REGIONAL REVIEW: OCTOBER 2026

CLASS 458

Units 458416+458427, which had been at Strawberry Hill since 7 August, returned to Wimbledon Park on 28 September and were back in passenger service from 2 October. Other units still in service in October were 458402/12/14/23.

After a period of working on different services daily, class 458 settled down to regular diagrams Monday to Friday from 23 September, which are still working thus:

> Empty Wimbledon Park to Waterloo, 06:18 & 09:48 Waterloo to Reading, 08:09 & 11:39 Reading to Waterloo, 13:22 Waterloo to Weybridge, 15:03 Weybridge to Waterloo, 16:37 & 18:15 Hounslow loop, 20:22 Waterloo to Weybridge, 22:03 Weybridge to Waterloo and empty to Clapham Yard.
>
> Empty Clapham Yard to Clapham Junction, 05:06 Clapham Junction to Weybridge, 06:32 Weybridge to Waterloo, 08:07 Hounslow Loop and empty to Wimbledon Park.
>
> Empty Wimbledon Park to Waterloo, 16:15 Hounslow Loop, 17:52 Waterloo to Weybridge, 19:32 Weybridge to Waterloo and empty to Wimbledon Park.

The morning and evening peak workings are often covered by the same pair of units, but not always.

The units had previously been running almost daily to Windsor. The last workings there were by 458414+458415 all day on 22 September, concluding with the 21:03 from Waterloo and 22:21 return.

On 6 October the 05:06 Clapham Junction to Weybridge, worked by 458416+458427, departed 33 minutes late, because of over-running engineering work. It ran non-stop to Staines in 19 minutes, enabling punctual operation of the return working.

There are no longer regular 458 workings at weekends, but on Saturday and Sunday 10 & 11 October engineering work on the Reading line resulted in units 458402+458423 and 458416+458427 being used on Hounslow Loop services. They also had some workings between Waterloo and Feltham on 10th. 458416+458427 were on Hounslow workings during the weekend of 24 & 25 October, as were 458412+458414 on the Saturday.

STOCK NOTES

Class 159: Nobody seems to have supplied Bournemouth Depot with GBR vinyls. Unit 159107 was outshopped on 26 October with South West Trains livery replaced by South Western Railway.

Class 201: Hastings Diesels are renovating trailer first 60708. Most structural work has been completed and good progress is being made in refurbishing the interior. Among the jobs yet to be completed are overhauling the running gear and fitting retention toilets and automatic door locking. It is hoped that the vehicle will be in service within 2 to 3 years.

Class 375: Southeastern has had to deal with a bed bug infestation on two units that were stabled at St Leonards West Marina Depot.

Class 700: Refurbishment of units at Eastleigh Works started with unit 700102 going there on 2 October. The unit ran under its own power from Three Bridges to Wembley via Streatham, Herne Hill and Kensington, and was hauled from there to Eastleigh by 37424 via Kensington, Hounslow and Chertsey. Match vehicles 68501 and 68504 (former Gatwick Express driving motor luggage vans) were used, together with a number of freight wagons for brake force. Class 700 units are not cleared to operate on most of Wessex Route and there are unlikely to be many, if any, drivers with traction and route knowledge to work them to Eastleigh.

TIMETABLES and DIAGRAMS

Temporary timetables: Normal services resumed to and from Eastbourne on 12 October, following work to the line between Keymer Junction and Lewes. The temporary timetable on the Uckfield line, with some trains terminating at Crowborough, is expected to continue until 2 November.

INTERESTING WORKINGS

Class 20: Locomotives 20901 and 20905 worked the drain train from Woking to Ashford on 12 October. During the afternoon of 14 October they ran light from Ashford to Eastleigh via Redhill, Guildford and Woking and returned with a tamping machine. The next day they moved the drain train from Ashford to Welwyn Garden City via Redhill, Guildford, Chertsey and Kew East.

Class 180: Unit 180110 was hauled from Ely to Eastleigh Depot on 30 September, joining 180109/11/13 already there.

Freight: DB Cargo worked a special freight to Fratton on 19 October, conveying cables for use in the Havant area resignalling. The train, hauled by 66044, ran 08:33 Eastleigh East Yard to Fratton and empty 12:09 Fratton to Southampton Eastern Docks.

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 25 passenger train operators is shown. Eurostar is not included, but open access operators are. MAA = moving annual average.

