



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 232

In the news this month, Porterbrook acquires Corelink fleets.....

Rolling stock financier Porterbrook has completed a deal to acquire 404 vehicles owned by Corelink Rail Infrastructure Limited (Corelink). The fleet of 324 Class 730 Aventra electric and 80 Class 196 diesel units, operated by West Midland Trains (WMT), serve passengers on regional and long-distance routes between London, Birmingham, and Liverpool. Together, they account for 60% of WMT's network operations.

Mary Grant, Porterbrook CEO, said: "West Midlands Trains has been one of our largest customers for over 15 years and this latest transaction solidifies that partnership for the future. It also completes a programme of more than £1 billion of capital deployed during the last five years in new trains, fleet upgrades, traction innovation, and rail infrastructure."

The five-car Aventras will be stabled and maintained at the Bletchley Train Maintenance Depot. Last year the site was upgraded with modern sidings, inspection facilities, new overhead electrified lines, and gantries following Porterbrook's £66 million investment.

Corelink is a joint venture between Infracapital and Pan-European Infrastructure II, a fund managed and advised by DWS Group & GmbH Co KGaA.

Tom Crawley, managing director at Infracapital, said: "We are proud to have established Corelink with DWS, delivering a modern and energy-efficient fleet that provides a reliable commuter experience across the West Midlands rail network. We believe Porterbrook is well-positioned to continue supporting Corelink's mission to deliver dependable and sustainable rail transport in the UK."

Hamish Mackenzie, Partner and Global Head of Infrastructure at DWS, commented: "Corelink is a core infrastructure asset that provides an essential rail transportation service to key routes in the United Kingdom. The successful sale of Corelink by Pan-European Infrastructure II showcases DWS's experience across the transportation sector and its active asset management expertise."

Also in the news, and top marks and much praise go to Greater Anglia who advise that..... Customers and staff have helped provide more than 1,900 meals for people in crisis this winter, following a successful series of foodbank collections at stations across West Essex and Hertfordshire.

Donation points were available from October 20th to December 14th at Bishop's Stortford, Harlow Town, Harlow Mill, Sawbridgeworth and Stansted Mountfitchet stations, giving customers the opportunity to support local communities by donating

essential items while travelling.

In total, around 800kg of food was collected, equivalent to 1,904 meals for individuals and families accessing local foodbanks. Donations also included much needed toiletries, sanitary products and household essentials. A staff raffle raised an additional £210 to support the initiative. Further funds were raised thanks to Greater Anglia Train Presentation colleague Lloyd Griffin, who played the electric organ at Bishop's Stortford station and collected £305 in donations.

All items and funds raised were delivered to foodbanks in Harlow, Sawbridgeworth and Bishop's Stortford, helping to ensure support reached people most in need during the winter period. The initiative was organised by Michael King, a relief ticket office clerk at Sawbridgeworth and Stansted Mountfitchet stations. He was supported by colleagues including Harlow Town ticket office supervisor Paul Hall, train presentation team member Lloyd Griffin, and roster clerk Lorraine Portnow. Special thanks were also extended to Laura Todd, a Special Educational Needs and Disability Careers Advisor at Essex County Council, who made a generous personal contribution.

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

On December 19th, Class 57 008 and 57 314 'Conway Castle' approach Northampton while working 5Z51, the 05:00 Carnforth Steamtown to Salisbury East Yard ECS move. [Derek Elston](#)

Front Cover

GWR power car No. 43156 leading 2C11 10:14 Plymouth - Penzance across The Royal Albert Bridge into Cornwall with 43189 on the rear on December 12th.

[Barry Beeston](#)



South Western Railway’s Class 450 009 heads through Raynes Park on December 13th with a service to London Waterloo. *Paul Godding*

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With Thanks

Once again many thanks to the many people who have contributed, it really makes our task of putting these magazines together a joy when we see so many great photos.

These issues wouldn’t be possible without contributions from:

Michael J Alderdice, John Alsop, Steve Andrews, Ray Anslow, Mark Armstrong, John Balaam, Brian Battersby, Steven Beesley, Barry Beeston, Mark Bennett, Michael Bennett, Ben Bucki, Ian Callander, Keith Chapman, Steve Chapman, Julian Churchill, Russell Clarke, Nick Clemson, Keith Davies, Brian Dobbs, Derek Elston, Eddie Emmott,

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Pathfinder Tours

The Pathfinder Finale

On December 20th, Pathfinder ran its last railtour after 52 years, 1Z52 Salisbury to Manchester Victoria then a mini tour round the North West via Copy Pit seen here arriving at Manchester Victoria led by Class 52 No. D1015 'Western Champion' with Class 57 314 on the rear. *Russell Clarke*

Wizzo No. D1015 'Western Champion' approaches Stone on December 20th working 1Z52 Salisbury - Lostock Hall. *Richard Hargreaves*

Class 57 314 is seen on the rear of the tour as it heads through Stone on December 20th, working 1Z52 Salisbury - Lostock Hall. *Richard Hargreaves*



Charter Scene

Pathfinder Tours

The Pathfinder Finale

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Diesel Traction Group's Wizzo No. D1015 'Western Champion' passes through Daisy Hill with 1Z52 Salisbury - Manchester Victoria on December 20th. *Dave Harris*



Charter Scene

Pathfinder Tours

The Pathfinder Finale

No. D1015 'Western Champion' passes through Hindley with 1Z52 Salisbury - Manchester Victoria - Lostock Hall on December 20th.

Jeff Nicholls



Charter Scene

Pathfinder Tours

The Pathfinder Finale

The final Pathfinder tour ran on December 20th and operated from Salisbury to Manchester. It is seen here approaching the unusual environs at Heaton Norris Junction near Stockport headed by D1015 which in a nod to the Tour operator was renumbered to represent long last sister D1001 'Western Pathfinder'. However the irony didn't end there as the train was worked from Salisbury to Gloucester by Class 57 008 which in a previous life was 47 060 and which operated the first Pathfinder tour under the F&W banner and lastly the company had been in business for 52 years, perhaps the use of the Western locomotive. A fitting finale. *Lee Stanford*



Charter Scene

Pathfinder Tours

The Pathfinder Finale

'Western Champion' roars into life as it crosses Lostock Hall Junction with 'The Pathfinder Finale' tour returning to Salisbury on December 20th. *John Sloane*



Charter Scene

Pathfinder Tours

The Pathfinder Finale

'The Pathfinder Finale' railtour on December 20th attracted a good crowd at Manchester Victoria, with No. D1015 'Western Champion' (numbered D1001 'Western Pathfinder' on one side) pictured arriving. *Bryan Roberts*



Charter Scene

Pathfinder Tours

The Pathfinder Finale

'Western Champion' arrives at Birmingham New Street with Pathfinders' final tour from Salisbury to Manchester and Lostock Hall on December 20th. *Chris Morrison*



Pathfinder Tours

The Pathfinder Finale

Western Class 52 No. D1015, carrying the identity of No. D1001 'Western Pathfinder' on the nearside only, powers through Stafford on December 20th, heading to Manchester and onwards to Lostock Hall. *Chris Morrison*

Wizzo No. D1015 'Western Champion' heads through Stoke on Trent on December 20th working 1Z52 Salisbury - Lostock Hall. *Richard Hargreaves*

No. D1015 departs Warrington Bank Quay after a crew change on the return journey from Manchester Victoria to Salisbury. *Chris Morrison*



Charter Scene Saphos Trains

The Bath Market Christmas Express

On December 4th, No. 71000 'Duke of Gloucester' top'n'tail with Class 57 311 on 1A71 Dorridge to Bath Spa heads through a very soggy Reading. Colin Pidgeon



Charter Scene

Vintage Trains

The Polar Express

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GWR Castle Class No. 5043 'Earl of Mount Edgumbe' passes Widney Manor with the 19:52 Dorridge - Birmingham Moor Street 'Polar Express' on December 13th. *Chris Morrison*



Charter Scene Northern Belle

Northern Belle

On December 20th, Class 57 313 'Scarborough Castle' heads a circular excursion from Woodlesford through Farington Curve Junction with 57 315 at the rear. *John Sloane*



Charter Scene Statesman Rail

The Bath Christmas Statesman

On December 11th, the 1Z47 Chesterfield to Bath Spa heads through Swindon top'n'tailed by Class 47s Nos. D1924 and D1935.

Colin Pidgeon



Charter Scene ECS and Light Engine Moves

Two tone green Class 47 No. D1924 'Crewe Diesel Depot' leads LSL's ECS move 5Z50 10:30 Crewe H.S. to Southall Loco Services Ltd. through Northampton on December 19th.

Derek Elston



Charter Scene

ECS and Light Engine Moves

West Coast's Class 47 832 was to be found stabled at London Euston on December 13th.

Paul Godding

Class 20 142 'Sir John Betjeman' and 20 189 running light engine as 0Z20, the 10:20 Kidderminster S.V.R. to Ashford Crane Depot approach Northampton on December 23rd.

Derek Elston

No. 71000 'Duke of Gloucester' passes Northampton with its support coach as 5Z31, the 06:56 Crewe H.S. to Southall Loco Services Ltd. on December 1st. *Derek Elston*



Charter Scene

ECS and Light Engine Moves

On December 5th, the 0Z41 East Lancs Railway to Crewe sees Class 40s Nos. D213 'Andania' and 40 012 'Aureol' about to pass Mills Hill.

Russell Clarke

On December 5th, the 0Z41 East Lancs Railway to Crewe sees Class 40s Nos. D213 'Andania' and 40 012 'Aureol' about to pass Culcheth.

Jeff Nicholls

Inter City liveried 47593 'Galloway Princess' brings up the rear of LSL's ECS move 5Z50, 10:30 Crewe H.S. to Southall Loco Services Ltd. through Northampton on December 19th.

Derek Elston



Charter Scene

ECS and Light Engine Moves

▶ Class 37 409 heads north through a very wet Winwick on December 23rd with empty stock from LSL at Crewe to the Bo'ness Railway.

Jeff Nicholls

▶ Class 37 409 'Loch Awe' and 37 401 'Mary Queen of Scots' catch the low sunlight on December 8th as they pass Coppull on a move from Crewe to Upperby. *John Sloane*

▶ Preserved/Privatey Owned Class 86 259 (No. E3137) passes light engine through Lancaster heading from West Coast's Carnforth Depot to Burton OT Wetmore Sidings. *Michael Lynam*



Avanti West Coast

Class 390 151 displaying its Poppy livery is seen departing Lancaster with a service to Glasgow Central. *Michael Lynam*



Avanti West Coast introduces pioneering initiative for employees to submit ideas

Avanti West Coast has introduced a pioneering initiative that utilises technology to capture and develop employee ideas – marking a first for the rail industry.

Titled 'Ignite a Change' the program provides employees with an innovative technology platform to submit suggestions to improve the business and customer experience.

Working with Sideways 6, an idea management software company, the intercity operator launched an online platform for the initiative – where all staff can share their proposals to address a specific business challenge – offering a unique way for them to interact on ideas.

The cloud-based technology, which is accessed on the web or via an app, has been integrated with tools already used by Avanti West Coast staff.

Powered by AI, the idea management software puts together similar ideas and suggests related topics – helping employees to collaborate and refine submissions. It also automates the process of capturing, reviewing and acting on suggestions. This means every idea is acknowledged.

Using existing online platforms, including Microsoft Teams, to engage directly with staff about their proposed solutions, the initiative is a unique approach by the train operator and a first for the rail industry.

Available to all employees, Ignite a Change enables company-wide collaboration and is designed to bring more people into the ideas process by giving them the opportunity to view, comment or engage with suggestions.

Proposals that will soon be implemented include giving staff the ability to apologise and resolve customer problems on the spot, as well as improving onboard announcements.

Anita Brown, Head of Innovation and Engagement at Avanti West Coast, said: "Our people have amazing ideas to improve how we deliver our service. Ignite a Change is about helping our staff to make those happen.

"The initiative has given us a brilliant opportunity to partner with Sideways 6 to do something pioneering for the rail industry. We've created a simple, user-friendly platform where anyone can quickly share their suggestions. By harnessing the ideas of our staff in this way, we can make a significant and far-reaching impact on the customer experience across the West Coast and beyond."

Simon Dance, CEO of Sideways 6's parent company Interact Software, said: "Partnering with Avanti West Coast on this initiative has been a brilliant opportunity to bring the power of employee ideas to the forefront of the rail industry. At Interact, we believe that when organisations truly listen to their people, innovation follows. With Sideways 6 employee ideas sit at the heart of that belief, helping companies capture ideas at scale and turn them into meaningful outcomes. By combining our employee ideas technology with the tools Avanti's teams already use every day, we're proud to support a more open, collaborative culture where every employee has a voice, and every suggestion has the potential to drive real impact."

Avanti West Coast

Class 805 001 is at the rear of Wigan to Carlisle working during the Preston blockade on January 2nd, seen heading away from Lostock Hall Junction. *John Sloane*

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Flintshire bakery celebrates 10 years serving the West Coast Main Line

A catering supplier based in North Wales has celebrated its 10-year anniversary serving customers across the West Coast Main Line. The Pudding Compartment, a small bakery in Flint overlooking the North Wales stretch of the network, started creating products for intercity services over a decade ago. Since then, over seven million individual items made by the bakery have been enjoyed by customers travelling between London and North Wales, Scotland and the north west. Working alongside Avanti West Coast since 2019, the business celebrated with some bespoke bakes made for the long-distance operator.

Starting out on their journey in Abergele, The Pudding Compartment consisted of just

three employees, catering to predominantly small businesses in North Wales. As a result of their popularity amongst customers travelling across the West Coast Main Line, the team of employees has since grown to 10 times its size. The bakery's most sought after offering on Avanti West Coast's menu is its shortbread, which has evolved over the last decade, changing flavour to shape to keep up with current trends.

Its popularity has been solely responsible for the employment of staff, as each biscuit is required to be carefully wrapped by hand before it makes its journey between North Wales and the major UK cities the operator serves. Alongside regular menu items, The Pudding Compartment has created bespoke

bakes for the operator over the years. These include Uncle Joe's Mint Ball brownie – the collaborative project between the bakery, Uncle Joe's (a traditional sweet company based in Wigan) and Avanti West Coast Train Manager, Helen May – who came up with the recipe. The brownie was originally planned as a limited-edition treat, however it was so popular that it became a permanent feature on the operator's First Class menu and is still being made in the Flintshire bakery today.

Avanti's link to The Pudding Compartment highlights its commitment to championing small businesses local to the West Coast Main Line. The operator has a key focus on sourcing products for its First Class menu and onboard shop through suppliers close

to its network – helping to reduce its carbon footprint and shine a light on the smaller producers that are at the heart of the communities it serves.

Steve West, Director of the Pudding Compartment, said: "It has been an honour to serve the customers of the West Coast Main Line for the last decade. Being able to see Avanti's trains pass by the window of our bakery knowing there are customers onboard enjoying our products is something that still makes me and the rest of the team smile every day. There's no doubt that the relationship we have with Avanti has added towards the success of our business. We receive some lovely feedback from customers all over the UK and the majority

of that has come from people who have tried our products whilst travelling along the West Coast. We hope that customers continue to enjoy our products in the years to come, and we're excited to see where our combined ideas will take us next!"

Rob Taylor, Food and Beverage Manager at Avanti West Coast, said: "It's been a pleasure collaborating with Steve and The Pudding Compartment team for so many years. They capture everything we love about the small businesses we work with – a close-knit team who are proud of their Welsh heritage, and who don't take the success of their products on our services for granted. We're already looking forward to some of the collaborative projects we have coming up in the future that we know our customers will love too!"



