarantee thousands of extra seats each day on the East Coast route, cutting journey times and providing much needed capacity.

"With this new timetable, we'll be able to serve many destinations more regularly and contribute at least an additional £108 million per year of economic value to the UK, while supporting greener and more sustainable journeys.

"We're delighted to be kick-starting the transformation of our timetable by significantly increasing services to Bradford from May 2025, in what will be a very special year for the city and wider area."

L.N.E.R.

▶ Class 91 110 'Battle of Britain Memorial Flight' propels 1A26 11:15 to London King's Cross away from Leeds on December 14th. *Derek Elston*

▶ Class 91 127 propels 1A30 12:45 to London King's Cross as it sets out on the journey from Leeds on December 14th. *Derek Elston*

▶ On December 14th, Class 91 101 'Flying Scotsman' propels 1A28 11:45 to London King's Cross as it sets out on the journey from Leeds. *Derek Elston*



DVT No. 82222 stands at Leeds on December 14th, with 1A26 11:15 to London King's Cross which, on departure, will be propelled by Class 91 110 'Battle of Britain Memorial Flight'. *Derek Elston*



L.N.E.R.

Class 800 112 races towards Alexandra Palace with the 15:00 from London King's Cross to Stirling on November 20th. *John Sloane*



On December 7th, in the midst of Storm Darragh, 3J51 RHTT from York Works, having travelled via Scarborough and Beverley, is seen passing through Selby en route to Hatfield & Stainforth, where it will reverse and retrace its steps. Class 37 116 was leading with 37 254 on the rear.
Steve Thompson



A filthy Class 66 764 arrives at Barking with a RHTT working to Broxbourne on November 21st with 66 797 on the rear. *John Sloane*



Network Rail

▶ Power cars Nos. 43274 and 43303 working 1Q23 Bristol (Kingsland Road) to Derby R.T.C. call at Swindon on December 19th. *Colin Pidgeon*

▶ Power cars Nos. 43277 and 43257 top'n'tail test train 1Q47 the 10:54 Derby R.T.C.(Network Rail) to Carlisle at Stafford passing Class 37 409 'Loch Awe' on December 17th. *Derek Elston*

▶ On December 18th, power cars Nos. 43274 and 43303 are seen at Swindon working 1Q22 Derby R.T.C. to Bristol (Kingsland Road). *Colin Pidgeon*



Rail Adventure

▶ On December 12th, the 5Q44 Plymouth (Laira Depot) to Mid-Norfolk Railway consisting of Rail Adventure power car No. 43468, GWR power cars Nos. 43160 and 43162, former Caledonian Sleeper Mk3 SLEPs Nos. 10551 and 10553 with Rail Adventure power car No. 43480 bringing up the rear, are seen at Swindon. *Ken Mumford*

▼ On December 12th, the 5Q44 Plymouth (Laira Depot) to Mid-Norfolk Railway consisting of Rail Adventure power car No. 43468, GWR power cars Nos. 43160 and 43162, former Caledonian Sleeper Mk3 SLEPs Nos. 10551 and 10553 with Rail Adventure power car No. 43480 bringing up the rear, are seen at Swindon. *Colin Pidgeon*



Rail Operations Group/Europhoenix

On December 11th, Class 37 884 on 5Q76 Wolverton Centre Sidings to Newport Docks heads through Swindon hauling former Greater Anglia Class 321 325 and 321 310.

Colin Pidgeon

Class 37 884 on 5Q76 Wolverton Centre Sidings to Newport Docks with Class 321 303 and 321 304 heads through Swindon on December 18th.

Colin Pidgeon

Class 37 884 on 5Q76 Wolverton Centre Sidings to Newport Docks with Class 321 303 and 321 304 heads through Swindon on December 18th.

Colin Pidgeon



Rail Operations Group/Europhoenix

▶ Class 37 800 passes Kempsey with 5Q78 05:54 Birkenhead North EMUD - Newport Docks (Sims Group) on December 2nd. *Keith Davies*

▶ Class 37 901 'Mirrlees Pioneer' working as 5H77 Northampton Up T.C. Sidings to Northampton E.M.D eases into Northampton station as it moves flood damaged Class 350 377 on December 16th. *Derek Elston*

▶ Class 37 611 'Denise' hauls 730 203 through Northampton working 5Q58 11:58 Wembley InterCity Depot to Old Dalby on December 9th. *Derek Elston*



TransPennine Express

▶ Class 802 218 crosses Stephenson's Sankey Viaduct with 9E13 Liverpool Lime Street to Newcastle service on January 2nd. *Brian Dobbs*

▶ Class 185 109 and 185 133 were used to work the 10:29 Cleethorpes to Liverpool Lime Street on December 19th and are seen on the slow line at Heaton Norris Junction, Stockport. *Barry Longson*

▶ The 20:19 Liverpool Lime Street - Cleethorpes prepares to depart Warrington Central on the evening of December 19th. *Jeff Nicholls*





Transport for Wales

On December 19th, Class 67 029 propels the 10:59 Cardiff to Manchester Piccadilly service past Heaton Norris Junction signal box. *Barry Longson*



Transport for Wales

Class 197 125 heads southbound at Winwick with 1D38
Manchester to Llandudno service on January 2nd.

Brian Dobbs



Transport for Wales

On December 24th. Class 67 014 passes Kempsey with 1W55 08:49 Cardiff Central - Manchester Piccadilly service. *Keith Davies*

Class 197 115 arrives into Crewe with 1V44 the 13:30 Manchester Piccadilly to Pembroke Dock service on December 17th. *Derek Elston*

Class 197 103 stands at Llandudno on December 16th waiting its departure time with a service to Manchester. *Richard Hargreaves*



Units: DMUs and EMUs

On a foggy December 27th, ex West Mids Class 323 242 slows for its booked stop at Cheadle Hulme while working the 11:46 Manchester Piccadilly to Stoke service.
Barry Longson



Units: DMUs and EMUs

On December 30th, West Midlands' Class 730 002 calls at Smethwick Galton Bridge with a service to Birmingham and Walsall.

Richard Hargreaves

Northern's Class 333 010 stands at Leeds on December 14th with 2V22 the 10:33 to Ilkley.

Derek Elston

Marston Vale line Class 150 139 has just passed a misty Parkside Junction, Newton le Willows, with a BletchleyTMD - Newton Heath TMD ECS working on December 4th. *Jeff Nicholls*



Units: DMUs and EMUs

TfL Class 378 148 approaches Dalston West Junction with a train from Highbury and Islington to Crystal Palace on November 21st.
John Sloane

TfL Class 710 376 is unusually seen departing Stratford on a North London line service on November 21st.
John Sloane

On November 21st, TfL Class 378 216 departs Stratford with a service to Willesden.
John Sloane



Units: DMUs and EMUs

TfL Class 710 263 comes off the 'Goblin' route from Gospel Oak and approaches Woodgrange Park with a service to Barking Riverside on November 21st. *John Sloane*

C2C Class 357 320 stands at Barking with the 13.10 service from Grays to London Fenchurch St. on November 21st. *John Sloane*

C2C units Nos. 357 025, 357 003 and 357 203 are seen parked at the rear of West Ham depot on November 21st. *John Sloane*



Units: DMUs and EMUs

TfL Class 710 270 arrives at Woodgrange Park with a service from Gospel Oak to Barking Riverside on November 21st. *John Sloane*

Thameslink's Class 700 107 calls at Farringdon with a Brighton to Bedford service on November 21st. *John Sloane*

Elizabeth line Class 345 063 speeds through Manor Park station with a working to Shenfield on November 21st. *John Sloane*



Units: DMUs and EMUs

Class 700 026 arrives at Farringdon with a southbound Thameslink service on November 21st. *John Sloane*

Northern Bi-mode Class 769 450 approaches Crow Nest Junction with a Wigan to Stalybridge service on December 2nd. *John Sloane*

Northern's Class 331 104 passes Bradley with a service from Blackpool North to Liverpool Lime St. on December 13th. *John Sloane*



Units: DMUs and EMUs

▶ A busy scene at Manchester Victoria on December 11th. Northern's Class 156 401 is ready to depart with the 13:31 to Rochdale, while TPE Class 185 141 is on a service from Saltburn to Manchester Airport. *Barry Longson*

▶ London NorthWestern's Class 350 237 stands at Northampton with 350 266 working 1Y34 the 11:06 Birmingham New Street to London Euston on December 18th. *Derek Elston*

▶ Northern's Class 333 015 arrives into Leeds with 2V23 10:40 from Ilkley on December 14th. *Derek Elston*



Units: DMUs and EMUs

On December 11th, Northern's Class 156 404 sits in platform 6 at Manchester Victoria awaiting to work the 12:18 Blackburn to Rochdale service.
Barry Longson

Northern's Class 150 138 arrives at Altrincham working a Chester - Manchester Piccadilly service via Stockport on December 5th.
Michael Lynam

The days testing done, LNW Class 730 234 and 730 209 pass Northampton running as 2Q94 the 14:01 Crewe to Wembley InterCity Depot on December 19th.
Derek Elston



Units: DMUs and EMUs

West Midlands' Class 196 108 looms out of the mist at Malvern Wells on a Birmingham to Hereford service on December 27th. *Neil Pugh*



Units: DMUs and EMUs

▶ Giving some variety to the local scene livery wise, ex West Midlands unit Class 323 206 awaits its next duty at Manchester Piccadilly on December 11th. *Barry Longson*

▶ Now transferred to Northern, former West Midlands' Class 323 219 departs Crewe on December 17th working 2A48 the 14:16 Crewe to Manchester Piccadilly service. *Derek Elston*

▶ Bound for Wolverton Works and a refresh Northern's Class 150 004 passes Northampton as 5H70 10:32 Neville Hill T.&R.S.M.D. to Wolverton Centre Sidings on December 19th. *Derek Elston*



Units: DMUs and EMUs

Merseyrail's Class 777 146, stands at Fazakerley in the pouring rain, with the 18:11 Headbolt Lane to Liverpool Central service, on December 4th. Photo taken under the footbridge for shelter! *Paul Senior*



Scotrail

▶ Class 156 513 and 156 511 ease through Crewe en route to Wolverton for refurb as 5H70, the 09:02 Corkerhill C.S.M.D. to Wolverton Centre Sidings on December 17th. *Derek Elston*

▼ Homeward bound! ScotRail's Class 156 467 passing through Northampton after overhaul at Wolverton Works running as 5S07 10:05 Wolverton Centre Sidings to Corkerhill C.S.M.D. on December 16th. *Derek Elston*



Manchester Metrolink

Trams Nos. 3004 and 3010 alongside 3056 are seen at the Altrincham terminus working services to Piccadilly and Bury on December 5th. *Michael Lynam*

Tram No. 3010 is seen at Navigation Road en route to Altrincham on December 5th. *Michael Lynam*

Metrolink drivers are now warned of wild animals (Deer) on the tracks on departure from Radcliffe heading for Manchester. Trams Nos. 3095 and 3090 are seen departing Radcliffe with a service to Piccadilly on December 5th. *Michael Lynam*



Manchester Metrolink

On December 12th Metrolink trams pass Manchester Central Exhibition Centre en route to the St. Peters Square stop, as seen from The Bridge Water Hall auditorium. *Michael Lynam*



