

REGIONAL REVIEW: MARCH 2022

STOCK NOTES

Class 455: Southern units are being stored in Hove Sidings. 455809/30 arrived on 3 March, 455810/27/31 on 17 March and 455838/39/41 on 18 March. Southern has 46 units, but only 36 are required in traffic. All of the units are to be withdrawn with effect from 15 May.

Class 701: Unit 701041 was delivered to Eastleigh on 11 March and 701042 on 16 March. 701031 was to be returned to Derby on 16 March, but 47749 which was hauling it failed at Farnborough. After a delay of almost 2½ hours it was able to continue to Woking, where the unit was deposited in the yard. The journey continued on 18 March behind 47739, but because of late running terminated at Chaddesden Sidings, Derby.

TIMETABLES AND DIAGRAMS

Gatwick Express is to resume operation on 4 April. Trains run half-hourly between Victoria and Brighton, with most calling only at Gatwick Airport. Peak services make extra stops between Haywards Heath and Brighton. Gatwick Express does not run to Brighton on Sundays, when there are Southern trains between Victoria and Brighton. Mondays to Saturdays the only Southern services are 00:02 from Victoria and 05:18 (05:29 Sat) from Brighton. The best way of getting to Brighton is to purchase a discounted Thameslink ticket and occupy a seat in the declassified first class section at the rear of the train.

Great Western is to cease running to Brighton from May, at the request of the Department for Transport.

Crossrail: It is hoped that services between Abbey Wood and Paddington can start by the end of June.

Eurostar: Services to Marne-la-Vallée-Chessy, for Disneyland Paris, resumed on 25 March.

INTERESTING WORKINGS

Class 201: Unit 1001 made driver training runs 10:25 St Leonards to Brighton and 13:01 return on 17 & 18 March.

Class 313: Network Rail's test unit, 313121, was hauled from Old Dalby to Eastleigh Works via Hertford North and Kew East on 23 February.

Freight: Class 69 locomotives are being used increasingly on the gypsum trains between Southampton Western Docks and Mountfield. There was a return working from Crewe to Winfrith Atomic Energy Establishment on 24 March, worked by 68016 and 68017. It is many years since there was last a train to Winfrith, but there may be regular workings again. The site was used for testing different types of nuclear reactor and rail traffic is contaminated material for disposal at Sellafield.

RAILWAY BUSINESS

Govia has accepted a fine of £23.5 million as a consequence of not refunding sums due to the Department for Transport in respect of the Southeastern franchise. This is additional to £64 million that the DfT is recovering in respect of franchise agreement contraventions. The DfT's wording 'is recovering' suggests that the sum has not yet been paid in full.

Govia Thameslink Railway: Less than a week before the old contract expired, it was announced that the Department for Transport had awarded a national rail contract to Govia Thameslink Railway for continued operation of its services from 1 April 2022. The contract will run to 1 April 2025, with an option for DfT to extend this for up to three years. Commercial risk remains with DfT, who pay the cost of operations and take the fares income. GTR is paid £8.8m annually as a management fee, with an additional performance fee of up to £22.9m. Additional fees may be earned by undertaking projects as directed by DfT.

GTR is to focus on encouraging more people to return to the railway. Dedicated funds are available for localised station enhancements and GTR, in co-operation with Network Rail, is to improve punctuality and reliability. All that is said about rolling stock is that GTR is to work towards phasing out diesel traction by 2035 and is to introduce its first “zero emission ancillary vehicles” in the next twelve months. Nothing is said in the public announcement about the cost of operating the service, but it is hard to believe that DfT does not require economies to be made.

PERFORMANCE and INCIDENTS

Figures show the percentage of trains arriving within 59 seconds of scheduled time, at all monitored stations. The ranking of the companies within the 24 passenger train operators is shown. Eurostar is not included, but open access operators are. MAA = moving annual average.

	9 January to 5 February	MAA to 5 February
All TOCs	73.0%	74.3%
SWR	73.1% (10 th)	75.9% (7 th)
GTR	71.7% (11 th)	75.6% (8 th)
SE	71.1% (13 th)	72.5% (10 th)

Thursday 24 February: A signalling failure between Belvedere and Erith caused trains to be diverted via Bexleyheath or Sidcup during the morning peak. Unit 769936 failed at Redhill shortly after 11:00 while on a Gatwick Airport to Reading test trip.

Monday 28 February: An unpowered scooter was thrown onto the line at St Denys during the evening, causing violent arcing that could be seen from a considerable distance. Although the scooter was hit by an empty train there was no serious damage and delays were kept to a minimum.

Tuesday 1 March: A signal failure at Ashted resulted in there being no trains between Epsom and Horsham until after 09:00. SWR services were diverted via Cobham, but there were numerous cancellations.

Wednesday 2 March: The 05:42 from Reading was involved in a fatality at St Margarets. Trains were diverted via Hounslow until the line re-opened about 10:40. A track circuit failure at Penge East during the morning peak caused delays and a few cancellations. Fast trains were diverted via Catford.

Friday 4 March: There was a power failure at Ebbsfleet about 09:30 resulted in trains being stranded. The 08:49 from Dover was stood at Southfleet for over an hour, with the 08:52 from Bruxelles and 09:13 from Paris behind it. The 09:12 St Pancras to Margate was stood between Wennington and Ebbsfleet for ¾ hour. Other trains were held at stations. Matters were put to rights after a bird’s nest was removed from switchgear. There were no trains to or from Windsor after the 09:53 to Waterloo. Services were subject to late running until early afternoon. An electrical fault at Datchet led to a fire, damaging lineside equipment. Services resumed with the 17:53 to Waterloo, but with a speed restriction at Datchet.