Charity farewell event to celebrate Chiltern Railways' Mark III fleet

A special one-off train journey is being organised by Chiltern Railways to say farewell to its iconic British Rail-era coaches and raise funds for the Railway Children charity.

On Sunday February 22nd, the operator will run a farewell event for its Mark III coaches, which were built in the 1970s and have been with Chiltern since 2010.

The Mark III coaches, and the locomotives that haul them, will leave by the end of March and Chiltern is replacing them with a newer, bigger fleet of modern coaches and locomotives during the course of 2026.

The special trip is being hosted by the Branch Line Society, with support from volunteers,

and proceeds from ticket sales will go to the Railway Children charity, which supports thousands of vulnerable children alone and at risk on the streets and on the rail network in the UK, Tanzania and India.

The day trip will start by running north from Banbury to Stourbridge, then run the entirety of the Chiltern Main Line up to London Marylebone, before the train returns to Banbury in the evening.

Richard Allan, Managing Director of Chiltern Railways, said: "I am thrilled that we are celebrating these iconic coaches which have served our customers for many years. This special and unique journey is a wonderful opportunity to say farewell to the

Mark III coaches and to raise money for the brilliant Railway Children charity."

Jack Miller, Group Director of Fundraising and Marketing, at Railway Children, said "We are consistently humbled by the generosity and commitment from our friends right across the rail family.

"This event, thanks to Chiltern Railways and Branch Line Society is a wonderful example of the industry uniting through a landmark occasion to support some of the world's most vulnerable children. This will be an incredible event that will create a fitting legacy."



CrossCountry

▶ Class 220 024 runs past Heaton Norris Junction on December 20th, working the 09:00 Bristol Temple Meads to Manchester Piccadilly service. *Barry Longson*

▼ Class 221 124 is seen on Stockport Viaduct on a rare sunny day on December 3rd, working the 12:05 Manchester Piccadilly to Bournemouth service. *Barry Longson*



DB Cargo

On December 16th, Class 66 050 heads through Warrington Bank Quay with a Knowsley to Wilton working. *Mark Enderby*

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DB Cargo

Class 66 088 awaits the road to Knowsley as it stands at the approach to Rainford with an empty binliner from Wilton on December 12th.

John Sloane

Class 66 096 leads 6M45, the 06:53 Dollands Moor Sidings to Daventry International Railfreight Reception Rfd loaded water train through Northampton on December 23rd.

Derek Elston

In failing light on December 4th, Class 66 109 'Teesport Express' hurries through Leyland with a Seaforth to Mossend intermodal working.

John Sloane



DB Cargo

▶ A Binliner at Golborne is an almost daily occurrence...but only the loaded train. For a couple of days before Christmas, the Wilton - Knowsley empty train was routed via the West Coast Main Line. On Christmas Eve, Class 66 125 was photographed heading north with this working. *Jeff Nicholls*

▶ Class 66 653 passes Kemspeye with 6V75 09:31 Dee Marsh Reception Sidings - Margam T.C. on December 13th. *Keith Davies*

▶ The 10:20 Trafford Park to Didcot is seen at Mauldeth Road on December 13th behind Class 66 065. *Lee Stanford*



A sunny Christmas Eve sees Class 66 142 heading beneath the East Lancs Road at Golborne with a loaded 'Binliner' from Knowsley to Wilton. In the distance, the West Pennine Moors can be seen.
Jeff Nicholls



DB Cargo

▶ Class 66 170 passes Lidlington station on December 19th with 6M75, the 11:52 Forders Sidings to Acton T.C. empties. *Derek Elston*

▶ Class 66 652 passes Kempseye on December 19th with 6V75 09:31 Dee Marsh Reception Sidings - Margam T.C. *Keith Davies*

▶ On December 8th, Class 66 106 eventually departs Swindon East Loop after waiting some 25 minutes with 6C03 Northolt Sidings to Severnside Sita with Domestic and Industrial Waste from London. You have to feel sorry for passengers waiting on platform 4 as this train crawled along the length of that platform and deposits the 'odour' from its contents!!
Ken Mumford



DB Cargo

Class 66 065 with the 4021 Trafford Park - Southampton Western Docks heads through Stafford on December 16th.

Richard Hargreaves

Class 66 097 with the 4L32 Trafford Park - Felixtowel passes through Stafford on December 16th. *Richard Hargreaves*

On December 8th, Class 66 206 hauls a well laden 4L45, the 10:02 Normanton Wakefield Europort to Felixstowe North past Oakenshaw Junction. *Tim Saunders*





DB Cargo

Class 66 109 'Teesport Express' is seen at Bickerscliffe with the 6E26 Knowsley to Wilton loaded refuse train. *Brian Dobbs*



Direct Rail Services

Class 68 002 roars up Boars Head Bank out of Wigan on December 27th whilst working the 4S44 service from Daventry to Coatbridge.
John Sloane



Direct Rail Services

Class 66 429 speeds through Euxton on December 17th with the 4S44 service from Daventry to Coatbridge. *John Sloane*



Direct Rail Services

On December 17th, Class 68 023 heads through Crewe working 0B32 Gresty Bridge - Longsight.
Richard Hargreaves

Class 68 005 approaches Preston with an intermodal working from Coatbridge-Daventry.
Michael Lynam

Class 66 432 and 66 434 on a 0Z32 Crewe DRS - Daventry light engine move head through Stafford on December 16th.
Richard Hargreaves



Direct Rail Services

▶ Class 88 008 with the 4M27 Coatbridge - Daventry heads through Stafford on December 4th. *Richard Hargreaves*

▶ Class 88 006 working the 4M27 Coatbridge - Daventry heads through Stafford on December 16th. *Richard Hargreaves*

▶ Class 88 009 passes through Lancaster with an intermodal service from Coatbridge - Daventry. *Michael Lynam*





Direct Rail Services host charity photoshoot

Direct Rail Services (DRS) organised a first-of-its-kind charity event in Cumbria.

The expert rail freight operator staged a photoshoot featuring one of its outstanding Class 68 locomotives and all 25 of its JNA wagons on the Cumbrian Coast Line, the first time a stationary photoshoot has been arranged on the main line at night.

The event took place on December 18th 2025, just outside Maryport, where people donated to Eden Valley Hospice for the unique opportunity to photograph the train from a private viewing point. Visitors were safely positioned well away from the tracks, and the train was stopped for 10 minutes to allow them to capture their shots.

The DRS team worked with Network Rail to ensure the event went smoothly and to time, and the train and surrounding area were specially illuminated with floodlights to create the perfect setting.

A total of £580 was raised for the charity – who provide specialist care for adults in north Cumbria who have life-limiting conditions – and the charity is an organisation close to many at DRS.

The JNA wagons are used to carry bulk aggregate and DRS has recently been using them in its work with Nuclear Waste Services' Low Level Waste Repository site in Cumbria. They have replaced thousands of lorry journeys and saved hundreds of tonnes of

CO2 emissions.

Joseph Nicholson, DRS Operations Planner and organiser of the event, said: "This was a fantastic opportunity to raise money for Eden Valley Hospice and also show off how brilliant our trains look at night.

"Many people thought it couldn't be done, but everyone came together to make it such a success. I would like to thank Network Rail, the landowner, and all my DRS colleagues."

Photo: Class 68 and JNA wagons ©Joseph Nicholson



East Midlands Railway

On a bright December 20th at Heaton Norris, Class 170 201 and 170 503 are seen working the 07:52 Norwich to Liverpool Lime Street service. *Barry Longson*



Freightliner

Class 90 008 and 90 042 approach the top of Boars Head Bank on December 6th with a Daventry to Coatbridge working. *John Sloane*

Class 66 568 passes Northampton with 4038, the 09:30 Lawley Street F.L.T. to Southampton M.C.T. on December 23rd. *Derek Elston*

Class 66 525 trundles through Northampton with 4L60, the 07:20 Trafford Park F.L.T. to London Gateway on December 23rd. *Derek Elston*



Freightliner

On December 3rd, Class 66 616 had charge of 6H59 the 11:55 Ashburys to Dowlow empty box wagons, seen at Stockport. *Barry Longson*

The low winter sun highlights the side of the 02:26 London Gateway to Trafford Park as it approaches Mauldeth Road on December 13th led by Class 90 012 and 90 049 with 66 597 dead in the train. *Lee Stanford*

Class 66 508 had charge of 6J34 11:01 Runcorn Folly Lane to Wilton loaded waste on December 20th and was captured at Heaton Norris, Stockport. *Barry Longson*



Freightliner

▶ Class 66 548 approaches Heaton Norris Junction on December 20th with a slightly delayed Runcorn to Brindle Heath waste train.
Lee Stanford

▶ The classic view of a train leaving Eastleigh sees Class 66 567 about to pass under Campbell Road bridge on December 16th working the 06:47 Crewe Basford Hall to Southampton.
Lee Stanford

▶ The 10:48 Leeds to Southampton container service passes Chesterfield on December 16th hauled by Class 66 508 with 66 952 DIT.
Lee Stanford



Freightliner

Class 90 045 and 90 021 approach Farington Curve Junction on December 20th at the head of the 4M83 from Coatbridge to Crewe.

John Sloane

Class 90 049 and 90 012 head through Stafford on December 16th with 4L67 Trafford Park - Felixtowe. *Richard Hargreaves*

Class 90 039 and 90 009 are seen at Farington Curve Junction on December 20th with a Daventry to Grangemouth intermodal service.

John Sloane



Freightliner

▶ Class 90 016 and 90 011 climb Boars Head Bank on December 27th with the 4S49 service from Daventry to Grangemouth. *John Sloane*

▶ On a wet December 4th, Class 90 045 and 90 006 head through Stafford working 4L67 Trafford Park - Felixtowe. *Richard Hargreaves*

▶ Class 66 569 'Gerald 'The Rule Book' Riley' heads through Coventry on engineers duties on November 2nd. *Pete Holloway*





FREIGHTLINER AGREE DEAL WITH PORTERBROOK FOR 150 INTERMODAL WAGONS

A new agreement between Freightliner and Porterbrook will see 150 new Intermodal Wagons on the UK railway. The wagons will be built by WH Davis a UK based independent manufacturer. Aligning with Porterbrook's core growth strategy, this deal supports Freightliner's position as the UK's largest intermodal freight operator, in addition to aiding the government's net zero target.

The wagons will begin to arrive in Q1 of 2027, with a new design based on 40ft platforms which allow greater efficiencies in the transportation of container volumes and around a 7% carbon reduction versus 60ft platforms.

Max Ordish, Head of Freight & Commercial Projects for Porterbrook, said: "Porterbrook is delighted to be working with strategic partners Freightliner and WH Davis on this innovative and decarbonised solution for the intermodal

market. The order of this new wagon design serves as a landmark deal in our portfolio and will help our customer achieve greater efficiencies and fewer carbon emissions in its future operations."

Andy Houghton, Managing Director for WH Davis, said: "As Managing Director of WH Davis, part of Buckland Rail, I'm proud to be working alongside Porterbrook and Freightliner on this innovative, low-carbon solution for the intermodal market. Securing this order for our new wagon design represents a significant milestone for our business, and we are looking forward to building on the collaborative relationship between the three companies."

Wabtec will be supplying the bogies for the new wagons

Tim Bentley, Group Vice President Regional Services for Wabtec UK, said: "Wabtec Corporation is proud to collaborate with Freightliner, WH Davies, and Porterbrook on this exciting project. Our Axiom TF20+ bogie design, together with Wabtec's UIC brake equipment, has been selected for the new wagons. This will deliver key life cycle benefits, including extended wheel life, fuel savings, and reduced track access charges. We look forward to working closely with our partners to successfully deliver this program and provide lasting value to our customers."

Data from The Office of Road and Rail (ORR) shows that between April and June of 2025 4,088 million net tonne kilometres of rail freight was moved proving that the rail freight industry is growing and easing both traffic and emissions in UK transport.

Freightliner

On December 16th, Class 66 420 passes through Ashley with a Bin train from Bredbury - Runcorn Folly Lane. *Michael Lynam*

Class 66 569 passes through Swindon on December 16th working 4L33 Wentloog to London Gateway. *Colin Pidgeon*

Class 66 603 with 6Z42 Tytherington to Appleford heads through Swindon on December 11th. *Ken Mumford*





FREIGHTLINER DELIVERS HYDROGEN BY RAIL FOR THE FIRST TIME

Network Rail, working with rail and energy partners Freightliner and GeoPura, has transported hydrogen for the first time on Britain's rail network, marking a major step forward for both the rail and energy sectors. The milestone was achieved on December 3rd at Network Rail's Test Tracks* site in Tuxford, where freight operator Freightliner hauled a train of gas containers from Doncaster to High Marnham – marking Britain's first shipment of hydrogen by rail. It was part of a rail and energy industry innovation event showcasing several hydrogen initiatives. This included the first re-engineered hydrogen-powered shunting locomotive – seen as a step towards replacing diesel – another milestone towards the rail industry's goal of becoming net zero. The event also demonstrated HPU hydrogen-powered generators, lighting towers and support vehicles.

Network Rail's site at Tuxford runs all the way to High Marnham, where it sits adjacent to HyMarnham Power, the UK's largest green hydrogen production facility operated by GeoPura and JG Pears. Built on the site of a former coal-fired power station, HyMarnham Power is one of the world's first rail-connected hydrogen production facilities, and Network Rail's Tuxford site will be the world's first net-zero railway testing facility.

Currently, hydrogen is transported by road. This breakthrough marks a major step towards the rail network becoming a ready-made hydrogen distribution system, a rolling pipeline, with connections to all major industrial and urban centres across Britain – proving the practical capability of rail to transport hydrogen at scale. Hydrogen will also be utilised to decarbonise wider rail operations, from construction to ongoing maintenance and off-grid operations.

Leevan Finney, Network Rail's engineering services director, said: "Rail is the greenest form of long-distance transport, and we, as an industry, are working hard to decarbonise transport and achieve net zero. For 200 years the railway has connected communities and major industry across Britain. The railway has the potential to be a strategic hydrogen distribution network in the future, as it has been for energy for many years.

"By bringing together rail and energy innovators here at Test Tracks in Tuxford, we're accelerating Britain's journey to net zero and showing how rail and energy sectors can work together to deliver sustainable transport and energy distribution."

Andrew Cunningham, CEO, GeoPura, said: "Hydrogen has a vital role in removing diesel from Britain's rail network, providing zero-emission power where electrification alone cannot reach. Excitingly, we're also showing that the rail network is a great way of transporting clean fuel to connected customers who can't get the power they need from the traditional distribution grid. By supplying locally produced green hydrogen from HyMarnham Power to this first-of-its-kind rail application, we're showing that clean fuel, proven technology and existing rail infrastructure work together right now to cut carbon and improve air quality across the network. GeoPura is delighted to support Network Rail and its partners as they show what the future of a net-zero railway looks like in practice."

The event at the Test Tracks site in Tuxford was held in partnership with organisations across the rail and energy sectors, including Freightliner, HyMarnham Power, GeoPura, Vanguard Sustainable Transport Solutions, Enspered Consulting, Rail Operations Group, Toyota UK and JCB.

*Test Tracks are the longest railway testing facilities in Europe, with over 40 miles (62 kilometres) of track across two diverse sites – Melton Mowbray in Leicestershire and Tuxford in Nottinghamshire.

