

REGIONAL REVIEW: MAY 2024

STOCK NOTES

Southeastern Fleet Renewal: Southeastern has invited five companies, Alstom, CAF, Hitachi, Siemens and Stadler, to bid to supply a new suburban fleet. Bids to cascade existing trains from elsewhere or to upgrade the existing Networker fleet will also be considered. The trains are to have on-board batteries that would enable them to operate if the traction power supply failed and without the need for conductor rails in depots. They could also run on the unelectrified line on the Hoo peninsula, should a passenger service be provided for new housing there.

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

30 April: 458401 to Bournemouth and 458527 from Bournemouth
14 May: 458413 to Bournemouth and 458512 from Bournemouth

Departures from Bournemouth are usually in the evening, with the train stabling overnight at Eastleigh East Yard, before continuing to Widnes. Units stored at Eastleigh Works are 458416/23/24/28, with more expected.

Class 701: Further moves, in addition to test trips, have included:

26 April: 701059 Derby to Eastleigh
1 May: 701502 Worksop to Derby
8 May: 701003 Eastleigh to Long Marston
9 May: 701019 Wimbledon to Marchwood, 701032 Marchwood to Wimbledon
10 May: 701029 Wimbledon to Marchwood
14 May: 701010 Wembley to Derby
16 May: 701022 Eastleigh to Marchwood

TIMETABLES and DIAGRAMS

Southern's Northern Limit: Southern will cease running to Hemel Hempstead from 3 June. Currently there are just four round trips that continue beyond Watford Junction Mondays to Fridays. This has principally been to enable Southern crews to retain route knowledge to Hemel Hempstead, in case a problem prevents reversal at Watford Junction. However, turning back at Hemel Hempstead risks delays to other services, relatively few passengers travel through from Southern stations and London Northwestern provides frequent, alternative trains north of Watford. Southern has never had to extend trains to Hemel Hempstead because of an infrastructure problem and recent work at Watford has reduced the risk of failures.

South Western Railway: The service pattern on lines from Portsmouth to Waterloo and to Southampton is hardly changed, but some trains run at different minutes past the hour in order to accommodate the new West Coastway timetable. Off-peak Mon-Fri up times via Haslemere are half an hour different from previously and the train via Winchester departs four minutes earlier. Departures from Waterloo are unchanged. Stopping trains via Netley depart Portsmouth & Southsea eight minutes earlier and Southampton Central 16 minutes earlier. It was difficult to schedule the Netley local service efficiently, because the journey time between Southampton Central and Portsmouth & Southsea is exactly an hour. Under the 2023 timetable trains shuttle to and fro, with a six minutes turn round at Southampton and 54 minutes at Portsmouth. Under the new timetable the trains interwork with local services to Bournemouth and Winchester, the standard off-peak circuit being Bournemouth – Winchester – Southampton Central – Portsmouth & Southsea – Southampton Central – Bournemouth, with peak time variations. This means that Portsmouth has hourly through trains, not advertised as such, to Bournemouth, though not in the opposite direction. On arrival from Portsmouth there is an eleven minutes wait at Southampton, where it is possible to change for an earlier arrival at Brockenhurst and Bournemouth.

INTERESTING WORKINGS

Class 56: Colas' 56096 arrived at Eastleigh from Hinksey Yard on 23 April. It made light engine return trips, probably crew training, to Westbury on 24 and 26 April.

Class 438 (4TC): 33012 and London Underground's 4TC unit were used for railtours from Eastleigh on 3 and 4 May, with other locomotives working top and tail. The route on 3 May was via Chandlers Ford, Laverstock Loop, Basingstoke, Hinksey Yard (Oxford), Swindon, Gloucester, Cardiff Central, Bristol Parkway, Bath Spa, Westbury, Newbury, Reading and direct back to Eastleigh. Next day the 4TC was topped and tailed by 33012 and 73136 from Eastleigh to Portsmouth Harbour, Westbury, Exeter Central, Waterloo and back to Eastleigh. The 4TC was out again to visit the diesel gala at the Swanage Railway. On 9 May it was used for a special train from Eastleigh to Swanage via Haslemere and Waterloo topped and tailed by 73109 and 69002, with 73109 leading from Eastleigh. 33012 was added at Woking on the way from Waterloo to Swanage, showing headcode 98, of course. The same locomotives were used for the return trip from Swanage to Eastleigh via Waterloo on 12 May.

