

REGIONAL REVIEW: APRIL 2023

STOCK NOTES

South West Trains livery: Units still in SWT blue or white livery are all class 458 and: 158880-86, 159101-08, 444004/08-10/13/22/26/28/33-36/39/41/44/45, 450004/31/50/59/79/82-85/98/99, 450102/04/12/16-18/21/25. Much greater progress has been made in changing the livery of class 450 units than class 444, some of which look quite shabby.



The driving coaches of unit 444019 are in rainbow livery, to a revised design with additional colours. *Photo: John Goodrich*

Class 07: Eastleigh Works shunter 07007 has been repainted, again in BR blue, but with its previous number 2991. It carries the name *Bruce* on small metal plates on the cabsides.

Class 201: 6L trailer standard 60528, originally in unit 1013, has been certified for main line operation. It replaced 6S trailer standard 60501 in unit 1001 with effect from 17 April, providing an additional eight seats.

Class 313: The units' last day in service will be 20 May. Only nine are diagrammed for use Mondays to Fridays and fewer at the weekend. Three units cover the Seaford service and the other six are on workings between Brighton, Littlehampton, Bognor Regis and Portsmouth. Weekends find them only on Seaford services and workings from Littlehampton to Bognor Regis and Portsmouth. Class 377 and 387 units sometimes appear on 313 diagrams.

Classes 158 and 159: A problem with the biofuel used by South Western Railway in its diesel trains caused blockages in their fuel filters, reducing power. The problem became apparent on 20 April and required fuel to be flushed out of the affected units and the filters replaced. Since 21 April a reduced service has operated on the West of England and Romsey lines. Trains shuttle between Basingstoke and Salisbury hourly and between Salisbury and Exeter every two hours. Trains between Salisbury and Romsey via Southampton also run every two hours and SWR services via Westbury are cancelled. A member travelling from Exeter reports a significant delay to his journey. This is expected to continue for at least a week.

Class 465: Southeastern has completed C6 overhauls on all of its class 465/0 and 465/1 units. The work was undertaken at Slade Green Depot, rather than sending the units to a contractor elsewhere. Class 465/9 and 466 units continue to be overhauled at Doncaster.

Class 701: Unit 701033 was hauled from Derby to Eastleigh on 28 March followed by 701026 on 4 April. Units are being stored at Long Marston, as well as Marchwood and Worksop. Those stored are:

- Long Marston: 701004/23-25/30/34/48/51
- Marchwood: 701016/19/22/32/38/43/45/46/49
- Worksop: 701001/07-09/20/36/39, 701501/04-07/11

701508/10 were hauled from Worksop to Wembley on 24 April.

TIMETABLES and DIAGRAMS

Class 387: Planned utilisation of the class 387/2 units from May is 16 on Gatwick Express, five on East Coastway, two on peak workings between Littlehampton and London Bridge, one on Great Northern and three undergoing maintenance.

Class 458: During the week commencing 3 April a class 458 pair worked 06:18 from Epsom, 07:06 to Hampton Court and 07:53 return, 08:54 to Guildford via Epsom and 10:45 return, 12:06 to Hampton Court and 12:54 return, 13:42, 15:42 and 17:42 to Shepperton and 14:41, 16:41 and 18:50 return, and 20:30 and 21:57 Kingston Loop. Subsequently class 458 main line services have been confined to Kingston Loop workings.

London Marathon: The customary additional trains ran to Greenwich, Maze Hill and Blackheath in connection with the London Marathon on 23 April. The normal Sunday service, in absence of engineering work, on the Greenwich and Bexleyheath lines is the following trains half-hourly:

- Cannon Street to Cannon Street via Bexleyheath and Greenwich (and vice versa)
- Kentish Town to Rainham via Greenwich
- Victoria to Dartford via Bexleyheath

A special service ran until mid-morning on 23 April, with the normal timetable thereafter. Fast trains ran non-stop from Maze Hill or Blackheath to their destination. Services were half-hourly unless shown otherwise.

