

## REGIONAL REVIEW: MARCH 2024

### STOCK NOTES

**Electrostar Reshuffle:** The 30 class 379 units that were rendered surplus by Greater Anglia are being taken on by Govia Thameslink Railway for use on Great Northern services from King's Cross. That should release the 29 Great Northern class 387/1 units that were originally used by Thameslink. How they will be used is unknown, but a likely end result is that more Networkers get withdrawn. Southern already operates class 387 and Southeastern has class 377/5. Therefore, the transfer of class 377 units from Southern to Southeastern, with Southern getting the 387/1 units in their place, would seem to be the best way of achieving this.

**Class 450:** All class 450 units were in South Western Railway livery by the beginning of March. The last in South West Trains blue were 450031 and 450099.



**Class 455** unit 455868, freshly painted blue and grey, leads 455908 through Winchester on 6 March, on its way from Bournemouth Depot to Wimbledon Park. It is a modern requirement that the external doors of trains are in a colour that contrasts with the bodywork, principally to assist those with impaired vision. As built, class 455 had a continuous grey band almost the full length of each carriage. 455868 has grey patches round the windows and the doors are entirely grey. On the cabside the train displays twelve 'golden spanners' representing the reliability awards made to Wimbledon's class 455 fleet. It had been planned that the unit would run to Waterloo on 4

March as a staff special, but that was cancelled, because of the derailment at Walton-on-Thames. The unit has been in regular use on suburban services from Waterloo. *Photo: Jeremy Chapter*

**Class 458:** Further moves to and from Widnes Alstom have been:

22 February: 458424 to Bournemouth  
27 February: 458420 to Bournemouth, 458522 from Bournemouth  
13 March: 458514 to Bournemouth  
14 March: 458521 from Eastleigh  
26 March: 458422 to Bournemouth

458423+450428 ran from Bournemouth to Eastleigh Works on 26 February.

**Classes 465 and 466:** Current storage locations are believed to be:

Doncaster Works: 465235, 466016  
Papworth Sidings, Ely: 465236-40/43-46/48-50  
Worksop: 465241/47, 465905/15/17/18/20/21/30/31/33/34, 466001/05/09/10/13/17/24/27/30/32/33/43

**Class 484:** As a result of problems with their wheels, availability of class 484 units has been poor. Only an hourly service, requiring one train, operated from 29 February until 23 March. The root of the problem appears to be the

interface between the wheels and the track. South Western Railway was proposing to buy six D78 driving coaches as a source of spare parts, but the Department for Transport directed that only the wheel sets should be purchased.

**Class 701:** Further movements have been:

1 March: 701012 Eastleigh to Derby  
18 March: 701005 Derby to Eastleigh  
19 March: 701016 Marchwood to Eastleigh

**Eastleigh Works:** Rolling stock at Eastleigh Works on 23 March included units 313201, 319011, 319377/80, 450104, 458423/28 and the London Underground 4TC, together with loose vehicles 71822/24/29/41/46/48/53/65, 77366/82/93 and 77417 from class 442 units 2401/05/07/12/24. Former Gatwick Express vehicles 68501/04/05, 72509 and 72635 were also present. 68501/04 are used as translator vehicles, with 68505 as a source of spare parts. Locomotives included 73002, 73101, E6016 (73110) and 73139, which seem to be long term residents, and Caledonian Sleeper 73970, which arrived from Doncaster for maintenance on 17 March. Regular business at Eastleigh includes work to carriages and locomotives from Locomotive Services Ltd, rectification of structural problems on Hitachi class 80x IET and Azuma trains, wagon repairs, and maintenance of London Underground's engineering fleet.

