



## Welcome to the Red Letter

### Investing in Infrastructure



*October was an important month for the rail industry. Against a background of continued growth in passenger numbers, the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) set out in detail how Network Rail will spend its £21 billion budget over the next five years, the efficiency savings it will be expected to make and the performance targets it will be set.*

2014-19 will see significant investment in projects which affect the West Coast. The Northern Hub will provide extra capacity and shorten journey times across the north of England. It will also improve connectivity at some of our major stations such as Manchester Piccadilly and Warrington Bank Quay.

Nearly half of train operating companies' revenue is paid to Network Rail. So we obviously have a real interest in Network Rail being an efficient organisation. The ORR will require Network Rail to make £1.7 billion efficiency savings, significant when set against the £21 billion budget for the period.

Finally, there will be a change in the punctuality targets Network Rail must meet on the West and East Coast routes. The new requirement will combine the familiar Public Performance Measure (PPM) of trains which arrive at final destination within 10 minutes of scheduled time with a less well-known measure of Cancellations and Significant Lateness (CaSL). In essence the change combines a slightly lower target covering trains which are slightly late with the introduction of a new target relating to trains which are very late. I believe this is a positive move – it will incentivise Network Rail to reduce the wide fluctuations in daily performance we currently see and provide a more consistent experience for customers.

[Click here to read the ORR determination](#)

[Click here to read more about the Northern Hub](#)

## Your journeys

### Timetable boost



*December will see the biggest series of timetable changes since the introduction of the Virgin High Frequency timetable in 2008.*

*Designed to maximise the use of our enhanced Pendolino fleet, the new timetable will see greater capacity between England and Scotland and other benefits.*

*Highlights include:*

- *Hourly Euston – West Midlands train combines with Birmingham – Scotland train to give new through service*
- *Greater connectivity on Euston – Liverpool services*
- *New open stops at Milton Keynes*
- *Later last train from Euston – Manchester*

#### Virgin Trains' Mediaroom

#### **Edinburgh, Haymarket, Glasgow Central, Lockerbie, Carlisle, Penrith (North Lakes), Oxenholme Lake District, Lancaster, Preston, Wigan North Western, Warrington Bank Quay**

New direct Virgin Trains journey opportunities to Sandwell & Dudley, Birmingham International, Coventry and Milton Keynes Central.

#### **Liverpool Lime Street, Runcorn**

Most Euston-Liverpool Lime Street-Euston services will call at Crewe. While adding 4-6 minutes to the overall journey time, this will give greater connectivity to Shrewsbury, Hereford, south Wales, Stoke-on-Trent and Derby.

#### **Manchester Piccadilly, Stockport, Macclesfield, Stoke-on-Trent**

New weekday late night train from Euston to Piccadilly, departing at 22:50 (compared with current 22:00) and calling at Stoke-on-Trent, Macclesfield and Stockport. Arrival time at Piccadilly will be 02:09.

#### **Wilmslow**

No major changes.

#### **Crewe**

Train frequency to and from London increases from two to four an hour.

New direct Virgin Trains journey opportunities to Runcorn, Liverpool Lime Street, Sandwell & Dudley, Birmingham International, Coventry and Milton Keynes Central.

#### **Holyhead, Bangor, Llandudno Junction, Colwyn Bay, Rhyl, Prestatyn, Flint, Wrexham General, Chester**

The introduction of a stop at Crewe on Euston-Lime Street-Euston services will reduce pressure on increasingly busy Euston-Chester/North Wales-Euston services.

#### **Stafford**

Improved connections at Crewe for journeys to the north of England, north Wales and Scotland.

#### **Lichfield Trent valley**

No major changes.

#### **Nuneaton**

Improved connections at Crewe for journeys to the north of England, north Wales and Scotland.

On Saturdays the Liverpool to London service will no longer call at Nuneaton at 0959.

#### **Wolverhampton**

Additional peak service to Euston, departing at 07:25 and arriving at 09:13.

New stops at Milton Keynes, replacing stops at Watford Junction.

One Virgin Trains service an hour to New Street instead of the current two.

Significant increase in seating, as most trains will be formed of Pendolinos or two Super Voyagers.

#### **Sandwell & Dudley**

New direct Virgin Trains journey opportunities to the north of England and Scotland.

Significant increase in seating, as most trains will be formed of Pendolinos or two Super Voyagers.

#### **Birmingham New Street**

Significant increase in seating, as most of the new London-Scotland-London trains the Midlands will be formed of Pendolinos or two Super Voyagers.

One Virgin Trains service an hour to Wolverhampton instead of the current two.

### **Birmingham International, Coventry**

New direct Virgin Trains journey opportunities to Crewe, Warrington Bank Quay, Wigan North Western, Preston, Oxenholme Lake District, Lancaster, Penrith (North Lakes), Carlisle, Haymarket, Edinburgh and Glasgow Central.

### **Rugby**

The 22:55 service north will terminate at Crewe rather than Manchester Piccadilly.

### **Northampton**

No major changes.

