

SLUG News - 2013

9 December 2013

Peter Luff MP Launches Off-Peak Hartlebury Service

Mid Worcestershire MP, Peter Luff led the celebrations at Hartlebury train station this morning (9 December) as he waved off the 09.19 service to Whitlocks End – the first train in the new hourly service linking to Worcester and Birmingham stations for almost 50 years.

Mr Luff was joined by local residents, senior managers from London Midland, the Chair of Wychavon District Council and representatives from the Stourbridge Line User Group and Cotswold Line Promotion Group, who came together after successfully campaigning to reinstate the service.

Terry Oliver, London Midland's head of Snow Hill services said, "We are committed to providing quality journeys for everyone and I'm really pleased that we have been able to modify the timetable to provide a much improved service for the people of Hartlebury".

Local residents, who applauded as the train pulled into the station for an extended three minute stop, were handed complimentary passes for a day's free travel on the London Midland service.

Stourbridge Line User Group chairman, Rob Hebron said, "I am delighted that London Midland has decided to provide an enhanced service for Hartlebury. We have persistently requested this improvement and they have delivered. Not only is Hartlebury accessible throughout the day but the village is now plugged into the London Midland network, which is of considerable size.

2 December 2013
Press Call / Photo Opportunity - Hartlebury Station, Monday 9 December at 08.45

Residents of Hartlebury will benefit from the most frequent rail service in almost 50 years, with an hourly service between Worcester and Birmingham Snow Hill, providing passengers with much improved rail links to both cities.

Mid Worcestershire MP, Peter Luff will join representatives from London Midland, Worcestershire County Council, Stourbridge Line User Group and Cotswold Line Promotion Group at Hartlebury station on Monday, 9 December at 08.45 to mark the introduction of the new service. Mr Luff will 'wave off' the 09.19 service from Worcester to Whitlocks End, which will stop at Hartlebury station for an extended three minute stop.

To mark the timetable revisions, London Midland will be providing one lucky person with a year's free rail travel between Hartlebury, Worcester Foregate Street and Birmingham stations on the Snow Hill line. To be in with a chance of winning, simply make your way to Hartlebury station on Monday 9 December to 'wave off' the 09.19 service. The lucky winner will be picked at random.

27 October 2013 December 2013 Timetable Changes

The December 2013 brings a number of changes to the Stourbridge line timetable, which are itemised below.

Rush hour services

These are subject to minor timing changes.

Off-peak Monday to Saturday

Hartlebury and Stratford-upon-Avon will see improved off-peak services. These are detailed in full in other news items.

Departures from Kidderminster towards Birmingham will be every 15 minutes at 10, 25, 40 and 55 minutes past each hour, rather than the current irregular interval pattern. Journeys towards Worcester will run 3 minutes earlier.

Trains stopping at Blakedown and Hagley will start from and terminate at Kidderminster rather than Worcester or Great Malvern. Northbound departures will be 12 minutes later than at present, while southbound departures will be 9 minutes earlier. The departures from Birmingham Snow Hill will be at 03 and 33 minutes past each hour.

Trains from Stourbridge Junction towards Birmingham will be retimed slightly and will depart at 07, 18, 27, 37, 48 and 57 minutes past each hour. All trains originating at Stourbridge Junction will normally depart from Platform 2. Trains towards Kidderminster will depart at 09 and 39 to Kidderminster and 29 and 59 to Worcester, meaning that the current 24 minutes between trains has been reduced to 20 minutes.

Trains stopping at Lye, Old Hill and Langley Green will all start from and terminate at Stourbridge Junction. Trains towards Birmingham will be about 2 minutes later than at present, while departures towards Stourbridge Junction will be about 10 minutes earlier. The departures from Birmingham Snow Hill will be at 23 and 53 minutes past each hour.

Trains at all other stations will see departure times slightly amended.

Sunday services

The stopping services from Stourbridge Junction to Dorridge will operate 4 minutes later than at present with return journeys running 3 minutes later.

27 October 2013

More Train Services to Stratford-upon-Avon from December

The December 2013 timetable brings a half hourly service on Monday to Saturday daytimes between Stourbridge Junction and Stratford-upon-Avon.