P6	23 August to 19 September	MAA to 19 September
GB	61.77%	65.63%
SWR	66.39% (8th)	65.10% (13th)
GTR	55.36% (15th)	66.14% (11th)
SE	59.58% (13th)	65.95% (12th)

The impact of heat-related speed restrictions on GTR and Southeastern is very clear, but in contrast SWR is little affected.

Monday 28 September: Unit 450060 failed following departure from Ashurst New Forest with the 08:52 Eastleigh to Bournemouth. It was assisted forward two hours later by a unit sent from Bournemouth. The following 05:43 Birmingham New Street to Bournemouth and 08:05 Waterloo to Weymouth returned to Southampton Central from Totton. Subsequent trains terminated at Southampton Central, until the 09:35 from Waterloo was able to proceed from Southampton half an hour late. This led to many up trains being cancelled west of Southampton, because no crews or rolling stock were available.
Tuesday 29 September: The line was closed after the 22:05 Portsmouth Harbour to Gatwick Airport was involved in a fatality between Pulborough and Billingshurst. The train was able to go forward about 02:30 and terminated at Three Bridges.
Wednesday 30 September: The train to form the 06:22 to St Pancras, units 395028+395022, failed, at Broadstairs. The units returned separately to Ramsgate Depot, clearing the line about 08:30. Services via HS1 were subject to delays and cancellations until the middle of the afternoon, because of a points failure between Stratford and Ebbsfleet.

Thursday 1 October: A points failure at Arundel Junction caused delays during the morning.
Friday 2 October: The points at Arundel Junction failed again, resulting in trains being cancelled or diverted via Littlehampton until early afternoon. A power failure caused loss of signalling in the Gillingham area for about half an hour from 11:00, but the service had recovered by early afternoon.
Saturday 3 October: The 15:30 Southampton Central to Waterloo was involved in a fatality at Basingstoke station. The down lines re-opened, but without trains stopping, after just half an hour. The up lines were closed until after 18:00. The 15:35 Waterloo to Southampton Central, 15:59 Southampton Central to Waterloo and 16:15 Southampton Central to Manchester Piccadilly were diverted via Havant. Other trains were delayed, curtailed or cancelled. Services were

suspended after a body was found by the line between Peckham Rye and Queens Road Peckham about 17:00. It was after 21:30 before the line could re-open, but while setting back to Queens Road Peckham station the 16:34 from Dalston Junction had lost shoegear. Another unit had to assist it to New Cross Gate Depot and that was not achieved until after midnight. The 16:51 Ore to Brighton failed to start, because of loss of power. The unit off the 14:54 from Victoria was used to assist, without success. Another unit, sent from Eastbourne, also lost power at Ore. The various trains were unable to return to Eastbourne until after midnight. This resulted in there being no evening trains between Ashford and Hastings. Anyone attempting to get from Hastings to Ashford via Tonbridge faced further serious problems. The 18:30 from Hastings failed between Tunbridge Wells and High Brooms with a brake fault. Passengers had to be evacuated to a train on the adjacent track, resulting in both lines being blocked for a significant period. Following repairs, the failed train was able to clear the line about 23:00. Numerous services were cancelled and others were severely delayed.

Sunday 4 October: The 12:34 Highbury & Islington to West Croydon, unit 378227, terminated at Sydenham with a brake fault.

Monday 5 October: A signalling problem at Rye resulted in a reduced service being operated until late afternoon. A brief external power failure about 09:00 caused temporary loss of signalling in the Bournemouth area. All of the axle counters in the area had to be reset, so normal working did not fully resume until after 11:00. Delays continued through the afternoon. The 18:33 Eastbourne to Victoria terminated at Haywards Heath to allow the police to investigate an alleged assault on board.

Tuesday 6 October: Services in and out of Eastbourne were suspended for about two hours during the afternoon, while police persuaded a person to come down from a precarious position on a bridge.

Thursday 8 October: A fractured conductor rail between Fareham and Eastleigh resulted in some early morning trains losing shoegear and the line being closed for the rest of the morning. Services were cancelled or diverted via Haslemere. The 14:10 Littlehampton to Victoria was involved in a fatality at East Worthing, resulting in the line being closed for about 2½ hours. Trains from Southampton or Portsmouth were cancelled or diverted to Littlehampton. Those between Victoria and Littlehampton were diverted via Crawley.