### **Milton Keynes Central**

New direct Virgin Trains journey opportunities to Crewe, Warrington Bank Quay, Wigan North Western, Preston, Oxenholme Lake District, Lancaster, Penrith (North Lakes), Carlisle, Haymarket, Edinburgh and Glasgow Central.

The following additional trains will now pick up and set down at Milton Keynes Central:

#### **Northbound**

16:20 London Euston to Manchester Piccadilly (MK16:50)

16:43 London Euston to Edinburgh (MK 17:13)

#### **Southbound**

07:15 Manchester Piccadilly to London Euston (MK 08:46)

21:45 Wolverhampton to London Euston (MK 23:05)

22:45 Wolverhampton to London Euston (MK 00:23)

### **Watford Junction**

Euston to Wolverhampton services will no longer call at Watford Junction.

### **London Euston**

Train frequency to and from Crewe increases from two to four an hour.

New weekday late night train to Manchester Piccadilly departing at 22:50 (compared with current 22:00) and arriving at Piccadilly 02:09.

Additional trains will both pick up and set down at Milton Keynes:

#### **Northbound**

16:20 to Manchester Piccadilly

16:43 to Edinburgh

#### **Southbound**

08:46 from Milton Keynes Central

23:05 from Milton Keynes Central

00:23 from Milton Keynes central

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## **Our trains**

### **New Pendolinos**



*The most audacious bid in the competition to run the West Coast franchise came from Bigjigs Toys, the wooden train manufacturer. Despite its bid being turned down by the Department for Transport, production of wooden Pendolinos has begun...*

In a letter to Patrick McLaughlin, in late 2012 Bigjigs made its pitch to run services on the West Coast route. It drew particular attention to its record on punctuality, claiming 'No delays – our track is not affected by sun, snow, wind or leaves. Our trains run whatever the weather!'

Unfortunately the Department had some concerns about the train design, noting the 'the carriage bodies are attached rigidly to the bogeys. To take advantage of the higher speeds on the WCML it will be necessary to retrofit a tilting mechanism.'

In a spirit of co-operation, Virgin Trains has granted permission for Bigjigs to procure a fleet of wooden Pendolinos for use across the country.

## Our destinations

### Let there be light!



*Lighting has a huge impact on how customers perceive our stations, particularly during the winter months. Moving to more modern lighting systems not only improves the way customer feel about stations but has other benefits too. Following a trial in the car park at Stafford station we're now taking action at other stations.*

Compared with the exceptionally high customer satisfaction ratings we receive for train factors, Virgin Trains' customers rate us relatively poorly for many station factors in the twice-yearly National Passenger Survey.

Even at the 17 stations we manage, we are responsible for the whole fabric of the station. But where we can we are committed to improving the station environment. Following a trial in the car park at Stafford, we will be installing LED lighting at ten stations. These projects range from the small scale, such as re-lighting a subway at Oxenholme, to more substantial projects such as re-lighting platforms at Lancaster.

Currently about 60% of all reactive call outs to our property help desk are lighting related and so, once the LED lamping is completed staff will be able to spend their time addressing other customer facing issues at Stations.

And as holders of the BSI Kitemark Energy Reduction Verification Award these projects will help us reduce our carbon footprint by reducing CO2 emissions at stations by 2.5% a year.

[Click here to read the National Passenger Survey](#)

[Click here to find out more about the BSI Kitemark for Energy Reduction Verification](#)

## Our people

### London Pride



*Train Manager Peter Davis has become one of the stars of Visit London's newest campaign.*

*The London Story is a collection of videos that features people from all walks of life talking about what the city means to them.*

[Click here to see Australian-born Peter's take on London's highlights](#)

## Railway world

### MPs look at preparations for winter



*The House of Commons Transport Committee is looking at how transport providers are preparing for winter. It is considering the following questions:*

- *How resilient are the UK's transport networks (including road, rail and air) to adverse winter weather?*
- *What lessons have been learned since the severe weather experienced in the winter of 2009-10? What practical changes have been made to ensure the UK is now better equipped to deal with severe weather?*
- *How well prepared are the Government, local authorities and transport providers for adverse winter weather? What more should be done to ensure a coordinated response?*

*Virgin Trains has provided input to the Committee's deliberations.*

Virgin Trains submitted evidence to the Transport Committee making the following key points:

- Our core aim is to maintain services as close to the advertised services as possible, rather than making an early switch to emergency timetables. This may have an adverse impact on our performance statistics. However, we firmly believe our approach gives our customers confidence about making journeys and reduces conflicting information appearing in different channels.
- We are a learning organisation, and our plans for snow and icy conditions are re-visited regularly to take account of experience. Our winterisation plan for trains and stations is reviewed annually and re briefed to front line teams in late summer.
- Social media plays an increasing part in keeping customers up-to-date during disruption and we will shortly be able to provide social media coverage for the entire period of train operation.

[Click here to read Virgin Trains' evidence to the Committee](#)

[Click here to view the Committee's discussion with rail industry representatives](#)

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