Freightliner

▶ Class 66 606 passes Walton Old Jct. on December 29th working Ince to Crewe sand empties. *Mark Enderby*

▶ On December 8th, Class 66 509 'Freightliner Retirement Association' heads through Swindon working 4L33 Wentloog - London Gateway. *Ken Mumford*

▶ Class 70 020 working the 6B71 Tunstead - Northampton passes through a wet Stafford on December 4th. *Richard Hargreaves*



GBRf

▶ Class 66 706 approaches Ashley with an aggregate train from Tunstead Sidings - Small Heath on December 16th. *Michael Lynam*

▶ Class 60 056 'Great Gable' runs slowly through Leyland with a Horton to Brindle Heath stone train at sunset on December 4th. *John Sloane*

▶ Class 66 746 runs through Euxton in the rain with a working from Mossend to Doncaster St. Catherines Junction on December 1st. *John Sloane*



6M31, the 09:23 Doncaster Down Decoy GB Railfreight to Arcow Quarry empties, passes Crofton West Junction on December 8th led by Class 66 733. *Tim Saunders*

Class 66 772 passes Winwick Jct. on December 11th with a Biomass train from Liverpool Biomass Terminal - Drax AES. *Michael Lynam*

Class 60 056 zigzags across all four tracks to access the Blackburn line with a rake of empty box wagons from Tuebrook - Horton Quarry, at Farrington Jct. on December 11th. *Michael Lynam*



Class 66 704 'Colchester Power Signalbox' passes Salford Central on December 20th with Biomass empties from Drax to Liverpool.

Bryan Roberts

Class 66 302 with the 6G99 Tunstead - Banbury stone heads through Stafford on December 16th. *Richard Hargreaves*

Class 66 719 with the 6G92 Tunstead - Small Heath passes through Stafford on December 4th. *Richard Hargreaves*



Class 66 791 is seen at Winwick with 6E10, Liverpool Biomass Terminal to Drax on December 16th. *Brian Dobbs*

Class 66 587 with the 6B71 Tunstead - Northampton Castle Yard heads through Stafford on December 16th. *Richard Hargreaves*

Class 66 736 with the 6M90 Avonmouth - Clitheroe cement heads through Stafford on December 20th. *Richard Hargreaves*



On December 9th, Class 66 718 arrives at Wickford with a RHTT working where it will terminate. The working would normally carry on down to Southend Victoria and would be in daylight hours. Class 66 763 was on the rear. *Charlie Robbins*



Class 66 758 'The Pavior' is highlighted by the low winter sun as it passes Stockport on December 3rd working the 07:26 Liverpool to Drax Biomass service. *Lee Stanford*

Class 66 780 working the 6X43 Dagenham - Garston heads through Stafford on December 4th. *Richard Hargreaves*

On December 16th, Class 66 751 working the 4M77 Southampton - Donnington heads through Wellington. *Richard Hargreaves*



Class 60056 leads 69 015 and 66 772 past Plumley with a Doncaster to Liverpool Biomass working on December 7th. *Mark Enderby*

Class 66 706 with the 6G92 Tunstead - Small heath heads through Stafford on December 16th. *Richard Hargreaves*

Class 66 791 heads through Warrington Bank Quay on December 16th with a Liverpool to Drax Biomass working. *Mark Enderby*







Great Western Railway

One of the latest GWR named IET's, Class 802 007 on 1A14 Bristol Temple Meads to London Paddington is seen at Swindon on December 29th, showing the names Joey and Michael Morpurgo - the name of the Horse and author of the book 'Warhorse'. *Ken Mumford*

Great Western Turbo units are now regularly seen at Southampton where on December 16th, Class 166 208 was seen departing with a service for Portsmouth while alongside Southern's Class 377 414 waits to depart for Brighton. *Lee Stanford*

On December 8th, Class 387 162 and 387 156 slow down as they come into platform 4 at Swindon with 1B12 London Paddington - Cardiff. Such units have no First Class accommodation or catering facilities. *Ken Mumford*



Great Western Railway

▶ Power car No. 43186 arrives into Truro with 2P16 13:15 Penzance - Plymouth with 43004 on the rear on December 11th. *Barry Beeston*

▶ On December 13th, power car No. 43156 is awaiting to depart Newquay with 2N25 19:24 Newquay - Par with 43189 on the rear. On the final day of operation of GWR Castle Class HST, Nos. 43189 and 43156 were drafted in from the mainline to replace a Class 150 unit which failed on the branch earlier in the day. *Barry Beeston*

▶ On December 5th, power car No. 43004 seen sat on the rear of a Plymouth bound service from Truro with 43186 on the front. While No. 43098 sits on the front of Truro bound service with 43187 on the rear. Services were terminating at Truro due to engineering works further west. *Barry Beeston*



Great Western Railway

▶ Power car No. 43198 exits off The Royal Albert Bridge into Devon with 2E06 07:45 Penzance - Exeter St. Davids with 43093 on the rear on December 12th. *Barry Beeston*

▶ Power car No. 43189 arrives into Truro on December 11th with 2C20 11:27 Exeter St. Davids - Penzance service with 43156 pushing on the rear. *Barry Beeston*

▶ On December 10th, power car No. 43004 leads 2C20 11:27 Exeter St. Davids - Penzance with 43186 on the rear, seen approaching Burngullow Jct. *Barry Beeston*



Great Western Railway

▶ Power car No, 43156 leading 2N17 15:24 Newquay - Par powers away from Trencreek pedestrian crossing, with 43189 on the rear. On the final day of operation of GWR Castle Class HST, Nos. 43189 and 43156 were drafted in from the mainline to replace a Class 150 unit which failed on the branch earlier in the day, December 13th. *Barry Beeston*

▶ On December 13th, power car No. 43189 leads 2N16 14:16 Par - Newquay crossing Chapel pedestrian crossing, with 43156 on the rear. The pair were drafted in from the mainline to replace a Class 150 unit which failed on the branch earlier in the day. *Barry Beeston*

▶ Class 802 006 passes Burngallow Jct. on December 11th, with 2C14 09:26 Exeter St. Davids - St. Erth, terminating there due to flooding in the Penzance area. *Barry Beeston*



Great Western Railway

▶ On December 13th, power car No. 43156 arrives into Truro with 2P90 13:14 Penzance - Plymouth with 43189 powering on the rear. On the final day of operation of GWR Castle Class HSTs the service was terminated at Par so that the pair could be drafted in to replace a Class 150 unit which failed on the branch earlier in the day. *Barry Beeston*

▶ Class 802006 working 2E11 10:58 St. Erth - Exeter St. Davids is seen approaching Burngallow Jct. on December 11th. *Barry Beeston*

▶ Power car No. 43093 approaches St. Austell on December 10th with 2P16 13:15 Penzance - Plymouth with 43198 on the rear. *Barry Beeston*



Great Western Railway

On December 8th, Class 387 150 and 387 167 depart Swindon working 1L13 Cardiff - London Paddington service. *Ken Mumford*

Class 57 312 working 0Z50 Reading Traincare Depot - Plymouth (Laira) via Bristol, Taunton, Exeter and Totnes) is seen at Swindon on December 8th. *Ken Mumford*

On December 8th, Class 158 747 formed incoming 2M17 from Westbury arrives at Swindon arriving 7mins LATE, delayed in the Wootton Bassett Junction area. Thus it had a 5 minute turnaround before departing back to Westbury as 2M26 which was delayed in the Trowbridge area. *Ken Mumford*







More Trains, More Seats, More Great Value Fares: Transformational LNER Timetable Introduced

A new timetable designed to deliver thousands of extra LNER services and millions of additional seats per year has been introduced.

Customers on the East Coast see the biggest uplift in services in more than a decade following the launch of the new rail industry timetable on December 14th 2025.

For LNER customers it means an additional 10,000 services every year, an extra 60,000 seats per week, quicker journeys, and the opportunity for even more great value fares.

An hourly fast service between Edinburgh Waverley and London King’s Cross will cut journey times to around four hours ten minutes. Additional capacity has been added for customers travelling to and from the North East of England with an extra train per hour between London and Newcastle, and customers in Yorkshire can enjoy quicker and more frequent journeys between many of the region’s stations and the English capital.

Colleagues at LNER have been working hard, over many years, alongside teams at other train operators, Network Rail, and in

the wider industry to successfully introduce this new timetable.

The transformation is a result of £4 billion invested on the East Coast Main Line over the past decade across track and train and has been developed to meet the needs of the greatest number of customers. In preparation, experts have used cutting-edge technology to work through numerous simulations of the timetable to aid a smooth introduction.

Alongside customer benefits, independent research shows the new timetable will bring significant benefits for the economy, generating at least an additional £105 million per year, on top of the £3.11 billion that investment and spending on LNER services already delivers.

Warrick Dent, Safety and Operations Director at LNER, said: “The introduction of our December 2025 timetable is a huge achievement and is testament to the hard work and dedication that has been shown by rail industry colleagues over many years.

“A change of this size is a once-in-a-generation occurrence and we are proud



to see the timetable come to life, delivering faster and more frequent journeys for so many areas across our route.”

Ellie Burrows, Eastern regional managing director, Network Rail, said: “The industry

has been preparing for many years for the new timetable, which will unlock thousands more seats, more frequent trains, and quicker journeys along the East Coast Main Line. Our priority now is to continue working together to deliver the long-term benefits

of this timetable change, the biggest in over a decade, for our passengers and the communities we serve.”

Photo: An LNER Azuma passes along the East Coast Main Line ©LNER

LNER Colleague Awarded British Empire Medal for Services to Diversity and Inclusion

An LNER colleague has spoken of his pride on being awarded a British Empire Medal in His Majesty The King’s New Year Honours for services to championing diversity and inclusion in the rail industry. Carter Goodby BEM, joined LNER six years ago, working as a frontline colleague helping customers at stations, and has progressed to a Business Partner in the People team. Throughout this time, he has consistently shown passion and dedication to enhancing equity, diversity, and inclusivity for people in the rail industry.

Within LNER, Carter is Chair of the company’s LGBT+

network, ‘TOGETHER’, leading initiatives, including planning York Pride, where he unites LGBT+ networks from across the railway. Carter is also a leadership member of ‘Journey’ – the Transport industry’s LGBT+ group – where he drives community initiatives and is encouraging industry-wide support for London Pride 2026. Alongside this, Carter volunteers as a committee member for Women in Rail and is on the leadership team for Rail Unites for Inclusion where he organises events to support, encourage, and bring together hundreds of members across the country.

Speaking of his honour, Carter said: “Being awarded a British Empire Medal is a huge honour and something I am very proud of. I am incredibly passionate about equity and inclusivity in the rail industry and want to make the railway a place where everyone can feel welcomed, valued, and included. My work is not for recognition, but it is always lovely to be appreciated by colleagues in the industry. The award is a huge surprise, and I feel humbled to receive it.”

Paula Bullock, People Director at LNER, said: “We are hugely proud of Carter and are thrilled that his passion

and dedication have been honoured in such a special way. He has an unwavering commitment to making the rail industry an inclusive environment for everyone who is part of it and his work has already seen positive change.

At LNER, we have four valued behaviours: Bring Passion, Be Bold, Always Care, and Own It. Carter’s work consistently delivers on those for his colleagues within LNER, the wider industry, and our customers, and it is fitting that he is recognised with this award. Congratulations Carter!”



Network Rail

Class 37 607 and 37 610 are seen on the down goods line at Stockport on December 12th, working 3Q06 the 11:03 Derby RTC to Derby RTC via Northwich and Crewe. *Barry Longson*

Class 37 607 and 37 610 are seen on the down goods line at Stockport on December 12th, working 3Q06 the 11:03 Derby RTC to Derby RTC via Northwich and Crewe. *Barry Longson*

On December 15th, a light engine working from Carlisle to Derby RTC produced Class 37 116 and 37 425 'Concrete Bob' seen here at Bradley, north of Standish. *John Sloane*



The final 08:46 Westbury to Taunton RHTT service led by a grimy and suitably endorsed Class 57 303 with tail loco 57 305 arrives into platform 5 at Salisbury.
Lee Stanford



Network Rail

Class 66 849 and 66 847 pass Oakenshaw Junction with 3S13, the 08:51 Wrenthorpe Sidings to Grimsby Town rail head treatment train on December 8th. *Tim Saunders*

Power cars Nos. 43014 and 43062 working 1Q23 Stockport - Northampton head through a dull, wet Stafford on December 4th.

Richard Hargreaves

On December 16th, power cars Nos. 43303 and 43301 arrive at Stafford whilst working 1Q47 Derby RTC to Carlisle. *Richard Hargreaves*



Network Rail

On December 16th, power cars Nos. 43013 and 43062 on 1Q15 Derby RTC to Landore TMD [the 'Flying Banana'] are seen at Swindon where it reversed. *Colin Pidgeon*

On December 16th, power cars Nos. 43013 and 43062 on 1Q15 Derby RTC to Landore TMD [the 'Flying Banana'] are seen at Purton heading to Swindon where it would reverse. *Ken Mumford*

Having reversed at Swindon on December 16th, power cars Nos. 43013 and 43062 on 1Q15 Derby RTC to Landore TMD [the 'Flying Banana'] is seen at Purton heading towards Gloucester. *Ken Mumford*



Network Rail

Class 37 419 and 37 057 pass Walton
Old Jct. on December 29th with a test
train working. *Mark Enderby*



Rail Adventure

On December 11th, Class 20 007, two barrier coaches, and 20 205 were sent from Wembley to Southampton Eastern Docks to collect coaches Nos. 39081 and 39082 from unit 395 008 that were damaged when the unit ran through the buffers at Ramsgate depot in November 2024. The coaches were taken to Southampton Docks by road in November 2025. Inset: The following day, December 12th, the consist is seen at St. Denys heading to Eastleigh Works. *John Goodrich*



Rail Operations Group/Europhoenix

▶ The ROG Class 93 locomotives are now making regular appearances on stock moves and on December 17th, Class 93 005 (with 93 004 on the rear) approaches Crewe with the 09:09 Polmadie to Wolverton centre as it takes Scotrail unit 334 024 for overhaul. *Lee Stanford*

▶ Class 93 005 and 93 004 pass Moore on December 17th, with 334 024 heading from Polmadie to Wolverton. *Mark Enderby*

▶ Class 93 004 and 93 005 head through Warrington Bank Quay on December 16th with a Derby to Polmadie working. *Mark Enderby*



Rail Operations Group/Europhoenix

On December 4th, Class 37 501 is seen at Stafford hauling 350 376 and 350 375 as 5Q70 Derby Adtranz to Northampton EMD.