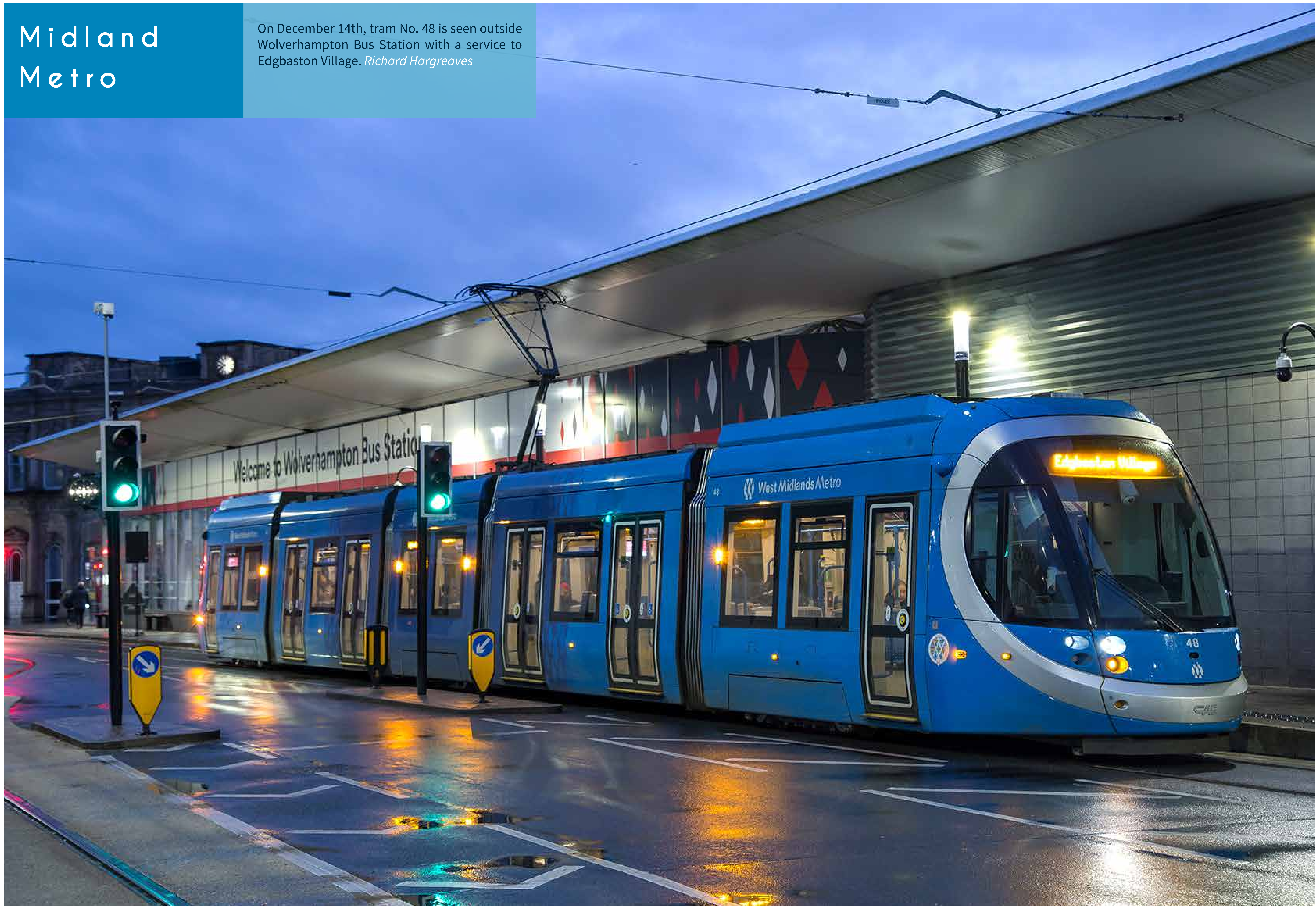
Midland Metro

On December 14th, tram No. 33 calls at Pipers Row with a service to Wolverhampton Station.
Richard Hargreaves



Midland Metro

On December 14th, tram No. 48 is seen outside
Wolverhampton Bus Station with a service to
Edgbaston Village. *Richard Hargreaves*



Nottingham Trams (NET)

On December 20th, NET tram No. 205 'Lord Byron' approaches the Lace Market stop.

Derek Elston



Nottingham Trams (NET)

On December 20th, NET tram No. 212 'William Booth' passes the Theatre Royal. *Derek Elston*



Docklands Light Railway

DLR sets 84 and 22 stand at Stratford station on
November 21st. *John Sloane*



Going Underground

A Hammersmith and City line service to Hammersmith heads out of Barking on November 21st. *John Sloane*



Going Underground

Unit No. 21443 is working a District Line service to Ealing Broadway as it calls at Barking on November 21st. *John Sloane*



In the fading light of December 8th, Class 37 116 leads 37 254 past Oakenshaw Junction heading for a reversal at Wakefield Westgate with 3J51, the 10:00 York Thrall Europa to York Thrall Europa rail head treatment train. *Tim Saunders*



Greater Anglia improves reliability at East London depot

Greater Anglia has improved reliability at one of its depots by increasing the flexibility of its overhead power lines.

Orient Way depot is located in East London, between Stratford and Lea Bridge, and is a critical facility with its twelve sidings, allowing for the parking and cleaning of trains around the clock.

The depot has a carriage washing machine, which cleans the trains when they exit the sidings and enter into passenger service.

Before November 2024, if the carriage washing machine needed to be switched off for any reason, such as maintenance, the whole depot sidings' power lines also needed to be switched off, meaning no trains could move.

A switch has now been fitted, meaning the machine's power line can be isolated independently from the rest of the depot when required. This additional flexibility will reduce the potential for delays to happen during any planned maintenance or if unexpected issues occur.

Simone Bailey, Asset Management Director at Greater Anglia, said: "This is a small but significant piece of work that means the resilience of our busy Orient Way depot has been improved. It means the reliability and punctuality of our train service can remain high for our customers across the network."

Fares Advice with RailUK

This month more questions and answers on the complex ticketing system of Britain's Railways.

Overdistance Excess Questions

Q: From what I understand, overdistance is not meant to be something the public use often and is completely on the discretion of each ticket office/guard, unlike change of route excesses.

For the purpose of hypothetically obtaining these excesses, in the case that the seller says no and you aren't at the last opportunity to buy, the hypothetical solution is to shop around and ask other sellers. I've had a few random questions in my head concerning overdistances:

1. What should happen if the new destination has a different route value? E.g. original ticket "via Banbury", new ticket "via High Wycombe"?
2. If the original ticket is an anytime can you excess to the off-peak for the new destination?
3. Example: Birmingham to Shrewsbury you can buy an Anytime Return but for Birmingham to Welshpool there is only an Off-Peak Return. Is an overdistance excess allowed?
4. Suppose you have a Y shaped network with stations A, B, C as the mainline and then a branch line from B to D. Suppose you hold a ticket A to B. Now, suppose you want to buy two over distance tickets, one to cover travel to C and another to cover travel to D. Motivation: this may be cheaper than buying a return, say A to C and buying a return B to D. (Example intended journey ABCBDBA). Is this even allowed or legal?

A: 1. Change of route and destination excess. Fairly easy

2. Yes. Although, If for example, you are excessing the return portion of a anytime ticket, and the outward journey was made during peak hours when at the only time would have been the only valid ticket, then in access to an off-peak ticket would be inappropriate.

3. Yes

4. I'm struggling to picture this one. However note, You can only excess to another ticket, and if there is no ticket that allows what you propose you cannot excess to it. Overdistance excesses are something which there is no official right to purchase and may be difficult,

if not impossible, to obtain so shopping around is no guarantee of success. If the journey has not been commenced the appropriate approach is to refund the unused ticket and purchase the one you actually want.

Compensation for partially cancelled journey

Q: I have an advanced single from station A to C, changing at station B. The train from station A to B has been cancelled, so I'm eligible to get the next train from A to B and therefore a later train from B to C.

However, I really need to get to station C at the original time, so instead of taking a later train from A to B, I'm going to get a taxi/lift and catch the original train from B to C. My cancelled train from A to B was the first train of the day, so I couldn't have gotten earlier one.

Am I due any compensation and if so, how do I claim for it?

A: *I don't think you're explicitly due any compensation. However, on occasions when this has happened to me, I've written to the TOC explained simply what's happened and the extra costs I've incurred as a result and they've paid at least something towards those costs.*

For instance once I had a train which turned around halfway due to late running so I drove to an intermediate station to catch it from the new starting point. This meant I had incurred a parking charge at the intermediate station (as otherwise I would have walked to the station). I wrote to the TOC explaining that technically I was not delayed so not due Delay Repay but was out of pocket so could they pay for the parking charge, they paid out with no quibble.

Ticket Advice for All

Advice on rail ticketing is available on railforums.co.uk in the 'Fares, Tickets & Routeing' section. We believe this to be the best source of UK rail fares advice available anywhere, as we have a team of people who are familiar with the complex rail fares system who can help you. Never pay over the odds again, and ask us if you need help! See you there!

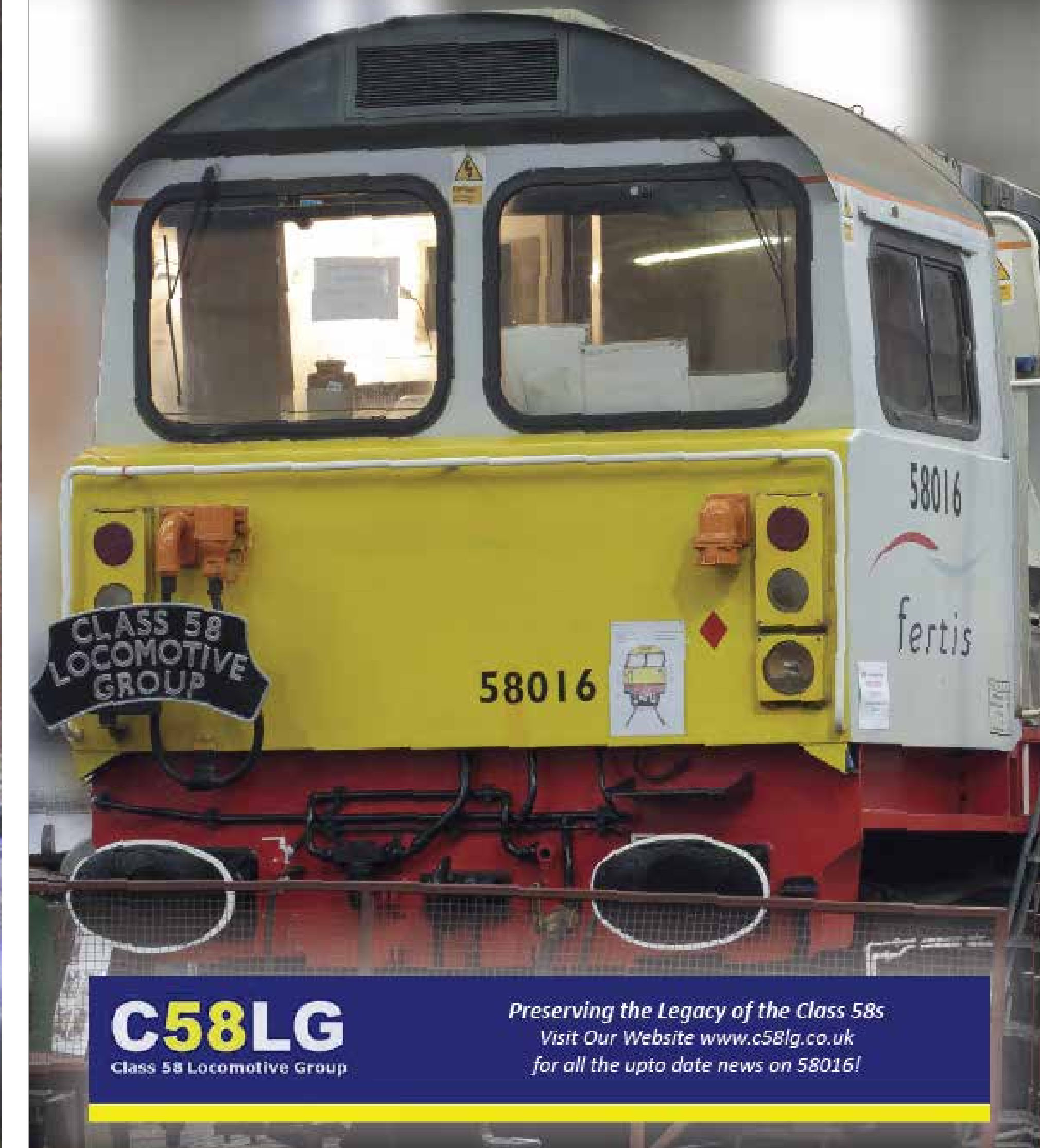
Colas Rail's track machine No. DR73806 is seen at Bentley Crossing, Dorridge on December 20th. The move to this location was in connection with work during the Christmas period. *John Alsop*



Join The **Class 58 Locomotive Group** and help support the restoration of 58016!

There are various ways to help the C58LG:

- Become a Member
- Make a donation
- Become a working volunteer
- Buy official C58LG merchandise



C58LG
Class 58 Locomotive Group

Preserving the Legacy of the Class 58s
Visit Our Website www.c58lg.co.uk
for all the upto date news on 58016!