Off-peak trains will leave Stourbridge Junction at 27 and 57 minutes past each hour with the xx27 journey operating to Dorridge and then non-stop to Stratford-upon-Avon Parkway and Stratford-upon-Avon, and the xx57 journey following the current route via Whitlock's End and Henley-in-Arden. The journey via Dorridge is 10 minutes shorter.

Trains return from Stratford-upon-Avon at xx03 (via Dorridge) and xx26 (via Whitlock's End). All off-peak trains will stop at Lye, Old Hill and Langley Green in both directions.

Off-Peak Train Services for Hartlebury from December

There is good news for Hartlebury passengers. From 9 December, Hartlebury will gain an hourly off-peak train service for the first time in 50 years.

At present, Hartlebury has trains stopping on Mondays to Saturdays from about 0630 to 0830 and from about 1630 to 1900. From December, the gap from 0830 to 1630 will be filled by an hourly service in both directions, departing at 32 minutes past the hour towards Birmingham and 52 minutes past the hour towards Worcester.

SLUG has long campaigned for a better service at Hartlebury and welcomes this initiative by London Midland. The new service is excellent for shopping trips. However, it seems incongruous that Hartlebury residents will be able to travel to Birmingham or Worcester for an evening out, but won't be able to return. In addition, the service needs to be extended to enable people to make longer trips from Hartlebury. For instance, anybody travelling to London can reach Euston at 0913, Marylebone at 0936 or Paddington at 0941. However, to get back, they would have to leave Euston at 1623, Marylebone at 1545 or Paddington at 1555 because there is no evening service to Hartlebury.

For these reasons, SLUG feels that this should only be the first step towards the provision of an all-day service, 7 days a week and will continue to campaign for the service to be further extended.

8 October 2013
The Great Escape

London Midland have re-introduced their “Great Escape” promotion which enables you to travel anywhere on London Midland trains for just £15 (£9.90 with a railcard) from 19 October to 3 November 2013.

26 September 2013 Midland Metro Developments

Midland Metro line 1 provides good connections with the Stourbridge line at The Hawthorns and Jewellery Quarter for journeys towards West Bromwich, Wednesbury, Bilston and Wolverhampton. A number of enhancements are in the pipeline to improve line 1.

Firstly, the first of a new fleet of trams, built by CAF in Spain, is due to be delivered next month, with introduction into service scheduled for Spring 2014. The new trams are larger than the current ones, with a maximum capacity of 200 passengers.

Secondly, the extension of line 1 from Snow Hill to New Street station is currently being constructed and is on schedule for completion in early 2015. This extension will give Stourbridge line passengers an alternative way of reaching New Street by changing at The Hawthorns or Jewellery Quarter.

Finally, two further extensions have been proposed and have been put out to public consultation. The first would see the line diverge from the current line just before the Wolverhampton St Georges stop and serve stops at the bus station and the railway station. This appears to be a flawed design as a tram journey could serve either the railway station or the city centre but not both. The other proposed extension would see the line extended beyond New Street to Centenary Square via the Town Hall. It is proposed to build this extension alongside the redevelopment of the Arena Central and Paradise Circus with the developers contributing towards the cost and it is hoped that this extension would be completed by 2017.

19 September 2013 Chiltern's New Look Trains Arrive

Chiltern have unveiled the first of their new-look trains as part of a £5.3 million investment programme.

The trains, the first of which left London Marylebone today, have been designed to emulate the style of the silver inter-city trains. Kitted out with new carpets, seat covers and tables, they have all the accoutrements of the popular silver trains. The revitalised trains will offer an even more comfortable space for passengers travelling along the route and has been delivered without recourse to taxpayer funds.

A rolling programme will see the entire fleet of Clubman trains updated by 2016.

They are also giving passengers' creative thought processes a boost, by transforming bog-standard onboard toilets into "inspiration stations" that provide a win...dow into a different world.

The first inspiration station has been designed to resemble Compton Verney, an eighteenth century country mansion turned art gallery in Warwickshire. It depicts a Rococo Revival chimneypiece from the mid-eighteenth century, a pier table from southern Italy and a painting of Compton Verney as it is today. The first inspiration station is now in service on the first refurbished clubman train.