Richard Hargreaves

Class 93 004 and 93 005 running as 5Q10 Derby RTC - Polmadie head through Stafford on December 16th. *Richard Hargreaves*

Another move on December 16th as Class 37 501 'Teesside Steelmaster' is seen at Stafford again this time with 350 406 as 5Q57 Northampton - Derby Litchurch Lane. *Richard Hargreaves*



Rail Operations Group/Europhoenix

Class 93 010 and 93 008 top'n'tail the 7Q32 Wolverton - Longsight seen arriving at Stafford on December 4th. *Richard Hargreaves*

Major excitement for the regulars at a rather bleak Winwick on December 18th as Class 93 004 tops and tails with 93 005 on a Derby RTC to Polmadie move taking barrier coaches north for use the following day taking a Scotrail EMU to Wolverton. *Jeff Nicholls*

Class 37 800 hauls 769 421 as 5Q94 Allerton - Long Marston through Stafford on December 16th. The former TfW unit having been on hire to Northern. *Richard Hargreaves*



Rail Operations Group/Europhoenix

Class 37800 'Casiopeia' with Class 455 723 in tow passes Lidlington with 5Q57, the 07:35 Alexandra Docks Up & Down Goods Loop to Derby Litchurch Lane stock move on December 19th. *Derek Elston*

Class 93 010 on the tail of debranded TPE set 01 passes a very wet Northampton as 7Q32, the 10:57 Wolverton Centre Sidings to Longsight T.M.D. (D). on December 4th. *Derek Elston*

Class 37407 'Blackpool Tower' grows through Northampton with Class 350 241 and 350 240 heading for storage as 5Q07, the 09:20 DB Cargo Fan A and B Sidings to Long Marston on December 23rd. *Derek Elston*



Rail Operations Group/EuropPhoenix

On December 17th, Class 93 005 and 93 004 top and tailed Scotrail 334 024 through Euxton during a move from Glasgow to Wolverton. *John Sloane*

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TransPennine Express

Class 397 011 departs Preston with a service to Glasgow Central. *Michael Lynam*

Class 397 001 passes Farington Curve Junction on December 20th with a Manchester Airport to Glasgow service. *John Sloane*

ATPE Class 397 races past Euxton with a service from Glasgow to Liverpool on December 17th. *John Sloane*



TransPennine Express

Class 397 003 whisks past Boars Head
with a Glasgow to Liverpool service on
December 27th. *John Sloane*



Transport for Wales

Class 67 010 arrives into Stockport working the 12:30 Manchester Piccadilly to Cardiff service, while Northern's Class 156 475 was working the short distance to Hazel Grove on December 3rd. *Barry Longson*



Transport for Wales

Class 67 029 passes Kempseye with 1W55
08:53 Cardiff Central - Manchester Piccadilly
on December 31st. *Keith Davies*

Class 67 012 passes Kempseye with 1W39
10:30 Manchester Piccadilly - Cardiff Central
on December 3rd. *Keith Davies*

Class 197 035 and 197 115 are seen at Kempseye
with 1W16 07:00 Milford Haven - Manchester
Piccadilly on December 3rd. *Keith Davies*



Transport for Wales

▶ Class 197 031 and 197 021 working 1110 Holyhead - Birmingham International are seen at Wellington on December 31st.

Richard Hargreaves

▶ Class 197 002 and 197109 pass Winwick Jct. on December 11th working a Manchester Airport - Holyhead service. *Michael Lynam*

▶ Class 67 017 with DVT No. 82201 on the rear pass Bayston Hill with 1V55 08:53 Cardiff Central - Manchester Piccadilly service on December 2nd. *Keith Davies*



Transport for Wales

On December 12th, Class 67 029 prepares to depart Stockport with the 14:30 Manchester Piccadilly to Cardiff Central service.

Barry Longson

Class 67 029 passes Kempsey with 1W55 09:53 Cardiff Central - Manchester Piccadilly service on December 11th. *Keith Davies*

Class 197 120 passes Bayston Hill with 1V38 09:30 Manchester Piccadilly - Fishguard Harbour on December 2nd. *Keith Davies*



Transport for Wales

▶ DVT No. 82200 leads Class 67 017 at Kempsey on December 2nd with 1V39 10:30 Manchester Piccadilly - Cardiff Central service. *Keith Davies*

▶ On December 13th, Class 67 020 passes Kempsey with 1V39 10:30 Manchester Piccadilly - Cardiff Central service. *Keith Davies*

▶ DVT No. 82201 and Class 67 017 pass Bayston Hill with 1W55 08:53 Cardiff Central - Manchester Piccadilly on December 19th. *Keith Davies*



Transport for Wales

On December 20th, Class 67 025 had charge of the 08:54 Cardiff Central to Manchester Piccadilly service, seen passing Heaton Norris Junction, Stockport. *Barry Longson*

Class 197 004 and 197 120 pass Hadnall on December 31st with 1W18 09:00 Milford Haven - Manchester Piccadilly. *Keith Davies*



Units: DMUs and EMUs

▶ Northern's Class 323 239 gets ready to depart Stockport on December 12th with the 14:55 Stoke on Trent to Manchester Piccadilly service. At this point it is unclear whether this is a one off advertising livery or if more will follow.

Barry Longson

▶ Northern's Class 156 475 and 156 466 call at Ashley working a Manchester Piccadilly - Chester service via Stockport on December 16th. *Michael Lynam*

▶ Northern's Class 769 434 is seen at Southport station. *Pete Holloway*



Units: DMUs and EMUs

An unidentified Greater Anglia Class 720 approaches North Fambridge on the Wickford - Southminster branch on December 11th. *Charlie Robbins*

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Units: DMUs and EMUs

▶ Northern's Class 323 239 has gained TfGM yellow Bee Network livery, which was launched on December 11th. The following day it was photographed departing Cheadle Hulme, working the 13:42 Manchester to Stoke service. *Barry Longson*

▶ Northern's Class 156 402 awaits departure from Southport on December 3rd. *John Sloane*

▶ LNW Class 350 119 on the tail of `Y26, the 09:06 Birmingham New Street to London Euston and 730 004 working ECS move 5G99, the 09:05 London Euston to Soho L.M.D. stand at Northampton on December 19th. *Derek Elston*



Units: DMUs and EMUs

▶ Gatwick Express liveried Class 387 210 is the rear unit on a service to London Victoria on December 13th, as it speeds through Clapham Junction. *Paul Godding*

▶ West Mid's Class 730 043 and 730 004 depart Northampton on ECS move 5G99, the 09:05 London Euston to Soho L.M.D. on December 19th. *Derek Elston*

▶ Class 323 233 is seen at Cheadle Hulme on December 29th, working the 07:46 Crewe to Manchester Piccadilly service. *Barry Longson*



Units: DMUs and EMUs

▶ Santa Train stickers were applied to Class 387 216 in about early December. The unit first visited Southampton in this guise on December 23rd and is seen on this date working 11:50 Southampton - Brighton service. *John Goodrich*

▶ Northern's Class 150 150 leads a service from Headbolt Lane to Blackburn into Rainford on December 12th. *John Sloane*

▶ SWR's Class 450 067 speeds through Raynes Park on December 13th working a service to Alton. *Paul Godding*



Units: DMUs and EMUs

South Western Railway's Class 450 126 passes Earlsfield on December 13th with a service to Alton. *Paul Godding*

Northern's Class 195 103 runs past Farington Curve Junction on an empty stock working on December 20th. *John Sloane*

SWR's Class 455 732 stands at London Waterloo on December 13th working a service to Hampton Court. *Paul Godding*



Units: DMUs and EMUs

► SWR Class 455 712 had an enthusiastic driver who sounded the horn to acknowledge photographers as he approached Swaythling on a fine December 20th with 11:32 Bournemouth Depot - Wimbledon Depot in readiness for a Class 455 farewell tour on December 21st. The train was 15 minutes early at this point.

John Goodrich

Northern's Class 156 441 passes Lostock Hall Junction on December 20th with a service from Preston to Colne. *John Sloane*

► Northern's Class 195 125 heads away from Farington Curve Junction on December 20th with a service to York. *John Sloane*



Units: DMUs and EMUs

SWR's Class 455 No. 5717 was the rear unit on 11:32 Bournemouth Depot - Wimbledon Depot stock move on a sunny December 20th. It is seen passing Swaythling with the destination blinds showing Special Charter in readiness for a farewell tour on December 21st. With Class 455 units ceasing to have booked diagrams after Christmas, this would probably be the last Class 455 working in the Southampton area. *John Goodrich*



Units: DMUs and EMUs

SWR's Class 455 871 approaches Earlsfield on December 13th with a service to Guilford.

Paul Godding

Northern's Class 150 145 passes Lostock Hall Junction whilst performing a reversal prior to working a Bamber Bridge to Colne service during a blockade of Preston on January 2nd.

John Sloane

Northern's Class 195 105 passes Lostock Hall Junction on a service to York as Wizzo No. D1015 'Western Champion' waits for the road with the Pathfinder Finale tour from Salisbury on December 20th. *John Sloane*



Units: DMUs and EMUs

South Western Railway's Class 458 428 departs Clapham Junction on December 13th with a service to London Waterloo. *Paul Godding*

Still carrying the livery of its former operator and in a rare burst of sunshine, South Western Railway operated Class 158 882 arrives at Eastleigh on December 1st with a Romsey to Salisbury service. *Lee Stanford*

Manchester Piccadilly's platform 12 on December 11th and the launch of 'The BEE Network' livery on Northern's Class 323 239. *Russell Clarke*



Units: DMUs and EMUs

A dull Eastleigh station on December 1st sees South Western Railway's Class 450 017 standing in platform one with a service from Bournemouth to Winchester as 444 044 and an unidentified sister hurry past on the fast line with a Weymouth to London Waterloo service.

Lee Stanford

Northern units Class 150 149 and 150 142 calls at Salford Central on December 20th, on a Clitheroe - Rochdale working.

Bryan Roberts

South Western Railway's Class 701 017 departs Earlsfield on December 13th with a service to London Waterloo.

Paul Godding



Units: DMUs and EMUs

C2C liveried Class 387 301, now in operation with Southern, is seen ready to depart from Platform 3 rather than the usual platform 2 with 11:20 Southampton - Brighton service on December 23rd. *John Goodrich*



Units: DMUs and EMUs

▶ Northern's Class 156 441 is seen at Heysham Harbour, having arrived with the daily service from Lancaster to connect with the afternoon sailing to the Isle of Man. Isle of Man Steam Packet 'Manxman' is seen adjacent to the station to operated the sailing to the Isle of Man. *Michael Lynam*

▶ Northern's Class 769 431 and 769 458 pass at Hindley on December 20th. *Jeff Nicholls*

▶ On its second day in service, Northern's Class 323 239 shows off its Bee Line advertising livery as it slows for the Mauldeth Road stop working the 10:36 Manchester Piccadilly to Crewe service. *Lee Stanford*





Upgrade work complete at Harwich International railway station

Train operator Greater Anglia has completed a £1 million investment programme to improve facilities at Harwich International railway station.

The improvement scheme included the replacement of roofing over the footbridge, staircases and station entrance building, as well as upgrades to ceilings in the same areas. The station was also repainted throughout, giving it a fresher and more welcoming appearance.

As part of the investment, new energy-efficient lighting has been installed to improve visibility and safety while reducing environmental impact.

The work was delivered over four weekends in September and was carefully planned to run alongside Network Rail Anglia's pre-arranged engineering work on the Colchester/Ipswich to Harwich Town line. The programme was delivered in close partnership with Harwich Port Authority to minimise disruption to passengers.

Andrew Goodrum, Infrastructure & Major Projects Director at Greater Anglia, said: "More than 100,000 journeys start or finish at Harwich International railway station every year, and these improvements make a significant difference to the overall passenger experience.

"The station is now brighter, more modern and more welcoming, while our new energy-efficient lighting reduces our carbon footprint.

"We would like to thank our passengers for their patience and understanding while this work was carried out, and our partners for their collaboration in delivering this upgrade programme."

Fares Advice with RailUK

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

Is it mandatory to have an itinerary with you when travelling?

Q: Is it mandatory to carry a copy of an itinerary with you when travelling? OK, sometimes a whole itinerary can be reconstructed from the printed seat reservation information, but often it can't. Am I obliged to be able to produce my itinerary if there's any sort of dispute about using a certain ticket on a certain train (which is where this links to fares, ticketing and routeing)? This is probably of greater interest to those who are still travelling with paper tickets, perhaps.

Clearly, seasoned rail travellers know what's sensible and carry a copy of their itinerary with them at all times (!?!?), if only to enable them to stand their ground in the face of incorrect information from a minority of staff. But I was wondering if there's any rule governing this? There are a couple of references to itineraries in the current NRCoT, but nothing that answers this particular question.

A: No.

The November 2025 changes to the NRCoT arguably mean if you are accused of being off-route, you had better be sure nre.co.uk will validate the route you are on.

The wording is highly ambiguous, but most people seem to be interpreting it to mean journey planner results produced by a licensed retailer (as distinct from nre.co.uk) can only validate your route if it is an itinerary issued in connection with the purchase of the ticket you are using. In that case, I imagine most people will have the booking confirmation email on their phone, or they will have access to it in the retailer's app.

There's no blanket requirement to have an itinerary, though. You just might want to have one if you foresee a dispute about validity.

If you're using a direct train and not breaking your journey, you definitely don't need one.

Even if you're using an nre.co.uk journey planner result, or an itinerary issued by a licensed retailer, to validate your route, there is no requirement to adhere to the timings if it's a flexible ticket. And you don't necessarily

need to stick to the route on your itinerary, either, as long as the route you use is valid (e.g. nre.co.uk validates it). I do a lot of cross-London journeys where there are half a dozen or more valid routes you could take, often with quite small differences in the journey time, so it's absolutely legitimate not to decide which route to take until you're actually making the journey, depending on live running information which will give an indication of which route will be best. It would be quite impractical to expect people to commit to a route at the time of purchase.

Cancellation of last through Mildmay line service

Q: Because of a reduced service, the last Mildmay service from West Brompton to Stratford (22:25) was cancelled (it actually started at Willesden Junction). I had planned to catch this train to West Hampstead and then onwards to St Albans. The ticket I had was only valid by this route. Fortunately, I arrived at West Brompton slightly earlier than anticipated, so was able to catch the one before. Had I not managed this, would I have been able to use an alternative route (i.e. Underground) for no extra charge or would I have been expected to pay out and attempt to claim back later

A: *Missing the last train via your ticket's only valid route doesn't automatically entitle you to use transport providers outside the NRCoT (e.g. the Underground).*

However, London Overground would be obliged to make alternative transport arrangements for you, so in practice it's highly likely that your ticket would be accepted on the Underground.

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!

National Rail

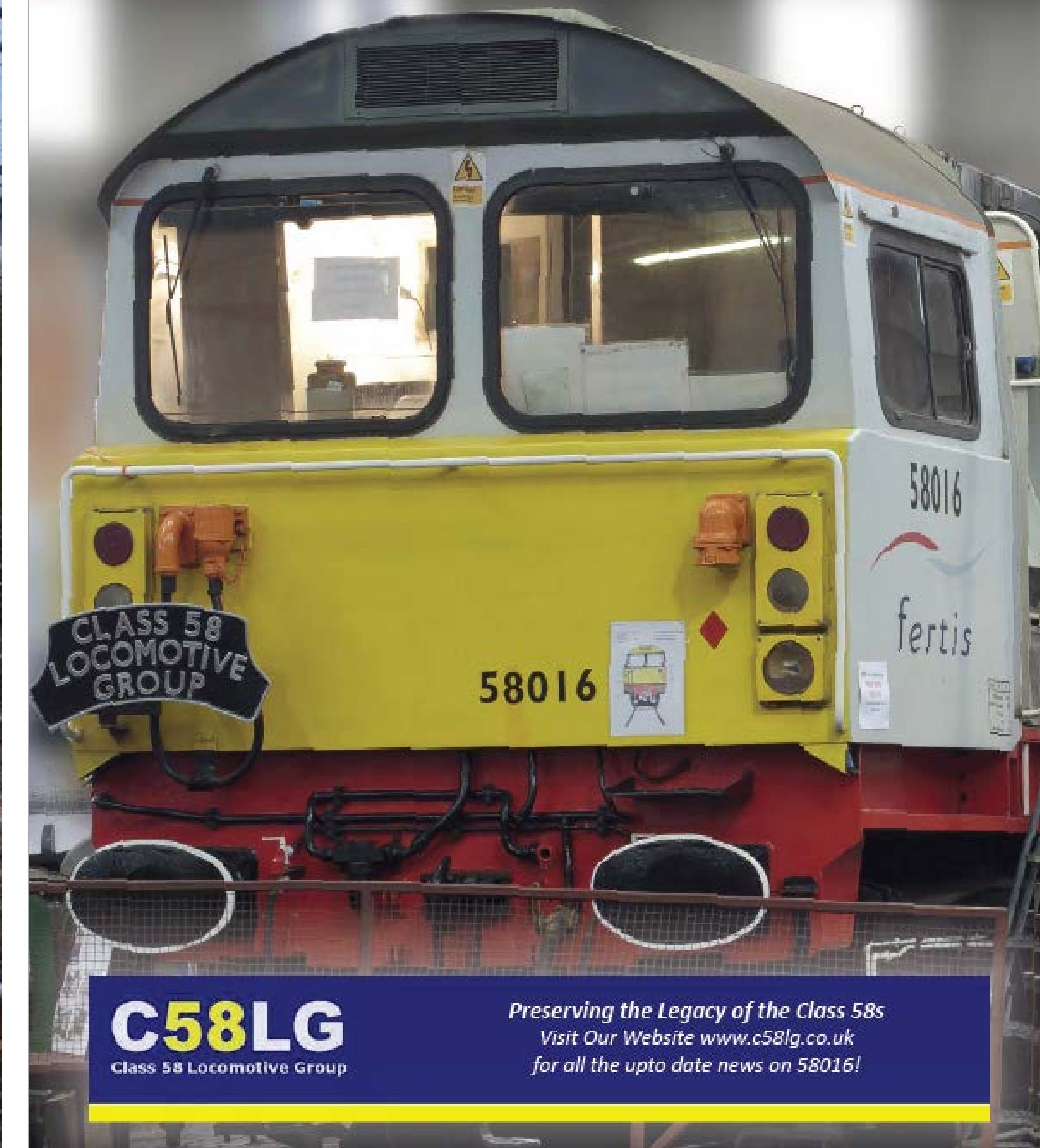
Colas Rail's No. DR75011 working 6Q59 Reading Triangle Sidings to Gloucester (Horton Road) heads through Swindon on December 8th. *Ken Mumford*



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



Network Rail completes £32m signalling upgrade in Edinburgh

Network Rail has completed a major signalling upgrade between Portobello and Edinburgh Waverley, improving reliability on one of Scotland's busiest rail corridors.