Safety measures to be installed at Greater Anglia stations to deter trespassers

Greater Anglia is installing anti-trespass measures at railway stations in Essex, Norfolk, and Suffolk, after figures from the past year revealed that trespass incidents caused over 19 days worth of delays. The new measures, such as additional fences, gates and witches' hats – rubber spikes on the ground which deter people from accessing the track – are designed to help keep people away from the tracks, after figures showed trespass incidents delayed trains by more than 476 hours over a year and caused 843 cancellations.

Anti-trespass measures are due to be installed at Beccles, Brampton, Darsham, Derby Road, Great Bentley, Great Yarmouth, Halesworth, Harwich Town, Lowestoft, Melton, Mistley, Norwich, Oulton Broad North, Oulton

Broad South, Saxmundham, Somerleyton, Thorpe-Le-Soken, Wickham Market, Wivenhoe, and Woodbridge. The work is expected to be completed by early Spring 2025.

Matt Wakefield, Greater Anglia's Head of Safety, Security and Sustainability, said: "Safety is our top priority on the railway. These measures are designed to help keep people off the tracks and remain in a safe place. I would like to remind people that the railway is not a playground. People should never go on the tracks without permission. Anyone who accesses the track without permission is risking their life and the lives of others. We are constantly striving to improve the punctuality and reliability of our railway. We know our

customers want a punctual, reliable service, and trespass incidents can cause lengthy delays to train services. Anyone who sees someone on the tracks who shouldn't be there should alert a member of rail staff immediately or dial 999 in an emergency."

Greater Anglia works with the charity Samaritans, which offers training to all rail staff nationwide. Greater Anglia staff have taken part in the course which teaches them how to recognise someone who may be vulnerable, how to approach them and start a conversation.

They are taught some of the essential listening skills that underpin Samaritans' volunteer services as well as how to get the person to a place of safety and refer

them onto friends, family, the British Transport Police or Samaritans to receive further support.

Samaritans are available all day, every day on 116 123.

Greater Anglia also sponsors 150 schools to participate in the 'Rail Safe Friendly' initiative, delivered by Learn Live in partnership with the Trespass Improvement Team at Network Rail, which educates young people in schools on the dangers of trespassing on the railway.

So far, Greater Anglia's support has seen 78 more schools join the programme, reaching 50,358 young people.

Greater Anglia announces December 2024 timetable changes

There was some minor changes to Greater Anglia and Stansted Express timetables from Sunday December 15th 2024. Changes include additional stops, with more services calling at Romford, and an extra train between Colchester and Colchester Town.

Key changes:

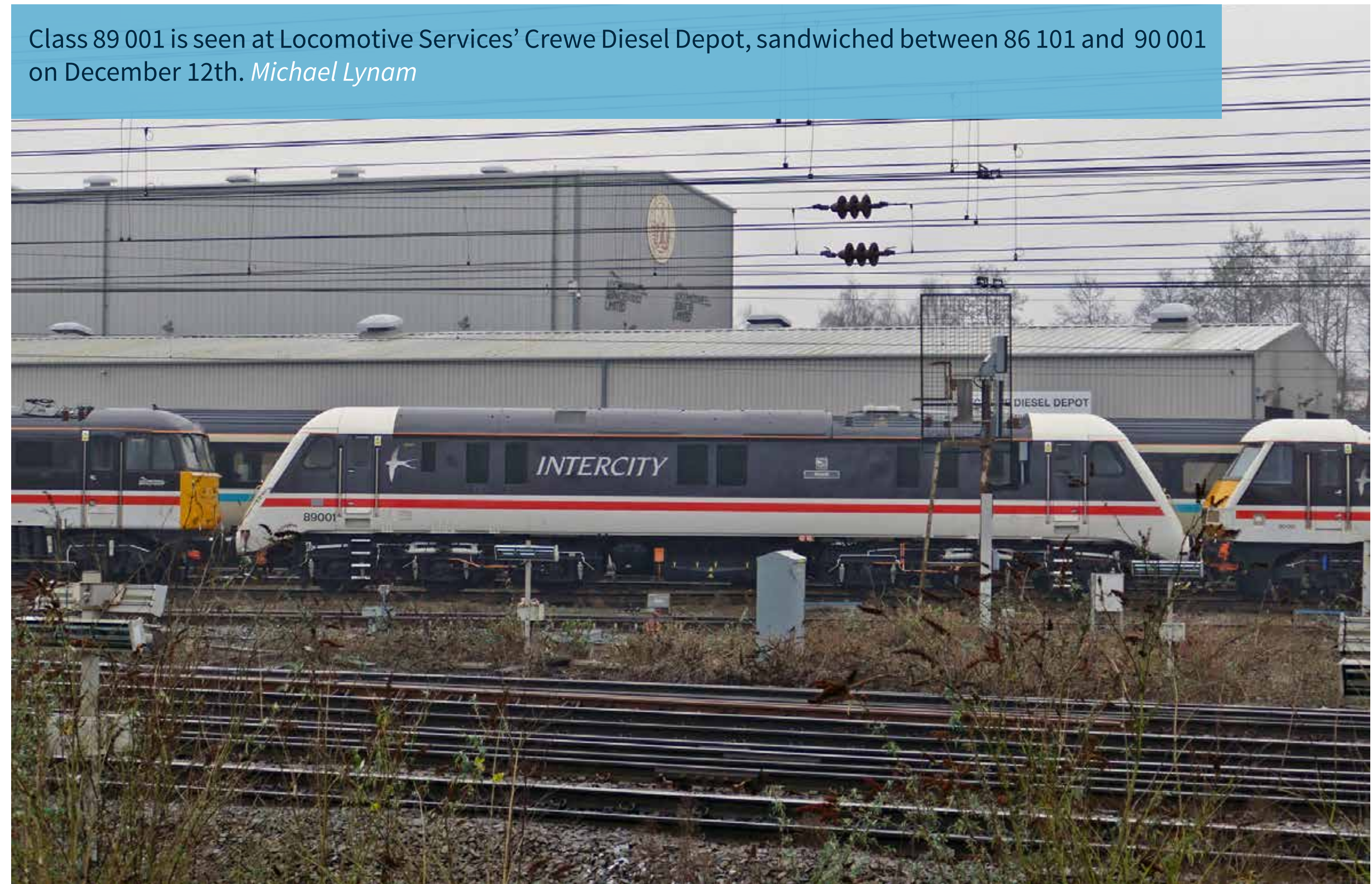
Some London Liverpool Street to Southend Victoria train services will depart from platform 8 at Stratford. Customers should check information screens.

The 06:35 London Liverpool Street to Southend Victoria train will additionally stop at Romford, calling at 06:50. The 06:46 London Liverpool Street to Witham train will now depart at 06:44 and additionally stop at Romford at 06:59. A new, earlier connecting train will depart Colchester at 07:13, arriving in Colchester Town at 07:21.

Martin Beable, Managing Director, Greater Anglia said: “We are pleased to be making further timetable improvements in our December timetable change, including an additional service and some additional stops. These changes will benefit existing passengers and encourage even more customers to take the train. With new trains operating all our services, we have transformed rail travel in our region, offering an excellent travel experience, more seats, and a more punctual and reliable service – which is consistently the best in the UK.”

The service improvements are designed to both support the ongoing recovery in passenger numbers and reflect emerging travel patterns across the Greater Anglia network.

Class 89 001 is seen at Locomotive Services' Crewe Diesel Depot, sandwiched between 86 101 and 90 001 on December 12th. *Michael Lynam*



Work starts on 'revolutionary' new bridge at Stowmarket rail station

Work has started to install a brand-new type of footbridge at Stowmarket rail station. Stowmarket station is the first in the country to have the first-of-its-kind accessible 'AVA' bridge, which includes fully-operational lifts.

Greater Anglia received funding for accessibility improvements at the station under the Government's Access for All scheme as the only step-free way to cross the platforms currently is via the level crossing. The £5.5 million project to install the 'AVA' footbridge will see the existing concrete footbridge removed and replaced. Enabling works are now being carried out to the platforms in readiness for the new bridge.

A temporary footbridge will be installed, and the existing bridge removed, over the weekend of January 11th while the line is closed for engineering works so that the station can still be used while the new bridge and lifts are being installed. It is anticipated that the installation of the 'AVA' bridge will commence at the end of May 2025. Passengers are advised that while the work is being carried out, the number of parking spaces in the car park will be reduced as some of it will be needed to be used by the project team.

The new bridge is a modular design, which is cheaper and quicker to construct. Lifts will be built into the bridge's design, making it much easier to travel between the platforms. It is designed to be more attractive for passengers, more reliable and easier to maintain than traditional designs. Built of stainless steel, it's designed to be long-lasting and doesn't need to be painted.

The modular design and 'plug-and-play' lifts are designed to cut the installation time needed on site by over half, which is much better for passengers and neighbours.

Marek Dowejko, Greater Anglia's Asset Programme Manager, said: “Thanks to this revolutionary new style of bridge the scheme was affordable, and we have been able to use the Access for All funding efficiently and to the best outcome for passengers. We want everyone to be able to have a good journey with us and the plans for Stowmarket are going to make a big difference to people using the station.”

Network Rail's head of buildings and architecture, Anthony Dewar, said: “We want to give passengers better journeys and provide a railway that's better value for money, and to do that we need fresh designs like this. We want a bridge that is open and light so passengers

feel secure, a bridge that looks modern, that makes people feel they're travelling on a modern railway, we want lifts to be more reliable, and our colleagues want a bridge that's easy to maintain, that can be installed more quickly and less disruptively... and also doesn't need painting every 25 years! That's why we have AVA.”

Chris Wise, Senior Director at Expedition, the Lead Designer and structural engineer for the 'AVA' Footbridge, said: “Of all the good things about 'AVA', to us at Expedition, the most exciting is how 'AVA' signals the future of infrastructure manufacture. 'AVA' demonstrates through its lean design, low carbon form how the industry can evolve: and not just in bridges and lifts. 'AVA' changes the landscape: from customised one-off construction to automated, efficient and industrialised manufacture. Saving the taxpayer money, saving lifetime carbon, manufacturing infrastructure products that are super-fast to build, beautiful to use, optimising the process and the product every single time one is made.”

Designed by ARX, the company behind the movable roofs at Wimbledon, the lifts are designed to be easier to install than traditional designs and provide built-in resilience and redundancy, to avoid going out of service.

Darren Falkingham from ARX said: “A footbridge with lifts is vital for persons of reduced mobility, but only any good while the lifts are working. When a lift goes out of service, that's more than an inconvenience – it's enough to stop people from travelling altogether. We applied our knowledge of safe and reliable moving structures to engineer a lift with a strong, curved stainless steel door and two drive motors per lift. And for rapid installation, the plug-and-play design is fully tested and certified at our factory, with a complete lift module delivered to the station platform. In fact, when the prototype was built, the lift was operational in just five hours of arriving at site, start to finish.”

Phil Webb from Walker Construction, said: A good design can be enough to make you feel good about your journey, to make you feel safe and welcomed, but a great design will do all that and be easy to install, cheap to maintain, and have the reliability to give people the certainty they can make their journeys hassle-free.”

Stowmarket station's 'AVA' is set to be open in the summer of 2025.



Railway reopens following successful £19m investment between London St. Pancras and Bedford

Major engineering work over Christmas has successfully delivered a £19m investment – including a new road bridge deck over track at Camden – in just nine days. Trains between London St Pancras and Harpenden have resumed following the closure, which saw the 160-year-old Agar Grove structure in London completely removed and replaced to improve journeys on the Midland Main Line. In addition to Agar Grove, a new bridge was slid beneath the track at Herfordshire to provide access to the Radlett Strategic Rail Freight Interchange. The “underbridge” was built beside the railway ready to be pushed into place last week at the site, which will contribute to a significant reduction of HGVs on the roads.

Hundreds of Network Rail colleagues worked around the clock during the nine-day track shutdown, with progress on replacing power lines near Bedford to

allow new electric trains to run, and dozens of smaller maintenance projects being carried out to keep the railway safe and reliable.

Mark Budden, Network Rail route director, said: “This project has been many years in the making, with meticulous planning of every detail, and its successful delivery is an outstanding achievement. The bridge deck at Agar Grove was more than 160 years old and needed replacing. While there is no perfect time to close the railway, the Christmas break provides the best opportunity because of lower passenger numbers. We’re extremely thankful to residents living near the site for their understanding, and for the patience of passengers whose journeys were disrupted. These essential upgrades will result in smoother and more reliable journeys for passengers in the future.”

