

REGIONAL REVIEW: DECEMBER 2024

STOCK NOTES

Electrostars: Thirteen class 377 units are transferring from Southern to Southeastern, in order to replace class 465/9 units on Maidstone East and Tunbridge Wells services. The units will continue to be maintained at Selhurst. This is possible as a result of class 379 units being introduced on the Great Northern line early in 2025, releasing class 387 units to Southern.

Class 395: Maintenance of the class 395 fleet has been carried out by Hitachi, but Southeastern is bringing the work in house. Hitachi staff who currently maintain the trains will transfer to Southeastern. Hitachi will continue to have a technical support and spare parts contract at least until 2027.

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

4 December: 701503+701504 Eastleigh to Long Marston
9 December: 701518+701524 Eastleigh to Derby
12 December: 701018 Long Marston to Eastleigh
19 December: 701045 Eastleigh to Worcester (for Long Marston)

Unit 701031 was named *Nighthawk* at Waterloo on 28 November. Other units are being named with a sporting theme as *Ace* (tennis at Wimbledon), *Jockey* (horseracing at Ascot, Sandown Park and Kempton Park), *Red Rose* (rugby at Twickenham) and *Thames Racer* (University boat race).

Class 458: Alstom has completed the refurbishment and reconfiguration of the original class 458 trains, reversing the expensive augmentation to five coaches. The last unit to be dealt with was 458414, which had a delayed return to Bournemouth. It reached Branksome on 17 December, but a points failure prevented it from entering the depot. It was returned to Eastleigh and successfully delivered the next day. Units 458405+458418, which had been stored at Eastleigh Works, ran to Wimbledon Park on 4 December. None of the units converted from class 460 vehicles are being refurbished and 458531 was moved from Wimbledon to Long Marston on 10 December. Units 458405/06 have been noted in passenger service.

Classes 465 and 466: Units 465915 and 466004 were moved from Worksop to Ely on 10 December. They were followed by 465920 and 466009 on 20 December.

TIMETABLES AND DIAGRAMS

Class 701: From the start of the December timetable there were just six class 701 diagrams Mondays to Fridays, almost entirely covering Windsor and Shepperton services. Only three units were in service throughout the day. Two retired to Wimbledon Park sidings during the middle of the day and one had just a single passenger duty, the 07:52 Surbiton to Waterloo. This is the only class 701 passenger working at Surbiton, but following this service the unit runs empty to Wimbledon Park via Hampton Court. Two units are diagrammed at weekends, with the Sunday workings including the 07:18, 09:17, 13:18, 15:14, 19:18 and 21:14 Kingston Loop services. However, there have been reports of diagrammed class 701 services being worked by other units, because the driver has not been trained on the type.

INTERESTING WORKINGS

Heritage Diesels: 50007 worked from Kidderminster to Eastleigh and 20007+20205 ran from Eastleigh to Kidderminster on 28 November.

RAIL BUSINESS

Open Access to Southampton: The veteran of Open Access trains, Ian Yeowart, is reported to be proposing services between London and Southampton. There would be eight workings daily, using eight-coach, 100 mph trains. It is envisaged that these would continue to and from Marchwood, which implies use of diesel trains or hybrids. A previous proposal, which involved use of redundant class 442 units, was rejected on grounds of lack of track capacity.

South Western Railway: The Government has confirmed that South Western Railway will be the first train operator to come into public control under its plans to end contracting out services. The contract with First Group and MTR to operate SWR expires on 25 May 2025. Pending the introduction of Great British Railways, the company will be managed by DfT Operator Limited, previously known as DfT Operator of Last Resort Holdings. Previously, English operators have only returned to Government control if in breach of their franchise agreement or in financial difficulties.

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.

P8/9	13 October to 11 November	MAA to 9 November	10 November to 7 December	MAA to 7 December
All TOCs	62.5%	67.1%	57.7%	67.0%
SWR	60.5% (10 th)	66.7% (12 th)	45.7% (19 th)	66.3% (12 th)
GTR	66.3% (8 th)	67.9% (10 th)	60.2% (10 th)	67.7% (10 th)
SE	60.4% (11 th)	67.2% (11 th)	52.0% (14 th)	66.6% (11 th)

Cancellations because of a lack of drivers contributed to the plunge in South Western Railway's performance in November and December.

Tuesday 26 Nov: Early morning trains were delayed or cancelled, because a tamper working overnight failed on the down line at Beaulieu Road. Another tamper had to be found to assist it to Totton.

Wednesday 27 Nov: A problem with points at Motspur Park Junction resulted in there being no trains on the Chessington branch until Friday. There was a full service, but with delays, to and from Epsom from late afternoon. Until then there were a few down trains, but none in the up direction. Several lines were affected by floods from early morning. Redhill to Tonbridge was closed all day because of flooding at Bletchingley Tunnel. Floods between Romsey and Salisbury receded by late morning and between Wanborough and Ash by early afternoon. Services on the Isle of Wight were suspended until 18:00, because of flooding at Ryde. Thameslink was disrupted for much of the day by flooding in Clerkenwell Tunnel, but trains were able to keep running. The 17:31 from Portsmouth Harbour was involved in a fatality at Hersham. The circumstances required all lines to be blocked for the rest of the day. Portsmouth trains were diverted via Cobham, as were a few Alton trains. Some Bournemouth line trains ran via Chertsey, but many services were cancelled or curtailed.