## TIMETABLES and DIAGRAMS

**Southeastern:** From 2 June trains between Charing Cross and Ramsgate via Canterbury West stop at Thanet Parkway, in addition to the St Pancras trains. There are additional morning trains from Tunbridge Wells and a half hourly evening peak service from Charing Cross to Ashford via Maidstone East. There are further revisions to Southeastern's suburban timetable from 2 June. This provides a less irregular service on the Woolwich line and through trains between the Bexleyheath line and Gravesend. The services through Woolwich are unchanged, other than the trains between Cannon Street and Gravesend being cut back to Dartford. The present timetable has down line departures from Woolwich Arsenal each half hour 6, 20 and 4 minutes apart. The up line service is little better, with trains 6, 16 and 8 minutes apart. The new timetable will not be regular interval, but with trains 5, 12 and 13 minutes apart on the up line and 9, 8 and 13 minutes apart on the down line. Trains between Victoria and Dartford via Bexleyheath are extended half hourly to and from Gravesend, replacing the hourly trains from Cannon Street via Woolwich.

## INTERESTING WORKINGS

**Class 20:** 57003 hauled 20302 and 20311 from Barrow Hill to Eastleigh on 21 March.

**Classes 37 and 47:** 37667 hauled 47810 and three HST trailer coaches, with match vehicles, from Crewe to Eastleigh Works on 21 February. Next day 37667+37409 hauled a rake of Mark 1 carriages from Eastleigh to Crewe. 47810 is one of the 47s that was allocated to Eastleigh in 1967, and is best remembered for hauling the final *Bournemouth Belle* Pullman on 9 July 1967. It returned to Crewe under its own power on 22 March. On 2 March 47828 and 47712 topped and tailed a trip from Nantwich to Portsmouth Harbour via the Severn Tunnel and Didcot. A Kidderminster to Canterbury West excursion on 13 March, hauled by 47805, ran outward via Kensington, Herne Hill and Maidstone East. It returned via Deal, Bat & Ball, Herne Hill and Kensington.

**Class 43:** A curious working of four HST power cars, 43480, 43467, 43423 and 43468, ran from Eastleigh to Kidderminster, via West Ealing (reverse) and Oxford, on 21 February.

**Class 158:** On 26 February unit 158881 ran from Salisbury to Network Rail's High Marnham test track via Bristol East, Birmingham New Street, Leicester and Toton. It is being used for sanding trials.

**Class 378:** London Overground is to operate half-hourly between West Croydon and London Bridge on Easter Sunday, 31 March, because resignalling work prevents Southern trains running from Victoria via Crystal Palace. At the same time, the East London Line is closed for engineering work. In preparation for this, unit 378146 was at London Bridge, platform

13, from 10:25 until 10:55 on 25 February. That was to check the train fitted into the platform and that the stepping distance between the train and the platform was adequate. No problems were found. The unit ran empty from and to Silwood Sidings via Crystal Palace.

**Class 455:** Class 455 units are working regularly on the Reading line at the moment. Blue and grey 455868, together with 455901, worked the 06:20 Waterloo to Reading on 20 March. The return working at 08:09 terminated 42 minutes late at Clapham Junction, because of a fatality. 455868 was diagrammed to remain on the Reading line all day, but was later seen on a Woking service.

**Class 769:** Units 769922 and 769959 (previously 319422 and 319459) have been at Brodie Engineering, Kilmarnock since autumn 2023. During the week commencing 25 March the units were on overnight test runs between Kilmarnock and Barassie. The units were originally intended for use by Great Western, including between Reading and Gatwick Airport. It is not known if these tests anticipate the units being placed in service or where they might be used. The units are owned by Porterbrook, who recently acquired 49% of the shares in Brodie Engineering.

**Class 802:** Great Western IET 802101 ran an unprecedented test trip from North Pole Depot to Waterloo on 18 March. It arrived in platform 18 at 09:26 and departed at 10:42 for Willesden South West Sidings and a couple of trips to Euston. This is understood to be in preparation for diversions when Paddington is closed.

## INDUSTRIAL ACTION

**ASLEF:** All drivers at Southeastern and Govia Thameslink Railway, together with many at South Western Railway, will be striking on 8 April. CrossCountry is among the companies with a drivers' strike on 5 April as is Great Western on 6 April.