Vital engineering work near Shalford, Surrey to close North Downs Line between Guildford and Gatwick Airport

From Saturday February 1st to Sunday February 16th, buses will replace trains between Guildford and Gatwick Airport while Network Rail engineers complete a number of critical upgrades on the North Downs line for the continued safe and reliable running of the railway. Engineers will be laying new wheel timbers – the blocks that carry tracks over bridges – on the railway bridge over the River Wey, to the south of Guildford. Made out of a synthetic alternative, the new wheel timbers will last 30 years longer than the old wooden versions and will mean fewer closures are needed in the future.

During this time, Network Rail will also be completing a range of other work, modernising the signalling in the area, including the renewal of four level crossings. All four crossings will have new signalling installed and will feedback to Guildford Area Signalling Centre and double lane barriers

will replace the existing single lane barriers, reducing the chance of vehicles crossing the track when barriers are down. Teams will also be stabilising one of the cuttings that borders the railway in Gomshall to reduce the risk of landslips leading to lengthy line closures. During this closure, buses will replace Great Western Railway (GWR) train services, operating between Guildford and Redhill, stopping at all stations. Another bus service will run direct to Gatwick Airport. Southern and Thameslink trains to and from London, Reigate, Redhill and Gatwick Airport are not affected by these works and will continue to operate.

Mark Goodall, Network Rail’s Wessex Route Director said: “I’m sorry to any passengers whose journeys will be disrupted while our engineers complete these important upgrades on the North Downs Line. This vital upgrade work will benefit passengers in the

long run as they will experience smoother and more reliable journeys. The level crossing upgrades we are undertaking will significantly improve safety for both passengers, motorists and pedestrians alike while replacing the wheel timbers on the railway bridge over the River Wey with a synthetic material will mean fewer closures and disruption for passengers in the future due to their increased lifespan. I’d like to thank our passengers in advance for their patience and understanding.”

Andy Gallagher, Great Western Railway Station Manager for the North Downs Line, said: “This work forms part of an ongoing programme of maintenance, helping to ensure we can continue to provide consistent and reliable services. Rail replacement services will be provided for those stations between Guildford and Gatwick that will not be served by GWR trains for 16 days.”



National Rail

Class 90 002 and Pacer 142 003 are seen stabled at Locomotive Services' Crewe Diesel Depot on December 12th. *Michael Lynam*



Pre-Christmas works completed on c2c network with 50-year-old rail replaced



Loco Fleet List Ten

This publication gives a reference to all the Diesel & Electric Locomotives which have operated on Britain's railways from the early experimental era right up until the present day.

This information has been put together to give an easy reference to the numbering and official naming of each locomotive and includes all withdrawn, preserved and currently operating locos in TOPS classification order.

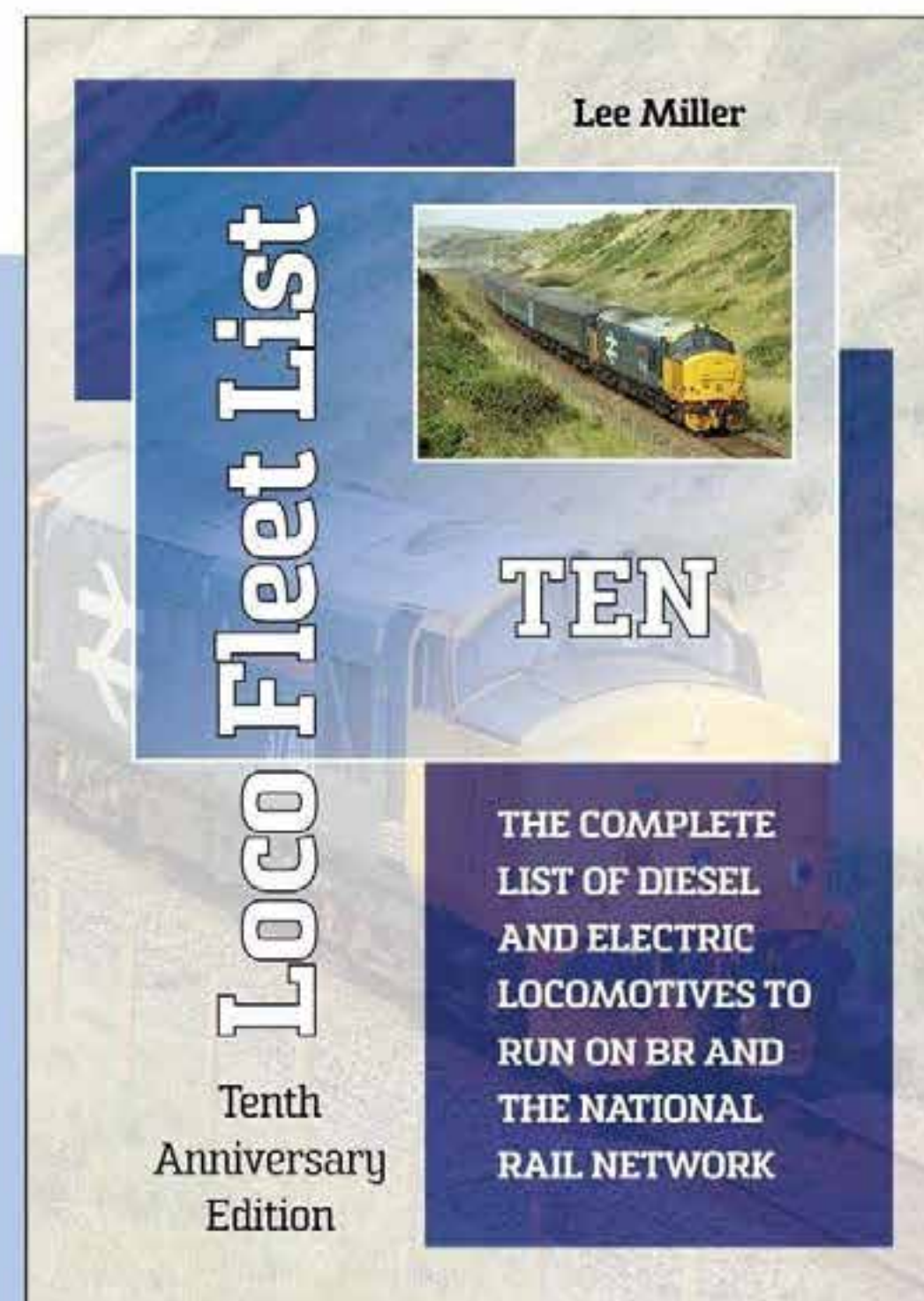
Features:

- Diesel Locomotives
- DC Electric & Electro-Diesel Locos
- AC Electric & Bi-Mode Locos
- Eurotunnel Locomotives
- Unclassified Locomotives

Loco Fleet List Ten is available via mail order for just £12.99 plus £1.99 P&P with a cheque or postal order made payable to: L Miller and sent to: 7 Wood Street, Warrington, WA1 3AY or using Paypal when visiting the Loco Fleet Shop website.

Web: www.locofleetshop.co.uk Email: lee@locofleetshop.co.uk

This special anniversary edition has undergone a complete rewrite to include scrappage dates, locations and allocations of all preserved and operational locomotives now in a perfect bound book



Engineers have completed track and station improvement works on the c2c route to help boost reliability and the passenger experience. Over a series of weekends in November and December, Network Rail replaced more than 3,800 metres of worn-out rail between Leigh-on-Sea and Southend Central stations. Having first been installed in 1967 and 1968, the old rail needed to be replaced to minimise the chance of defects that can cause delays. The newly-installed rail is expected to last for another 50 years. Engineers also fixed faulty drainage pipes alongside the platforms at Chalkwell station. If the pipes had not been fixed, excess water could have affected the quality of the track, potentially causing a bumpy ride and the need for speed restrictions on trains.

At the same time, c2c engineers and station colleagues took the chance to carry out essential improvement works at key locations across the network, including Shoeburyness, Southend-on-Sea and Westcliff. These delivered vital upgrades which are crucial to maintaining safety and efficiency for c2c customers across the route. Day, and other timetable changes.

Simon Milburn, infrastructure director for Network Rail Anglia, said: "Our work over November and December was vital to keeping trains running safely and reliably in future. Thank you to c2c passengers for bearing with us while our engineers got out on track and got these jobs done."

Laura McEwen, Operations and Engineering Director for c2c, said: "We appreciate that for customers these works have caused disruption, but the benefit is projected to last for another five decades and ensure the safety of our railway for all.

"While Network Rail delivered the work, we made the most of the time to carry out a huge variety of improvements. These encompassed everything from cutting back trees in customer car parks, painting ticket halls, resurfacing platforms and ensuring the structural durability of station canopies.

"Some of these will of course be more apparent to customers than others, but we hope that this work behind the scenes gives our passengers confidence that we are using our resources as wisely as possible."

3300 individuals on course for employment as NIS Group celebrates TRIA expansion

More than 3300 people have been started on the path to sustainable employment in rail, construction and civils this year by a leading West Midlands training provider. NIS Group, which was founded by former Royal Marine Davie Carns in 2018, is on course for its best-ever 12 months after accelerating the roll-out of its Transport, Rail and Infrastructure Academy (TRIA) network in the region – a partnership with City of Wolverhampton College and the West Midlands Combined Authority. Over £1m has been invested into launching two new dedicated facilities in Aston and Coventry, supplementing existing hubs at the City of Wolverhampton College's Bilston Campus and at BCIMO in Dudley.

It means the company can now offer 100 different courses in multiple locations across the West Midlands, all with dedicated industrial facilities and equipment to help learners become even more work ready or to upskill to enhance long-term prospects. Crucially, 83% of the people NIS Group has assisted have progressed into full-time sustainable employment - a major increase on the national sector average.

Davie Carns, Group Managing Director, commented: "We announced the launch of TRIA in February this year and, in just ten months, have taken what was an exciting vision and turned it into a reality. Importantly, the network of dedicated training centres has been supported by industry and subsequently are kitted out with specialist rail, construction and civils equipment. The backing from multiple UK-wide employers supporting our programmes has given us the platform to empower 3330 individuals to seek sustainable employment through training and education."

He continued: "These are real people with real stories, often overcoming difficult challenges in life whether that is long-term unemployment, physical disability, mental health issues or returning to society after

service in the Armed Forces. We are making a difference to thousands of people and this number will only increase as we grow our TRIA network even further in the coming months."

NIS Group has combined investment in the best trainers with the best facilities, equipping its four dedicated facilities with specialist capabilities, including a Signalling Academy and special slab tracks for high-speed rail. This is in addition to purpose-built areas for training on machines and heavy plant.

Davie added: "We have come a long way in 2024 and that has been down to the commitment of our 70-strong team, who have worked tirelessly to build futures together for the people we support. The next twelve months is shaping up to be another exciting period for the business as we plan for the official openings of Aston and Coventry, as well as our direct work with colleges and employers."

Jean's story

Since arriving from Central Africa over 20 years ago, Birmingham-based Jean Anale had found himself working largely in labouring roles without much sense of direction. After a recommendation from a friend, he found himself on the Gateway to Rail course at City of Wolverhampton College.

"I came to the UK in 2001 from Congo unable to speak English and began my journey by joining language and then electrical courses. Back home and then over here I found myself working in construction, so any hands-on job feels quite familiar to me. This course was recommended to me by a friend who is also from Congo – he's now on the rail earning good money and enjoying himself. Hearing his successful journey motivated me to trust NIS Group. Education is such a big investment in my life, and I can see improvement already.

The personal development each individual receives is really special. I would recommend to anybody to give this course a go - it's a fantastic experience and has a lot to offer for someone looking to get their career started."

More learner stories...

Kelly Eccleston

Kelly Eccleston has chosen to swap the construction site for a potential career in rail in the bid for more career progression.

The Willenhall plasterer, who embarked on the Gateway to Rail Course at NIS Group's TRIA facility at the City of Wolverhampton College, said: "Progression in a job is key for me. I had climbed as far as I could and wanted to move into another sector that offered different opportunities.

"It has been a superb course and being back in this type of environment has made me realise that a career on the tracks is what I'm after.

"Being the only female in the class has been great! All the guys have been supportive, and we have a good laugh together, whilst my tutor Keith is passing on so much knowledge about the industry that I'll soon be able to use in my day-to-day role."

Kaine Singh

Kaine Singh has also made the switch in sectors, driven by his desire to support his little boy and make him proud.

The former Coventry manufacturer is benefiting from the Gateway to Employment course and has his sights firmly set on a career in construction.

"I have always believed if you don't challenge yourself, you will never know if there is an opportunity for something bigger and better.