Friday 9 October: A signalling failure at Streatham South Junction caused Southern trains to Sutton via Mitcham Junction to be diverted via West Croydon throughout the morning. The Bromley North service was suspended for two hours after the 12:02 from Grove Park hit a tree. The main line through Wimbledon was closed after the 18:41 Waterloo to Basingstoke was involved in a fatality. Thameslink and London Trams continued to run, but South Western services did not resume until 21:30 and there were numerous cancellations for the rest of the day. A few main line trains were diverted via Chertsey. The 21:09 Reading to Waterloo terminated at Wokingham after a lithium battery in the possession of a passenger caught fire. Services were suspended for about an hour.

Sunday 11 October: Unit 395003 derailed at Ramsgate Depot during the night.

Monday 12 October: A points failure at Aldershot caused extensive delays and many cancellations during the morning. The 16:24 Victoria to Eastbourne hit a tree between Cooksbridge and Lewes, resulting in it terminating at Lewes two hours late. The 21:36 Brighton to Seaford was involved in a fatality at Moulsecoomb, causing the line to be closed until after midnight.

Friday 16 October: A signalling problem at Tanners Hill Junction caused delays to down trains during the morning, with some services omitting calls at Lewisham. The 08:40 East Croydon to Victoria, units 377436+377438, failed between Streatham Common and Balham, blocking the up slow line. The down slow line was later blocked to allow repairs to be carried out, requiring all trains to use the fast lines between Selhurst and Balham, running non-stop. The failed train was able to proceed to Balham about 11:00, where it came out of service and ran to Streatham Hill Depot. The 12:21 Cambridge to Brighton was delayed at London Bridge by 38 minutes, because of a problem with the doors. With platform 4 blocked, following trains had to be diverted via platform 3, which is used by trains to Cannon Street. The resulting congestion caused delays, so the 12:51 from Cambridge and 13:16 from Bedford were diverted via Tulse Hill and Streatham Common.

Saturday 17 October: There were delays throughout the evening, because of a signalling problem at Vauxhall. Main line services were further disrupted by a points failure at Basingstoke.

Sunday 18 October: A major signalling failure at Virginia Water resulted in there being no trains via Chertsey after the 18:52 from Woking, apart from the 22:50 Waterloo to Woking. Reading trains were subject to significant delays or cancellation.

Monday 19 October: There was a reduced service through Ford for most of the day, because of a signalling problem there. The full timetable operated only during the evening. High speed services were delayed by a severe speed restriction, caused by a track defect on the up line at Stratford International. A points failure at Headcorn disrupted morning services.

The 09:02 Charing Cross to Dover Priory took advantage of the bi-directional signalling to run via the up line from Headcorn to Ashford. Following trains ran via the main line at Headcorn, where the platforms are on loops, so did not stop there. Normal service resumed with the 11:04 Charing Cross to Dover Priory.

Tuesday 20 October: The 20:55 Portsmouth Harbour to Waterloo terminated at Fareham, because of a technical fault.

Wednesday 21 October: The 10:30 from Hastings hit a tree on the line between Crowhurst and Battle, causing extensive cancellations until late afternoon. That was shortly followed by the 09:36 from Ramsgate hitting a tree between Marden and Paddock Wood. Trains were diverted via Maidstone East until early afternoon. Services through Effingham Junction were suspended for over 1½ hours following a points failure about 17:30. Among the trains to be stranded was the 17:15 Waterloo to Portsmouth & Southsea, which is scheduled via Cobham. It terminated at Havant 77 minutes late. Meantime, trains were cancelled or diverted via Woking.

Thursday 22 October: Early morning trains from Bromley North were cancelled, because of a signalling problem. The 05:28 from Portsmouth Harbour was involved in a fatality near Christs Hospital, but was able to go forward to Horsham about 09:30. Meantime trains were cancelled or diverted via Crawley. All lines through Woking were closed from the middle of the afternoon for the rest of the day, while the police negotiated with a person in a precarious position on a bridge. This resulted in very extensive disruption. A few Portsmouth trains were diverted via Cobham, but there were many cancellations. Passengers were permitted to complete their journey by taxi.

Friday 23 October: High winds brought many trees down onto the line, resulting in widespread disruption. Trains hitting trees were: 04:19 empty stock Guildford to Surbiton at Horsley; 04:57 Poole to Waterloo between Branksome and Bournemouth; a railhead treatment train near Balcombe about 06:20; 14:09 Haslemere to Waterloo at Witley; 13:40 London Bridge to Tattenham Corner at Kingswood; 14:24 Victoria to Eastbourne (which started at East Croydon) at Haywards Heath; 14:32 Margate to St Pancras near Stone Crossing and 14:20 from St Pancras between Dumpton Park and Ramsgate. There were also fallen trees blocking the line between Hassocks and Preston Park, between Petersfield and Rowlands Castle and at or near Holton Heath, Christchurch, Sway, Marchwood, Mottisfont & Dunbridge, Swanwick, Shawford, Micheldever, Petersfield, Farnborough North, Hersham, Windsor & Eton Riverside, Barnes Bridge, Malden Manor, Moulsecoomb, Uckfield, Oxted, Merstham, Ladywell, Catford Bridge, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge, Meopham, Snodland, Teynham, Selling and Minster. Further trees fell onto the line at Branksome, Bournemouth and Dumpton Park, following the initial incidents.