- 06:50, then 07:10 to 09:10 Cannon Street to Slade Green via Greenwich (fast)
- 07:00 to 10:00 Cannon Street to Dartford via Greenwich (fast)
- 07:20 to 09:20 Cannon Street to Barnehurst via Greenwich
- 07:35 hourly to 10:35, 11:40 and 12:40 Cannon Street to Dartford via Greenwich
- 07:00 to 10:30 Charing Cross to Slade Green via Bexleyheath (10:30 to Dartford)
- 07:08 to 10:08 Charing Cross to Dartford via Blackheath and Woolwich
- 07:20 to 10:20 Charing Cross to Barnehurst or Dartford via Bexleyheath
- 08:05 and 08:35 London Bridge to Barnehurst via Bexleyheath (fast)

The service from Victoria to Dartford ran as usual, as did Thameslink between London Bridge and Rainham via Greenwich. There was a very short notice 09:15 Cannon Street to Dartford via Blackheath and Woolwich. Some late running occurred, because of extended station stops, despite additional time being scheduled.

Coronation Services: Southeastern plans to run additional trains between London and Dartford on Coronation Day, 6 May. There will be extra carriages on some other trains. Southern also plans to run longer trains. In connection with the Coronation Concert on 7 May, South Western Railway is running four trains an hour to Windsor, alternately via Richmond and via Hounslow.

Southeastern: The 21 May timetable change sees off-peak Charing Cross trains restored to the Bexleyheath line, with an hourly service to Dartford Mondays to Saturdays. Some adjustments are made to peak services where there have been overcrowding problems. Class 707 units will be used at weekends, as well as weekdays. Hastings services are retimed, so some down trains are five minutes faster, while some up ones are two minutes slower.

Southern: Timetable changes in May mainly affect the East Coastway. All trains between Eastbourne and Ashford will call at Three Oaks and Winchelsea, but will no longer stop at Normans Bay. Trains between Victoria and Ore will call at Normans Bay instead. Trains between Brighton and Hastings will be extended to Ore and there will be additional hourly

trains between Brighton and Eastbourne, which will continue to Ore at peak times. The additional Eastbourne trains replace the shuttle between Brighton and Lewes. On Sundays trains between Eastbourne and Ashford call additionally at Hampden Park, Pevensey & Westham, Cooden Beach and Collington. Elsewhere, there are additional evening peak trains between Brighton and West Worthing, but the 16:51 Brighton to Littlehampton and 17:51 return are cut back to West Worthing. Some suburban services will be reduced in length, in order to release class 377 units to replace class 313. Watford Junction trains will be longer, with class 377/7 replacing class 377/2 on this service.

Thameslink: From the May timetable change Thameslink trains to and from Littlehampton will be replaced by London Bridge services provided by Southern. Trains between Rainham and Luton will be cut back to Kentish Town after the evening peak. The Sunday service between London Bridge and Horsham will be replaced by extension of Bedford to Three Bridges trains hourly. Some class 700 trains will operate to Kings Lynn, but as Great Northern services.

South Western Railway: There are only minor changes to the SWR timetable in May, being timing alterations to a few trains to improve reliability and provide better connections.

Cross Country: The Bournemouth to Manchester service becomes hourly, as before the pandemic, from May.

Swanage: Swanage Railway and West Coast Railways are operating trains between Swanage and Wareham on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays from 4 April until 10 September, using a refurbished class 117 DMU, 51356+59486+51388, and a class 121 single unit, 55028. There are four round trips, with the first starting and the last terminating at Corfe Castle.

INTERESTING WORKINGS

Class 73: 73961 and 73962 went briefly to Scotland to assist with Caledonian Sleeper workings. They can only do so when working in multiple with one of the Caledonian 73s, because they cannot provide adequate power for train heating and are not fitted with Dellner couplings. The 73s ran from Tonbridge to Edinburgh Craighentiny on 28 March and returned to Doncaster on 7 April. Their contribution was very limited. 73961+73971 worked the sleeper to and from Aberdeen on 30 March and 3 April, but 73962 did not venture out of the depot. A class 66 usually hauls the 09:01 Eastleigh to Hoo Junction and 14:05 return infrastructure trains, but pairs of class 73s substituted several times in April. 73109+73119 were in use on 12 April, with 73109+73213 on 17, 18 and 19 April and 73128+73212 on 25 April. Work between Blackfriars and St Pancras on 22 and 23 April required use of class 73 locomotives on engineer's trains. (Classes 31 and 33 are the only other types permitted on the line). 73109+73136+73128+73212+73201+73141 ran in convoy from Tonbridge to Kentish Town via Herne Hill and Kew East overnight on 21/22 April and returned early on 24 April.

