



EDITORIAL

Welcome to my first edition of the MMPA Newsletter. As you'll know if you were at the AGM I've swapped duties with Rob Latham, so he's now looking after Membership.

We extend a warm welcome to our new members who joined at the AGM and since.

We noticed that one or two members had paid twice during the year. If you would like to extend your membership by a year please ask when renewals are requested or before.

Your comments and contributions will always be welcome, including photos if we have space. Please email editor@mmpa.org.uk

Richard Porter

NEW TIMETABLES

The new timetables come into force on Sunday 12th December. The Marlow branch timings are not changed, but connecting times may be. Always check at weekends because branch times can be adjusted to fit in with engineering work on the main line.

Chiltern Railways' Leaf Fall timetable will continue until 11 December, with an additional service departing High Wycombe at 07:24 arriving at Marylebone at 08:00.

When we asked you if you wished to continue with printed timetables by post we got one positive reply. At the same time GWR was making changes from week to week because of coronavirus and technical issues. It doesn't make sense to print lots of paper which will be out of date before it gets distributed, so we won't be asking for printed timetables in future but you can download timetables from the operators' websites. The Marlow branch timetable is included here for the benefit of members not on the net.

GWR Services Switch to TfL-Rail

A further five GWR services will transfer to TfL-RAIL on 12th December. These are:

07:30 and 08:00 MF Reading to Paddington, calling additionally at Burnham, West Drayton and Ealing Broadway;

17:27, 18:26 and 18:56 MF Paddington to Reading, calling additionally at Ealing Broadway and West Drayton.

These changes are being made in preparation for the opening of the Elizabeth line in the first half of 2022.

Some journey times may increase by 1-2 minutes but arrival and departure times at Paddington will be unchanged.

In the long term, however, many journey times will decrease as a result of through running services directly into central London.

Once the central core is open, Elizabeth Line services will operate as three railways:

- Reading and Heathrow to Paddington ML
- Paddington Elizabeth Line to Abbey Wood
- Liverpool Street ML to Shenfield.

Passengers will need to change at Paddington ML (main line) station for services through central London.

From autumn 2022 at the earliest, passengers will be able to make journeys from Reading and Heathrow directly through to Elizabeth line stations in central London and beyond without needing to change trains.

The final milestone will be no later than May 2023, when the full Elizabeth Line timetable will be in place.

Elizabeth Line trains do not have toilets and most seating is back-to-the-window.

FARES TO GO UP BY 3.8% ?

According to leaked reports (*Guardian*, 1st December) the government is considering raising regulated fares by 3.8% next year, though not on 1st January. This is the inflation figure for last July based on the higher Retail Prices Index (RPI), but without the usual 1% on top.

Tickets are sold up to twelve weeks in advance so any price rises are normally announced at least that far ahead.

Transport user groups are campaigning for a fares freeze in order to attract more people back onto the railways.

Thames Valley Fares Nightmare

In the light of the service changes mentioned above (p.1) we've been looking at the fares for Paddington to Maidenhead during the evening peak from 13th December.

TfL-RAIL services and all incoming services are off-peak, as are GWR departures from Paddington at 15:56, 16:56 and 17:56. The remaining GWR departures up to 18:20 are peak rate, meaning you need to have an Anytime ticket. The Bourne End and Marlow services connect with the fast 'peak' services.

Now here's the catch. Most tickets are valid on any operator's services over the permitted route, but according to the GWR App Anytime Single tickets are only valid for the operator shown. We have asked GWR for clarification.

Railcard discounts given for evening peak departures but not necessarily for morning ones (it depends which railcard), so you may be able to save by buying two tickets.

Normal off-peak single and return tickets including GWR e-tickets, can be used on either operator's services, BUT if you use TfL's "contactless" ticketing you will be charged peak fares between 16:00 and 19:00.

How this will be policed, or even understood, remains to be seen. Please let us have your experiences.

Chiltern Gets New 6-Year Contract

Chiltern Railways has agreed a new National Rail Contract with the Department for Transport (DfT) for the next six years.

The new contract starts on Friday 31st December and runs until the end of 2027.

The new contract means Chiltern Railways will continue operating its existing services between London and Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and the West Midlands.

Chiltern has committed to delivering the following:

- To continue and expand the trials of HybridFlex technology which converts existing trains to diesel-battery hybrid with zero emissions whilst at stations
- To work on a business case for converting all diesel trains to hybrid technology
- To introduce Delay Repay 15 which means customers can make compensation claims when a train arrives 15 minutes or more late at its destination.
- An improved onboard customer environment with new LED lighting and CCTV on all trains and a plan for a light refresh of train interiors with the owners of the trains.
- Extended opening hours for the customer contact centre 7 days a week.