Class 455: Blue and grey unit 455868 was working between Waterloo and Basingstoke with 455909 on 7 May, an ASLEF strike day. The pair were reported on the 11:23 from Basingstoke.

Excursions: 47712 and 47805 have been the regular pair topping and tailing Locomotive Services' excursions, including Crewe to Windsor via Kew East on 25 April, Paignton to Windsor via Kensington on 2 May, Woking to Llandudno via Salisbury and Hereford on 6 May and Carnforth to Windsor via Kew East on 9 May.

RAIL BUSINESS

Boundary Journeys: Stagecoach South Western Trains Limited has settled a claim that it did not make tickets from London fare zone boundaries sufficiently available for purchase. As a result, many holders of Travelcards paid twice for the London part of the journey when making a longer trip. The Competition Appeal Tribunal has agreed a £25M payment, with passengers who believe they were overcharged being able to claim compensation. Similar claims remain outstanding against the present franchisee First MTR South Western Trains Ltd and others, including Govia Thameslink Railway and London & South Eastern Railway Ltd, the previous operator of Southeastern.

INDUSTRIAL ACTION

ASLEF called further strikes at companies including Southeastern, Govia Thameslink Railway and South Western Railway on 7 May and CrossCountry and Great Western on 8 May. Services, of lack of them, were similar to those on previous strike days.

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.

	1 to 28 April	MAA to 28 April
All TOCs	71.0%	67.5%
SWR	72.4% (11 th)	67.1% (12 th)
GTR	72.5% (=9 th)	68.5% (10 th)
SE	71.6% (12 th)	67.5% (11 th)

Tuesday 23 April: A points failure at Byfleet & New Haw caused significant delays and cancellations throughout the evening. Some trains from the Portsmouth line were diverted via Cobham.

Wednesday 24 April: Sadly, there were two fatalities, involving the 04:52 Twickenham to Waterloo at Teddington and the 19:40 Tunbridge Wells to Charing Cross at Chelsfield. Kingston Loop and Shepperton services were cancelled until 07:30 and evening trains to and from Sevenoaks were cancelled or diverted via Bat & Ball. Vandals caused a fire on the railway at Gravesend that damaged power cables. The fire brigade attended at 21:15 and most services were cancelled for the rest of the evening. High speed trains were diverted via Ashford.

Thursday 25 April: A signalling problem prevented Southern trains turning back at Reigate between the delayed arrival of the 09:38 from Victoria and the 14:54 departure. Trains terminated at Redhill meantime, but Great Western was unaffected. A signalling failure at Peckham Rye caused most London Overground trains to be cancelled for three hours from 13:00. The 19:36 Brighton to Seaford lost time to Falmer, where it failed. After half an hour it was able to continue to Lewes, where it terminated. Consequent cancellations and delays continued until after 22:00.

Friday 26 April: Overnight engineering work between Byfleet & New Haw and Woking over-ran, because of an equipment failure. Machinery to stress the rails could only be released from the track by draining hydraulic fluid from it. The line did not reopen until 08:00, but with train crews and rolling stock out of place there were cancellations and delays for most of the day. A signalling problem between Preston Park and Hassocks about 08:00 caused delays and cancellations for almost six hours.

Saturday 27 April: The 11:46 Slade Green Depot to Doncaster Works came to a stand with a brake fault on the Atlantic Line between Denmark Hill and Shepherds Lane Junction. The 12:04 from Dalston Junction terminated at Denmark Hill and following London Overground services were cancelled. The defective train was not on the move until 17:00.

Sunday 28 April: There was a possession of the down fast and up slow lines through South Croydon, when a fault was found with a set of points that prevented use of platform 4. Trains towards Purley could run via platform 5, but no route was available for trains from East Grinstead, which had to turn back at Sanderstead. It was possible to run a two-hourly service starting with the 10:15 from East Grinstead.