Class 201: Unit 1001 worked an excursion from Hastings to Bath Spa and Bristol on 25 March, via Tonbridge, Redhill, Reading and Swindon. On 15 April the unit was used for a railtour visiting every London terminus, starting from Liverpool Street and in order via Fenchurch Street, King's Cross, Euston, St Pancras, Marylebone, Paddington, Waterloo, Blackfriars (even though not a terminus), Victoria, Charing Cross, Cannon Street and terminating at London Bridge. The train was away from St Leonards Depot for almost 24 hours, with empty stock departing at 23:52 on 14th and not arriving back until 23:43.

Class 458: Units 458534+535 worked the 06:41 Alton to Waterloo on 14 April, as a result of stock displacement caused by a major signalling failure at Waterloo the previous day.

Excursions: 47593 and 47828 worked an excursion from Crewe to Weymouth via Kew East and Chertsey on 19 April.

Departmental: Inspection saloon 975025, the former Hastings DEMU buffet car, made a tour of inspection on 21 and 22 March powered by 37418. The itinerary on 21st was Clapham Junction, Crystal Palace, Oxted, South Croydon, Horsham, Bognor Regis, Brighton, Three Bridges and Brighton. Empty stock came from Cricklewood via Kensington and the train stabled in Brighton Wall Sidings, adjacent to the Hove line. Next day the saloon ran from Brighton to Clapham Junction

(Windsor Line) via Eastbourne, Hastings, Tonbridge, Maidstone West, Abbey Wood and Nunhead. Empty stock was back to Cricklewood via Kew East. The saloon is based at Derby.

RAILWAY BUSINESS

Southeastern: Numerous Southeastern stations are unstaffed for all or part of the day, even though booking offices are meant to be open. This mostly affects suburban stations and smaller rural ones. Following on from the unpopular timetable change, this is increasing calls for Southeastern's suburban services to become part of London Overground. The London Assembly voted in favour of this in March, but the Department for Transport does not intend to cede control to Transport for London.

STRIKES

Strikes on 30 March and 1 April by RMT members working for train operators, were called off. However, the union is balloting its members, who include guards, conductors and platform staff, to see if they are in favour of further strikes. The companies concerned are those having contracts with the Department for Transport, so Southeastern, Govia Thameslink Railway, South Western Railway, CrossCountry and Great Western are among those affected.

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.

	5 to 31 March	MAA to 31 March
All TOCs	70.8%	67.8%
SWR	71.0% (10 th)	67.8% (11 th)
GTR	72.3% (9 th)	68.4% (9 th)
SE	68.2% (11 th)	65.3% (12 th)

Charing Cross: Southeastern passengers had a dire week beginning on 20 March. Monday passed without serious incidents, but on Tuesday a points failure at Ewer Street Junction (between London Bridge and Waterloo East) about 10:30 put the up fast line out of use. The service to and from Charing Cross had to be thinned out, with trains diverted to Cannon Street or terminated at London Bridge. Fortunately, the points were back in use by early afternoon. The Ewer Street points failed again during the middle of Wednesday afternoon, so the up fast line was out of use for the rest of the day, again with diversions to Cannon Street and trains turning back at London Bridge. A few trains were diverted to Victoria. Thursday's evening peak was no better. The 17:40 Charing Cross to Sevenoaks failed across the junction at Hither Green. Some passengers disembarked onto the track, leading to power being cut off to the third rails over quite a wide area until everyone was accounted for. After fitters' attention the 17:40 was able to move fully into Hither Green station about 20:00. On Friday morning a power surge put the signalling at Charing Cross entirely out of use from 06:00. Services were not able to resume until 08:20. Meantime Hastings trains terminated at London Bridge and other main line trains were diverted to Victoria. Suburban trains were cancelled, diverted to Cannon Street or terminated at London Bridge. The points at Ewer Street Junction failed again about 09:00 on 30 March, preventing use of the slow line to Charing Cross until 14:00. There were diversions to Cannon Street and Victoria, with some trains terminating at London Bridge. During service disruptions at London Bridge passengers are detained on the concourse, which gets crowded, and only allowed up to the platforms in safe numbers. This causes significant stress, and sometimes anger, as passengers can see from departure boards that trains they wish to catch are calling, but they have no access to them. The problem is worse now that the Southeastern timetable requires more people to change trains at London Bridge.