Talk: The Wycombe Railway

John Gurney will give his long awaited talk on the Wycombe Railway at Bourne End Community Centre on 17th March 2022 (postponed from 2020). Watch BEBCA's website or *Target* magazine for tickets.

COVID-19

Don't forget that facemasks are required by law on public transport and in some indoor settings, unless you are exempt.

For AGM 2022 we plan to revert to our usual time of year at the end of March - details in the next issue.

AGM 24th September 2021

We had a full house for the AGM, albeit with chairs spread more widely due to COVID-19. The formalities were completed in record time, so straight onto the presentations:

Presentation by Mark Hopwood CBE, Managing Director, GWR

Mark introduced Ollie Irwin, GWR's newly appointed Duty Station Manager covering the Marlow branch.

Mark paid tribute to Nigel Hunt, who died recently. Nigel had been a towering presence in local transport affairs and was a former chairman of MMPA.

He said that GWR was beginning to plan for the replacement of the long serving class 165 Turbo units used on the branch. They aim to test a battery powered unit on the Greenford branch and, if successful, these would probably be introduced on to all the Thames Valley (and Cornish) branches. The tri-mode Class 769 (formerly Thameslink 319s with added diesel engines) would probably be deployed on the Maidenhead to Bourne End shuttle in due course, but could not be used on the Bourne End - Marlow section.

He also said that GWR was trialling (in Devon) closer connections with local bus companies to improve the overall service. In answer to a question about the situation at Bourne End, where NetworkRail had created a small parking area where the former café had stood instead of creating a bus pull-in, he said that this was an issue for the bus company and Buckinghamshire Council.

He confirmed that a cashless ticket machine would soon be installed at Furze Platt, earlier cash taking ones having proved a target for some local residents.

Mark admitted that the remodelling of Maidenhead station forecourt, now completed, had taken longer than he would have liked.

To a question about the long planned trackworks at Bourne End to allow two trains per hour to operate off-peak between Marlow and Maidenhead without passengers having

to change trains, he said that it was their aspiration that this would happen but that it was now clear that a full resignalling of the branch would be necessary; this had serious cost implications for the project which, in any case, had lost much of the funding committed by local bodies owing to the elastic timescale. Nevertheless he agreed that it was unreasonable to expect passengers travelling from Marlow to stations on the main line to have to change twice within fifteen miles. A further questioner asked why a half-hourly service could not be run throughout the day now, but Mark did not consider this financially viable.

In answer to another question Mark said that he hoped that the half-hourly service between Maidenhead and Didcot would be restored in the December timetable. This would obviate some of the unsatisfactory connectivity which presently exists.

Martin Coker (representing Cookham Parish Council) thanked GWR for accepting bus tickets between Cookham and Bourne End when the road was closed due to floods.

Presentation by Jo Grew, Network Rail Industry Programme Director.

Jo said that Network Rail was collaborating with GWR on the trial of battery trainsets, with particular reference to re-charging facilities. NR was in the process of installing new axle counters on the main line and introducing the European Train Control System (ETCS).

On the subject of the Bourne End trackworks she agreed that it had taken much too long but said that it was a technically difficult scheme. Some switches and crossings were used nowhere else in the country, for example. There was to be a meeting to try and finalise the specification and estimate the cost. (How many times have we heard that before?) In answer to a question she said that only then would it be time to try and re-activate the previously promised funding from Local Enterprise Partnerships.

Jo said that following the track renewal between Bourne End and Marlow last year, the replacement of the track between Cookham and Cock Marsh viaduct was scheduled for 2022/23. She promised to research and respond after the meeting to questions about level crossings fitness for purpose and why the Brunel bridge over the Thames was still in a state of disrepair.

Presentation by Mike Bagshaw, MTR Elizabeth Line Performance and Planning Director, accompanied by Scott McCloud.

Mike gave an overview of the route and scheduled opening dates of the various sections. It was hoped that the full service would be in operation by December 2022. He was aware of several local issues at Taplow but confirmed that local residents would be permitted to make use of the over-bridge when the road under the tracks was flooded.

He confirmed that the 0938 to London was the first off-peak service but was aware that this was inconsistent with a service from Maidenhead. Roger Worthington (Taplow Parish Council) mentioned that Buckinghamshire Council intended to authorise the building of 3,000 houses in vicinity of the station; could TfL not create a new car park close to the station, which would also have the benefit of eliminating commuter parking on Station Road. Mike said they might act as facilitators for such a project.

