

REGIONAL REVIEW: AUGUST 2026

CLASS 458

The 28 refurbished units all remain on lease to South Western Railway until March 2027, but from 27 July there were just two eight-coach class 458 trains diagrammed, confined to peak hours Mondays to Fridays. The planned workings were:

05:31 Hounslow – Waterloo 06:08	05:22 Waterloo – Weybridge 06:39
06:22 Waterloo – Weybridge 07:38	07:02 Weybridge – Waterloo 08:26
08:02 Weybridge – Waterloo 09:26	08:37 Waterloo – Hounslow Loop – Waterloo 10:00
16:15 Waterloo – Hounslow Loop – Waterloo 17:39	17:37 Waterloo – Hounslow Loop – Waterloo 19:00
17:52 Waterloo – Weybridge 19:13	19:37 Waterloo – Hounslow 20:15
19:33 Weybridge – Waterloo 20:58	

In practice there were many substitutions by classes 450 and 701 and the morning and evening parts of the diagrams were not worked by the same units. There was no day when both diagrams were fully covered by class 458.

Units in passenger service in August were 458402/04/12/15/21/23/26/28, with up to three pairs in service daily on workings to Windsor, Weybridge and Reading. Workings varied and rarely included any on the services shown above. The units were normally out all day. 458421 was not noted in service after 5 August, when its workings, with 458423, included the 08:18 Waterloo to Reading. That departed 25 minutes late and called only at Twickenham, Staines, Ascot, Bracknell and Wokingham. Reading was reached 11 minutes late, in time to depart punctually with the 10:09 to Waterloo. On 7 August 458416+458427 ran empty 12:15 Wimbledon Park to Strawberry Hill Depot, presumably for storage. Two pairs of units were in service from 24 August, 458402+458412 and 458404+458423, which were still out all day on Windsor, Weybridge and Reading workings.

STOCK NOTES

Networker Replacement: Southeastern has selected its preferred manufacturer of new suburban rolling stock. Subject to a business case being approved, contract negotiations will begin. The manufacturer has not been identified. Southeastern would prefer to have a uniform suburban fleet but, as a minimum, needs to replace the class 465 and 466 units. The company has no plans to take on the class 458 units.

Class 701: Further moves from Bicester to Wimbledon have been 701515 on 30 July, 701530 on 31 July, 701516 on 5 August and 701526 on 7 August. Units 701507+701511 were hauled from Derby to Wimbledon on 18 August, followed by 701505+701514 on 21 August. 701028 and 701029 are stored at Clapham Yard, but all other class 701/0 units have been in public service.

INTERESTING WORKINGS

Class 73: A convoy of four locomotives, 73109+73212+73966+73141, ran from Eastleigh to Leicester via Chertsey and Kew East on 5 August. The Caledonian Sleeper locomotive, 73966, had been at Eastleigh Works for attention since 4 June.

Class 93: Locomotive 93009 arrived light at Eastleigh from Crewe on 19 August and hauled 68024 to Leicester next day. It ran via Oxford both ways.

Class 201: Four coach unit 1001 ran from St Leonards to the Bluebell Railway via Tonbridge and South Croydon on 31 July. Six coach unit 1013 worked a special passenger train 12:17 Hastings to Sandwich via Tonbridge and Canterbury West and 14:45 Sandwich to Tonbridge via Dover. It then returned empty to St Leonards via Hastings. On 15 August 1013 worked a charter from Tonbridge to Warminster via Redhill, Streatham Common, Herne Hill, Waterloo, Andover and Salisbury. It stabled at Westbury and the return was via Southampton instead of Andover.

Class 377: On 18 August the 07:10 Ashford International to Cannon Street was noted formed 377121+122+123, so not just numerical order, but a twelve-coach Southeastern train entirely in Southern livery, but for the branding.

Class 403 (Brighton Belle): The four-coach *Brighton Belle* unit in the care of Locomotive Services Limited was worked top and tail from Crewe to Derby Litchurch Lane via Lichfield by 20132 and 20107 on 11 August. It was worked back by the same locomotives on 13 August.