Monday 29 April: A barrier at Adversane AHB level crossing, south of Billingshurst, became detached and was hit by the 07:05 Victoria to Bognor Regis. The barrier short-circuited the conductor rail and the train became stranded with damaged shoe gear. The 07:54 from Bognor terminated at Pulborough and was used to evacuate passengers from the 07:05. Trains were diverted via Hove until the line re-opened late morning. A points failure at Earlswood resulted in all up trains running via Redhill for about 2½ hours from 16:00. Gatwick Express was cancelled for the rest of the day, as were Thameslink services terminating and starting at Three Bridges. Locomotive 70005 failed on the up fast line between Worting Junction and Basingstoke while working the 18:56 Southampton Maritime to Leeds Freightliner Terminal. 66952 was sent to assist and the train went forward 199 minutes late.

Tuesday 30 April: Unit 450026 became stranded between Northam and St Denys while working the 09:44 Southampton Central to Portsmouth & Southsea, fortunately not blocking any of the other three lines. Another unit assisted the train to St Denys, where it terminated 79 minutes late. It was found that the collector shoes were slightly too high and had lost contact with the conductor rail. There were no trains between Fulwell and Shepperton throughout the afternoon, because of a signalling problem. A points failure at Peckham Rye caused London Overground services to be suspended for two hours from 18:40. Southern services were diverted via Forest Hill or cancelled. The 18:43 from Beckenham Junction to London Bridge reversed at Streatham Hill and ran via Forest Hill. The 19:43 also ran via Forest Hill, having reversed in Crystal Palace Tunnel.

Wednesday 1 May: The 10:45 Bournemouth to Manchester was diverted via Havant, Guildford and Wokingham, because of a points failure at Southcote Junction. Trains between Maidstone West and Paddock Wood were severely delayed or cancelled for three hours from midday, because of a signalling problem. Late evening trains were delayed by a signal failure between Haywards Heath and Wivelsfield. The 21:16 & 21:46 Victoria to Littlehampton and the 22:16 to Bognor Regis were diverted via Crawley.

Thursday 2 May: There were no Southern trains to Beckenham Junction until the 10:44 from London Bridge, because of a signalling failure. Another signalling problem resulted in there being no trains to or from Hampton Court between the 06:23 to Waterloo and a late-running arrival at 08:20. The 08:27 from Charing Cross failed between Minster and Ramsgate and eventually reached Ramsgate 74 minutes late. The 13:49 Dalston Junction to Clapham Junction failed between Denmark Hill and Clapham High Street, causing London Overground services to be suspended for two hours.

Sunday 5 May: A track machine running from Cambria Junction to Paddock Wood failed at Harrietsham about 10:00. Unfortunately, the line was blocked for engineering work between Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells, so no alternative

route was available and trains were being diverted via Maidstone East. The following 08:55 from Victoria was delayed for 1½ hours at Hollingbourne, until the failed machine could be recessed in Lenham down loop. The 09:33 from Charing Cross was delayed for an hour at Maidstone East and the 09:55 from Victoria terminated there. The 10:29 from Charing Cross and 10:55 from Victoria were also delayed and normal working resumed with the 11:29 and 11:55.

Monday 6 May: There was a difficult day on the Brighton line, starting with a signalling failure in the Balcombe area shortly after 08:00. That required the service to be thinned and trains from Littlehampton to Victoria were diverted via Crawley. Signalling was restored late morning, about the same time that an earthslip was found in a cutting near Balcombe. That caused numerous cancellations for most of the afternoon, with Littlehampton trains in both directions running via Crawley. Matters were made worse by flooding affecting the signalling at Keymer Junction early in the afternoon and again during the evening. The service was seriously disrupted for the rest of the day. Late evening Thameslink services to and from Sevenoaks were diverted via Orpington, because of a signalling problem at Otford.