## 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.

P12	4 February to 2 March	MAA to 2 March
All TOCs	68.3%	67.6%
SWR	68.2%	67.3%
GTR	67.6%	69.0%
SE	68.5%	67.4%

Of note in February is Southeastern having the best performance of the main three Southern operators. Based on complexity of network, one would expect South Western Railway to perform best and Southeastern worst, yet SWR has the worst moving annual average of the three. Of course, performance depends to a very significant extent on Network Rail and infrastructure, outside the operators' control.

**Tuesday 20 February:** A signalling failure between Charlton and Woolwich Arsenal about 11:30 resulted in trains being diverted via Bexleyheath for six hours. There were some cancellations, mostly of Cannon Street roundabout services. There was also a signalling failure at Sandwich about 11:30, with trains diverted via Canterbury West until 20:00.

**Wednesday 21 February:** A landslip between Crowborough and Buxted resulted in there being no trains to or from Uckfield after the 09:33 to London Bridge. Trains turned back at Crowborough for the rest of the day. A track circuit failure at Waterloo put platforms 1 to 3 out of use until late morning. The fault soon repeated and normal operation did not resume until late afternoon. Most trains were diverted to other platforms, but a few were cancelled. A track circuit failure at Salfords resulted in Gatwick Express services being cancelled during the afternoon and Great Western trains to Gatwick were cut back to Redhill.

**Thursday 22 February:** There were further track circuit problems at Waterloo during the night, resulting in platforms 1 to 3 being out of use all day, and with only restricted access to platforms 4 to 6. Trains were subject to delay and there were a few peak hour cancellations. Normal working resumed on Friday morning. There were no trains on the Sheerness branch until the 15:23 from Sittingbourne, because of a problem with Kings Ferry Bridge. The 10:45 Clapham Junction to Dalston Junction failed at Denmark Hill. It was able to proceed after a delay of ¾ hour, but came out of service at Surrey Quays. A multi-purpose vehicle failed between Ford and Barnham about 18:30, blocking the down line. It was hauled back to Horsham two hours later by another MPV. Consequential delays and cancellations continued for the rest of the evening. The 16:19 from Gravesend hit a tree at Mottingham, resulting in both lines being blocked until 19:30 with trains diverted via Bexleyheath. Three mice made their home in an equipment cabinet at Charing and caused a flashover. That was fatal to them and resulted in failure of the signalling in the area. The 18:25 Victoria to Ashford terminated at Maidstone East and other trains were cancelled or diverted via Bat & Ball for the rest of the evening.

**Friday 23 February:** The line was, quite exceptionally, closed for seven hours after the 13:05 Victoria to Portsmouth & Southsea was involved in a fatality at Crawley. The line is often re-opened within about two hours of these sad incidents. Thameslink terminated at Three Bridges and Arun Valley trains were diverted via Hove. A landslip on the down side of the embankment east of Newington resulted in there being no down trains between Rainham and Sittingbourne after the 13:20 St Pancras to Ramsgate. A few up trains continued to run, but the line was entirely closed following passage of the 15:16 Dover to Victoria. The line did not reopen until 4 March, after 3,000 tonnes of stone had been used to regrade and strengthen the embankment. Meantime, there were no trains between Rainham and Sittingbourne, with only Thameslink running to Rainham. The only Southeastern trains to Gillingham were the stopping service from Victoria that is scheduled to terminate there. Trains from St Pancras terminated and started at Rochester. Trains ran hourly from Sittingbourne to Ramsgate and to Dover. Southeastern provided a minibus shuttle between Canterbury East and Canterbury West, as well as buses between Sittingbourne and Gillingham. Unit 455870, running empty, suffered a brake fault, on the down fast line at Earlsfield about 16:00 and could not be moved. After attention by a fitter, it was assisted to Wimbledon Depot by another train about 18:30. Meantime, all down trains had to run via the down slow line, so did not call at Clapham Junction or Earlsfield, and some were significantly delayed or cancelled.

**Saturday 24 February:** There were few morning trains on the Sheerness branch, because of sheep on the line at Queenborough. Passenger services between Poole and Weymouth were suspended until 10:00 after early morning trains got into difficulties because of ice on the conductor rails. Services on the Lymington branch were also suspended from 08:00 until 10:30 because of ice. The line between Willingdon Junction and Lewes was closed for about 1½ hours from 08:00 to allow urgent track repairs.