Excursions: In connection with Ladies' Day at Goodwood Races on 30 July, the Northern Belle ran from Victoria to Chichester via Crystal Palace, Redhill, Horsham and Littlehampton. Special trains, particularly locomotive-hauled, normally use platform 2 at Victoria, but this departed from platform 7, in order to cross to the Down Brighton Slow line immediately outside the station. The train stabled at Littlehampton and returned from Chichester via Fareham, Winchester, Chertsey, Richmond and Stewarts Lane. It was topped and tailed by 57601 (leading from Victoria) and 57313.

47848 and 57313 topped and tailed a Victoria to Weymouth trip on 13 August, in place of steam traction. 47593 and 47712 topped and tailed an excursion from Derby to Eastbourne via Kew East, Longhedge Junction, Herne Hill, Streatham Common and Redhill on 14 August. It had to be diverted via Brighton, because of the derailment near Lewes the previous day. The train passed East Croydon 12 minutes late, but omitted a pathing stop at South Croydon and gained 28 minutes between there and Keymer Junction on what was a very slack schedule. Despite the diversion, the train was 11 minutes early into Eastbourne. There was no such luck heading north, when the train was 40 minutes late through Keymer Junction, with further delays in the Croydon area leading to it being 76 minutes late at Kew East. 47810 and 57003 worked an excursion on Three Bridges to Kingswear via Hove, Botley and Westbury on 15 August.

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.

P4	28 June to 25 July	MAA to 25 July
GB	64.78%	66.37%
SWR	65.45% (12 th)	65.25% (14 th)
GTR	65.11% (13 th)	67.62% (11 th)
SE	68.48% (8 th)	67.02% (12 th)

The hot weather has resulted in numerous reports of track defects, mostly from train drivers. These normally require the line to be blocked until permanent way staff have examined the track. Often it is possible to re-open the line quite quickly with a speed restriction, but sometimes attention to the ballast is required. Only the more disruptive incidents are noted here. There have again been speed restrictions and revised schedules on the West of England line, because of embankments shrinking.

Tuesday 28 July: The line was closed for about 2½ hours after the 08:30 Waterloo to Portsmouth Harbour was involved in a fatality near Farncombe. Trains were cancelled or diverted via Winchester. The 11:18 London Bridge to Hastings hit a tree between Wadhurst and Stonegate, but was able to continue 140 minutes late. The service was disrupted throughout the afternoon. A signalling failure in the Herne Hill area about 20:00 caused disruption for the rest of the evening. The 20:16, 20:19 and 20:46 Sutton to St Albans were diverted via Peckham Rye and London Bridge, but most other Thameslink services via Sutton were cancelled. Some Southeastern trains were diverted via Catford.

Friday 31 July: Trains were diverted via Catford for about two hours following the 10:53 from Ramsgate being involved in a fatality at Beckenham Junction. Most Orpington local services were cancelled and trains from London Bridge terminated at Crystal Palace. Trains were halted for over an hour during the afternoon after a trespasser climbed onto a signal gantry between Clapham Junction and Wandsworth Common. There were numerous cancellations and lengthy delays. Then the slow lines were blocked for about 1½ hours after a person was hit by the 18:30 Victoria to Epsom Downs, so the service was severely disrupted for the rest of the day. A track defect affecting both of the down lines near Berrylands caused disruption throughout the evening. Trains were delayed and there were some cancellations. The 20:23 Waterloo to Alton and the 20:42 to Basingstoke were diverted via Chertsey.

Saturday 1 August: A signalling failure resulted in there being no trains to or from Uckfield after the 07:33 departure. Trains turned back at Crowborough for the rest of the day. The 16:55 Bournemouth to Manchester became stranded after hitting an object on the line at Hinton Admiral, resulting in services being suspended between Southampton and Bournemouth. After passengers had been evacuated and fitters had attended, the train was able to return to Bournemouth about 21:00. Only a few late evening trains operated thereafter.

Sunday 2 August: The signalling between Wimbledon and New Malden failed just before 09:00. Most trains to and from Waterloo via Wimbledon were cancelled, but a few were diverted via Chertsey. Shepperton trains ran via Richmond. Signalling was fully restored after an hour, but the service remained disrupted for the rest of the morning.

Monday 3 August: Evening peak trains were delayed or cancelled, because of an axle-counter failure at Balham.