Wednesday 8 May: A signalling problem in the Warblington area caused delays to up trains for most of the day, with some Victoria trains terminating short at Chichester. Matters were made worse by a points failure at Portcreek Junction during the morning peak. A defective rail joint at Barnes caused a signalling failure that prevented use of the Hounslow Loop during the afternoon. The up line reopened about 17:00, but the down line was unavailable until 07:00 next day. Weybridge trains were diverted via Twickenham and Loop trains were cancelled meantime. An electrical fire on the track in Wells Tunnel about 16:30 melted part of a rail. There were no trains between Tonbridge and St Leonards until after 22:00, when bidirectional working was introduced on the down line through Tunbridge Wells.

Thursday 9 May: The 07:39 from Tunbridge Wells terminated at Hildenborough with a brake defect.

Friday 10 May: A track defect at Clandon caused trains to terminate short at Effingham Junction or be diverted via Woking in the up direction for six hours from 08:45. Hayes services were suspended for about 1½ hours from 10:00, because a tree fell onto the line. The 16:11 Kentish Town to Orpington, unit 700054, failed to gain power on changing to DC at City Thameslink and retired empty to Cricklewood, having blocked the line for 40 minutes. The 18:54 Cannon Street roundabout service hit a tree at Greenwich on its outward journey. The train came out of service and departed empty to Slade Green at 20:25. Trains in both directions were diverted via Lewisham meantime. The 20:50 Victoria to East Grinstead terminated at Lingfield after a bicycle had been thrown onto the railway and the 21:50 terminated at Hurst Green.

Saturday 11 May: An electrical fire in Penge Tunnel caused afternoon trains to be diverted. The Catford Loop was closed for engineering work, so trains had to run via Lewisham and New Beckenham or Chislehurst. There was a further electrical fault in the tunnel late evening, when further diversions were required.

Sunday 12 May: There were no trains to or from Windsor until the 12:44 from Waterloo, after a body was found on the line. The 15:07 Waterloo to Basingstoke failed at Clapham Junction and terminated there.

Monday 13 May: There was significant disruption following overnight track circuit failures at Penge West, Norwood Junction and Purley. The problem at Norwood Junction was rectified quickly, but normal working at Purley did not resume until early afternoon. Numerous signals were affected on the up lines at Penge West, requiring some Thameslink trains to be diverted via Selhurst and Tulse Hill until late afternoon. There were also many cancellations and delays. The 06:16 Victoria to Sutton terminated at Waddon after the passenger alarm was activated and could not be reset. Following trains were cancelled or diverted via Mitcham Junction until 08:00. Services between Reading and Wokingham were suspended for almost two hours from 09:15, because of a lineside fire. The train to form the 11:58 to Luton failed at Rainham, resulting in Thameslink services terminating and starting at Gillingham until the 17:28 departure. There were no trains between Maidstone West and Paddock Wood from 13:20 until after 20:30, because of a damaged gas main at Yalding.

Tuesday 14 April: There were no trains to or from Dover until 07:00, because of over-running engineering work. Trains via Deal were diverted via Canterbury West. Foliage became caught in a pantograph on the 05:40 Margate to St Pancras, so it tripped the power supply near Lenham on HS1 and became immobilised. In order to recover the train the two units had to be split and hauled individually back to Ashford by another. This took all morning, with passengers reporting that the toilets and air conditioning on the failed train were no longer working. Single line working was in operation on the down line, requiring some Southeastern trains to be cancelled. When possible, priority was given to Eurostar services heading towards the Continent. A power failure about 12:20 prevented trains running between Norwood Junction and West Croydon for about an hour. Most trains were cancelled or terminated short, but the 12:15 Epsom to London Bridge and 13:00 Victoria to Epsom Downs were diverted via Mitcham Junction.

Wednesday 15 April: The 03:15 Bedford to Brighton failed at Wivelsfield and terminated there, blocking the line for about ¾ hour. A points failure at Charlton caused early morning trains to be delayed, cancelled or diverted via

Bexleyheath. Just as the service had recovered, the 09:27 from Cannon Street failed at Woolwich Arsenal. The 07:00 Bognor Regis to Victoria became stranded after it hit a deer between Pulborough and Billingshurst. The brake system was damaged. The 06:08 from Southampton terminated at Pulborough and the unit was used for an end-on evacuation of passengers from the Bognor train. Following repairs the failed train was able to depart empty to Lovers Walk about 09:40. Up trains were cancelled or diverted via Hove meantime. The 15:09 Reading to Waterloo, units 455867+455919 failed at Longcross and terminated there. It was on the move, empty, about 16:30. The line was closed for over an hour during the afternoon, with several trains stranded, after a distressed person climbed onto a signal gantry between Wimbledon and Raynes Park.