**Monday 26 February:** A UK Power Networks electricity failure during the night put signalling out of use over a wide area from Merstham to the coast. There was also a brief loss of traction power. Most signalling was restored within 1½ hours, but there were no trains via Hove until after 07:30. Points failures at Copyhold Junction and Preston Park added to the disruption and there were delays and cancellations throughout the morning. The line was blocked north of Battle for 2½ hours during the afternoon by a fallen tree.

**Tuesday 27 February:** A power failure and a broken rail prevented any trains running between Folkestone and Dover from 08:00 until 17:30. Trains were cut back to Ashford or diverted via Canterbury West. The 11:03 Weymouth to Waterloo was diverted via Havant, because of a signalling problem between Winchester and Basingstoke. The 17:10 Tunbridge Wells to Charing Cross was involved in a fatality at Hither Green, resulting in cancellations, diversions and delays for the rest of the day. Track circuit and points failures prevented trains running via West Worthing from 18:00 until late evening. Trains between Victoria and Littlehampton were diverted via Horsham and most others were cancelled. The reversing siding was out of use until 25 March. Meantime, the few trains scheduled to terminate at West Worthing turned back at Worthing.

**Wednesday 28 February:** The 17:54 Peterborough to Horsham failed at Faygate, but was able to complete its journey 111 minutes late.

**Thursday 29 February:** There were no trains to or from Charing Cross from 16:57 until 19:27, because of trespassers on Hungerford Bridge.

**Friday 1 March:** Rodents sharpening their teeth on signalling cables between Berwick and Polegate caused numerous cancellations and delays from 09:30 until late afternoon.

**Saturday 2 March:** The 00:25 Victoria to Ashford was delayed by over two hours after hitting a tree near Bearsted. Engineering work resulted in Chessington trains being replaced by buses and a half-hourly service from Guildford via

Epsom terminating and starting at Raynes Park. Disruption was heightened by a fault with a conductor rail between Raynes Park and Worcester Park. The 06:34 from Guildford turned back at Worcester Park and subsequent trains terminated at Epsom. The planned service resumed with the 11:04 Guildford to Raynes Park.

**Sunday 3 March:** A signal failure at East Croydon about 08:00 caused major delays and many cancellations. Only platforms 1 and 6 could be used until about 09:30. The service was not back to normal until early afternoon.

**Monday 4 March:** The 04:30 Woking to Waterloo suffered a broken window when an object was thrown up from the conductor rail in the Hersham area. Then the 04:54 Basingstoke to Waterloo, units 450092+450056, hit a piece of scrap rail on a vehicle access point at Walton-on-Thames, causing the leading pair of wheels to derail. There was damage to the track, signal cables and conductor rails. Fortunately, the train was adjacent to the former fast lines platform, to which its passengers could be evacuated. A few down trains continued to run until shortly before 08:00, after which all lines were closed for the rest of the day, resulting in numerous cancellations. Portsmouth trains were diverted via Cobham, as were Alton services, which reversed at Guildford. Those Bournemouth line trains that were not cancelled mostly terminated at Basingstoke or Woking. Only a few ran through to Waterloo via Chertsey. West of England trains terminated and started at Basingstoke. 73202+73212 hauled the units to Northam depot overnight. Normal working resumed on Tuesday morning. Early morning trains were delayed by ice on the conductor rails in the Lewes area. The Seaford branch was particularly badly affected. The 05:24 from Seaford terminated at Newhaven Town and there were no further trains until the 08:36 from Brighton. A points failure at Whitton Junction caused cancellation of 'clockwise' evening peak trains on the Hounslow loop.

**Tuesday 5 March:** A landslip at Merstham caused trains to be diverted via the Quarry Line for four hours from 12:30. Services between Victoria and Reigate were cancelled.