Signalling is the system that tells train drivers when it's safe to move and when they need to stop. It uses signals along the track, ground-based monitoring kit and specialist equipment in control centres to keep trains a safe distance apart and make sure the railway runs smoothly and safely.

Over Christmas Day and Boxing Day, teams commissioned the new signalling equipment at Portobello Junction, a complex part of the infrastructure east of Edinburgh Waverley Station. The work replaced legacy systems and assets that had been in operation for more than 40 years, improving performance and reliability for passengers.

The upgrade completes a £32m investment delivered by Network Rail over the past three years. As well as installing new signalling equipment, the project renewed the controls at Craighentiny depot, improving access for trains entering and leaving one of the busiest depots in the east of Scotland.

Commissioning the new equipment was scheduled for the Christmas period, when the railway is closed on Christmas Day and fewer people are travelling. This allowed engineers from both Network Rail and Siemens to complete the complex upgrade safely and efficiently, while keeping disruption to a minimum.

Dan Holder, Head of Engineering and Asset Management for Network Rail Scotland, said: "The Signalling system is our 'hidden' asset and is critical to how we run the railway. It keeps trains moving safely and efficiently, so maintaining and upgrading these systems is one of our most important

responsibilities.

"We're constantly reviewing our infrastructure to identify where improvements will make the biggest difference for passengers. In this case, the equipment had reached the end of its life, so it was vital to replace it and take the opportunity to upgrade supporting infrastructure at the same time.

"These improvements will reduce the risk of faults and help deliver more reliable journeys across the route. It's a significant investment in the performance of the railway and in the experience of the people who rely on it."

National Rail

Some of the GWR IETs now have this branding applied, promoting improved WiFi signal. *Ken Mumford*

GWR
Enhanced WiFi
TECHNOLOGY FROM THE WORLD OF F1
802 101

RAILWAY MISSION

LEADER HONoured IN NEW YEAR'S AWARDS

Liam Johnston, who heads the Railway Mission – a Rugby-based charity devoted to providing pastoral support to rail workers across the UK – has been awarded an MBE by HM King Charles III in the 2026 New Year's Honours.

The award, for services to the rail industry, comes as Liam also marks 25 years of employment as the organisation's lead chaplain, now providing leadership to its 20-strong team of regional chaplains as Executive Director.

Railway Mission began in 1881, a constant, reassuring presence on the ever-changing UK rail network. The charity offers railway workers support in strengthening their mental, emotional and spiritual health, through its professional team. The services provided complement welfare provision supplied by the railway companies. Railway Mission is a 24/7 service, with chaplains frequently called to provide specialist care whenever challenging incidents or traumatic emergencies occur on or around rail infrastructure. Support is provided to railway employees at all levels, from drivers, guards and train managers, through signallers, cleaners and clerks, to senior managers and advisors of train operating companies, Network Rail and British Transport Police. Research by the Rail Safety and Standards Board has calculated that, under Liam's leadership, Railway Mission generates £1.8 million in social value annually – more than £3.10 for each pound of donated income.

Liam's quarter-century of work with Railway Mission has included providing urgent care at some of the most significant incidents across the UK railway network. Beyond the rails, Liam was present to support British Transport Police at major disasters such as the Grenfell Tower fire and Manchester Arena bombing. Liam serves additionally as Vice-President of Rail Hope International, providing bespoke training, mentorship and advice on best practice to rail organisations around the world.



Reacting to the news, Liam Johnston Executive Director of the Railway Mission said: "Being awarded an MBE is a tremendous honour, and I'm deeply grateful. While my name may be on the citation, this recognition belongs to all of us at Railway Mission; to every chaplain and colleague who quietly shows up day after day for railway people. It also belongs to our supporters, without whom we would not be able to achieve as much as we do for the railway family.

"I am proud to accept this as an award for the whole Railway Mission team, as tribute to the compassion, professionalism and commitment that underpins our work."

Railway Mission trustee David Giles added: 'We are thrilled that Liam's dedicated service has been publicly recognised, particularly as this work often takes place well away from the public gaze and in people's most vulnerable moments. I am confident that the railway family joins me in thanking Liam for his tenacity and tenderness, his passion for people, and his vision, leadership and strength of faith.'

Liam will receive his award in a ceremony later in 2026.

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:

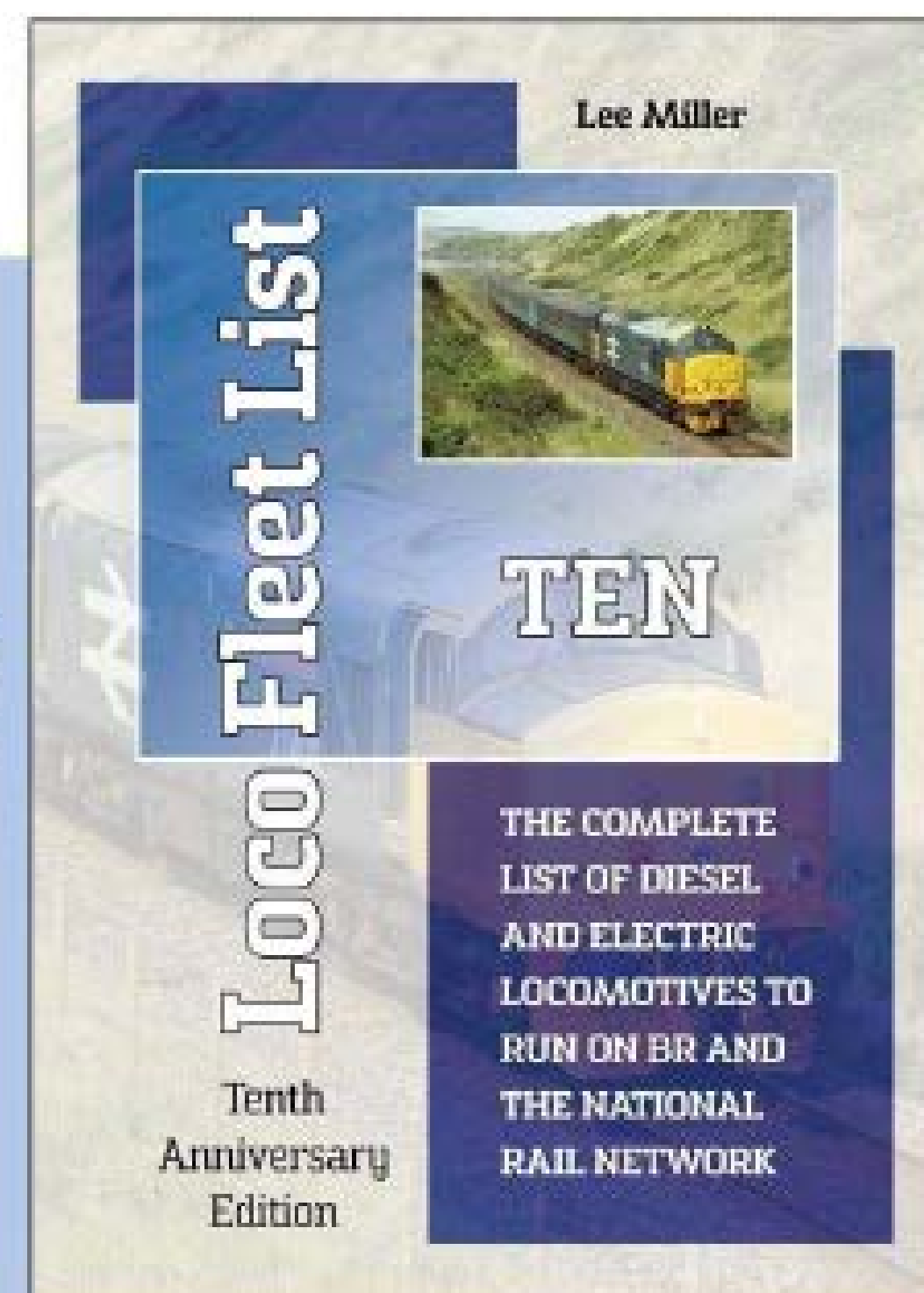
- Diesel Locomotives
- DC Electric & Electro-Diesel Locos
- AC Electric & Bi-Mode Locos
- Eurotunnel Locomotives
- Unclassified Locomotives

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



Happy birthday, Brent Cross West! Passengers vote with their feet for Thameslink station as numbers soar 41% in second year of operation

On the eve of its two-year anniversary on December 10th, passenger demand at Thameslink's newest station, Brent Cross West, has been shown to have exceeded all expectations, soaring 41% and firmly validating the decision by Barnet Council to accelerate the delivery of this new transport link with Government backing. Figures released by Thameslink show that in the first year of its operation, some 533,000 passenger journeys were made through Brent Cross West Station. This year, passenger journeys increased 41% to 754,000 giving a total of 1.287m across the two years. Furthermore, this passenger growth rate is forecast to continue.

Thameslink Infrastructure Director Pete Carbery said: "We worked in close collaboration with Barnet Council and Network Rail on the construction of this, our newest, station on the Thameslink route, and we're delighted it's proving so popular. The continued rise in passenger numbers shows just how valuable this station is to the community, helping to boost local businesses, support new jobs, and contribute to wider economic growth in

the area. It's a clear example of how sustained investment in the railway can deliver significant benefits to both the local and wider economy, and we're sure its excellent design and the fast connections our service provides to the capital and beyond have played a major part in its success."

Councillor Alan Schneiderman, Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change for Barnet Council said: "The opening of Brent Cross West has not only transformed the way residents get around the area, and improved connections in and out of central London, but it has also played a key role in unlocking further investment for local development. It's great to see Brent Cross West becoming the well-loved, well-used new station the council intended it to be."

As well as connecting central London to Brent Cross in as little as 15 minutes, a key feature of the station includes a new, public overbridge, which provides the first pedestrian access across this stretch of the Midland

Main Line since it was first built in the 19th century. To mark the second anniversary, Thameslink has partnered with walking and wellness app Go Jauntly to develop a new walking trail which starts at the station as part of its 'Thameslink Trails' series. Promoting leisure and sustainable travel to the station, the interactive walk guides users through the new station and town, past the visitor pavilion, through to Golders Green and Hampstead Heath along a predominantly off-street route. It is available to explore free on the Go Jauntly app, and Thameslink's Instagram and TikTok accounts @tlrailuk.

Time capsule

Thameslink's newest station is celebrating its second anniversary just as the modern railway marks its second centenary of operation through a series of nationwide events badged Railway 200. To celebrate railway history and also the regeneration taking place in the Brent Cross West area, a time capsule was recently buried in Claremont Park close by Brent Cross West.



Thameslink's Railway 200 Programme Lead, Patrick Ladbury, said: "Being at Brent Cross West, it was clear to see that the spirit of the railway is very much alive with continuing growth, innovation and connection. Burying this time capsule is our way of sharing that story with the future and celebrating the people and communities who make our railway what it is today."

Councillor Alan Schneiderman, Barnet Council Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change and Cricklewood Ward Member, said: "We're delighted to have been chosen to host the Railway 200 time capsule at Brent Cross Town, home to London's newest railway station Brent Cross West. As the area continues to develop it is a great opportunity to work alongside our local community to capture the past, present and future to be uncovered by generations to come."

TRU sets new benchmark for sustainable delivery as electrification, skills investment and community impact accelerates

The Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU) has released its 2025 Sustainable Development Report, demonstrating a year of significant progress towards delivering a faster, greener, more reliable railway across the North, and leaving a long-lasting legacy in the communities it works in. Guided by its sustainability strategy, Our Guiding Compass, the programme has embedded long-term thinking into every aspect of delivery, from carbon reduction and habitat creation to job growth, customer experience and community partnerships.

Alex Peters, Acting Head of Sustainability for TRU, reflects on the programme's momentum: "I'm really proud of the progress we've made in our sustainable development this year. This report demonstrates that TRU is doing far more than improving railway infrastructure - it's making a real, positive difference in communities along our route and leaving a sustainable legacy. We've electrified lines, launched the TRU Community Fund, introduced our first sustainable composite sleepers and identified

Biodiversity Net Gain on the ground. These are just a few milestones from across the programme and I'm excited by what's to come, and the impact we will continue to make."

The report summarises TRU progress from April 1st 2024 to March 31st 2025, capturing achievements across all four pillars of TRU's sustainability strategy: Northern Jobs, Enhanced Environment, Satisfied Customers and Working with Communities.

Key achievements include:

Electrification completed between Manchester Victoria - Salford and York - Church Fenton, meaning 25% of the route is now fully electrified

3,917 work experience days delivered for young people and adults

99 apprentices and 39 graduates recruited, including TRU's leadership role in launching PlanBEE Rail, the UK's first shared higher apprenticeship for the rail sector
Introduction of 155 sustainable composite sleepers

at Osmondthorpe Lane - reducing carbon by 70% per sleeper and winning the ICE Smeaton Award
98.9% of construction waste diverted from landfill
Eight biodiversity gain sites in development, with the first 30-year habitat management commitment likely to be delivered at Fairfield station

Launch of the TRU Community Fund, awarding over £150,000 to 27 groups in the last year, with a second fund currently underway

TRU is unlocking long-term economic growth by generating new employment and training pathways across the region. This year saw the second cohort of PlanBEE Rail apprentices begin their career in the industry, in a collaborative apprenticeship model involving Network Rail, Gateshead College, NSAR and 12 industry partners. Apprentices undertake four six-month placements at different employers, gaining multi-disciplinary experience while studying towards a Level 4 qualification. Local supply chain investment also remains a core priority. 69% of non-core spend went to

suppliers within 25 miles of the route, contributing to £706.5m in total local spending, while SME spending reached £323.4m. Partnerships with SMEs, such as COWAP, demonstrate how TRU is enabling significant regional business growth.