16 September 2013

Stourbridge Line employees nominated for awards at the National Staff Rail Awards

Two London Midland employees who both live in the Dudley area and work for London Midland on the Stourbridge Line have been nominated for awards at the National Staff Rail Awards.

Ian Clee from Dudley, has been shortlisted for Outstanding Customer Service at the national Rail Staff Awards for his work as London Midland Customer Service Assistant at Stourbridge station.

Sarah Hollies from Stourbridge is a finalist in the David Maidment charity category in the national Rail Staff Awards. Nominated for the fundraising she has done in her free time for Breakthrough Breast Cancer, Sarah has worked for London Midland for four years and is currently a retail assistant at Droitwich Spa railway station.

Congratulations to both of them on their nominations, and we wish them all the best and hope that they win the awards.

17 July 2013

A new Sunday bus service for Stourbridge and Kidderminster passengers

Whittles have announced that their popular service 125 which runs from Stourbridge to Bridgnorth via Kidderminster, Bewdley and Highley will operate on Sundays from 28 July to 8 September.

There are two through journeys per day to and from Bridgnorth.

16 July 2013
Birmingham City Centre Tunnels Closure

The Birmingham city centre tunnels at St Chad's and Queensway will be completely closed to all traffic from 19 July to 2 September and major delays are expected on the road network in the area.

Centro and Birmingham City Council are advising people who drive into Birmingham to switch to public transport. As a result, regular rail users may find that their trains are fuller than normal. It will be interesting to discover what percentage of the new rail passengers stay loyal to the train service when the tunnels are reopened.

20 June 2013
Rail User's Group welcomes station improvements
(Extract from a Press Release by the Stourbridge Line User Group)

A local rail passenger group has welcomed the news about car parking at Stourbridge Junction. An announcement from Centro (the West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority) that more parking spaces are to be provided has fulfilled a long standing campaign by the Stourbridge Line User Group (SLUG). As recently as last month at the SLUG AGM and Public Meeting, questions were raised about inadequate parking facilities. The Centro spokesman, Steve Fisher alluded to "Pinch Points Funding" which might be granted to bring into use land in Rufford Road. The government has now released the finance for improved car parking at Stourbridge Junction, Kings Norton and Four Oaks in order to take traffic off the heavily used road network.

SLUG Chairman, Rob Hebron was quoted as saying:

"I am delighted that years of lobbying have produced a positive effect, demonstrated as 175 new car parking spaces. This will bring the total capacity to almost 1000. I cannot overstate how fortunate we are in having free car parking at key stations and it is a major factor in raising demand for train services. However, my euphoria is dampened by my concerns that London Midland may not be able to cope with the extra rail passenger traffic, so I hope that train carriage capacity will be considered in advance of the 2014 construction commencement date.

He continued:

"We have had visionaries working for the transport authority (referring to the late Councillor Angus Adams) and clearly, we still have. Rail travel has been recognised as the transport of the future but we need to support and develop it right now in the present.

He concluded:

"Stourbridge Junction is a "Park and Ride" facility as opposed to the new Stratford upon Avon "Parkway" station which has been designed alongside road infrastructure. There is a saturation point where local roads around one single station cannot cope with increased traffic. The Stourbridge Line needs a Parkway station to relieve the traditional stations. The time to plan for this is now".

9 June 2013
Kinver Country Fayre

Kinver Country Fayre 2013 takes place on Sunday 16 June. For Stourbridge line passengers, a special bus service 227E will operate from Stourbridge Bus Station on that day, leaving Stourbridge at 0940, 1040, 1140, 1240, 1340, 1540 and 1640, returning from Kinver at 1015, 1115, 1215, 1315, 1415, 1615 and 1800.

15 May 2013
SLUG on Facebook

SLUG is pleased to announce that it now has a Facebook page, which over time will be populated with some interesting information and discussion about train services and other rail related facilities on the Birmingham-Stourbridge-Kidderminster-Worcester rail route along with other connecting public transport services.

The page may be accessed by clicking the Facebook icon at the top of any page on this website.