Tuesday 4 August: Further signalling problems at Balham caused delays during the morning. The 15:33 Waterloo to Windsor terminated at Wraybury, because of a tree on the line. Services resumed with the 18:33 from Waterloo and until then trains terminated at Staines.

Wednesday 5 August: A tree fell onto the line at Isleworth during the afternoon, resulting in the 14:33 from Weybridge and 14:52 from Waterloo being delayed by about three hours. Following trains were cancelled or diverted via Richmond, until the line re-opened about 18:30.

Friday 7 August: A track circuit failure at Herne Hill about 09:00 prevented trains running towards Blackfriars for the rest of the morning. Thameslink services were cancelled. A car hit the 11:03 Waterloo to Guildford on Cooks level crossing between Oxshott and Cobham. The train suffered minor damage and fortunately nobody was seriously injured. The line was closed until late afternoon, with services cancelled or diverted via Epsom. The line was blocked between Weybridge and Woking for about an hour from 15:00 while the fire brigade tackled a lineside fire. The incident at Cooks level crossing prevented diversions via Cobham.

Saturday 8 August: Unit 377411 became derailed at Lovers Walk about 07:30. There was a loss of power to signalling in the Swanley area shortly before 11:00, preventing trains running through the area. Trains via Sole Street were diverted via Dartford and Thameslink's Sevenoaks service was diverted via Orpington. Trains between Maidstone East and London were cancelled, with a shuttle operating to and from Ashford International. Trains that had been stranded in the Swanley area started moving about 12:30, but it was a further 1½ hours before other services resumed. Disruption continued through the afternoon, because crews and trains were displaced. A fire near the railway between North Sheen and Mortlake caused the line to be closed from 21:00. Reading and Windsor trains were diverted via Hounslow and Kingston Loop services terminated and started at Twickenham.

Sunday 9 August: A signalling failure at Fareham resulted in early morning trains being cancelled. The 07:30 Southampton to Brighton started from Portsmouth. Lines through Fareham opened shortly after 08:00. A points failure at Billingshurst about 16:00 caused the line to be closed for two hours. There were major delays and cancellations, but the only diversion was the 16:31 Bognor Regis to Victoria via Hove. Late evening services were disrupted by a lineside fire between Purley and Coulsdon South, which damaged signalling cables. The Redhill line was blocked while the fire brigade attended and the cable damage resulted in loss of signalling on the Quarry line. The service was thinned out next morning, pending completion of cable renewal.

LEWES DERAILMENT: The late-running 14:24 Victoria to Eastbourne derailed between Cooksbridge and Lewes about 16:00 on **Thursday 13 August**. The rear three coaches, 421304, 422304 and 423304 of unit 387304, ended up on their side adjacent to the track. Two passengers were reported to be seriously injured, with nine others less badly hurt. The line is expected to be blocked between Keymer Junction and Lewes for a significant period, to allow time for accident investigation, recovery of rolling stock and necessary repairs. While the line is closed trains between Brighton, Seaford, Eastbourne and Hastings have additional carriages, where possible. As well as travelling via Brighton, passengers with East Coastway tickets may use Southeastern trains between London and Hastings and Brighton & Hove Buses serving Brighton, Lewes, Eastbourne, Uckfield and Tunbridge Wells.

The cause of the derailment is to be established, but speaking after the incident and another derailment at Wickford, Essex, Network Rail's Group Safety & Engineering Director, Martin Frobisher, said: *The unprecedented hot and dry weather that we have experienced this summer has presented exceptional challenges to the railway. In response, we have taken several additional proactive steps to manage and mitigate the impact on the railway, including closely monitoring the temperature of tracks, implementing speed restrictions where it is appropriate to do so, and planning track renewals around high temperatures.*

RAIB investigations on site concluded on 15 August and two Kirow rail-mounted cranes were despatched to assist recovery of the derailed train. There is restricted road access through a residential area, with the railway close to the River Ouse and in a Site of Special Scientific Importance. Network Rail expects the line to re-open on 1 September.

An interim report issued by RAIB on 19 August indicated that there was a track defect at the site of the derailment.

