

ONWARDS TOWARDS DUDLEY by Roger Davis



Dudley 2023 ?

Since the last edition of *Platform* was published, SLUG's aspirations for a rail based passenger service along the entire route from Stourbridge Junction to Wednesbury has moved forward. The biggest news is that, on 20 November, the Government announced a £250 million investment grant to the West Midlands Combined Authority, the majority of which will be used to build the long

awaited Midland Metro line from Wednesbury to Brierley Hill. This will enable work on constructing the line to start in 2019 with the line from Wednesbury to Dudley open in 2022 and to Brierley Hill in 2023.

In addition, SLUG has arranged meetings with both West Midlands Rail (WMR), the consortium of local authorities, and West Midlands Trains (WMT), the operator of the new franchise, and both have stated their commitment to reopen the line from Stourbridge Junction to Brierley Hill. WMR has told us that this is a committed scheme under the HS2 connectivity package while, at our meeting at WMT Headquarters in Birmingham, WMT stated that they are fully committed to providing this service as the funding for the new station has been agreed. WMT's proposal is for a half-hourly service (peak and off-peak) to operate to a new station at Moor Street which would be built with car parking facilities. It is intended that the line is further extended in 2023 to provide an interchange with the Midland Metro at Hart's Hill (Canal Street). In fact, at the annual WMR Conference, I managed to have a word with Jan Chaudhry-Van Der Velde, the newly appointed Managing Director of WMT, and he reiterated that WMT was fully committed to providing the seven new West Midlands stations they promised when awarded the franchise in August.



Brierley Hill 2020 ?
With a new station of course !

This includes the station at West Midlands Safari Park which WMT have told us is due to be built close to the Bewdley bypass on West Midlands Safari Park (WMSP) land with funding provided by WMSP. Trains would only operate as far as the Safari Park as Worcestershire County Council are concerned about traffic congestion if the service continued to Bewdley. An hourly service is proposed, with additional peak services, although the service would not operate when Severn Valley Railway were hosting a Gala event.

Both stations are earmarked for opening in December 2019, although this seems ambitious especially as Network Rail will be involved and their GRIP process seems to delay projects as the residents of Kidderminster will attest.

We will keep you informed of any progress in future editions of *Platform* and on our website.