"My parents are both ambitious, hard workers so it must be where I get it from. I want to do well for my family, especially my little boy who is my main motivation."

He concluded: "I have been getting 100% on my assessments, which is really rewarding. Not every training provider gives you what NIS Group gives you and this is by far the best course I have done.

"Long-term I would love to emulate my tutor Julian, who has been a massive inspiration to me. To get to the stage where you can share your experiences to make other people's lives better is where I eventually want to be."

Deborah's story...

Deborah McIver is switching the nail file for the power tools after taking part in the Gateway to Construction course at the new TRIA site in Coventry.

Having previously worked in the beauty industry, the former Rugby-based beautician now has her eyes fixed on a new career in construction.

"Before this course I was a nail technician, and I did spray tanning, piercings... I have a few certificates under my belt!

"Sadly, I got carpal tunnel, and I had to have an operation, and, at that point, I took the decision to go into construction, as it was what I wanted to do when I was younger but never had the chance.

"I was interested in engineering and working on the rail, which led me to a careers day

for women and applying for a few jobs. Unfortunately, I needed more qualifications and experience, so jumped for joy when the NIS Group course came up!

"I have dyslexia, and this made me struggle a little bit on my first few days because I was anxious to write in the exams. But my tutors have been really accommodating and given me additional time to read and finish my exams. I have benefited so much from the team and learnt a lot from them.

"It has been so enjoyable, particularly around health and safety which is incredibly important in construction. This industry is all about team effort and is not something that you can do by yourself, you always need someone to watch your back, and you watch their back in return, so everybody is alive and safe. I have been doing great, I have passed all of my tests, and I feel so proud of myself."

For further information, please visit www.nisgroup.co.uk or follow the company across its social channels.

Photo: TRIA End of Year, some of the 3300 learners who have been supported by NIS Group this year.

National Rail

Class 68004 vies for the award of the filthiest loco of the RHTT season as it passes through Euxton at the head of the 4S44 service from Daventry to Coatbridge on December 10th. *John Sloane*



Global 'whistle-up' on New Year's Day signals start of rail's 200th anniversary

A celebratory cacophony of train locomotive whistles and horns at midday on January 1st 2025 signalled the start of the 200th anniversary of the modern railway. The Railway 200 Whistle-Up, spearheaded by the Heritage Railway Association (HRA), involved more than 50 heritage railways in the UK and abroad blowing the whistles of nearly 200 vintage steam and diesel locomotives to herald a year-long celebration. Railways in other countries, including Holland, South Africa and Sierra Leone, will be taking part, some with British-built locos. The HRA claims it will be the biggest railway heritage mass participation event ever.

Train engine horns at mainline stations will also sound off at the appointed hour to welcome in the anniversary year. At the other end of the scale, train modellers Hornby will be getting a variety of model trains to toot and whistle on their track layouts. There will also be a special appearance on social media from everyone's favourite blue engine, Thomas the Tank Engine.

Railway 200 is a year-long celebration of 200 years of the modern railway. It will explore how rail has shaped national life and encourage more people to consider a career in the railway. The anniversary commemorates the launch of the Stockton and Darlington Railway (S&DR) in 1825, a journey that changed the world forever. In tribute, at the adjoining Locomotion museum in Shildon, County Durham, the whistle of the North Eastern Railway's locomotive 910 will be sounded once more. The 910 is currently undergoing restoration, ahead of its display next year, and is the only locomotive to have appeared in all three of the previous S&DR anniversaries, in 1875, 1925 and 1975.

Community rail groups will be participating in the Whistle-Up too.

Everyone is invited to join in by recording themselves, family and friends blowing whistles, sounding horns or ringing bells at noon on New Year's Day and posting on social media, using #Railway200 and #WhistleUp200. If no whistles, horns or bells are to hand, try a Christmas party blower or popper, or just pucker your lips and whistle!

Welcoming the start of Railway 200, Rail Minister Lord Hendo said: "The world changed forever in 1825 with the birth of the modern railway in Britain, and rolled out across the globe. Railway 200's celebrations are a unique opportunity to honour a groundbreaking moment in our history while looking boldly towards the future. The Whistle-Up event marks the start of a year that will showcase how the railway continues to transform lives, connect communities, and create growth, jobs, housing and tourism."

This milestone reminds us of the integral role rail plays in a sustainable future and is our chance to present the railway as a forward thinking, digital industry with vibrant and diverse career paths for a new generation. Together, let us celebrate this extraordinary British achievement and inspire a shared vision for the next century of railway progress."

Alan Hyde from Railway 200 said: "The 200th anniversary of the modern railway marks a major milestone in our national life. In time-honoured fashion, the Whistle-Up fanfare launches what promises to be a memorable year with lots of exciting activities and events planned to celebrate the past, present and future of rail."

Steve Oates, chief executive of the Heritage Railway Association, added: "The railways made so much of the world we now live in possible. From package holidays to commuting and even the concept of standardised time, it was the coming of the railways that kickstarted it all and transformed communities across the globe. It's important that we don't let the landmark 200th anniversary go without a sizeable celebration."

The whistle-up is a great chance for everyone involved in railways, big and small across the world, to join in the celebrations and see in 2025 in style by reviving a tradition from the age of steam. And, unlike in decades past, we'll be able to join it all up thanks to the power of social media by using #WhistleUp200."

SOUTHERN COUNTIES RAILWAY SOCIETY

A club for anyone interested in the railways of Southern England.



www.southerncountiesrailwaysociety.co.uk

National Rail

Former ironstone railway loco 'Robert', an Avonside built in 1933 still stands plinthed outside Stratford station as seen on November 21st.
John Sloane



On December 17th, Class 37 409 'Loch Awe' stands at Stafford awaiting the road as it returns home light engine as 0Z37 11:02 Barrow Hill L.I.P. to Crewe H.S. *Derek Elston*



Euston's five-point plan making strides to improve passenger experience

Network Rail and its train operating partners announce progress against their five-point plan to enhance the customer experience at Euston station. Launched in October, the five-point plan was developed in response to passenger feedback and aims to create a smoother, better experience for everyone passing through one of London's busiest transport hubs. The plan has delivered improvements for passengers in time for the busy festive period at Euston.

Here's a reminder of the five-point plan and how it is delivering results:

Reviewing passenger information provision and circulation, including a shutdown and review of the use of overhead advertising boards.

A review on how passengers are invited to, and board services, especially during disruption.

Creating more concourse space and

alleviating pinch-points, which will include more, and upgraded, toilet provision.

Unifying station operation during disruption to ensure a holistic approach is taken for the benefit of all passengers.

Driving up the reliability of both the infrastructure and train services to reduce disruptive events being experienced at the station.

Network Rail is focused on improving how passengers receive information. Wednesday December 11th marked the start of a trial to utilise the station's advertising board to display live travel information.

Additionally, a comprehensive review of concourse signage has been completed, resulting in the installation of simplified and clearer displays. The new signage aims to make navigating Euston station easier and more intuitive for passengers.

Network Rail has collaborated with train operating partners to trial early boarding of Avanti West Coast and London Northwestern Railway services. This initiative has reduced concourse congestion, with passenger feedback being collected regularly to refine the process further.

Maximising space for passengers to move around within the station is a top priority. Efforts to reduce congestion and free up known pinch points on the concourse are already underway, with the bookstore at the eastern side of the station now removed. Extra temporary toilet facilities have been installed ahead of Christmas to meet the seasonal demand, and plans for a full refurbishment of the existing toilets are in development, with further details to be announced soon.

On December 18th, Network Rail convened the second rail industry summit to give passenger user groups and government an update on progress on Euston station's five-

point improvement plan. The event saw Rail Minister, Lord Hendy and representatives from the DfT, Avanti West Coast, London Northwestern Railway, TfL, the ORR, London TravelWatch and Transport Focus join Network Rail staff for a tour of the station. Senior Network Rail staff also held a round table discussion on the improvements that have been made, as well as the long-term aspirations to regenerate the Euston campus in the future.

Amanda Webster-Uz, Network Rail's head of Euston station operations, said: "Passengers are at the heart of everything we do, and we're pleased to see the five-point plan making a tangible difference at Euston station.

From better boarding processes to clearer information and improved facilities, these changes are delivering real benefits for our passengers. There's still work to do, but we're committed to making Euston a station that passengers can rely on."

Rail Minister Lord Hendy said: "For too long, Euston hasn't been good enough for passengers, and it's reassuring to see that Network Rail is putting this right by making significant strides on our five-point plan for improvement.

"A more passenger-focused railway is one of the Government's top priorities, and we will continue to work with Network Rail to improve the station, so that customers can look forward to travelling by rail."

Network Rail continues to develop plans for a major upgrade at Euston, which will deliver a brand-new station concourse that's fit for the future, brighter and offers much better facilities to passengers. Work continues with partners to ensure the revamped station integrates with the new HS2 station, TfL services and new homes, community, office and retail spaces.

2024 wrap-up: a landmark year for TRU

With 2025 now upon us, TRU would like to thank customers for their support as the programme reflects on a successful year that saw several key milestones achieved. The newly appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer reaffirmed the Government's commitment to the Transpennine Route Upgrade in October's Autumn Budget announcement. Just a week later, the Chancellor, along with the Transport Secretary and Mayor Andy Burnham, visited Manchester and Stalybridge to see first-hand the progress being made on the programme.

A major target for TRU in 2024 was achieved in November, as TransPennine Express joined Northern in operating electric passenger services between Manchester Victoria and Stalybridge. This was a huge step forward in the programme's aims to deliver faster, more frequent trains on a cleaner, greener, more reliable railway.

Electric test trains have also been in operation between York and Church Fenton, with the first electrified passenger services to launch in 2025.

Significant progress has also been made in upgrading infrastructure across the route, with perhaps the most noticeable changes seen at the iconic Huddersfield station. The station upgrade has just passed the one-year mark. Scaffold towers and a raised working platform are in place to enable the trainshed canopy restoration work, whilst the tearoom – built in 1886 – has been dismantled in 8,000 different pieces and carefully stored away ahead of being reinstated in the future.

A new, purpose-built office compound was also opened at the rear of the station, so that the programme had a central working hub at such a vital location on the route. Named HD1, the sustainable approach to the building of the office compound contributed to TRU's perfect 45/45 score in a Considerate Constructors Scheme assessment of the station. October saw the completion of TRU's public consultation on plans for rail upgrades between Stalybridge and Diggle (Saddleworth). More than 300 residents gave feedback on proposals, including major upgrades at both Mossley and Greenfield that will make the stations fully accessible for the first time.

The programme was granted a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO) to bring further upgrades to the route between Leeds and Micklefield, outlining plans to replace five level crossings with safer alternatives, work to a number of bridges to enable electrification, and the installation of some small-scale infrastructure.

Back in March, TRU announced a £100m investment for a new rail depot in Shipley which will be used to house and maintain Northern's fleet of electric trains on the Airedale and Wharfedale Lines whilst access in and out of their Neville Hill depot in Leeds is restricted during a future phase of TRU works. Northern will keep the depot open following the completion of upgrades, with as many as 100 permanent employees.

Elsewhere in West Yorkshire, the new year brought an intriguing find – following investigations at a TRU site near Ravensthorpe Road, a team from Oxford Archaeology believed that a large, irregularly shaped cropmark was probably an Iron Age or Romano-British enclosure. A collection of Romano-British ceramics, building materials, flint, glass and animal bones were all recovered at the site and are still in testing.

TRU closed out the year with the launch of the programme's first annual Sustainable Development Report, based on the sustainability strategy, 'Our Guiding Compass'.

Our Guiding Compass has been instrumental in shaping TRU's sustainable development efforts, comprising of four key pillars that steer sustainability: Northern jobs, enhanced environment, satisfied customers, and community engagement. One milestone of many outlined in the report was the introduction of PlanBEE Rail, a unique higher apprenticeship scheme designed to recruit and nurture the next generation of multi-disciplinary project managers. In what is a two-year programme where the apprentices rotate around four different employers, the TRU cohort have already had a taste of what it's like to be part of a multi-billion-pound railway programme.

As part of the programme's commitment to leave a long-lasting legacy within the communities it operates, 2024 saw the introduction of the £175,000 TRU Community Fund.

The fund offers community groups, schools and charities the opportunity to create or enhance indoor or outdoor community-focused facilities through small (£1000-£5000) or medium (£5000-£20,000) grants, with the successful recipients recently confirmed.