Friday 14 August: Unit 444011 derailed when entering Clapham Yard during the early hours. Rerailing was not completed until after 08:00, so other trains were unable to depart to take up service. Some other services were short-formed, because units were split to cover more than one diagram. A points failure between Three Bridges and Horsham severely disrupted services during the morning, with many trains cancelled, terminating short or diverted via Hove. Not many drivers who work Victoria trains from Portsmouth and Bognor trains know the route via Dorking, but the 05:20 from Havant and the 07:32 from Portsmouth Harbour ran that way. The 08:24 from Ashford was detained at Rye for 1½ hours, because of a signalling problem and the 08:50 from Eastbourne terminated at Hastings. Services were subject to delays and cancellations into the afternoon. Locomotive 66518 failed between Winchester and Micheldever about 14:00 while hauling a Southampton to Trafford Park freight. An assisting locomotive came from Southampton and the train was on the move shortly after 17:00. Trains in both directions were diverted via Havant (SWR) or Laverstock (XC) meantime, if not terminated short or cancelled entirely. The East Grinstead branch was closed for 1½ hours during the afternoon because of a fire. The line was closed between Polegate and Willingdon Junction from the middle of the afternoon, because of a track defect. The closure continued next day, while repairs were undertaken, with trains from Brighton turning back at Polegate.

Saturday 15 August: There were no trains to or from Bognor Regis between the 09:35 departure and the arrival from Victoria at 11:21, because of a points failure. Meantime, the shuttle was cancelled and Victoria trains terminated and started at Barnham. A signalling problem meant that the service was suspended again during the afternoon, with no trains between the 13:15 arrival from Brighton and the 14:56 departure to Victoria. There were no trains on the Uckfield line after 07:30 because of track defects and an embankment slip in the Edenbridge area. The line did not re-open until Monday morning. A lineside fire near Feltham Junction caused the line to be closed for about two hours from 09:00. Trains were delayed, cancelled or diverted via Chertsey. The 08:21 Cambridge to Brighton, unit 700137, failed at Farringdon and required fitter's attention before it could proceed empty to Three Bridges Depot at 11:25. Following trains were severely delayed or were terminated short, later causing cancellation of many northbound trains. The 09:32 Bedford to Three Bridges, unit 700105, which had been detained for over an hour in the Cricklewood area, also failed at Farringdon, but was able to continue after a further delay of ¾ hour. The Thameslink service was badly disrupted throughout the afternoon, with delays and cancellations continuing through the evening.

Monday 17 August: The Uckfield line re-opened, but with speed restrictions. A track defect between Woldingham and Oxted also delayed East Grinstead trains, but those to Uckfield were subject to restrictions in the Edenbridge Town area as well. That made operation through the extensive single line sections difficult, resulting in cancellations, particularly during the morning peak. Thereafter, most trains terminated and started at Crowborough, with rail replacement buses to and from Uckfield. This continued on Tuesday. A defective rail between Crawley and Three Bridges resulted in the 13:56 from Bognor being diverted via Dorking and the 14:26, 14:56, 15:26 & 15:56 via Hove. The 18:30 from Rainham struck a supermarket trolley on departure from Plumstead. Power was isolated while the driver removed the trolley and trains were on the move again about 40 minutes later.

Tuesday 18 August: An aggregate train from Whatley Quarry to Allington became stranded near Edenbridge about 11:40 and did not pass Tonbridge until 15:20, resulting in the passenger service being cancelled for most of the afternoon. A track circuit failure about 18:00 prevented trains running through Gillingham for over 1½ hours. The service was severely disrupted for the rest of the day, with many cancellations. A major fire in a recycling centre in Bermondsey caused the Kent fast lines to be closed about 20:30. All East London line services were suspended about an hour later. Traction current was discharged on all lines after passengers attempted to leave a stranded train. Southeastern services came to a halt, but most Thameslink trains were diverted via Herne Hill and Streatham Common for the rest of the day. A few Southeastern services resumed from 23:30, but there were no East London Trains on Wednesday morning and a limited service during the afternoon and evening, because of fears about the safety of a fire-damaged building. There was a previous fire at the recycling centre on 8 June this year, which also caused extensive disruption to rail services. There were no further trains via Hounslow after the 22:33 from Weybridge struck a person on Wood Lane level crossing between Isleworth and Syon Lane.