Saturday 5 March: A speed restriction at Ford caused delays to westbound trains, so none worked through to Southampton after 08:00. Trains were diverted to Bognor Regis or turned back at Fareham. Southern services elsewhere were subject to cancellation, because of a shortage of staff, and there were no trains at all to Tattenham Corner.

Sunday 6 March: Locomotive 59205 and three wagons derailed in Eastleigh Yard during the evening.

Tuesday 8 March: A points failure at Tunbridge Wells caused early morning trains to be delayed by over an hour. There were consequential delays until late morning. There were no trains to Seaford during the afternoon, because of a points

failure at Southerham Junction. The 17:34 Cannon Street loop service failed at Charlton, on its outward journey, and terminated there.

Wednesday 9 March: A points failure at Purley caused there to be no morning peak trains from Caterham. There were no trains between Victoria and Dartford after 14:00, as a result of a track circuit failure between Nunhead and Lewisham.

Friday 11 March: Several signals failed in the Bedhampton area, resulting in delays and cancellations from early morning until the middle of the afternoon. Many Southern services were diverted to Bognor Regis or terminated at Chichester. The 19:07 Charing Cross to Hayes failed at West Wickham, but was able to complete its journey after a delay of 50 minutes. Following trains terminated at Elmers End.

Saturday 12 March: The 19:24 from Victoria was involved in a fatality at Eastbourne, resulting in the line being closed until late evening.

Monday 14 March: Locomotive 66531 derailed in Eastleigh Yard during the night, blocking the Fareham line. Damaged points at Littlehampton Junction meant that trains could only run towards Arundel Junction, for Angmering. Trains between Portsmouth and Littlehampton were diverted to Bognor Regis or terminated at Barnham and those between Littlehampton and Bognor Regis were cancelled. The curve to Ford was not back in use until Friday. Lines were closed at Faversham after the 12:10 Victoria to Dover Priory was involved in a fatality.

Tuesday 15 March: The Mountfield to Southampton Western Docks gypsum empties, hauled by 69002, failed near Basingstoke about 15:30 and was assisted forward by 66792 3½ hours late. A points failure between Herne Hill and Blackfriars caused delays and cancellations during the evening.

Wednesday 16 March: The 23:20 (previous day) Waterloo to Reading terminated at Bracknell, with a small fire on unit 450563. The Catford Loop was closed for about two hours from 07:00 after a body was found on the line at Ravensbourne. A Toton to Dollands Moor freight train failed near West Malling about 16:10, blocking the line for 1½ hours.

Thursday 17 March: The 12:57 Portsmouth & Southsea to Barnham was involved in a fatality resulting in the line between Chichester and Barnham being closed for about 2½ hours.

Friday 18 March: A damaged conductor rail at Cheam led to severe delays and cancellations from 08:00 until midday.

Saturday 19 March: There were no trains to or from Eastbourne for over two hours from 07:30, because of a burst water main at Hampden Park. Delays and cancellations continued for several more hours, because crews and rolling stock were displaced.

Tuesday 22 March: A points failure at New Cross Gate caused most London Overground services to Crystal Palace and West Croydon between 06:00 and 08:00 to be cancelled. The 10:31 St Albans to Rainham was involved in a fatality between Gravesend and Higham resulting in the line being closed for about two hours.

Wednesday 23 March: A problem with a conductor rail led to the line through Eynsford being closed for about two hours from 13:00. Trains were diverted via Orpington. The line was closed for about two hours after the 15:00 Waterloo to Portsmouth Harbour was involved in a fatality at Rowlands Castle. Late evening services were disrupted by the complete loss of signalling between New Cross Gate and Sydenham. Trains were cancelled or diverted via Tulse Hill.

Thursday 24 March: The 10:23 Waterloo to Alton, units 450013+030, failed at Farnham and terminated there.

AROUND THE REGION

Station Improvements: Southeastern is redecorating and improving waiting rooms at Gillingham, Gravesend and Herne Bay, with new seating, heating and lighting. Passenger information displays and charging points are being provided. The booking hall and toilets at Canterbury East are being refurbished. The concourses at Margate and Ramsgate are having redundant fixtures and cables removed, the ceilings repainted and the original parquet floors cleaned and polished. The booking office at West Dulwich and the coffee shop at Lower Sydenham are being refurbished.

Hollingbourne: A redundant station building is being renovated for use as a community space.

St Mary Cray: There are now lifts to the platforms and the ticket office has been upgraded.

Penge Tunnel: The line between Herne Hill and Beckenham Junction will be closed from 23 to 31 July while track is relaid through Penge Tunnel.

Waterloo: While another war is being fought in Europe, a special remembrance service was held on 22 March to mark the centenary of Queen Mary formally opening the Victory Arch. The Victory Arch was designed by J R Scott, the LSWR's chief architect, and is built of Portland stone. Bronze plaques record the names of the 585 employees of the London & South Western Railway who lost their lives in the First World War. Sculptures either side depict War and Peace, with Britannia holding the torch of liberty above.

Portsmouth Direct Line: Alstom has been awarded the £49 million contract for resignalling Farncombe to Petersfield. Work is scheduled for completion in 2024.

Hythe (Hants): Network Rail is supporting the proposal to re-open the Fawley branch to passenger services, but only as far as Hythe and using existing diesel trains. The cost of extending to a park and ride station at Fawley is said to be unaffordable at the moment.

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