Work to deliver upgrades across the route continued over the Christmas period, too:

Railway bridge deck replacement in Osmondthorpe, on the east side of Leeds with a stronger structure that will enable the tracks to be moved into a better position and allow faster, longer trains to run.

Foundation piling in Church Fenton for new overhead line equipment (OLE), which will enable electric trains to be introduced in the future.

The removal of a section of Station Road railway bridge in Mirfield, opening up the station wall to create a new station entrance, and carrying out piling for a new station platform.

Track point replacement near Miles Platting in Manchester, to allow trains to change from one line to another.

Gordon Kells, TRU Interim Managing Director, said: "2024 was a big year for TRU and I'm really proud of what's been achieved across the programme. A number of key milestones have been reached and we've paved the way for more success next year. I'd like to thank all of our passengers, stakeholders and local communities for their understanding and support and we are looking ahead to further achievements in 2025."



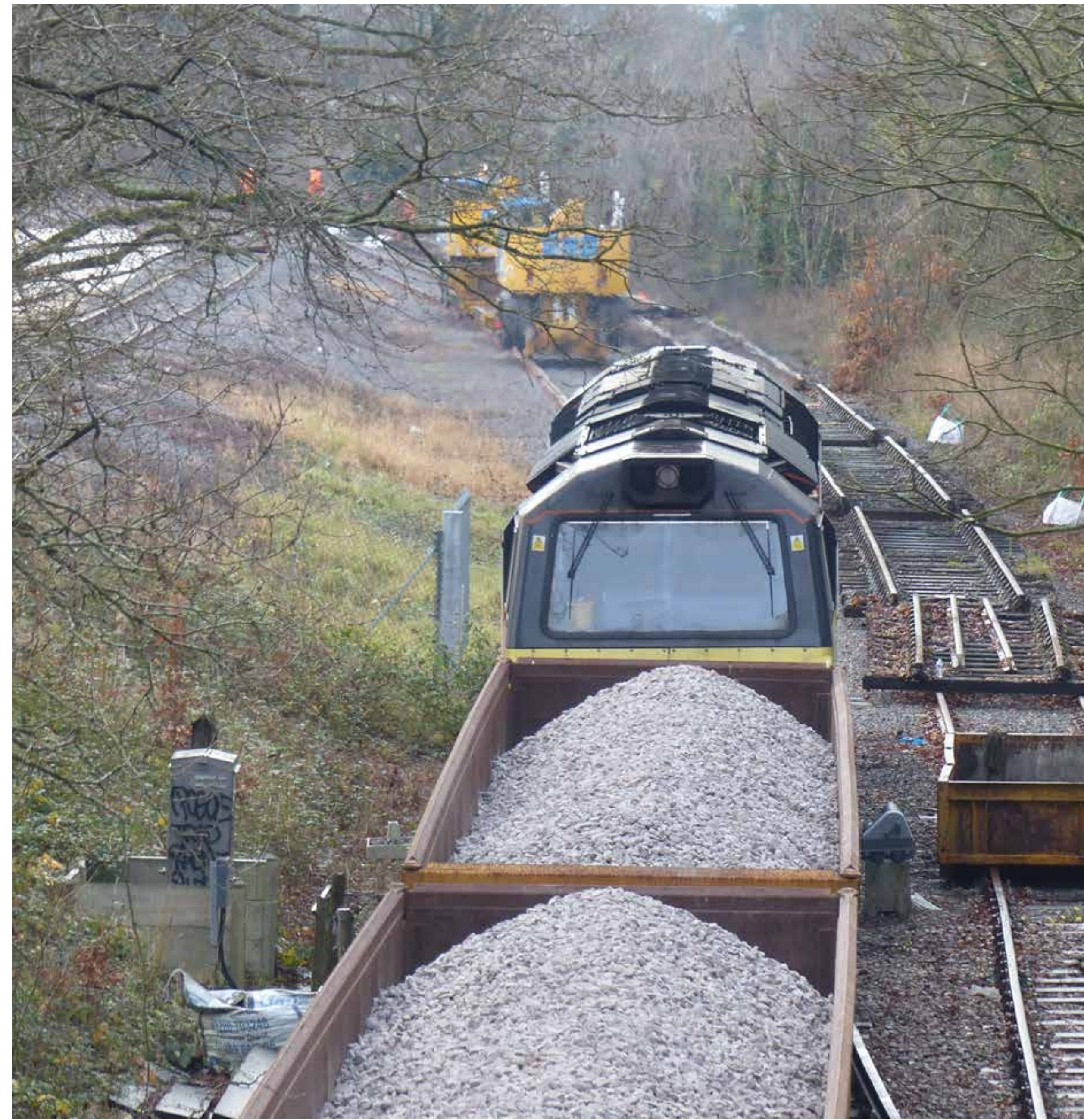
National Rail

In early December, the Chessington branch was closed to passenger traffic while the 'unused' road at Chessington South Station was re-laid with new track, to assist the increase in aggregates movements at the 'Cappagh' facility just beyond the end of the public line

Top Left: An unusual visitor to Chessington South on December 14th was Colas Class 70 813, which formed part of an infrastructure blockade at the end of the Chessington branch, delivering new ballast for the previously-unused 'up' road, which was being re-laid to enable ballast trains to arrive and/or depart while a passenger train is occupying the only serviceable platform at the station.

Top and Bottom Right: Waiting in the 'up' road between Chessington South and Chessington North on December 14th is a ballast train top & tailed by Freightliner's Class 66 413 and 66 951. They have just collected the old ballast from the notional 'up' road at Chessington South Station, which is being re-laid to allow for the increase in deliveries to the 'Cappagh' aggregates facility just beyond the station.

Bottom Left: A Network Rail track gang working at Chessington South station. Having opened in 1938, only one platform at Chessington South has ever seen passenger service; however, with the recent opening and enlarging of the 'Cappagh' aggregates facility just beyond the station, it was deemed necessary to lift and replace the original 1938 sleepers, rails and ballast from the notional 'up' platform (much of which was in dire condition), allowing freight trains to pass while passenger services are standing at the station (at the moment, they have to wait until the passenger service departs before a freight can enter or leave the facility). In this picture, all the old material has now been removed, and the new ballast is waiting to be unloaded from the train visible under the bridge, which was hauled by Colas Rail 70 813. There are no plans to bring the 'up' platform into use. *Ian Callander*



Multi-million-pound investment at Slade Green depot boosts rail industry's maintenance capabilities and smoother, more reliable journeys for customers

A brand-new wheel lathe, carriage wash and extended overhead gantry are among the highlights of a multi-million pound investment at the Slade Green train maintenance depot to assist Southeastern with maintaining its current train fleet as well as supporting future upgrades of its 'Metro' fleet

These transformational upgrades were unveiled on December 16th during an event in which Daniel Francis, MP for Bexleyheath and Crayford, visited the depot to see the upgraded facilities. The depot, which employs 180 people locally, looks after five different types of train, a situation that could change in the future if options are realised to upgrade the fleet with new trains that could deliver transformational improvements for customers, providing more reliable, comfortable and accessible journeys.

Supporting the maintenance of the train fleet, the Network Rail and Southeastern Alliance has worked together to install a new wheel lathe (machinery which reprofiles train wheels giving passengers a smoother ride), as well as a new carriage wash and extended overhead gantry and lifting cranes that have recently been introduced for the Class 707 City Beam trains, which has been supported by Siemens Mobility.

The new wheel lathe allows Southeastern to service its five-vehicle fleet, which includes the Class 707 City Beam. The old wheel lathe, which was installed at the introduction of Networkers in the early 1990's, was limited to a maximum of four vehicle turns.

Train wheels experience daily wear and tear that can result in small 'flat' spots on the wheels, particularly during the autumn leaf-fall season. The two moveable cutting heads on the lathe can re-profile wheels with precision, measuring the size of each one and then accurately calculating how much metal to cut away. The wheel is then re-profiled, and the roundness is restored.

The lathe finishes its work by measuring the train wheels to ensure their quality before the train returns to service – with the benefit being that trains are back in service more quickly for passengers, who experience a smoother ride and fewer cancellations as a result.

Mark Johnson, Southeastern's Engineering Director said: "Our railway is getting busier, and at Southeastern we're seeing record post-pandemic passenger numbers, with over 400k daily entries and exits being recorded at our London terminals. This is encouraging news, and we're working hard to support this growth by improving performance and reducing subsidy. We're very proud of the great work that is done at Slade Green with Siemens and the wider team to keep our trains in the best possible condition for customer service, with recent improvements we've made in partnership with Network Rail ensuring that we have the most cost-effective and efficient maintenance regime, helping us also to prepare for any potential new or cascaded fleet in the coming years."

David Davidson, Network Rail's Kent Route Director said: "We are building a better, more reliable and sustainable railway, and underpinning that is our ambition is to deliver better performance and reduce our subsidy."

It's really important to the Alliance that we invest in our train depots, so that they meet the needs not only of the current train fleet but also the future train fleet. Our Alliance with Southeastern can achieve so much more as a single structure that can focus on things like performance – and that's embodied in the way we are investing in Slade Green depot."

Mark Barry, Fleet Operations Director at Siemens Mobility, said: "It was great to show Daniel Francis MP some of the work our team does at Slade Green, working as one team with Southeastern to maintain our next-generation digital fleet of Desiro City Class 707 trains. The technical expertise our team offers, combined with cutting-edge Railigent digital remote monitoring technology to prevent technical failures, helps keep our fleet in service for passengers travelling on the network."

Daniel Francis, Labour MP for Bexleyheath and Crayford said: "The Slade Green depot in my constituency is approaching its 125th anniversary next year and it's been great to see the work going on here, the employment opportunities it brings to local people and the maintenance carried out to ensure trains across the network can run every day."

Ravenglass station footbridge to be refurbished



Network Rail has announced plans to fully refurbish the footbridge at Ravenglass station on the Cumbrian Coast Line.

The much-loved footbridge, first constructed in 1849, was due to be repaired this autumn with the timber deck being replaced. However, when engineers started work on the bridge, they found the condition was worse than expected and so a full refurbishment and repair is needed.

Work will start on site in February 2025, with the whole structure removed and transported to a repair facility to be worked on. This includes being fully repainted, restoring it to how it looked in its historic heyday. Doing this work away from the station means we don't have to close the line and trains can continue to run.

The footbridge will then be bought back to site and reinstalled at the station, with the timber deck replaced, safety checks carried out and then reopened to passengers and the public in May 2025.

Unfortunately, this means the footbridge will have to remain closed until the repair work is fully complete.

Network Rail have worked with Cumberland Council and the Lake District Council to put in pedestrian diversion routes, with signage and safety barriers so people can still access both platforms during the work. Access to Ravenglass and Eskdale Heritage Railway remains unaffected.

Chris Pye, Network Rail's North West Route Infrastructure Director said: "We are sorry to disrupt passengers and the local community longer than we have planned to. We're working hard to keep the disruption to a minimum, including taking the bridge off-site to work on it which will be quicker than working on site."

National Rail

Lined black liveried Class 57 002 leads BR green liveried Class 37 No. D6817 at Charnock Richard on a Crewe to Carlisle Upperby move on December 10th.
John Sloane



Did you Know - Ken Mumford

Some more of the nations oddities this month:



After the 1914-18 war some ROD 2-8-0s were stored at Tattenham Corner [see above], Gretna, Sandycroft, Morecambe and some parts of Birkenhead. The Government initially asked £10,000 each for them, but by 1927 the LMS was able to buy them for £340 each!

An initial order for five of Bullied 'Leader' locomotives was placed straight from the drawing board in 1946 and a further 31 were ordered in 1947, although, with nationalisation looming, this was merely a gesture. The latter order was cancelled after the Southern Railway was taken into public ownership, to allow trials to be carried out on the prototype.

Polos, starting from £14.00 each, minimal order of 3.



10+ Price: £11.75 EACH

Heavy weight Hoodies starting from £27.50 each, minimal order of 2.



10+ Price: £26.50 EACH

Budget Hoodies £18.10 EACH For 5 plus (not shown)

Softshell, from £27.00 each, minimal order of 2.



10+ Price: £25.50 EACH

Morf's (neckwear), starting from £9.00 each, minimal order of 3.



15+ Price: £8.35 EACH

Gymsacs, starting from £5.00 each, minimal order of 3.



10+ Price: £12.75 EACH

We have a broad range of bags, from shoppers, courier bags to messenger bags.