**Wednesday 6 March:** There were delays and cancellations throughout the morning, because of a signalling failure between Portsmouth & Southsea and Portsmouth Harbour. A track circuit failure at Forest Hill caused delays for most of the day. Some northbound Thameslink services were diverted via Streatham Common. The 17:30 Hayes to Charing Cross was delayed by three hours after hitting a tree near West Wickham. The 16:52 Charing Cross was similarly delayed. Following trains terminated at Elmers End, were cancelled or diverted. Trains were unable to call at Balcombe during the evening, because of a power cut affecting the village.

**Friday 8 March:** There were three particularly disruptive points failures during the day. The first, on HS1, required single line working between Stratford and Wennington for about 4½ hours from mid-morning, with consequential delays until late afternoon. As usual, priority was given to Eurostar, with some Southeastern services cancelled. The second put platform 4, up slow, at East Croydon out of use until late evening, requiring some services to be cancelled and causing delays to others. Then late evening trains to and from Portsmouth were subject to delays or terminated short, because of a points failure at Portcreek Junction.

**Saturday 9 March:** A power failure caused loss of signalling between Redhill and Horley, also affecting the Quarry line, shortly before midday. Power was restored within an hour, but the service was disrupted throughout the afternoon.

**Monday 11 March:** There were no trains at West Wickham all day, because of a power cut.

**Tuesday 12 March:** Thameslink services to and from Rainham terminated and started at Gillingham all day, because rats had damaged a signalling cable. The resulting signal failure prevented use of the bay platform. A freight train from Willesden to Cliffe, conveying HS2 spoil, failed between Lewisham and Courthill Loop South Junction shortly before 15:00. A locomotive had to come from Tonbridge to assist it forward, with the train continuing its journey about 19:00. Meantime trains from Lewisham to Hither Green or Hayes were diverted via Parks Bridge Junction.

**Wednesday 13 March:** A points failure at Headcorn caused delays of over an hour during the early afternoon.

**Friday 15 March:** A motorist being pursued by the police hit the parapet of Whitehorse Road overbridge, between Thornton Heath and Selhurst, about 04:00. Debris fell onto the railway, causing all lines to be closed. The slow lines reopened by 07:20, but the fast lines remained closed until the afternoon. Some trains were diverted via Crystal Palace and there were many delays and cancellations. The 17:39 Cannon Street to Rochester, units 465912+465047 failed between London Bridge and New Cross. An isolation had to be taken to allow repairs to be carried out and the train eventually terminated at New Cross 2¾ hours late.

**Sunday 17 March:** A power failure between Dover and Folkestone about 08:00 was found to have been caused by a blown insulator pot. Arcing had damaged conductor and running rails. The line was closed in both directions until 23:00 to allow the rails to be replaced. Trains were cut back to Folkestone or cancelled.

**Monday 18 March:** The 11:09 Waterloo to Portsmouth Harbour was involved in a fatality at Hook, resulting in all lines being blocked until 14:00. Some trains were diverted via Havant.

**Wednesday 20 March:** The 07:15 Hounslow loop service was involved in a fatality at Clapham Junction on its outward journey, resulting in the Windsor line being closed until after 09:00. London Overground services were diverted to Battersea Park. Some trains reversed at Twickenham and were diverted via Kingston. There were numerous cancellations until early afternoon, because trains and staff were out of place.

**Saturday 23 March:** A problem with a set of points on the down main line approaching Brighton about 06:30 caused some trains to be cut back to Preston Park. Others were authorised to run from Preston Park to Brighton via the Carriage Road, over which there is a 15 mph speed restriction. There already was a much reduced service, of two Gatwick Express and two Thameslink trains hourly, because platforms 6 to 8 at Brighton were closed for engineering work. Despite that, delays and cancellations started to accumulate, so all Gatwick Express services were cut back to Haywards Heath from mid-morning until the middle of the afternoon, when the down main line re-opened. Afternoon services were disrupted after a person was hit by the 12:50 Victoria to London Bridge at Balham.

**Sunday 24 March:** A track defect at Clandon caused trains from Guildford to be diverted via Woking or to start at Effingham Junction from 10:45. Normal service resumed with the 13:20 from Guildford.