Work with schools also continued, with 14,550 young people engaged across 187 events that included STEM workshops, careers sessions, and inclusive programmes such as the Barnardo's Young Carers initiative. Public art initiatives involving local pupils, including Routes to Roots at Ashton-under-Lyne and the Welbeck mural at Castleford, are also helping transform stations into vibrant community spaces. TRU is poised for one of its most transformative years yet in 2026. With major upgrades continuing at pace along the 70-mile route, three more stations being completed and biodiversity delivery beginning on the ground, the programme will continue to accelerate benefits for passengers and communities across the North.

National Rail

‘Duke of Gloucester’ top’n’tailed with Class 57 311 working 1Z50 06:10 Ely to Bath Spa passes Crofton about 20 minutes down on December 6th. *David Lindsell*



SOUTHERN COUNTIES RAILWAY SOCIETY

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



www.southerncountiesrailwaysociety.co.uk

Pre-Met on track for growth in rail after passing half a million-production milestone

Prototyping experience, rapid delivery times and world class quality developed in the automotive sector is putting a metal pressings and stamping specialist on track for its best year in rail. Pre-Met, which employs 60 people at its factory on Studley Road in Redditch, is on course to produce half a million brake plates for the first time ever and is now targeting new opportunities supplying components to rolling stock, infrastructure companies and train manufacturers. The company's acquisition of Quality Springs & Pressings has helped increase capacity to take on the additional work and, even with a 20% increase in volumes, the firm has been able to achieve zero defects over an eleven-month period.

Destined for a major tier 1 supplier, the braking plate is manufactured in up to 18 different variants, including left to right set variants. Growth in the rail sector is helping Pre-Met increase its workforce, with four new people taken on in welding, press setting, quality and in the tool room.

"Diversification was a big priority this year for the business, and we wanted to look at ways where we could maximise our core expertise in automotive, aerospace and advanced engineering and take it into complementary areas," explained James Leng, Managing Director of Pre-Met.

"Rail was a natural target. We had started to deliver a couple of projects on time and to budget and this has accelerated this year, with the one back plate now passing 500,000 of units in 2025 – with a 20% rise in production expected next year."

He continued: "This is just the start. All the recent investment has given us a platform to offer rail customers a one-source solution for tool transfers and new products. We can do everything from initial prototyping and small batch work, through to developing the tooling, producing in medium and high volumes and completing value added assembly. We have recently been working with another rail client to help reverse engineer one of its existing products to improve the base design and simplify the production process. In turn, this



will improve finished quality, whilst extending longevity of the component lifecycle."

Operating from Redditch since 1973, Pre-Met originally made high-value pens, cufflinks and telecommunication parts, with today's company evolving into a critical, quality-assured supplier to aerospace, mobility, med-tech, construction, electronics and transport sectors, shipping its components to customers across the world. Consistent investment in new technology and workforce development has seen it become a metal pressings and assembly specialist, offering a full product lifecycle from concept and design to prototyping and low, medium and high-volume production. It has also worked tirelessly to achieve the highest levels of manufacturing performance, securing world class 'right first time' and quality scores, not to mention gaining ISO 9001, AS9100 (aerospace) and TS16949 (automotive) accreditations.

More recently, Pre-Met has reinforced its commitment to digital transformation by obtaining its Cyber Essentials security certificate.

James concluded: "2025 has been a pivotal year for us, with the Quality Springs & Pressings acquisition and subsequent consolidation of its operations at our existing site on Studley Road. Over £500k has been invested in the integration and this has given us an extra 30% boost in production and access to new robotic technology. "This is making a real difference to us in rail and there are also new doors opening in aerospace and defence, with our membership of JOSCAR pushing Pre-Met's expertise into new supply chains."

National Rail

Porterbrook Leasing Hydroflex unit Class 799 201 on 5Q98 Long Marston to Swindon is seen at Swindon on December 16th.
Colin Pidgeon



On December 29th, Class 37 425 'Sir Robert McAlpine' approaches Swindon working 0Z47 Bristol (Kingsland Road) to Reading Triangle Sidings on route learning. *Ken Mumford*



Work to make Wandsworth Town fully accessible to start in February 2026

Network Rail and South Western Railway (SWR) will begin work in February 2026 to make Wandsworth Town station in south west London fully step free, improving access for passengers with reduced mobility, parents with pushchairs and those travelling with luggage.

The station, which sits between Clapham Junction and Putney, on the SWR route will become the latest station on the network to benefit from accessibility improvements including the installation of new lifts to all platforms.

The project, delivered in partnership with Wandsworth Council, includes the construction of a modern second entrance at Odyssey Way, with new ticket barriers. This will improve access from the north of the station and support growing passenger demand at the station.

The improvements are also funded through the Department for Transport's (DfT) Access for All scheme, which creates obstacle free routes from station entrances to platforms. New lifts will be installed to all platforms at

Wandsworth Town station.

Preparatory works will begin in February with the installation of hoardings and ducting, followed by a temporary scaffold bridge in April. Piling works to form the foundations for the new lift will take place between May and November 2026, with the lift shaft installed in February 2027. The station upgrade is scheduled for completion in summer 2027.

Wandsworth Town station will be open throughout the works, although some entrances and platforms may be temporarily closed while construction is under way. There will be some changes to SWR services, which will be shared as the programme progresses.

Over 3.75 million people used the station between April 2024 and March 2025 making Wandsworth Town the 15th busiest station on the South Western Railway network.

Speaking on behalf of Network Rail and South Western Railway, Paul McAleer, Principal Programme Sponsor, said: "We are



looking forward to starting work to improve access at Wandsworth Town station. This is a busy and growing station, and these improvements will make a real difference for passengers who currently face barriers using the railway."

Jenny Yates, Cabinet Member for Transport said: "Improving access to Wandsworth Town station is hugely important for our residents and the future success of the town centre as it grows. By working in partnership with Network Rail, we're pleased that these

upgrade works will get underway in 2026 to improve this busy Victorian station for the benefit of the whole community."

National Rail

Network Rail are building an additional platform at Salford Crescent to ease congestion. This view on December 19th 2025, shows the progress so far. *Barry Longson*



Class 57 313 'Scarborough Castle' working the 1Z64 Northern Belle is seen at Coventry on December 14th. *Pete Holloway*

Major step forward as Midlands Rail Hub Alliance confirmed

The four partners which will design and develop the most transformative railway upgrade in the Midlands have been confirmed.

Midlands Rail Hub, which could cost around £1.75bn if delivered in full, will improve journeys, help to boost economic growth, and better connect people with opportunities, jobs, and new houses.

The new Midlands Rail Hub Alliance - confirmed to include VolkerRail, Laing O'Rourke, AtkinsRéalis and Siemens Mobility, working alongside Network Rail - will design and develop Midlands Rail Hub and support the build phase.

This will include connecting the Chiltern main line, which runs into Moor Street, with the Camp Hill lines which run towards the South West and East Midlands, via two new chords in Bordesley, near Birmingham city centre.

Alongside this, work is also being prioritised to progress smaller changes to the existing railway which will provide passengers and communities with quicker benefits, including new journey options and more trains.

This includes reopening platform 4 at

Snow Hill station, so additional Chiltern Railways services can run directly between Birmingham's business district and London Marylebone, and redeveloping Kings Norton station and the lines through it so extra Cross City trains can be added and new Midlands Rail Hub-enabled services can call there.

The Midlands Rail Hub Alliance - working with the sponsoring partner team of Network Rail, West Midlands Rail Executive, Department for Transport, and Midlands Connect - will plan timescales for the development of Midlands Rail Hub, with early passenger benefits expected to be realised by the early 2030s.

Rail Minister Lord Peter Hendy said: "The Midlands Rail Hub will be transformational for millions of people across the country by improving capacity across the network, allowing more services and better reliability.

"Thanks to £123 million of Government funding we are unlocking jobs opportunities, stimulating housing growth and better connecting our communities, forging ahead with our promise to create modern transport Britain needs and deserves."

Denise Wetton, Network Rail's Central route director, said: "We want the huge

improvements this major investment and upgrade will unlock - including access to opportunities, more jobs, economic growth, and new houses - to benefit people, communities, and businesses as soon as possible.

"Confirming the Midlands Rail Hub alliance partners means this vital regional and national project can really start to move forward and we are focusing hard to start work on this transformative project as quickly as possible."

Mal Drury-Rose, West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE) director, said: "After years of supporting this project, we are thrilled that it will come to fruition, delivering huge benefits for passengers in the West Midlands.

"We are committed to ensuring that it's more than just a rail scheme - that it maximises the benefits of HS2 coming to the region, creating a major new transport interchange at Moor Street and Curzon Street stations, and delivers on our wider ambitions for social mobility, transport integration, regeneration and economic growth."



Maria Machancoses, chief executive of Midlands Connect, said: "Today is a big moment for the region - the Midlands Rail Hub alliance will finally allow us to start delivering real improvements passengers will feel on the ground as early as 2028.

"We must keep driving this project forward and work with Government to get the full programme funded and delivered, because only then will the Midlands realise its full potential."

The overhaul of the railway in Birmingham

and the West Midlands, including changing how the city's three main stations - New Street, Moor Street and Snow Hill - are served by train services from across the region and beyond, will have significant benefits to local, regional and national passenger journeys.

The transformation of the network will include running more train services on key routes through Birmingham, significantly improving connections and journey options for the millions of people who use the railway every day.

Picture-perfect peaks: Network Rail plays key role in landmark project to remove pylons from views across Eryri National Park

Working in partnership with National Grid, a once-in-a-generation scheme is underway to improve the landscape around the Dwyryd Estuary, in Snowdonia, by re-routing power cables underground. The existing overhead lines are a highly visible and intrusive feature in one of the UK's most celebrated protected landscapes. National Grid's flagship Eryri Visual Impact Provision project is addressing this by constructing a 3.4km underground tunnel beneath the estuary between Minffordd and Llandecwyn, allowing the removal of 3km of overhead lines and 10 electricity pylons. With specialist expertise in railway tunnels, Network Rail's Asset Protection team is supporting the project by working closely with National Grid and its contractor, Hochtief UK, to provide engineering assurance for works on and near the railway. This collaboration is helping the project to progress safely and efficiently, protecting vital rail infrastructure while minimising impacts on the railway, local communities and the national park environment through careful coordination of access arrangements, construction safety and environmental compliance.

Tunnel construction is underway with Network Rail so far supporting works where the tunnel passes beneath the railway at Minffordd and Penrhyndeudraeth. In March 2026, the Asset Protection team will again work alongside National Grid during further tunnelling activities at Llandecwyn. The pylons and overhead lines are due for removal in 2029. The section of overhead line, constructed in 1966, is part of the 400kV electricity route connecting the 400kV Pentir substation near Bangor with the former Trawsfynydd Power Station, now a 400kV substation.

The Eryri project is the only VIP scheme underway in Wales, and one of just five across the UK - alongside schemes in the Dorset National Landscape, Peak District National Park, North Wessex Downs National Landscape and the Cotswolds National Landscape.

Nick Millington, Wales and Borders Route Director, Network Rail, said, "We're proud to support the Visual Impact Provision project in Eryri, which aligns with our commitment to sustainability, community engagement and protecting the environment. Wales and Borders is more than a railway - and the contribution of our specialist engineering teams to this complex work shows how we work with partners to deliver lasting benefits for our beautiful landscape, while keeping passengers and

freight moving safely and reliably."

Keeping the railway open and protecting the national park

Located close to the Cambrian Line and key community access points, the project requires tight coordination between National Grid, its contractors and Network Rail to plan safe construction routes, cable delivery operations and overhead line removal - all while keeping disruption to a minimum. The Cambrian Line remains open during the work. Network Rail has also worked closely with the Eryri National Park Authority and National Grid's environmental teams to support access planning and mitigate environmental risks. This includes protecting sensitive habitats and to allow well-used walking routes

- including the Wales Coast Path - to remain accessible throughout the works, wherever possible.

Steve Ellison, Senior Project Manager for the Eryri VIP at National Grid, said, "We're proud to have completed this important and delicate stage of our tunnelling journey without issue. This is testament to the close working relationship we have with Network Rail and the high level of skill and expertise within both teams."

Note: The image is a visual representation of what the view near the Dwyryd Estuary will look like once the project is completed in 2029. ©Network Rail



National Rail

Brand new Colas Rail tampers Nos. DR73953 and DR73954 pass through Northampton as 6Q77, the 09:53 Princes Risborough Ace to Rugby Depot Access Line on December 19th. *Derek Elston*



High-tech trial about to begin at Britain's second most bashed bridge

Harlaxton Road bridge in Grantham has become the country's second most struck bridge – underlining just why Network Rail has selected the structure for a high-tech trial aimed at reducing delays and costs.

New figures reveal that the bridge, which carries the East Coast Main Line over a six-road junction, was hit 18 times in 2024/25 – up from 14 the previous year.

Network Rail has revealed this year's top ten, which showed that only Watling Street bridge on the A5 in Hinckley, Leicestershire, was hit more times (22). Barrowby Road in Grantham – less than half a mile from Harlaxton Road – sits at number eight with 11 strikes.

Nationally, there were 1,666 reported bridge strikes by lorries and other high sided vehicles for the year to 31 March – one every five hours. This caused 186,384

minutes of delays – more than 120 days – and cost Britain's rail industry around £12 million in delays and cancellations.

Earlier this year, Network Rail secured £50,000 funding and has partnered with risk-management specialists BES Group to trial a pioneering remote monitoring system at Harlaxton Road bridge, which already has prominent signage, chevrons and protective beams. Cameras and sensors will be installed at the bridge before the end of December to massively speed up the process of checking that the bridge is safe to carry trains. A trial period of three months will check that the system meets Network Rail's requirements.

The remote monitoring system provides real-time alerts using cameras and impact-sensing technology that captures data and video footage instantly after a

collision. This allows engineers to assess the bridge remotely within seconds, reducing disruption for passengers and improving safety for staff who would otherwise need to inspect the structure on track.

Richard Woodford, Network Rail asset engineer, said: "Bridge strikes cost the British rail industry millions of pounds a year in delays, cancellations and repairs. Harlaxton Road already has prominent signage, so this trial using technology aims to cut inspection times after a strike from hours to seconds in many cases.

This means trains can run again much sooner, boosting the reliability of the railway and potentially saving hundreds of thousands of pounds in this one location alone."

O Come All Ye Freight-Full: Railway helps to deliver extra Christmas cheer in 200th anniversary year

As part of Railway 200, freight trains carry more than 1 billion tonnes of goods to prepare for festive period, including millions of Christmas decorations, trees, presents, food and bottles of wine. A freight train can carry as much as 129 HGVs, so the railway is helping to cut traffic jams in the run up to the festivities and deliver a greener Christmas. New figures reveal that rail freight is playing an even bigger role in the run up to Christmas this year, bringing extra festive cheer to homes across Britain and cause for celebration in the 200th anniversary of the modern railway.

Freight trains are helping to deliver millions of festive goods, including Christmas crackers, puddings, mince pies, decorations, wrapping paper, trees, toys and wine to shops around the country. About a third of Tesco's Christmas range will reach the shelves by rail freight. Overall, in the three months since mid-September, as retailers prepare for the festivities, more than 1.1 billion tonnes of consumer goods and fresh produce have been moved by more than 12,000 freight trains, an increase of 10 and 4 per cent respectively since last year.

In addition, to keep supermarket shelves stocked, in the week before Christmas 1,000 trains will move about 90 million tonnes of seasonal goods from ports and freight terminals around Britain.

Richard Moody, Programme Director at Network Rail, said: "Rail freight companies are delighted to play a central role in delivering Christmas cheer during rail's bicentenary year, ensuring families have everything they need to celebrate in style. With only a fraction of the emissions compared to road haulage, every tree, pudding and toy transported by rail helps to make a green Christmas. Many friends and families around the Christmas table will be unaware that much of their festive fare was carried to market by rail freight, one of Santa's not-so-little helpers."