Wednesday 22 March: Down trains were unable to call at Knockholt, because of urgent repairs to the footbridge.

Thursday 23 March: There were no trains to or from Weymouth until after 09:00, because police were investigating the electrocution of a teenage girl on the line during the night. A power failure resulted in there being no trains between Redhill and Tonbridge from 08:00 until midday. The 12:23 Guildford to Farnham was cancelled, because of a fault on unit 450126. 450022 was summoned from Farnham Depot to work the 13:04 to Guildford, but that ran half an hour late, with the 13:34 minutes behind it. As Farnham trains have a 26 minutes turnround at Guildford 450022 was able to depart back with the 13:53 only five minutes late.

Friday 24 March: Evening trains were subject to delay after a breeze block was thrown onto the line near Gravesend, damaging signalling equipment.

Monday 27 March: There were no trains between Purley and Caterham all day, because of a signalling failure.

Tuesday 28 March: A traction power failure at Battle resulted in the 05:13 from Hastings being delayed there by three hours. The 05:30 was held for three hours at Crowhurst and terminated at Tonbridge. Numerous other trains were cancelled. The service was disrupted for the rest of the morning. The 15:40 Victoria to Dover Priory terminated at Canterbury East, having developed a fault. An empty train was summoned from Faversham to assist the failed train to Dover Priory Sidings.

Wednesday 29 March: The line was blocked by a fallen tree at Cobham & Stoke d'Abernon for about two hours during the evening.

Thursday 30 March: Brickwork fell from Chalk Tunnel, Guildford resulted in the line being closed for about an hour from midday. Great Western and Haslemere trains were cancelled or delayed and others diverted via Winchester.

Friday 31 March: A tree fell onto the Lymington branch during the night, so the first four round trips were cancelled. The 05:13 Portsmouth & Southsea to Southampton and the 05:47 Southampton to Brighton were diverted via Eastleigh, because of a tree on the Netley line. The 06:39 from Epsom Downs failed at Carshalton Beeches and terminated there.

Saturday 1 April: There were no trains between Ascot and Aldershot until 09:30, because of flooding. A signalling failure at Guildford caused severe disruption to services during the evening.

Sunday 2 April: Thameslink services were disrupted by over-running engineering work at Farringdon and Elephant & Castle. The down line at Balcombe was closed for about an hour during the afternoon to allow urgent repairs to the track. Bi-directional working was in operation between Balcombe Tunnel Junction and New Copyhold Junction, resulting in extensive delays that continued into the evening.

Tuesday 4 April: A points failure at Bromley Junction (Crystal Palace) resulted in 06:43 Beckenham Junction to London Bridge being cancelled. When the line re-opened the train ran non-stop 09:13 to London Bridge, managing the journey in 27 minutes instead of the usual 38. Normal service resumed with the 08:44 from London Bridge. Trains were delayed by a signal failure at West Dulwich shortly after 08:00 and some were diverted via Catford. Unit 377402 derailed at Selhurst Depot late in the evening.

Wednesday 5 April: Damaged points at Dorking resulted in there being no trains between Leatherhead and Horsham for ten hours from 08:00. A temporary repair was made, requiring the line to be closed from 20:00 on Thursday to enable a full repair to be carried out.

Thursday 6 April: The 12:44 from London Bridge failed between Crystal Palace and Beckenham Junction. A tree fell onto the line at Ewell West about 16:00. Trains towards Waterloo were diverted via Cobham for about two hours. A points failure resulted in the last train between Crowborough and Uckfield being the 18:07 from London Bridge.