Wednesday 19 August: There were no eastbound trains through Worthing until the 06:17 from Southampton at 08:01, because an online machine had failed during engineering work at Shoreham-by-Sea. Trains were cancelled or terminated short while another machine came to haul the failure into the up loop at Worthing. Trains from Littlehampton to Victoria were diverted via Crawley. A signalling problem at Motspur Park caused delays during the afternoon. As a result, up trains via Motspur Park ran non-stop from Raynes Park to Waterloo.

Thursday 20 August: The 22:05 (previous day) Waterloo to Poole became stranded with a brake fault near Hinton Admiral and terminated at Bournemouth at 02:43. The 11:15 from Weymouth was involved in a fatality at Brookwood, resulting in all lines being closed for about two hours. Most trains were terminated short or cancelled, but a few were diverted via Havant. Down trains via Pulborough terminated at Horsham or were diverted via Hove during the afternoon, because of a track defect. The 17:12 London Bridge to Tattenham Corner terminated at Coulsdon Town, because of a tree on the line. Services resumed with the 19:40 from London Bridge.

Friday 21 August: A points failure at Dartford Junction caused delays and a few cancellations from late morning onwards.

Saturday 22 August: There was severe disruption to services via Billingshurst throughout the day after a series of track defects were discovered. Hardly any trains ran south of Horsham during the afternoon and the line was closed on Sunday morning while repairs were carried out. A track defect on the Quarry Line required down trains to be diverted via Redhill during the afternoon.

Sunday 23 August: A technical problem at CrossCountry's control centre in Birmingham meant that most of its services, including all to and from Bournemouth, were cancelled. South Western Railway ran a few additional trains between Bournemouth and Basingstoke during the afternoon, in the paths of CrossCountry services. A signalling fault at Plumstead caused delays and some diversions from mid-morning onwards. There were no trains to or from Littlehampton after the 18:31 to Bognor Regis, because of a track defect. Victoria trains were diverted to Barnham.

Monday 24 August: A car collided with a parapet of Windmill Bridge overbridge, north of East Croydon station, during the night. Brickwork fell onto the railway, causing all lines to be closed. The slow lines re-opened allowing services to resume shortly before 04:00, but the fast lines remained closed through the morning peak, causing delays and cancellations. A fire on the track between Victoria and Factory Junction resulted in trains being diverted via Stewarts Lane during the middle of the morning. There were further diversions when the fire re-ignited during the evening.

RAILWAY BUSINESS

Ticket Sales: Southeastern is to replace ticket vending machines, some of which are over twenty years old, with 200 new ones from 2027. A wider range of tickets will be available and the new machines can produce bar-coded tickets and top up Oyster cards. Southeastern says the new machines will be faster and easier to use than the old ones.

Driver Recruitment: Following the release of GCSE results, the Department for Transport is encouraging young people to become train drivers. This follows the minimum age for train driving being reduced to 18. Fewer than 4% of train drivers are under 30 and a quarter of the current workforce will reach retirement age by 2030.

Greater Thameslink Railway: Steve White, the Managing Director of Southeastern, is to move to Greater Thameslink Railway as Managing Director there. His experience in setting up the integrated management and operation of Southeastern and Network Rail's Kent Route, will be used to establish a similar arrangement between GTR and Sussex Route. This may be rather more complicated, given the extent to which GTR operates outside Sussex Route, reaching not just Ashford on Kent Route and Southampton on Wessex, but also Watford Junction on West Coast Main Line South, Bedford on East Midlands, Peterborough on East Coast and Kings Lynn on Anglia.

Fare Evasion: South Western Railway says it has reduced fare evasion by 67% since 2017, but it has stepped up its efforts to do so. One initiative is to deploy more revenue protection staff at Vauxhall, to ensure that all passengers travelling from there with an electronic ticket have it scanned. Anyone arriving at Waterloo with an unscanned ticket can be identified. It has been estimated that up to 95% of Vauxhall to Waterloo electronic tickets have been used fraudulently by passengers travelling from much further away. During the first two months of this initiative, 153 offences were identified and £45,000 recovered. Passengers found travelling without an appropriate ticket can be charged a £100 penalty fare (£50 if paid within 21 days) plus the ordinary single fare for the journey that they made. When fraudulent travel is identified it is possible to check sales data for previous purchases of incorrect tickets by that person. Passengers

are prosecuted if repeated fraud is identified. Recent examples included an individual travelling from Hampshire who owed £11,000 in unpaid fares and another from Surrey who owed £20,000, having inappropriately used a 16-17 railcard.