12 May 2013
A Most Unusual Rail Tour

SLUG is pleased to publicise a most unusual rail tour that is running, entirely for charity, on Sunday 26th May. It is hoped to raise £10,000 - £12,500 for Railway Children with ticket sales, on board raffle and sales etc.

It may be of interest to members as there are some places left and it would be good if it could be filled up. The train is being provided by Chiltern completely free of charge, the train's crews are donating their pay to The Railway Children and Network Rail is not charging for its work in planning and running the train etc.

The Branch Line Society is facilitating this unique, interesting and unusual trip (at no charge of course) and any publicity amongst members and support (in terms of bookings to fill the train and publicity) would be appreciated by the BLS for this well deserving cause.

It will connect with the first train of the day from Birmingham Moor Street (depart 08.55) and intermediate stations to Marylebone, as well as return trains at Bicester North and Marylebone.

6 January 2013 The heat is on

An article on rail fare increases does not constitute “news” in the true sense of the word. The annual inflation-busting hike in travel costs is hardly unexpected.

However, the well worn phrase “it pays for developing the service” simply will not wash with passengers this year. Those same customers can claim that their train service has actually deteriorated in 2012 and fare rises are unjustified on that basis alone.

London Midland has delivered comfort and speed with the new Class 172 trains. Likewise, Chiltern Railways has introduced superior Mk3 Silver Locomotive-hauled trains on our line. What can the operators offer for 2013 which will placate commuters who are regularly late for work in the morning? The official answer is rejigged, more efficient timetables. The real answer lies in the terms of the franchise extension from the Department for Transport: To compensate for delays and cancellations, every London Midland season ticket holder will receive 5 free tickets to travel anywhere on the London Midland network. Furthermore, 500,000 more Advance fare tickets will be made available on the London to Crewe, London to Birmingham and Birmingham to Liverpool routes. Finally, London Midland promise over £2m on improvements, including “a programme of information, safety and performance enhancements which will help to improve customers’ travel experience, particularly in the West Midlands”.

This is all very well if you believe that the £2m is new money and not derived from the New Year fare increases. The fact is that London Midland has suffered a serious blow to its stature and credibility and PR alone will not repair the damage to its reputation. Although the Snow Hill Lines suffered less than other routes during the driver shortage experience, there is much to be done on the Stourbridge Line. A coat of paint at stations will not be enough. As far as the Stourbridge Line User Group is concerned, basic issues will have to be tackled: Overcrowding during rush hour needs to be addressed. Worcestershire stations deserve a better frequency of trains and some need an upgrade to enable passengers to travel during the evening and Sundays. This is the starting point in 2013. The heat is on for London Midland to prove itself.

6 January 2013
Christmas Quiz Answers



How well do you know the Stourbridge line? Here are the photographs and the answers are below.

- 1 Birmingham Moor Street
- 2 Worcester Shrub Hill
- 3 Smethwick Galton Bridge
- 4 Jewellery Quarter (entrance in Vyse Street)
- 5 Hartlebury
- 6 Cradley Heath
- 7 Worcester Shrub Hill (Ladies Waiting Room)
- 8 Stourbridge Junction
- 9 Worcester Tunnel Junction
- 10 Blakedown Signal Box
- 11 Droitwich Spa
- 12 Birmingham Snow Hill (Livery Street entrance)
- 13 Hagley
- 14 Langley Green
- 15 Old Hill (crossing the canal just north of the station)
- 16 Old Hill Tunnel (view from above the southern portal)
- 17 Worcester Foregate Street
- 18 Smethwick Junction
- 19 Jewellery Quarter (view through the Hockley tunnels)
- 20 Kidderminster
- 21 Hoobrook Viaduct, Kidderminster
- 22 The Hawthorns
- 23 Rowley Regis
- 24 Lye
- 25 Livery Street bridge (between Snow Hill and Jewellery Quarter)
- 26 Birmingham Snow Hill
- 27 Railway bridge over the Worcester & Birmingham Canal, Worcester
- 28 Stourbridge Junction signal box
- 29 Stourbridge Town
- 30 Digbeth viaduct, south of Birmingham Moor Street