Ben Smith, Head of primary, global and rail logistics at Tesco, added: "Our distribution network plays a vital role in our efforts to become carbon neutral in our own operations by 2035. Moving more than 30 per cent of our packaged Christmas range by rail allows us to get products to our stores in a more sustainable way, by removing thousands of lorry journeys each year and reducing our carbon emissions."

Railway 200 is a national celebration of 200 years of the modern railway, inspired by the opening of the Stockton and Darlington Railway in 1825, a journey that changed the world forever. The origins of the railway came even earlier and were built on carrying cargo, with horses pulling coal in wooden wagons.





The Great Central Railway, PLC (GCR) is currently arranging the disposal of ex-LMS Class 5MT 4-6-0 locomotive No. 45491 and its tender.

The loco has been undergoing restoration by its current ownership for a number of years but it is believed to still be in need of substantial additional work before it could be considered as fit for operational service. GCR has been the loco's base for some fifteen years but has not played any significant role in the restoration work carried out hitherto.

The sale is being conducted with reference to Section 12 and Schedule 1 of the Torts (Interference with Goods) Act 1977. For this purpose, GCR has been in receipt of legal advice provided by Shakespeare Martineau LLP of Nottingham.

Offers from interested parties to buy the locomotive & tender are now being sought in its "as seen" condition.

Latest passenger travel advice during Manchester Piccadilly's once-in-a-generation upgrade

Passengers using the North West's busiest railway station are being advised to plan their journey in advance this February, ahead of once-in-a-generation track and signalling upgrades. Network Rail teams will be completing a huge overhaul of tracks, points and signalling systems on the southern approach to Manchester Piccadilly station, beginning on Saturday February 14th. Some of this infrastructure dates to the 1980s and problems which occur on this section of the railway impact on nearly every service travelling into Manchester Piccadilly, so improving reliability here will provide a huge boost to passengers.

Network Rail will be investing nearly eight million pounds (£7.9m) on upgrades including:

- Replacing 11 sets of points
- Renewing 9,000m of cabling
- Upgrading timber sleepers with modern concrete equivalents
- Bringing lineside equipment up to date across six lines

The vast scale of the work spanning all main lines means no trains from the south and east of the city will run into Manchester Piccadilly for nine days over February half term (Saturday 14th - Sunday 22nd).

Some trains from across the north will also be impacted during the essential upgrades as well as direct connections to Manchester Airport station. During this time, Network Rail is advising passengers to travel light, allow extra time for their journey and be prepared to queue, as stations and rail replacement services are expected to be very busy. Network Rail has worked with train operators, Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) and Manchester City Council to develop an alternative travel plan during the closure, to keep passengers moving smoothly to their destination.

Passengers can now see details on journey planners. Where train services cannot reach Manchester, rail replacement buses will be in place. TfGM will be supporting with ticket acceptance across a range of Bee Network bus

and Metrolink services on affected routes and more information will follow ahead of the work beginning. While the train shed (platforms 1-12) will close, Manchester Piccadilly's concourse will remain open to the public. There will be a limited service westbound from platforms 13 and 14. Staff will be on hand to coordinate bus and Metrolink Bee Network journeys.

Rebecca Rathore, Network Rail's North West route strategy director, said: "We're investing £7.9m in renewing the Piccadilly corridor, a stretch of track critical to the journeys of around 400,000 trains into Manchester every year. This work is going to significantly reduce disruption for the many passengers who regularly use this route. Once the job is done, we will have a better, more reliable railway. The major overhaul over six railway lines can only take place during a full railway closure and we have worked closely with train operators, TfGM and Manchester City Council to develop an alternative travel plan that will keep people on the move. Please, plan your journey in advance as we are expecting services to be busy. We are grateful for your understanding."

Simon Elliott, Network Director Rail at TfGM, said: "This investment in Manchester Piccadilly's rail infrastructure is a crucial step forward in delivering a reliable and resilient railway for passengers, freight and supporting the city-region's continued economic growth. We are working closely with rail industry colleagues to support people to move easily across Greater Manchester while these essential works take place with ticket acceptance on a range of Bee Network bus services and Metrolink on affected routes."

A spokesperson for train operators said: "This work will improve the reliability of trains running into the region's busiest station. During this essential work, we're expecting services to be busy, so please plan ahead and allow extra travel time. Please check with your specific operator or with National Rail Enquiries for detailed journey information."

National Rail

Class 57 008 and 57 314 are seen thundering through Andover station with the empty stock working from Carnforth Steamtown (05:50) to Salisbury East Yard on the afternoon of December 19th. *David Lindsell*



Did you Know - Ken Mumford

Some more of the nations oddities this month:

A pair of graceful ladies?

A Bricklayers' Arms crew were due to work the 12.53 am Cannon Street to Dartford - but they never did! Running light from the shed, they stopped at Borough Market to help put out incendiaries on the track, then crossed the Thames to back onto their train.



As they did so, the bombs began to drop on the station; the signal lights all went out, the station began to blaze, and the driver later wrote in his report - *'The fires were like huge torches and there were thousands of sparks. The smoke from the fires blacked out the moon, and then the station roof caught alight.'*

By that time it was clear that the first thing to be done was to save the two trains standing in the station. The Bricklayers' Arms men pulled their train halfway across the river bridge [above] and there stopped. They were followed by two locos coupled together which were pulling another train out of the blazing station - this must have been the most extraordinary and incongruous bit of double-heading on record - a 'Schools' class 4-4-0 'St. Lawrence (No. 934) and an elderly, but shapely Wainwright 0-4-4 tank, in their different fashions, a pair of very graceful ladies.

Alas, one was to be casualty that night, for the two trains had not long come to rest on the bridge, when a fresh cluster of bombs rained down, and one fell on 934's boiler damaging it severely, and turning half of the train standing on the parallel line over on its side. Miraculously, its crew escaped death.

Then the coaches of the other train began to blaze; the wind blowing up the Thames was too strong to allow the buckets of water being thrown at the burning train to be effective, thus the fire got a firm hold. So, the loco was uncoupled and drew clear but stayed on the loco on the bridge for the rest of the night and looked at awe at London burning.

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

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A Different View

Sunrise at Stafford on December 20th
as a CrossCountry service waits to
depart for Manchester Piccadilly.
Richard Hargreaves



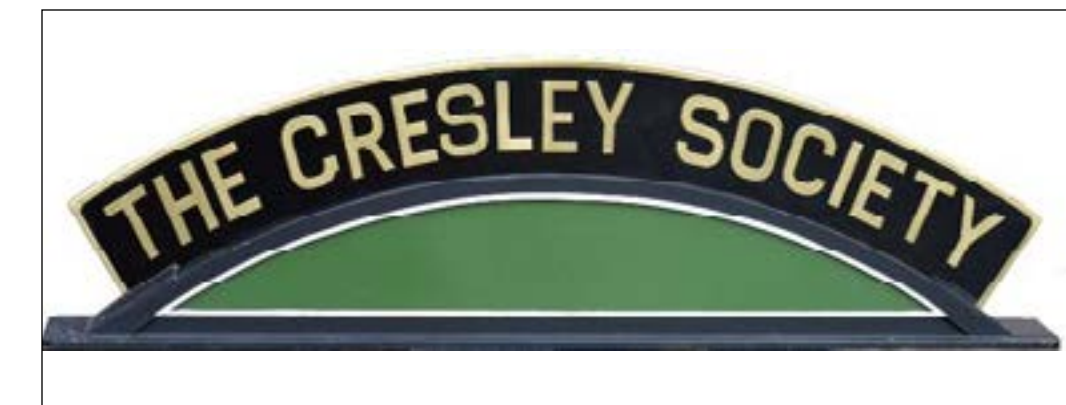
A Different View

Heysham Harbour station - a pleasant looking place! *Michael Lynam*

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THE GRESLEY SOCIETY ANNOUNCES THANKSGIVING SERVICE TO CELEBRATE SIR NIGEL GRESLEY'S 150TH ANNIVERSARY



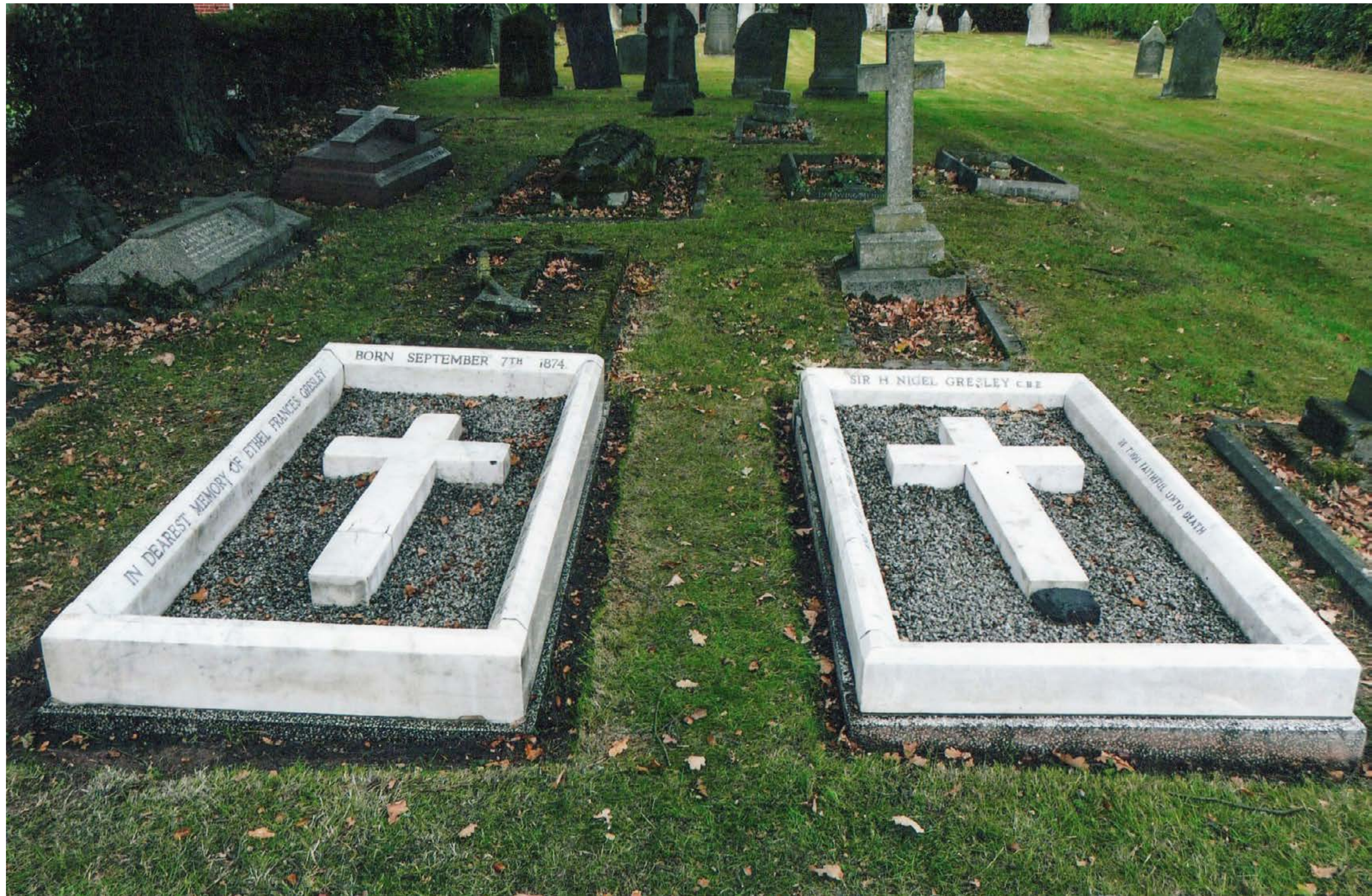
The Gresley Society Trust, founded in 1963 to honour the life and works of Sir Nigel Gresley, is delighted to announce a special Thanksgiving Service and Talk on Saturday, April 11th 2026, at St. Peter's Church, Netherseal, Derbyshire, to mark the 150th anniversary of the birth of the legendary railway engineer. Renowned for designing famous steam locomotives such as Flying Scotsman, Cock O' The North, and Mallard, Sir Nigel Gresley's legacy of innovation, speed, and elegance continues to inspire railway enthusiasts worldwide.

This special event, held close to the 85th anniversary of Sir Nigel Gresley's death and burial at St. Peter's Church on April 9th 1941, will commence the Trust's year-long celebrations under the strapline "A Legacy of Innovation, Speed and Elegance". The service at St. Peter's Church, where Sir Nigel and his wife are buried, will begin at 12 noon, followed by a talk in the nearby village hall exploring Gresley's remarkable life and achievements. Attendees will also have the opportunity to visit the Gresley family graves.

The event is expected to conclude by 16:00. To enhance accessibility, the Society will provide a vintage bus service from Burton-on-Trent and/or Tamworth railway stations.

Philip Benham MBE, FCILT, Chairman of The Gresley Society Trust, said: "Sir Nigel Gresley's visionary designs transformed the railway industry and continue to captivate enthusiasts worldwide. This Thanksgiving Service and Talk at Netherseal, a place of deep personal significance, is a poignant way to begin our 150th anniversary celebrations, honouring his extraordinary contributions to engineering and his enduring legacy." The Gresley Society invites members, their guests and members of the public to join this unique event. To register your interest in attending, including preferences for the potential bus service and preferred station (Burton-on-Trent or Tamworth), please contact Christopher Clark on christopherseclark@outlook.com. Early registration is encouraged to secure your place and assist with planning.

This event is part of a broader programme of celebrations, including a Symposium and Gala Dinner on June 20th 2026 at the Mansion House, Doncaster, an exhibition at the Danum Gallery, a new plaque unveiling at Doncaster



station, and a Gresley-focused theme at The Festival of British Railway Modelling on February 7th-8th 2026. The Trust also continues its work preserving Gresley's legacy through the ownership of Gresley class N2 No. 1744 and Buffet Lounge Car No. 1852, with ongoing restoration efforts supported by Heritage Fund applications.

BOILER DELIVERED: HUGE MILESTONE REACHED IN THE PROJECT TO BUILD BRITAIN'S MOST POWERFUL STEAM LOCOMOTIVE



The project to build Britain's most powerful steam locomotive celebrated a significant milestone on Tuesday December 9th with the delivery of the locomotive's boiler. The boiler is the single largest component required for the engine at a cost of over £500,000 and was built at Dampfloswerk (Steam Locomotive Works) Meiningen, Germany. Following delivery, it is now housed inside the new Darlington Locomotive Works alongside the wheeled frames, locomotive's tender and monobloc fabricated cylinder.

The P2 class locomotive, No. 2007 Prince of Wales, is the second new build steam locomotive by the A1 Steam Locomotive Trust and will operate on the national rail network upon completion. Originally built in the 1930s, the P2 'Mikados' were the most powerful express passenger locomotives to ever operate in the UK. They were designed by Sir Nigel Gresley, who also designed Flying Scotsman and Mallard, to haul 600-ton trains over the arduous Edinburgh to Aberdeen route.