Marchwood: Following rejection of its plans to run trains between Waterloo, Southampton and Marchwood, Alliance Rail (trading as Grand Union) has said that a number of errors were noted in that decision. Following a number of meetings with the Regulator to address those issues, a new application with a revised service pattern has been re-submitted. The number of trains to and from Waterloo is reduced from eight to five, but it is intended to run an hourly service between Southampton Central and Marchwood.

Cross Channel Traffic: Trenitalia France, a subsidiary of the Italian State Railway, has signed an agreement with Hitachi for the supply of 19 high-speed trains which it intends to use between London and Paris. It is planned that the service will start in 2029. The Office of Rail and Road has pre-approved a new framework track access agreement between HS1 Limited and Virgin Trains, which will allow operation up to twenty new daily return services between London and Paris, Brussels or Amsterdam from 1 October 2030 to 31 December 2040. Virgin Trains now needs to procure rolling stock, secure access to other rail networks and obtain safety approvals. Transport Scotland has commissioned a study into running overnight trains between Scotland and mainland Europe via the Channel Tunnel.

DB Cargo: Deutsche Bahn intends to sell its UK subsidiary, DB Cargo. The company was originally established as English, Welsh & Scottish Railway, which acquired most of British Rail's freight businesses. It has subsequently lost a significant amount of traffic to other companies and ranks behind GB Railfreight and Freightliner in terms of traffic volume.

AROUND THE REGION

Charing Cross: While the line was closed, all of the track between Waterloo East and Charing Cross, including 16 sets of points, was replaced. This was harder than usual, because the weight restriction on the viaduct prevented use of large cranes and heavy machinery, and there is little space alongside the tracks. As far as possible, track was preassembled at Hoo Junction. Other work included rebuilding the sections of the platforms at Charing Cross that were constructed in the 1950s when suburban trains were extended to ten coaches. The new platform surface, of steel and glass-reinforced plastic, extends onto the further extensions provided to accommodate Networkers. Work at Waterloo East included repainting the footbridge, repairing its bearings and replacing the windows in it. The new windows have openings to improve ventilation. The toilets on the island platform were refurbished. The line closure also assisted the ongoing repairs to and repainting of the bridge over the Thames.

Denmark Hill: The Camberwell Society has since 2020 greatly improved the environment of Denmark Hill station, with gardening and provision of art works. They have planted vines and are expecting a good harvest of grapes this year, which are to be used to make white wine. The Society has said 'the dream of sipping a glass of wine, grown right here in Camberwell, is becoming a reality... making history as we work on the first ever vineyard in a UK station. (There used to be a grape vine at Knebworth station, but maybe a single vine does not constitute a vineyard).

East Croydon: The footbridge across the north end of the platforms at East Croydon came into use for passengers in 2013, but half of its width was to be used by the general public as a means of crossing the railway. However, for town planning and financial reasons the public side has never come into use. Agreement has, at last, been reached that the bridge will be fully opened. The station and public sides of the bridge are separated by a glass barrier. That complied with building regulations when it was constructed, but no longer does so. Before the public side of the bridge finally comes into use, the barrier has to be replaced.

Belmont: Sutton Council has agreed to increase its contribution to the cost of doubling the Epsom Downs branch as far as Belmont by £4 million. This follows cost increases since the project was approved and allows work to start in August.

Lewes: A new waiting shelter has been provided on platform 2 (towards Haywards Heath) at Lewes station. This is not a typical steel and glass structure, but is to a heritage design suited to the station. It is planned to provide a matching shelter on platform 1.

Waterloo: South Western Railway has experimentally introduced dog patrols at Waterloo station as an additional security measure. Riley and Buster are Cocker Spaniels, while Flo is a Labrador. SWR says that the dogs' visible presence will offer an added deterrent and help colleagues maintain a safe and welcoming environment for customers.

Christchurch: Work has started on refurbishing the railway bridge over the River Avon, east of Christchurch.

Pokesdown: New lifts, expected to come into service early in 2028, will provide step-free access to platforms at Pokesdown.

CREDITS: Colin Duff, John Goodrich, Stuart Hicks