A member complained that on board train announcements were inadequate, in that when they were made it was only once the train had arrived in a station rather than giving due warning of impending arrival and that no mention of branch line junctions as change stations were made at all: both were unhelpful, particularly for passengers unfamiliar with the area.

A member reported that as a wheelchair user he had been denied exit through a gate at Paddington on the grounds that it was a TfL gate while he had a GWR ticket. [see p2 -Ed]

Presentation by Martin Howard, Chiltern Railways.

Martin said that traffic levels had now recovered to about 50-55% of pre-pandemic levels, with 70-80% at weekends. Chiltern had introduced flexi season tickets, giving eight days travel in any twenty-eight day period. He said it was more beneficial for shorter journeys, such as High Wycombe or Beaconsfield to Marylebone, rather than longer distances.

He complimented Nigel Phillips (committee member) for finally persuading NetworkRail to install a repeater signal on platform 1 at High Wycombe: as a result there had been no recent complaints about connectivity from platform 3, whereas they used to receive several each month.

Chiltern are trialling diesel/battery hybrid class 165 and 168 trainsets. The latter has been in action and will return soon after modifications, but they are experiencing some issues with the 165 set.

Chiltern's franchise expires at the end of 2021 but they are hopeful of being left in charge under the new arrangements. [see page 2 -Ed]

Other Matters

Martin Coker urged all operators to be aware of and engage with local authorities when the latter are formulating Local Plans, so that implications for their services can be taken into account.

Mrs Marshall (Bourne End and Wooburn Parish Council) raised the issue of the Bourne End café site: she believed a feasibility study had been carried out on its future use but had been unable to obtain a copy.

Clr Sharma (RBWM) asked about the proposed line from Langley to Heathrow T5. Mark Hopwood said that nothing was expected in the near future.

John Marsh, MMPA Chair (with edits)

NB The formal minutes will be included in the March 2022 Newsletter.

Williams - Shapps Plan For Rail

The long awaited Williams Report, now a White Paper called the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail, finally saw the light of day this year. So what does it mean for us?

That Transport Secretary Grant Shapps has added his name to the report shows some commitment by the department, though whether a future Transport Secretary would feel bound by it is another matter.

Basically, a new public body, "Great British Railways" (GBR), will be set up to:

- be a single guiding mind;
- develop a 30-year strategy and long term business plans;
- manage railway budgets;
- control ticketing and collect fare revenue;
- own stations and infrastructure;
- have a national brand and identity;
- plan track access arrangements;
- be accountable and regulated.

So GBR will combine Network Rail and some functions of the Rail Delivery Group such as National Rail Enquiries.

Freight operators will be least impacted.

Franchises are now dead. In fact some of them have been nailed to their perches for a while, under Emergency Recovery Measures Agreements (ERMAs) or the fabled *Operator of Last Resort* (HMG itself).

Franchises will be replaced by concessions or "Passenger Service Contracts" to operate train services, similar to the way Transport for London runs the Overground and buses.

GBR will run the stations and the train operators will run the trains. The Government is expected to take the financial risk.

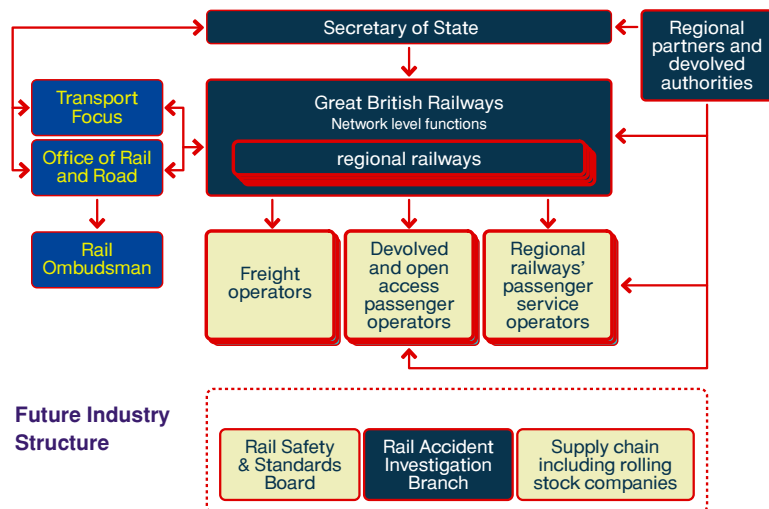
We'll see new, consistent branding across the whole network, with some regional variations. Fears that the iconic double arrow symbol may be modified have been expressed - surely an unnecessary expense?