Promotional print T-shirt, £10.50 each minimal order of 2.



10+ Price: £7.25 EACH

Hi-Vis, starting from £7.50 each, minimal order of 2



10+ Price: £6.25 EACH

Umbrellas, starting from £14.00 each, minimal order of 3.



10+ Price: £12.75 EACH

Branded merchandise, Draw bags, mouse mats, coasters.



Branded T-shirts starting from £8.70 each, minimal order of 5.



10+ Price: £7.60 EACH

If you are after an item not shown, please ask, we have a vast range. Prices shown is example pricing. Pricing will vary on artwork / design and quantities. Standard turn-around time 5-7 days. Prices assume collection from our Huddersfield Service Centre. Postage if required charged at cost.

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Showing your pride of your organisation, builds awareness and strength in your brand. Get the message out there consistently with consistent branded apparel. Some of our example pricing, always best to get a bespoke quote.

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A Different View

WintersunlightcatchesthesideofStatesman Rail carriages at Wolverhampton.
Richard Hargreaves



Hopetown Darlington Celebrates a Successful 2024



Hopetown Darlington looks back at an impressive catalogue of events and accolades achieved in 2024. On September 27th 1825, a railway journey changed the world forever as Locomotion No. 1 completed the first voyage of a passenger-carrying train. On July 16th 2024, Hopetown Darlington marked a milestone in celebrating Darlington's railway heritage and opened its doors following a £37 million investment, which was heralded by a week of special events including live music and street theatre.

So far, Darlington's award-winning visitor attraction has welcomed over 80,000 visitors, and of these, over 20,000 children have played on Wagon Woods – an adventure play park themed off the Brusselton Incline. Ice Creams have proven very popular, with over 15,000 cones sold – including the exclusive Black Diamond ice cream, named after Locomotive No. 3 on the S&DR.

The historic Carriage Works is a Grade II listed building constructed in 1853 which was renovated as part of Hopetown Darlington's development. Within this building, the Exhibition Hall was designed to host a

variety of world-class events. The opening special exhibition was Brick Journeys, a tour through the world of transport made entirely from LEGO® bricks. This event was phenomenally popular with families and LEGO® enthusiasts alike, attracting crowds from all over the country.

Hopetown Darlington has also been the recipient of numerous awards and accolades. Initially receiving the VisitEngland Welcome accolade, in October, which recognizes excellence within the visitor attraction sector. This was followed by winning the high prestigious North

East Culture Award for Best Museum or Cultural Venue in November, and then the Visitor Economy Award in December.

Halloween arrived in style as ghostly goings haunted the site throughout the half term. Frightfully fabulous workshops and events, including a spooky pumpkin trail leading to a haunted passenger train, were active across all buildings. Families flocked from all over the Tees Valley on the day itself in fancy dress to meet the ghouls roaming the site.

November marked the opening of Experiment! a state-of-the-art railway-themed time travel immersive experience. Comparable to rides in the biggest theme parks, Experiment! uses massive digital screens and motion simulation to take passengers from Darlington across the world – and through different time periods – showcasing the story of rail travel up until the modern day and beyond. Reviews from riders have been exceptionally positive both from adults and children alike, making it the perfect addition to any visit.

Councillor Libby McCollom, Cabinet Member for Local Services, said: "Hopetown Darlington has been a fantastic addition to the town, bringing in visitors from across the globe. I look forward to its impressive success continuing into 2025, which will be a key year for tourism in Darlington."

Leona White-Hannant, Hopetown Darlington's Development Director, said: "I'm extremely proud of how much Hopetown Darlington has accomplished in just five months. I'd like to thank our fantastic visitors for coming to enjoy the site, and to our staff, whose hard work is well reflected in Hopetown's success."

Mike Crawshaw, Head of Culture & Heritage at Darlington Borough Council said: "After a fantastic 2024, we have a really exciting programme in store for the 2025 festival year. The Bicentenary Celebrations will no doubt be incredible, and we look forward to welcoming the world to Darlington."

GREAT CENTRAL RAILWAY'S WINTER STEAM GALA TO WELCOME THE NEW YEAR WITH A TRIO OF GUEST LOCOS



the Great Western Railway plus our handsome home fleet. We hope to welcome thousands of people to Leicestershire over the four-day event providing a real boost to the local economy. Thank you to all the railways and locomotive owning groups who have allowed us to put together a once in a lifetime lineup.”

A celebration of steam power featuring an exciting lineup of locomotives and action-packed timetables, the Winter Steam Gala promises a spectacular display of heritage railway action on GCR's unique award-winning double track line. With frequent services from all the GCRs heritage stations, displays and gala attractions, its perfect for both railway enthusiasts and families looking to enjoy a unique weekend experience.

The Winter Steam Gala will run from the January 23rd - 26th. For more information and to buy tickets visit www.gcrailway.co.uk

All attractions appear subject to availability.

GWR Collett tank loco no. 6695 courtesy of the 6695 Locomotive Ltd and the Swindon & Cricklade Railway <https://swindon-cricklade-railway.org/steam/>

GWR heavy freight loco no. 3850 with thanks to Dinmore Manor Locomotive Limited and the Gloucester & Warwickshire Railway <https://www.gwsr.com/our-trains/3850>

Photo: With the early morning goods No. 3850 departs Gotherington on October 27th.

The Great Central Railway is thrilled to announce three very special guest locos to help blow away the January blues at its much-anticipated Winter Steam Gala, one of the country's biggest railway shows, which will run from the January 23rd- 26th 2025.

Visiting the Great Central Railway Winter Steam Gala will be Great Western Railway Collett Tank number 6995, visiting from the Swindon and Cricklade Railway, Great

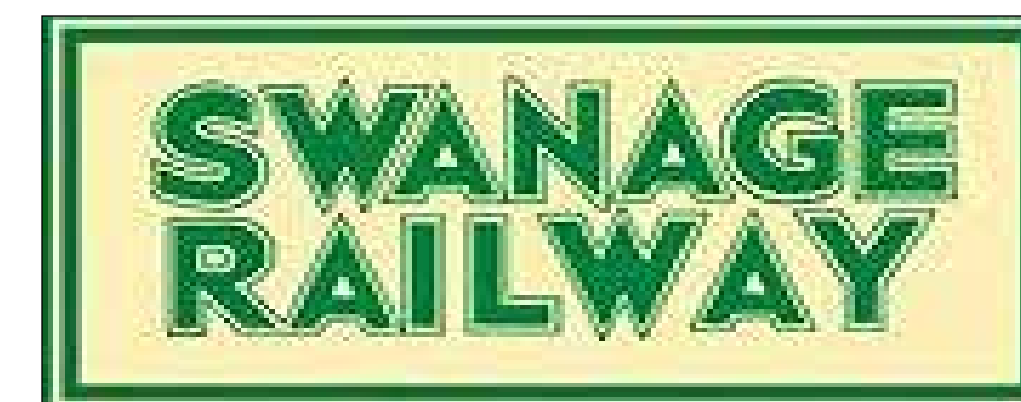
Western Railway Heavy Freight number 3850, from the Gloucester and Warwickshire Railway and joining them will be a brand new loco - Great Western 'Grange' Class Number 6880, 'Betton Grange' which was only completed last year when dedicated enthusiasts completed a dream to rebuild the class of locomotive after all the originals were scrapped.

With passenger and freight trains running all day, as

well as a special twilight train service, the Winter Gala is designed to delight enthusiasts and families alike. The three guests will join the Great Central Railway's home fleet meaning there will be up to eight locomotives steamed up.

General Manager of the Great Central Railway, Malcolm Holmes, said, "What a way to start the year! Three large guest locomotives all representing different eras of

VICTORIAN STEAM LOCOMOTIVE TO 'WHISTLE OFF' MARKING START OF NATIONAL RAILWAY 200 CELEBRATIONS



New Year's Day saw dedicated Swanage Railway volunteers take part in a national 'whistle off' at the start of Railway 200 celebrations marking two hundred years of railway development – and inspiring a new generation of young people to become involved with railways.

At 12 noon on Wednesday, January 1st, 2025, the crew of the Swanage Railway Trust's unique Victorian T3 class steam locomotive No. 563 blew its whistle as the engine departs Swanage station hauling a passenger train bound for Corfe Castle and Norden.

It was in 1885 that a ten-mile branch line railway linking Swanage and Corfe Castle with Wareham, on the main

railway line to London, was opened – an historic move that turned Swanage from a fishing and quarrying town into a popular seaside resort and the picturesque village of Corfe Castle into a desirable day-trip destination.

The locomotive crew proudly blowing the whistle of the 1893 built T3 as it departs Swanage station at 12 noon on New Year's Day will be volunteer driver Billy Johnson from Swanage and volunteer fireman Aidan Strand from Hamworthy in Poole.

Driver Billy Johnson, a dedicated Swanage Railway volunteer for more than 15 years, said: "I am delighted to be taking part in the national 'whistle off' for the Railway

200 celebrations which will be a very special occasion. It's an honour and a privilege.

"There is so much to celebrate in terms of what the railways – both standard and narrow gauge – have contributed to the prosperity and development of the country, as well as the Isle of Purbeck, over the past 200 years," added Billy who also helps to maintain the tracks of the Swanage Railway and lives in Swanage.

The ten-mile Victorian branch line connecting Wareham with Corfe Castle and Swanage also enabled industrial development with stone and ball clay exported out of the Isle of Purbeck by train instead of ship.

The first railway to be built into Dorset opened in 1847 and linked Southampton in Hampshire with Dorchester – passing through Wareham, near the start of the future Swanage branch line almost 40 years later, on its way to Dorset's county town.

Swanage Railway Trust chair, Frank Roberts, said: "The Swanage Railway is proud to be marking the start of the Railway 200 celebrations highlighting the 200th anniversary of the birth of the modern railway which changed Britain and the world.

"Railway 200 celebrates the past, present and future of rail and we are delighted that our two museums – the museum in the restored goods shed at Corfe Castle station and the Purbeck Mining Museum next to Norden station - showcase the important contributions that railways, both standard gauge and narrow gauge, have made to the Isle of Purbeck across almost two centuries. "The controversial closure and demolition of the Swanage branch line in 1972 – and its slow rebirth as the Swanage Railway since 1976 – is part of the stirring Railway 200 story. The Swanage branch line took seven short weeks to demolish and 30 long years to rebuild against the odds," added Frank who lives in Swanage and has been a dedicated volunteer on the Isle of Purbeck heritage line for more than 40 years.

The Swanage Railway celebrates the 140th anniversary of its opening on Tuesday, May 20th 2025. After an almost 40 year battle by Isle of Purbeck businessmen to be allowed to build the ten-mile branch line linking the market town of Wareham with Corfe Castle and Swanage – and after two years of construction work costing more than £80,000 in Victorian money – the first steam train departed Swanage for Corfe Castle and Wareham, on Wednesday May 20th 1885. After being controversially closed by British Rail in January 1972 – with seven miles of track lifted between Swanage, Corfe Castle and Furzebrook in just seven weeks during the summer of 1972 – dedicated Swanage Railway volunteers started their 30 year battle to rebuild the line at a boarded up Swanage station in February, 1976.

Photo: Victorian Swanage station 1880s ©Andrew PM Wright Collection

MAN WHO DROVE BR TRAINS TO SWANAGE DRIVES TRAIN FROM SWANAGE ON 53rd ANNIVERSARY OF LAST BR TRAINS TO THE TOWN



A man who drove diesel trains to Swanage in the dying years of the Purbeck branch line - in the late 1960s and early 1970s - has driven a steam train out of Swanage on the 53rd anniversary of the last British Rail trains to the seaside town.

Mel Cox started as a 15-year-old steam locomotive cleaner at Bournemouth station in 1964 and by the late 1960s he was driving three-carriage 'Hampshire' class diesel-electric multiple unit trains on the ten-mile branch line connecting the main line from London at Wareham with the village of Corfe Castle and the seaside town of Swanage.

After a four-year battle to close the line - which opened in 1885 and was operated with steam locomotives until 1966 when diesel trains took over for the final five years

of the branch line's operation - British Rail ran its last passenger trains on the single track branch line to Corfe Castle and Swanage on Saturday, January 1st 1972.

On Wednesday, January 1st, 2025 - New Year's Day - Mel, who is a Swanage Railway volunteer driver - took to the controls of unique Victorian T3 class steam locomotive No. 563 which was hauling the heritage trains between Swanage, Herston, Harman's Cross, Corfe Castle and Swanage. The T3 was built at Nine Elms in London during 1893.