Thursday 28 Nov: Points failures caused cancellations and delays at Gravesend during the morning peak and at Littlehampton in the afternoon. Unit 395008 unit hit the buffers of the up west siding at Ramsgate during the evening, with the leading coach and front half of the adjacent coach off the rails. There was a delay in recovering the unit, because of difficult site conditions.

Friday 29 Nov: Trains were unable to call at Surbiton during the evening peak after two individuals released a corrosive substance at the station.

Tuesday 3 Dec: A points failure at Three Bridges caused services to and from Horsham to be suspended during the early afternoon. Some trains were diverted via Hove and the 12:28 from Portsmouth Harbour ran via Dorking.

Wednesday 4 Dec: There were delays throughout the morning, because of a points failure at East Croydon. Guildford station was closed for about an hour during the afternoon after a suspicious item, later found to be harmless, was discovered. The line between Staines and Feltham Junction was closed for about two hours from 15:00 after a person with serious injuries was found on the track near Ashford (Surrey).

Thursday 5 Dec: A track circuit failure between Three Bridges and Haywards Heath caused delays during the afternoon. Gatwick Express services to Brighton were cut back to Gatwick Airport.

Friday 6 Dec: A problem at Network Rail's Stoke-on-Trent data centre resulted drivers having difficulty using the GSM Radio system, which they use to communicate with signallers. A work around was found that allowed emergency calls and the system was functioning correctly by early afternoon. There were some delays and cancellations as a result of this, with Thameslink and Southeastern being particularly affected. As a result of a problem within an overnight engineering possession between Worting Junction and Winchester the down line did not open until after 06:00 and the up line was closed to traffic until 08:20. Trains to Waterloo via Winchester were diverted via Havant or terminated at Eastleigh. Cross Country diverted via Chandlers Ford and Laverstock.

Saturday 7 Dec: A power failure during the night caused loss of signalling between Pulborough and Arundel. Trains were cancelled, terminated at Horsham or diverted via Hove. A generator was installed the following night. High winds caused numerous trees to fall onto the railway. The following trains ran into trees; 06:45 from Portsmouth Harbour near Rowlands Castle, 06:39 from Reading near Barnes, 07:50 Salisbury to Romsey near Mottisfont & Dunbridge, 09:30 Waterloo to Portsmouth near Farncombe, 09:56 from Salisbury between Chandlers Ford and Romsey, 14:55 from Portsmouth Harbour near Micheldever and 23:18 from Portsmouth Harbour between Liss and Liphook. The 08:35 from Dartford terminated at New Eltham, because of a tree blocking the up line. Trains towards London were diverted via Bexleyheath until 10:20. There were also trees on the line at Woking, Aldershot, Cosham, Brockenhurst, New Milton, Branksome and Poole. An overhead power line that crosses the line between Glynde and Berwick was damaged by the wind, causing an electrical fire, and there was a risk of the cables coming down onto the railway. As a result the line was closed between Southerham Junction and Willingdon Junction from 08:30 and the next train was the 23:32 Brighton to Eastbourne. The 08:07 London Bridge to Uckfield failed between Crowborough and Uckfield, blocking the line for the rest of the morning. Trains terminated at Crowborough, with services to Uckfield resuming with the 12:07 from London Bridge.

Sunday 8 Dec: There were further incidents of trains hitting trees during morning; 07:10 Minster to St Pancras between Chilham and Wye, 08:08 Salisbury to Romsey near Mottisfont & Dunbridge and 07:47 from Victoria at Pulborough. There were also trees on the line at North Camp, Overton, Clandon and between Guildford and Farncombe. A signalling fault put platforms 1 to 12 Victoria out of use until 09:00, after which a very limited service was possible. Matters were not helped by the lines from Lewisham to Petts Wood and St Pancras to Herne Hill being closed for engineering work. Main line trains to Charing Cross and Thameslink services from Sevenoaks were scheduled to be diverted to Victoria, so some trains terminated and started at Herne Hill and Bellingham. Tunbridge Wells trains ran to and from Charing Cross via New Beckenham, so made additional, unscheduled passenger calls at Bromley South. Dartford trains were diverted to Cannon Street. Trains to and from Sevenoaks were replaced by a shuttle between Sevenoaks and Orpington. Maidstone East line trains terminated and started at Swanley. Normal working was possible from late afternoon, but the Southeastern service remained disrupted until late evening. Southern managed to operate its Sunday service from platforms 13 to 19 without too many cancellations and even Gatwick Express operated most trains.