We'll also expect to see reform of the fares system including flexible season tickets, and overhaul of the track access regulations which, through legislation, will give GBR the powers it needs.

The plan does little to reduce the number of interfaces between train operators, freight operators and GBR.

All this could take up several years to implement so don't hold your breath!

RP



Source: Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail

DOWN THE LINE

Mark Hopwood on Linked In

You can watch Mark's occasional video reports from around the network on LinkedIn. Just search for "Mark Hopwood CBE". It seems he's getting quite a following!

While you're at it check out Mark Wild's latest update on the Crossrail project.

Better Passenger Information

Network Rail and Great Western Railway (GWR) have been trialling a new information service supplying passengers with enhanced travel information. The service will give passengers more accurate and improved information on delays and disruptions. The trial launched on 26th October and ran until late November.

The passenger information system operated on Network Rail's Western Route running from Paddington to Penzance, including Thames Valley.

From Monday to Friday between 6:30am-7:30pm Network Rail used rainbow boards at three of its managed stations: Paddington, Reading and Bristol Temple Meads.



The rainbow boards are like those seen at London Underground stations using green, amber, red and black colour coding to show the condition of different services.

Weather report-style video reports will also be available on Twitter at @NetworkRailWest and @GWRHelp.

The aim is to give passengers the chance to make informed decisions when travelling via train.



Taplow

The south side gateline seems to be more unmanned than manned, even in the middle of the day. Flower pots, complete with watering system, have been placed on the over-bridge. TfL's priorities were once again a source of bewilderment. (Photo: R. Porter)

Bourne End

A 'bus service improvement plan' (BSIP) has been proposed. A scheme to create a 'virtual branch line' with a coordinated mix of bus and train has been set up between Totnes and Salcombe in Devon. It is proposed to trial a similar arrangement for Bourne End to High Wycombe Station.

Maidenhead

The forecourt remodelling has now opened. Only limited drop off space is provided and no parking except for six disabled spaces. The similar arrangement at High Wycombe seemed to function well. GWR has an allocation of parking space in the Stafferton Way car park to replace forecourt parking.

Proposed Marlow Film Studio

There is a proposal for film studios adjacent to the line between Marlow and Bourne End. Of concern is the impact on local transport particularly on road transport over Cookham Bridge. One suggestion is that a rail halt serving the studios [and Little Marlow? -Ed.] would help alleviate this. The site is in Bucks but could have significant impact on RBWM.

The views expressed in the newsletter are not necessarily those of the MMPA Committee.

MAIDENHEAD TO BOURNE END AND MARLOW

MONDAYS TO FRIDAYS

Table with columns for stations (London Paddington T, Slough, Reading, Twyford, Maidenhead, Furze Platt, Cookham, Bourne End, Marlow) and times for departures (d) and arrivals (a).

Train Times
12 December 2021 - 14 May 2022
Times may vary at weekends and late evenings. Please check before travelling.

SATURDAYS

Table with columns for stations (London Paddington T, Slough, Reading, Twyford, Maidenhead, Furze Platt, Cookham, Bourne End, Marlow) and times for departures (d) and arrivals (a).

SUNDAYS

Table with columns for stations (London Paddington T, Slough, Reading, Twyford, Maidenhead, Furze Platt, Cookham, Bourne End, Marlow) and times for departures (d) and arrivals (a).

Large print timetables are available for partially sighted customers. Call 03457 000 125 or email GWR.Feedback@GWR.com

MARLOW AND BOURNE END TO MAIDENHEAD

MONDAYS TO FRIDAYS

Table with columns for stations (Marlow, Bourne End, Maidenhead, Twyford, Reading, Slough, London Paddington T) and times for departures (d) and arrivals (a).

SATURDAYS

Table with columns for stations (Marlow, Bourne End, Maidenhead, Twyford, Reading, Slough, London Paddington T) and times for departures (d) and arrivals (a).

Passenger Assist: freephone 0800 197 1329
National Rail Enquiries: 03457 48 49 50
Arrival time: d Departure time
Monday to Thursdays departs 2240

SUNDAYS

Table with columns for stations (Marlow, Bourne End, Maidenhead, Twyford, Reading, Slough, London Paddington T) and times for departures (d) and arrivals (a).

MX: Monday excepted
TSM: Tuesday - Saturday
SUM: Sunday Morning
Light text: connecting service
Green text: runs on certain days only, or has differences at some stations