P2 Project Director, Richard Courteney-Harris MBE, said "It is a proud day for the Trust as we begin to see the dream becoming reality as the P2 starts to take shape. The boiler is the beating heart of any locomotive and as the largest and most expensive component, its delivery today is a message of intent as we look forward to Prince of Wales steaming for the first time. In the year that railways celebrate their bicentenary, we are delighted to be building on that proud heritage, here in Darlington where it all began with Locomotion No.1 200 years ago." The project to build a new P2 is expected to cost around £7million, of which £5million has already been raised, with first movements anticipated in 3 years' time. This project is predominantly funded by enthusiasts pledging to donate £10 a month, with larger ticket items, such as the recent delivery, paid for by larger donations to the 'Boiler Club'. This project could not exist without the passion and commitment that is felt in Britain for railway heritage and all things steam! New supporters are encouraged to sign up at a1steam.com/p2donation

A1SLT would like to thank GAC UK for their service and professionalism in enabling the arrival of the boiler into the UK and RSS Ltd for the provision of a suitable wagon to accommodate the new boiler.





Hopetown Darlington has been honoured with the National Railway Heritage Award (NRHA) Chairman's Special Award at the 2025 National Railway Heritage Awards, recognising the outstanding preservation and revitalisation of three of Darlington's most historic railway buildings.

The National Railway Heritage Awards is an annual celebration to recognise, acknowledge and reward, for the public benefit, the very best in re-use, restoration and conservation of Britain's historic railway infrastructure.

The Chairman's Special Award was presented by Peter Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill, Minister of State for Rail, during the ceremony in central London celebrating exceptional achievements in railway heritage across the UK.

This prestigious national award reflects the extensive work undertaken as part of the £37 million transformation of heritage railway buildings and historic railway land into a 7.5-acre, railway-themed visitor attraction in the heart of Darlington.

The project has breathed new life into one of the town's most significant historic sites, safeguarding its pioneering railway heritage while creating an inspiring and engaging destination for future generations.

Councillor Libby McCollom, Cabinet Member for Local Services at Darlington Borough Council, said: "Receiving the NRHA Chairman's Special Award is a tremendous honour for everyone involved in Hopetown Darlington

from its earliest stages. We have always believed this site is one of Darlington's greatest assets. To see this recognised by the National Railway Heritage Awards is incredibly rewarding."

"This accolade reinforces our commitment to preserving Darlington's rich railway history while shaping a vibrant cultural destination that will continue to inspire residents and visitors for years to come."

Mike Crawshaw, Head of Heritage and Culture at Darlington Borough Council, said: "We are immensely proud to receive this award. Hopetown Darlington represents the very best of our town's spirit. Preserving these remarkable buildings is not just about safeguarding

our past; it's about celebrating what makes Darlington unique. This recognition puts our town and our attraction firmly on the national stage and is a testament to the dedication, passion, and hard work of everyone involved in the project from the very beginning."

This latest award adds to a growing list of achievements for Hopetown Darlington, which also recently received a VisitEngland Welcome Accolade for delivering an exceptional visitor experience. The awarded plaque will be unveiled during a ceremony at Hopetown Darlington in January 2026.

Photo: Goods Shed ©Hopetown Darlington

CHRISTMAS CAROL CONCERT TRAINS BRING FESTIVE JOY AND CHEER TO CORFE CASTLE'S VICTORIAN STATION



Two popular evening Christmas carol concert trains have brought festive joy and cheer to Corfe Castle's Victorian station which has played host to a choir, a band and a talented teenager playing the evocative Scottish bagpipes.

Special steam evening trains ran on Thursday December 11th and 18th 2025, from Swanage station to Corfe Castle where the concerts of songs and carols took place with singers and musicians performing in the station's restored Victorian goods shed which houses the Swanage Railway museum.

Featured in the concerts were the Carol Train Singers – conducted by musical director Angus Murray-Brown from Swanage – the Tuxedo Brass Quartet and teenager Freddie Sills who played the Scottish bagpipes in classic Highland dress including a tartan kilt.

The Carol Train Singers choir was specially formed for the festive concerts with its members being drawn from the Harmony Rocks choir based at Harman's Cross village hall between Corfe Castle and Swanage.

The Tuxedo Brass Quartet is based in Swanage with Angus Murray-Brown's wife Jacqui being a member of the group.

Living near Wareham, 18 year-old Freddie Sills is a former member of the Swanage Railway's Sygnets youth group who has been playing the bagpipes for eight years.

Freddie played seven classic Scottish marches and ballads during the Christmas carol concert – the three welcoming the steam train as it ran into Corfe Castle station and passengers disembarked, three during the concert and the last as the steam train departed Corfe Castle for Swanage.

On arrival at Corfe Castle station, the train passengers also had the opportunity to enjoy tasty mince pies and mulled wine to add to the festive atmosphere.

The Christmas carol concerts were organised by Bob Bunyar and his wife Sue who live in Swanage.

A dedicated Swanage Railway volunteer for almost 40 years, Bob is part of the team that maintains the heritage line's station at Harman's Cross.

Swanage Railway Chief Executive Officer Abbie Kings said: "Seeing the carol trains return has been truly special. Bringing this much-loved tradition back to the railway has reminded us what the Swanage Railway is really about – bringing people together.

"From Swanage to Harman's Cross and Corfe Castle, the sound of carols travelling along the line has connected our communities, created shared moments of joy and shown the railway at its very best: warm, welcoming and at the heart of the places we serve," added Abbie.

Event organiser Bob Bunyar explained: "Both Christmas carol trains soon sold out and there was a wonderful atmosphere at Corfe Castle station as the passengers joined in with the carol singing.

"The carol trains were great festive fun and a chance for people to enjoy carol singing - a great mix of steam, a train ride, community singing, tasty mince pies and mulled wine plus the evocative Scottish bagpipes.

"As passengers got off the steam train back at Swanage, there were many gratifying comments of thanks and praising what a lovely evening it was so I think the Christmas concerts really went down well.

"A lot of detailed work has gone on behind the scenes to plan, prepare and stage the two festive concerts at Corfe Castle station and I would like to thank everyone for all their hard work – and for the public supporting the event so wonderfully.

"I would also like to thank Celia Harding, who volunteers at the Corfe Castle station museum in the Victorian goods shed, for her help and for being able to use the museum which was an ideal setting for the carol concerts.

"Planning for the Christmas carol trains started on a very hot day in June when musical director Angus Murray Brown, and his wife Jacqui, met my wife Sue and I in our garden in Swanage to formulate plans for the two festive events.

"The sight, and sound, of Freddie Sills playing his Scottish bagpipes as the steam train departed Corfe Castle station after the carol concert was pretty awesome. He's an excellent piper and certainly added to the atmosphere and poignancy of the evening," added Bob.

Photo: Carol concert at Corfe Castle in December 2025.
©ANDREW PM WRIGHT

STATION VOLUNTEERS AWARDED FOR FLORAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL EXCELLENCE IN REGIONAL COMPETITION



Dedicated Swanage Railway volunteers - who work to maintain and develop five stations on the Isle of Purbeck heritage line - are celebrating after winning ten awards for floral and neighbourhood excellence in a regional competition.

Swanage, Herston, Harman's Cross, Corfe Castle and Norden stations each received two Stations In Bloom awards from the South and South East in Bloom organisation with one of the It's Your Neighbourhood awards for each station being sponsored by the prestigious Royal Horticultural Society founded in 1804.

Other awards went to local councils and communities for large towns, cemeteries, gardens, beach fronts and community projects in east and north Dorset, east Wiltshire, Hampshire, the Isle of Wight, west and east Sussex, Surrey and Kent.

One of the competition judges, Derek Beer from Shaftesbury, in north Dorset, said: "The five Swanage Railway stations were flagship entries - involving horticulture, community involvement and environmental activity. Four of the stations justifiably achieved the highest possible awards.

"Having the privilege of being shown around the Swanage Railway stations, and meeting such incredibly talented and dedicated volunteers, I am so grateful for the opportunity and cannot wait to meet them all again for next year's competition," he added.

Swanage station won the South and South East In Bloom Silver Award, sponsored by the Royal Horticultural Society, as well as the South and South East In Bloom Neighbourhood Award.

The Herston community halt won the South and South East In Bloom Silver Gilt Award, sponsored by the Royal Horticultural Society, as well as the South and South East In Bloom Neighbourhood Award in the level four Thriving category.

Harman's Cross station won the South and South East In Bloom Gold Award, sponsored by the Royal Horticultural Society, as well as the South and South East In Bloom Neighbourhood Award in the level five Outstanding category.

Corfe Castle station won the South and South East In Bloom Silver Gilt Award, sponsored by the Royal Horticultural Society, as well as the South and South East In Bloom Neighbourhood Award in the level four Thriving category.

Norden station won the South and South East In Bloom Gold Award, sponsored by the Royal Horticultural Society, as well as the South and South East In Bloom

Neighbourhood Award in the level four Thriving category. Norden station volunteer Mike Brown said: "The friendly Norden station maintenance and gardening team was surprised, and honoured, to receive the Gold and Thriving awards. We take great pride in caring for Norden station - which celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2025 - because first impressions count and we try to support the environment and biodiversity by encouraging native flora and fauna. We could not have achieved these awards without the hard work and support from the various teams at Norden. The certificates now hang with pride in our station waiting room at Norden along with other certificates," he added.

Volunteer Corfe Castle station manager David Scott explained: "We take considerable pride in the restored Victorian station at Corfe Castle so presenting it to the best of our ability is very important to us."

Bob Bunyar, one of the dedicated volunteers who help maintain and develop Harman's Cross station said: "It was very pleasing to receive two awards as the station team, particularly the gardeners, have put in a tremendous effort this year, especially doing extra watering due to the very dry conditions which were challenging. "The Harman's Cross station team is very dedicated and want to make the station look its best for our passengers - not only with its gardens but also like to use artifacts to enhance the feel of times gone by such as using old wheelbarrows, luggage trunks and the like for displays," added Bob.

Herston community halt volunteer Frank Roberts explained: "The Herston Halt team was delighted to receive the award after what was a very hot summer. With Herston Halt being the smallest station on the Swanage Railway, our success this year recognises the effort of many dedicated members in the team, especially Marilyn Carter and Carol Wright who sadly lost her husband Pete in 2024.

"Pete was a regular Herston Halt volunteer for more than twenty years and we keep the station looking good in his memory," added Frank.

Photo: Swanage Railway In Bloom winners at Harman's Cross. © ANDREW PM WRIGHT

More Railway Is Coming! Great Central Railway Reunification Project Set to Build Again In 2026



Two ‘highly visible’ sections next on the to do list with 75% of funding in place.

The Great Central Railway’s ambitious Reunification scheme should take two big steps forward in 2026. A highly visible new road bridge and a short section of viaduct are expected to be built in Loughborough at a cost of three and a half million pounds.

Reunification will link together two halves of the Great Central Railway, one in Leicestershire and one in Nottinghamshire. The end result will be an eighteen mile heritage line which connects local attractions together and stimulates economic growth in the East Midlands.

“We’re delighted to share our intentions to get back to building for the Reunification project,” said Great Central Railway General Manager, Malcolm Holmes. “Already three parts of the build have been completed, which involved raising and investing millions of pounds. With planning permission now granted for the rest of the work, ground investigation completed and final design underway, we can look forward to seeing construction workers back on site in Summer 2026. Our business forecast predicts tourism growth for the area when Reunification is finished. We want to help turn people who day trip to the area, into people who take longer breaks here which is good for us all.”

The next two sections to be built will fill in another sixty metres of the missing five hundred metres between the railways - a stretch of track taken away by British Rail in the 1970s. The other parts of the work that have already been completed include a spectacular new bridge over the Midland Main Line at Loughborough.

More than two and a half million pounds have been raised for the latest building work. Donations are coming in from around the country and the world. Seventy five percent of the funds are in place for building the next two sections.

During 2025 the two halves of the Great Central Railway have been working ever closer together, preparing for the day they are one line again. Andy Fillingham of Great Central Railway (Nottingham) said, “We know there’s a huge appetite to see Reunification completed. The next sections can’t come soon enough, though we still need to raise some more money before we can definitely press ahead. The more we raise, the sooner we can build and the further we go, towards delivering this transformational project.”

Malcolm Holmes continued “Every pound will help us build more railway, so we’d urge anyone who would like to see this work continue and the project completed to please consider a donation. It’s been really humbling to see how much everyone has put their faith in the railway to deliver. On behalf of everyone, thank you.”

East Lincs Railway

An unusual combination of Class 110 driving trailer No. E51842 and single car No. W55001 is about to enter Irwell Vale station with a Rawtenstall - Heywood service on December 31st. The destination of 'Knaresborough' seems a little ambitious! *Jeff Nicholls*



East Lancs Railway

DMU Nos. E51842 and W55001 are seen departing Irwell Vale on December 31st with a service to Heywood. *Jeff Nicholls*



East Lincs Railway

Former Lancashire and Yorkshire 0-6-0 No. 52322 is seen at Townsend Fold with a late running Heywood - Rawtenstall service on the last day of 2025. *Jeff Nicholls*



Gloucestershire & Warwickshire Railway

▶ GWR Castle Class No. 4079 'Pendennis Castle' awaits the inbound service at Winchcombe before it can continue the onward journey to Broadway on December 29th. *Derek Elston*

▶ BR Green Class 37, English Electric type 3, No. D6948 waits to exit the shed road at Toddington. on December 29th. *Derek Elston*

▶ Class 26 043 is seen stabled on the shed yard at Toddington on December 29th. *Derek Elston*





Gloucestershire &
Warwickshire Railway

GWR Castle Class No. 4079 'Pendennis Castle' runs round its train at Broadway on December 29th. *Derek Elston*



The welcoming warmth of the footplate of 'Pendennis Castle'. *Derek Elston*





Severn Valley Railway

On December 27th, Class 37 418 stands at Bridgnorth working 11:30 Bridgnorth - Kidderminster service. *Richard Hargreaves*

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Severn Valley Railway

On December 28th, GWR Hall Class No. 4930
'Hagley Hall' arrives into Kidderminster.
Richard Hargreaves

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Severn Valley Railway

On December 29th, the SVR held their Winter Diesel Gala. Here the driver of Clayton Class 17 No. D8598 checks that all is well with the coupling up to the three car DMU at Arley, ready for the return trip back to Kidderminster.

Barry Longson

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From the Archives

Class 52 No. D1001 'Western Pathfinder' pictured with the down Cornish Riviera Express on June 29th 1970. The location is Wrangton, on Rattery Bank. The signal box is now at Kidderminster. *Bryan Roberts*

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From the Archives

On May 23rd 1984, ED Class 73 131 was seen
in Clapham Yard shunting parcel vans.
Barry Longson



From the Archives

It was fairly rare for Class 20s to work on their own.
Here Class 20 063 has a very short freight in tow
as it runs through Carstairs on April 27th 1982.
Barry Longson





From the Archives

Class 31 275, 31 189, 31 243 and others are seen from a passing train at Peterborough Depot on June 14th 1975. *John Sloane*

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From the Archives

Class 47 145 soaks up the winter sunshine at
Crewe Works on February 1st 1981.

John Sloane

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From the Archives

GM liveried Class 142 014 approaches
Manchester Piccadilly on September 20th
1986. *John Sloane*





From the Archives

Class 47 146 pilots Deltic 55 007 'Pinza' away from a snowy Newark on December 30th 1981. *John Sloane*

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From the Archives

A cat's eye view of Class 37 307 stabled by the then roofless steam depot at Worcester, on a chilly January 22nd, 1983. *Barry Longson*

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From the Archives

A line up of locos stabled at the side of Motherwell depot on November 13th, 1982. They are R to L Class 37 150, 27 111, 20 199 and 37 146. *Barry Longson*

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From the Archives

Four 'Tractors'! Having stopped on the Up Slow line at Winwick Junction to reverse, Class 37 612 and 37 038 blast off in a cloud of diesel exhaust towards Earlestown on a Network Rail test train on October 2nd 2013. *Jeff Nicholls*