**Monday 25 March:** West Worthing reversing siding returned to use, but only briefly. A points failure where trains exit the siding disrupted morning peak services. The 06:40 from Littlehampton was held at Durrington-on-Sea until 08:25 and terminated at Haywards Heath. The 05:47 Southampton to Brighton was held for 75 minutes at Goring-by-Sea and the 06:32 and 07:17 Portsmouth Harbour to Brighton were diverted to Littlehampton. The 07:10 and 07:40 Littlehampton to Victoria were diverted via Crawley. The 06:41 Brighton to West Worthing and 07:22 return terminated and started at Worthing. The 07:43 Chichester to Brighton was delayed by half an hour at Angmering and following trains suffered lesser delays. After the points were returned to use the 07:33 from Southampton was punctual to Hove, but five minutes late into Brighton, because all West Coast platforms were occupied by late arrivals. Normal service resumed quite quickly. Services between Ore and Ashford were suspended during the early afternoon, after the 11:50 from Eastbourne encountered a flock of sheep on the track between Doleham and Rye. The 12:24 from Ashford terminated at Rye. Trains resumed with the 14:50 from Eastbourne and 16:24 from Ashford.

## AROUND THE REGION

**Kingsferry Bridge:** The forty steel cables used to raise and lower the deck of Kingsferry Bridge, on the Sheerness branch, are to be renewed during the summer. This will result in the bridge being closed to road and rail traffic and to ships on 8, 9 and 15 to 22 June, 29 June to 6 July and 13 and 14 July. The adjacent high level road bridge sometimes has to be closed during high winds, so the work is being undertaken at a time when that is unlikely to happen.

**Blackheath Tunnel:** The line between Blackheath and Charlton will be closed from 1 June until 10 August, to allow work in Blackheath Tunnel. The tunnel suffers from significant water ingress, which causes damage to the track and electrical equipment. Brickwork repairs will be carried out, concrete lining installed and the drainage system rebuilt. Work will also be carried out to the track, including dealing with areas where the ballast has become waterlogged. The tunnel is used by half-hourly trains between Dartford and Cannon Street, mainly to provide a direct service between Lewisham and Woolwich. They will be diverted via Greenwich.

**Grove Park:** Recent improvements at Grove Park depot include provision of access platforms within the carriage servicing shed, permitting level access to the interior of trains on tracks 5, 6 and 7. The number of trains being cleaned at Grove Park has been increased, so about a quarter of Southeastern's carriage cleaning is done there. The depot is able to carry out some internal repairs to passenger saloons, as well as heavy cleaning.

**Petts Wood:** A new footbridge with lifts has come into use at Petts Wood station.

**Tonbridge:** GB Railfreight has opened a maintenance depot, at Tonbridge West Yard. There is a large blue building west of the footbridge across the yard.

**Battle:** The former station master's house at Battle has been renovated and is now used as a community hub by Battle Town Council.

**Hampden Park:** Willingdon Junction is being renewed over the Easter weekend, 29 March to 1 April, resulting in the line being closed between Lewes and Pevensey & Westham.

**Waterloo:** Network Rail and Lambeth Council have developed a long-term plan for development of Waterloo station and the surrounding area. It is not intended to build over the platforms, but there is to be extensive work in the arches below, including provision of a new southern concourse. Improvements will be made to the main concourse and the surrounding public realm. A new bus and taxi hub is planned, allowing the cab road to be pedestrianised.

**Portsmouth Direct Line:** Abolition of Farncombe, Haslemere and Petersfield signal boxes and the introduction of new signalling controlled from Basingstoke ROC has been deferred from later this year to 2025. This is a consequence of the Victoria Area Resignalling taking longer than originally planned.

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

## SIGNAL BOX VISITS

There is to be a visit to Guildford, Farncombe, Haslemere & Petersfield signal boxes, probably on a weekday in late April. All but Guildford are to close next year. For more details please contact Stuart Hicks by email at [visits@southernelectric.org.uk](mailto:visits@southernelectric.org.uk)