As the steam train pulled into Corfe Castle station, Mel was welcomed by Bob Richards who was the last British Rail signalman at the village station and who signalled the last British Rail train through Corfe Castle on the evening of Saturday, January 1st, 1972.

At Corfe Castle, Mel and Bob were united with a special piece of Swanage branch line signalling history - an engraved steel tube that was issued by the Corfe Castle signalman to the British Rail train driver as the permission for the train to run on the single track from Corfe Castle down to Swanage and back to Corfe Castle.

Dating from the late 1960s, the historic item - known as a staff and used to prevent two trains from running on the same track - is preserved in the Swanage Railway Trust's museum housed in the restored Victorian goods shed at Corfe Castle station.

Mel said: "It doesn't seem like 53 years since the last British Rail trains ran from Wareham down to Corfe Castle and Swanage - driving them through the lovely Isle of Purbeck was like entering a more leisurely and friendly world.

"Between trains at Swanage station, we used to nip down Station Road to the seafront and buy fish and chips before returning to the station and eating them with the train guard who had also come from Bournemouth station.

"It was great to meet Bob Richards again at Corfe Castle station. Some drivers at Bournemouth didn't like branch line work but I loved it because it was different from the hustle and bustle of the main line at Bournemouth and trains to London Waterloo. The Swanage branch staff were like a family and it was a slower pace of life. It was very sad when the line was closed and the tracks were lifted six months later.

"Like myself, most of the other train drivers and guards at Bournemouth never thought the Swanage Railway would or could be rebuilt - because the task seemed so huge - but several generations of dedicated Swanage Railway volunteers have proved us very wrong.

"It's a privilege to be a Swanage Railway volunteer and drive steam trains through the Purbeck countryside and past the ruins of Corfe Castle. There is a wonderful

camaraderie and thankfully we have young people joining the world of the steam locomotive footplate at Swanage - just like I did at Bournemouth station back in 1964 as a 16-year old.

"The last days of the British Rail branch line to Swanage were very sad because there was the very real prospect of a bypass being built on the redundant railway trackbed through Corfe Castle with the glorious Purbeck stone viaduct and the Victorian station being demolished to make way for the new road," added Mel who lives in Swanage and retired as a main line driver based at Bournemouth station in 2007.

Retired and living in Corfe Castle, Bob Richards said: "It was strange to hold that metal signalling staff that I handed to so many train drivers while I was a signalman at Corfe Castle but it bought back many happy memories of the branch line, the railway staff and the train drivers - including Mel who was a real character and still is.

"It's good to know the signalling staff has been preserved and is on public display in the museum at Corfe Castle station - it's part of the operation and history of the Swanage branch line," added Bob who started his railway career as a station porter at Corfe Castle in 1962 before moving to Swanage station as a shunter in 1964 and then returning to Corfe Castle in 1967 as a signalman.

After the closure of the Swanage branch line in January, 1972, Bob moved to Wareham station signal box from where he retired in 2007 after 45 years working on the railways.

Photo: Mel Cox and Bob Richards with T3 No. 563 at Corfe Castle on January 1st 2025. ©Andrew PM Wright

East Lancs Railway

SR 4-6-2 No. 34081 '92 Squadron' arrived at the East Lancs Railway from the Nene Valley Railway in early December. On its second outing on the ELR, it is seen at Burrs Country Park on December 19th with a lunchtime dining train from Bury to Rawtenstall. *Brian Dobbs*



East Lancs Railway

Recently arrived at the ELR, 'Battle of Britain' Class Pacific No. 34081 '92 Squadron' approaches Summerseat with the first steam service of the day on December 29th. *Gerald Nicholl*



Great Central Railway

On a cold, damp, and foggy day, Deltic Class 55019 'Royal Highland Fusilier' runs round the 10:50 service from Loughborough, at Leicester North, during the Deltic running day on December 28th. *Paul Senior*



Telford Steam Railway

On December 29th, Class 08 757 'Eagle' is seen at Horsehay & Dawley during the lines 'Gronk running day'. This locomotive was built by British Railways at their Horwich Works in 1961. *Richard Hargreaves*

Ruston & Hornsby 0-4-0DM Class 88DS No. 382824 'Hector', this 0-4-0 diesel mechanical loco was built in 1955 as works number 382824. It was purchased privately from F.H. Lloyd and Co. Birmingham in 1981. *Richard Hargreaves*

Class 08 784 was on hire for Polar Express trains and the Gronk running day on December 29th from the Great Central North. This locomotive was built by British Railways at their Derby Works. It entered service (numbered as D3952) on April 23rd 1960. *Richard Hargreaves*



Telford Steam Railway

Class 03 No. D2051 is seen in the shed under restoration on December 29th, No. D2051 was built by British Railways and entered service at Hull Dairycotes on January 27th 1959 and was withdrawn on December 14th 1972 from Colchester. *Richard Hargreaves*



Severn Valley Railway

On December 30th, Class 20 048 and GWR tank engine No. 1450 are seen at Arley.
Richard Hargreaves

Class 20 048 and GWR No. 1450 are seen on Eardington Bank with the 12:25 Bridgnorth - Kidderminster service on December 30th.
Keith Davies

Class 46 045 arrives at Arley on December 30th with a service to Kidderminster.
Richard Hargreaves



Severn Valley Railway

▶ On December 30th, GWR power cars Nos. 43122 and 43094 are seen on Eardington Bank with the 11:05 Kidderminster - Bridgnorth service.

Keith Davies

▶ Class 52 No. D1015 top'n'tail with Class 46 045 climb Eardington Bank with the 13:00 Kidderminster - Bridgnorth service on December 30th.

Keith Davies

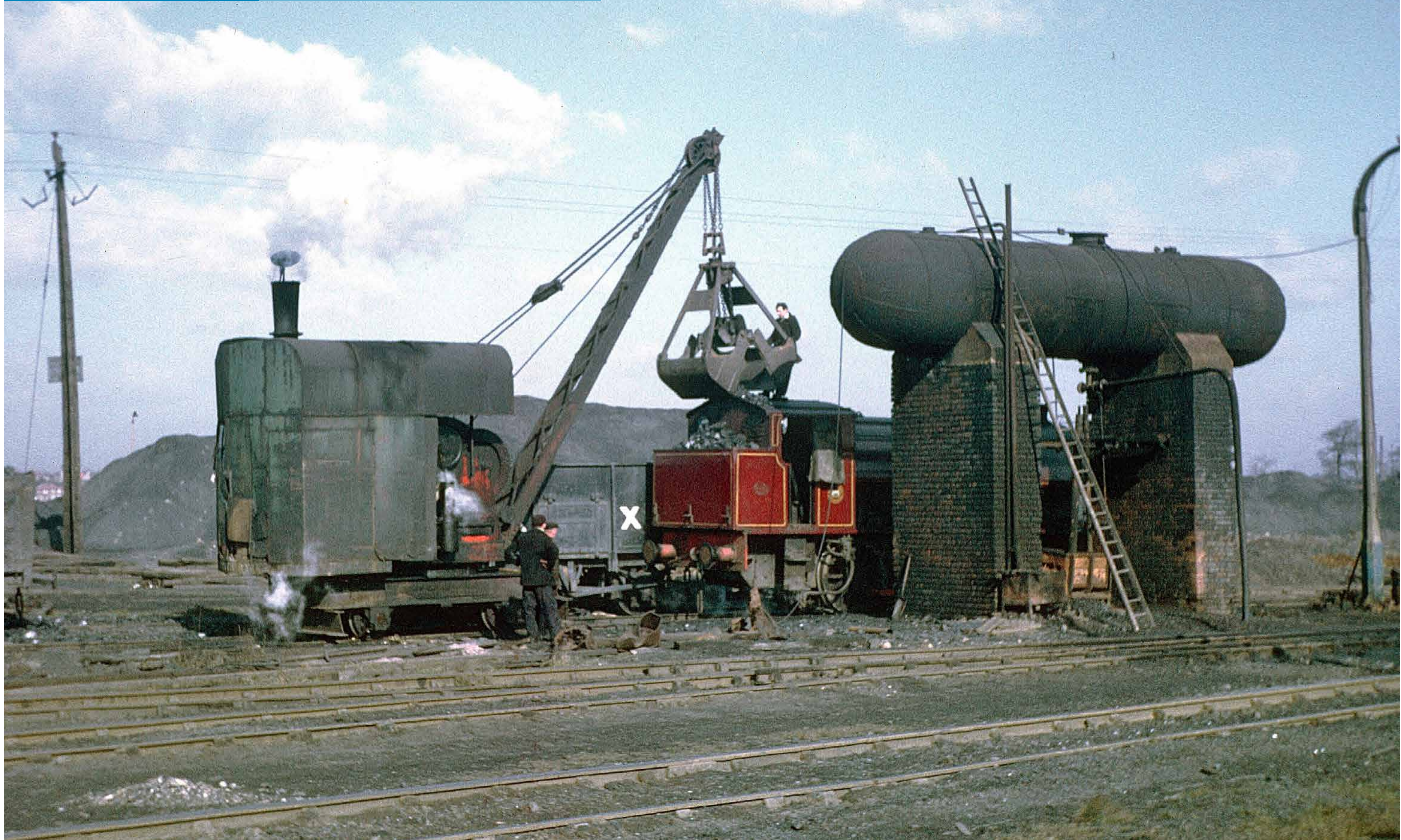
▶ Class 46 045 is seen on Eardington Bank with the 11:05 Bridgnorth - Kidderminster service on December 30th.

Keith Davies



From the Archives

NCB 'Allen', a Hudswell Clark of 1944, is coaled by an antiquated vertical boyled steam crane at Astley Green colliery on March 6th 1968. *John Sloane*



From the Archives

▶ A front end comparison of Class 81 017 and an unidentified Class 304 at Manchester Piccadilly on January 9th, 1982. *Barry Longson*

▶ On standby, Class 25 277 awaits its next duty at Manchester Victoria on January 16th 1982. *Barry Longson*

▶ Having seen its stock released, Class 26 012 moves out of Waverley station on a dull November 14th, 1981. *Barry Longson*



From the Archives

▶ Back in the days of variety, Class 45 050 stands at Manchester Piccadilly on October 31st, 1981 waiting to depart with a service to Harwich.
Barry Longson

▶ Class 47 405 calls at Stalybridge on January 12th 1981 working a transpennine service to Newcastle.
Brian Hewertson

▶ Class 40 145 is seen at Derby on September 19 1981.
Brian Hewertson



From the Archives

▶ Class 25 037 makes a spirited start, away from Edinburgh on an overcast November 14th 1981 with a service to Perth.

Barry Longson

▶ Class 31 327 and unknown classmate stand in the yard at Doncaster on February 15th 1981.

Brian Hewertson

▶ Class 45 118 is seen at Tinsley depot on January 10th 1982. *Brian Hewertson*



From the Archives

On August 11th, 2009, Beyer Peacock 0-4-0ST, works No. 1827, built 1979, presently at the Foxfield Steam Railway, and 0-4-0+0-4-0T No. 6841, built in 1937, and named 'William Francis' were outside the former Liverpool Road Warehouse, This latter locomotive worked at Baddersley Colliery, Warwickshire, and is currently on display at Bressingham Steam Museum. *Brian Dobbs*



From the Archives

Beyer Peacock 0-6-0 No. 957, built 1887 for the Lancashire & Yorkshire Railway, with a demonstration freight on August 13th 2009, and is now based at Bolton Abbey & Embsay Steam Railway. The internal railway at MOSI is now dismantled as a result of the bridge works for the Ordsall Lane Chord. *Brian Dobbs*



From the Archives

▶ Class 55 No. D9020 'Nimbus' awaits its next turn in York shed yard on June 3rd 1968.

John Sloane

▶ A Class 305 unit leads a working to Shoeburyness as it whisks past the DLR station at Shadwell on October 26th 1987. *John Sloane*

▶ No. 46229 'Duchess of Hamilton' is in sparkling condition following restoration as it coasts through Church Fenton with 'The Limited Edition' excursion on May 10th 1980.

John Sloane



From the Archives

Class 25 061 sits in Springs Branch shed yard and basks in the evening sunlight of May 14th 1980.

John Sloane



From the Archives

DB97702 and DB97701 were converted from a Class 501 unit to become a battery locomotive for use on the Merseyside electric system. Here they stand outside Birkenhead North depot on May 2nd 1988.
John Sloane