Friday 7 April: A signalling failure on HS1 about 22:20 resulted in services being suspended for the rest of the evening.

Sunday 9 April: There were no trains to or from Portsmouth Harbour from 07:00 until 09:30, because of a signalling failure. Trains terminated and started at Portsmouth & Southsea or Fratton.

Monday 10 April: A signal failure at Woking about 10:30 caused major delays and cancellations into the afternoon. Portsmouth trains were diverted via Cobham. The 15:55 Victoria to Ashford and 16:55 Ashford to Victoria were diverted via Bat & Ball, because a tree had fallen onto the line at Maidstone East. Other trains were delayed or cancelled.

Tuesday 11 April: There were no trains from Brockenhurst to Lymington between 19:26 and 21:26, because the branch unit, 450091, failed. Numerous signals failed at Pluckley about 19:30, causing delays for the rest of the evening. The 18:45 from Portsmouth Harbour hit a large tree on the line at Worplesdon. The train only suffered minor damage, so was able to continue to Woking, where it terminated, after the tree had been removed.

Wednesday 12 April: Forecast high winds resulted in a 50 mph speed restriction being imposed on lines from Eastleigh to Havant, Portsmouth, Lymington and Weymouth. The 11:59 Portsmouth Harbour to Waterloo hit a tree between Botley and Hedge End. It was able to continue after 1½ hours and terminated at Eastleigh. Trees and other obstructions

were also blown onto the Lymington branch and at Southampton Airport Parkway, Swanwick, Martins Heron, Ash Vale and Worplesdon. A Grain to West Ruislip freight conveying HS2 construction materials was stopped at Crayford about 21:10, because of a problem with a wagon. It was able to proceed at reduced speed to Hither Green, where it recessed, about 05:00. Up trains were diverted via Bexleyheath meantime.

Thursday 13 April: A power failure affecting the signalling put platforms 1 to 14 at Waterloo out of use from 03:00. A reasonably normal service operated on the Windsor lines, with Shepperton trains diverted via Richmond. Very few trains ran to Waterloo via Wimbledon. Some trains terminated and started at Wimbledon, Woking and Basingstoke, but many were cancelled entirely. Signalling was restored about 11:00, but with rolling stock and crews displaced, the service was badly disrupted until the evening.

Friday 14 April: A signalling failure resulted in services to Tattenham Corner being suspended following arrival of the 09:40 from London Bridge. A limited service operated from 17:45, with single line working on the up line between Coulsdon Town and Tattenham Corner.

Sunday 16 April: A scooter was thrown onto the line at St Leonards Warrior Square about 19:50, causing a short circuit and fire. The down line was blocked until after 21:00 and it was a further hour before the up line reopened.

Monday 17 April: A power failure on the slow lines at Battersea Park caused morning peak trains to be delayed or cancelled. Gatwick Express was suspended and some main line trains were diverted to London Bridge. Lines through Basingstoke were closed for about an hour from 13:25 after a trespasser on the line was badly injured. Several trains were diverted via Havant. Wimbledon Signalling Centre was evacuated for a short while during the afternoon, after the fire alarm was activated. All trains were brought to a halt for about 20 minutes. Fortunately, the service recovered in time for the evening peak. A track circuit failure at Allbrook Junction, north of Eastleigh, about 21:45 blocked all lines until 23:00.

Tuesday 18 April: An overnight signalling failure at Chichester resulted in trains from Brighton terminating there and Victoria services being diverted to Bognor Regis until after 09:00. The 15:40 Victoria to Ramsgate failed at Westgate-on-Sea, but was able to continue after a delay of 1¼ hours.

Wednesday 19 April: All lines were closed after the 11:26 Three Bridges to Bedford was involved in a fatality south of Gatwick Airport. The fast lines re-opened after 1½ hours and the down slow an hour after that. Service recovery was hindered by a signalling fault on the up slow that was not rectified until the evening.

Thursday 20 April: The 16:00 from Tonbridge terminated at Maidstone West, because a damaged insulator pot had caused a small fire on the line at Maidstone Barracks. The line was closed until after 18:00. A fatality at Basingstoke shortly after 17:00 caused services to be suspended for almost two hours.