Monday 9 Dec: There was no morning peak service on the Oxted line, because of a fallen tree between Oxted and Hurst Green. The full service did not resume until the afternoon. A points failure at Haslemere disrupted the afternoon service. A few trains were diverted via Winchester.

Wednesday 11 Dec: Unfortunately, there were two fatalities during the evening, involving the 19:20 Waterloo to Exeter at Weybridge and the 22:41 from Littlehampton on the Bognor branch. The 19:20 terminated at Woking three hours late. Some Portsmouth trains were diverted via Cobham but other services were curtailed or cancelled. There were no further trains to or from Bognor that evening.

Thursday 12 Dec: A track circuit failure on the up line at Swanwick caused the service to be reduced during the morning and trains from Southampton ran non-stop from Netley to Fareham.

Friday 13 Dec: An axle counter failure at Sutton prevented trains running towards West Croydon until after 10:00. The 07:45 Waterloo to Portsmouth terminated at Woking with a traction failure, blocking the down slow line for the rest of the morning. The 14:50 from Victoria collided with the buffers at London Bridge, but there was no serious damage.

Saturday 14 Dec: A car was driven through a boundary fence and onto the railway at New Beckenham station during the night. The line was closed during the morning while repairs were carried out to the platform. A double deck bus became converted to open top when driven under Portland Road bridge, Norwood Junction during the evening. Trains were diverted via Selhurst and Tulse Hill while the condition of the bridge was checked.

Monday 16 Dec: A points failure at Frimley caused trains to be cancelled for about two hours from 08:00. A points failure at East Croydon required some up fast trains to be diverted to the up slow line from shortly after 08:00 until the

middle of the afternoon. Trains through Three Bridges were subject to cancellation and delay during the middle of the day, because of yet another points failure. The 13:47 Salisbury to Waterloo, units 158888+159108, failed between Tunnel Junction and Grateley, blocking the line until 16:00. Following trains were diverted via Southampton. The 16:56 Charing Cross to Tunbridge Wells failed inside Sevenoaks Tunnel, but was eventually able to proceed to Hildenborough where it terminated 50 minutes late. The 17:34 Charing Cross to Ramsgate was diverted via Maidstone East, but failed at Ashford and terminated there. Other trains were held up behind the 16:56.

Wednesday 18 Dec: A cable fault led to loss of power on the down slow line at Orpington for almost three hours from 07:30. Trains had to be diverted to the down fast line and the bay platforms, 6 to 8, at Orpington could not be used. There were significant delays and cancellations until the middle of the afternoon. The 11:21 Ore to Victoria (which started from Hastings) terminated at Haywards Heath after a passenger started a fire in a toilet.

Thursday 19 Dec: There were no trains to or from Hayes and a limited service from Elmers End until 07:31, because of a signalling failure. There were no Southern trains to Beckenham Junction after the 12:44 from London Bridge, because of lack of platform staff at Beckenham Junction. Trains terminated and started at Birkbeck for the rest of the day. A track defect put platform 2 (down fast) at Basingstoke out of use during the afternoon and evening. Signalling failures at Eastleigh during the afternoon and at Southampton a few hours later caused delays for the rest of the day. A signalling failure prevented trains running from Gravesend to Ebbsfleet during the evening. High speed trains via Faversham terminated at Rochester or Strood.

Friday 20 Dec: A signalling failure prevented use of platform 2 (up slow) at Southampton Central all day. This resulted in alternate Brighton trains being diverted to Portsmouth & Southsea. On top of that, a signalling problem at Chichester resulted in some morning trains being diverted to Bognor Regis. The problem at Southampton persisted through Saturday, with normal service not resuming until Sunday.

Saturday 21 Dec: The 08:18 from Dover Priory was involved in a fatality at Beckenham Junction. Trains were diverted via Catford until 13:30 and Southern services terminated at Birkbeck.

AROUND THE REGION

Margate: Colleagues at Margate station recently got together with Station Supervisor, Dougie Calder, to mark his 55 years working on the railway. He started at Margate as a junior porter in 1969, aged 16, but has no plans to retire.

Slade Green: A new wheel lathe and carriage washing plant have been installed at Slade Green Depot. The overhead gantry crane has been extended.

Bishopstone: The indefatigable Friends of Bishopstone Station, supported by the Railway Heritage Trust, Govia Thameslink Railway and Network Rail, are working to renovate the ladies' toilet, particularly its mosaic floor.

Clandon: After monitoring devices detected movement in an embankment at Clandon an emergency speed restriction was imposed. The line is closed from 21 to 27 December for installation of steel sheet piles, in addition to planned Christmas engineering work. Following this, soil nails will be used to stabilise the slope.

Brookwood: Track renewals over the Christmas period will result in removal of the trailing crossover between the fast lines and abolition of the ground switch panel from which it was worked.

Dorchester South: Accessibility to the station has been improved by automatic doors to the ticket office and a new ramp. The platform waiting shelters have been replaced and the former parcels office demolished.

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