Thursday 16 April: A fault on the 07:37 St Pancras to Margate caused it to trip out the overhead line as it approached Ashford. It took some time to establish which of the trains in the area was the culprit and then to isolate the pantograph concerned. Bi-directional single line working was necessary while a fitter worked on the 07:37, which went forward 80 minutes late and terminated at Ramsgate. A car being pursued by the police smashed through the level crossing at Berwick, shortly after 11:00, fortunately without being hit by a train, but causing extensive damage. The line was closed until the middle of the afternoon. There were no trains between Crystal Palace and Norwood Junction from 09:00 until 14:30, because of a points failure. Trains between Victoria and West Croydon via Crystal Palace were diverted via Selhurst. A cable fire at Sunningdale level crossing resulted in the line being closed from 20:30 for the rest of the day.

Friday 17 April: The 10:07 London Bridge to Uckfield terminated at Crowborough, because of a signalling problem. Services to Uckfield did not resume until the 14:07. The 11:13 Southampton to Victoria was involved in a fatality between Bosham and Fishbourne, resulting in the line being closed until about 15:00. Up trains via Hither Green or Ladywell were unable to run via Lewisham for about two hours from 17:45, because of a signal failure, and were diverted via Parks Bridge Junction.

Saturday 18 April: The 05:57 Victoria to Orpington was cancelled after the two units forming the train became uncoupled on departure. The disruption caused by signal failures on single track lines was demonstrated by significant delays and cancellations between Crowborough and Uckfield from the start of service until late afternoon and between Farnham and Alton during the evening. The line was closed for about two hours after a person was hit by the 20:22 from Charing Cross at Ladywell.

Monday 20 April: The 06:42 from Portsmouth Harbour was delayed by twenty minutes at Liss, because of a brake problem, and terminated at Guildford.

AROUND THE REGION

Folkestone Warren: There is a long history of earth movement at Folkestone Warren, where the chalk cliffs sit on gault clay. Further movement has resulted in a 20 mph speed restriction being imposed over quarter of a mile in the vicinity of the former Warren Staff Halt. Network Rail expects to have to spend millions stabilising the line, but is starting to consider whether this is one of the coastal railways that may have to be abandoned in favour of an alternative. Poole to Hamworthy has been identified as another line that may be difficult to maintain indefinitely.

Chartham: Network Rail is renovating and repainting the disused signal box. It is not listed, but was retained at the request of the Parish Council, who hope to put it to a community use.

Sandling: The station will be unstaffed from 7 June, because a member of staff is retiring. The booking office was previously open in the morning Mondays to Fridays.

Otford: A footbridge has replaced the foot crossing a short distance south of Otford station.

Hoo Junction: In association with track renewals, the down platform at Hoo Junction Staff Halt has been demolished. The halt came into use on 6 February 1956 and appears to have ceased being used sometime between 1998 and 2002. Can anyone be more precise as to when trains ceased stopping for staff?

Bishopstone: A painting 4ft x 8ft has been unveiled on the platform at Bishopstone. It depicts the special steam train that ran to Seaford in June 2014 to mark the line's 150th anniversary.

Surbiton: Completion of the upgrade of Surbiton station, including a new staircase from the down side to the footbridge, was marked by a ribbon-cutting ceremony by the local MP and the Mayor of Kingston-upon-Thames on 17 May. The work has been completed very much in the style of the listed station building.

Woking: It is intended that a new entrance, direct from the station platform, will be created at the disused, but listed, Southern Railway signal box at Woking. That will enable public access and a new use for the building. The lever frame is still present and included in the listing, so a railway exhibition is likely. There may also be a café.

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