Friday 21 April: The 07:01 Dorking to Waterloo failed at Boxhill with a brake fault, blocking the line for about two hours. A tree fell onto the line between Mottisfont & Dunbridge and Romsey about 14:45.

Sunday 23 April: The line was closed at Cosham for most of the morning after a body was found. Engineering work at Basingstoke meant that all lines were closed there, so no diversionary route was available and SWR and CrossCountry trains were scheduled to be diverted via Cosham.

AROUND THE REGION

Station improvements: Work by Southeastern and Network Rail includes Access for All schemes at Bexley, Canterbury East, Chatham and Hither Green. Redecoration and other improvements are to be carried out at Beckenham Junction, Eltham, Faversham, Herne Bay, Margate, Maze Hill, Orpington and Staplehurst. The relatively new booking hall at Woolwich Arsenal is to be rebuilt and extended. A scheme is being prepared to relieve passenger congestion at Canterbury West.

Thanet Parkway: It is no longer expected that new station between Ramsgate and Minster will open on 21 May. The planned date has been put back to 31 July.

Hastings Line: The line was closed between Tunbridge Wells and St Leonards from 7 to 15 April. During this period work was undertaken to stabilise cutting and embankment slopes at Wadhurst, Frant and Snape Wood (between Wadhurst and Stonegate). 500 metres of concrete slab was replaced in Mountfield Tunnel and 900 metres of track relaid.

Sharnal Street: Plans to introduce a passenger service on part of the Grain branch, to serve new housing, have been paused indefinitely. Medway Council says this is because of high inflation, significantly increased construction costs and pressures on public spending. The Council intends to safeguard land for a station.

London Bridge: The stonework from the entrance to the South Eastern Railway's offices at Tooley Street has been rebuilt against the wall of the Vale of Rheidol Railway's carriage shed at Aberystwyth. The office building was demolished as part of the reconstruction of London Bridge station. The roof that covered the terminal platforms remains stored in parts at Aberystwyth.

Easter Engineering: Points and crossings were renewed at Streatham North Junction between 7 and 10 April, the Easter weekend. Main line trains were diverted to London Bridge, requiring Uckfield services to be cut back to East Croydon. There were no through trains between Reigate and London. Suburban services were subject to cancellation or alteration. While there were no Southern trains at Clapham Junction, a new, wider staircase from the footbridge to platforms 13 and 14 was craned into position.

Tooting: Lifts are being provided to the platforms at Tooting.

Waterloo: Work started in April to reglaze the roof over the concourse and platforms 1 to 19. The roof extends to 12,000 square metres and requires about 10,000 new panels. These will be polycarbonate, which is only half as heavy as glass. The work will take two years.

Motspur Park: A new footbridge with lifts is to be provided at Motspur Park station.



Work under way at Ryde Pier Head station. *Photo: Network Rail*

Ryde: The railway along Ryde Pier is to re-open no later than 10 June. It has been closed since 30 October to allow major renovation of the pier. Re-opening is later than originally planned, but work had to be suspended during December and January, because of severe weather and high tides. Further work will be undertaken over a number of weeks in October this year to renew the railway track along the pier.

Weymouth: A new forecourt in front of Weymouth station was formally inaugurated on 21 April. The work was substantially completed last year, but the ceremony was delayed because of rail strikes. There are information panels about Weymouth's railway history and a pocket park. Onward travel connections are improved, with a new bus interchange and taxi rank, improved car park layout, secure cycle storage and improved pedestrian and cycle routes to Radipole. There is a new café at the station and the canopy over platforms 2 and 3 has been renovated.

A LATE APRIL FOOL?

On 4 April the National Rail website announced "Due to a points failure at Birkbeck no trains will run between Norwood Junction and Beckenham Junction, but instead will be diverted to terminate and restart at East Croydon". Passenger trains between Norwood Junction and Beckenham Junction were withdrawn on 1 January 1917 and the curve from Birkbeck was taken out of use in 1966.

CREDITS: William Davies, Colin Duff, John Goodrich, Stuart Hicks