Saturday 24 October: High winds brought trees down onto the line from late afternoon onwards at or near Botley, Haslemere, Southbourne, Amberley, Angmering, Polegate, Edenbridge, Longfield, Canterbury East and Herne Bay.

Sunday 25 October: High winds continued into the afternoon. Trains hitting trees were: 23:34 (Saturday) Charing Cross to Canterbury West near Chartham; 07:55 Faversham to Dover Priory at Shepherds Well; 08:04 Victoria to Epsom Downs near Banstead; 10:34 Charing Cross to Ramsgate near Chilham; 12:09 Chessington South to Waterloo at Motspur Park; 12:16 Basingstoke to Waterloo between Hook and Winchfield; 12:33 Strood to Paddock Wood near Aylesford; 14:20 Ashford International to Margate near Wye. Trees also fell onto the railway at or near Beaulieu Road, New Eltham and Walmer. The 09:35 Waterloo to Southampton Airport Parkway lost shoegear and became stranded south of Eastleigh. That resulted in the line being blocked until the end of the afternoon. Passengers were evacuated to a diesel train, because conductor rail repairs were needed before another unit could assist the failure. Trains had been terminating at Southampton Airport Parkway because of engineering work, but did so at Eastleigh instead. A signal failure at Rochester Bridge Junction prevented trains running to and from Strood from 12:30 and caused delays to trains via Sole Street. Normal working did not resume until about 21:00. A points failure on the fast lines between Gatwick Airport and Three Bridges caused delays and many cancellations during the afternoon and early evening. Trains could not be diverted to the slow lines, because they were under possession for engineering work.

Monday 26 October: Trains to and from Cannon Street were subject to delays during the morning, because of a signalling failure. There were a few cancellations or trains terminating and starting at London Bridge. London Overground operated a reduced service to West Croydon and Crystal Palace from 10:00 until 15:00, because of a signalling problem at Honor Oak Park.

RAILWAY BUSINESS

Govia Thameslink Railway: The long-running legal claim against Govia Thameslink Railway that it charged unlawfully inflated fares on the Brighton line, with particular reference to Gatwick Express, has come to a halt. An action by David Boyle, as a representative passenger, was brought against GTR in the Competition Appeal Tribunal in 2021. Unfortunately,

Mr Boyle died in 2025 when the case was approaching a hearing. A potential replacement representative was unable to obtain insurance against legal costs should he lose. In the absence of such insurance, the case has been dropped.

Fraudulent Travel: The Financial Conduct Authority has given a senior executive at HSBC bank a lifetime ban from working in the financial industry. This follows him being convicted of fraud by false representation, for repeatedly travelling by train between Orpington and London without a valid ticket. Joseph Molloy, who could easily have afforded to pay the correct fare, not only purchased tickets for less than the full journey, but also claimed the Jobcentre Plus discount for unemployed people. He was given a 10 months prison sentence, suspended for 18 months, and ordered to carry out 80 hours of unpaid work, to undertake ten rehabilitation activity days and to pay costs and compensation totalling £5,337. He was also banned from travelling on Southeastern for a year, though how easily that could be enforced is open to question.

Greater Thameslink Railway has reported a significant reduction in crime on its network since it implemented its Antisocial Behaviour Improvement Plan in 2024. There has been a 32% drop in vandalism and criminal damage. Bicycle thefts are down by 59% and other theft from passengers is down by 35%. GTR employs 110 Travel Safe Officers across the Southern, Gatwick Express, Thameslink and Great Northern networks.

AROUND THE REGION

Walmer: Coldblow level crossing, south of Walmer, has been taken out of use on safety grounds, because of persistent misuse. The gates are user-operated, with lights to indicate it is safe to cross. There have been repeated incidents of people ignoring the red light and other misuse.

Redhill: All lines through Redhill will be closed from 20 December until early on 4 January, to allow new track and points to be laid in the station area.

Godstone: There is a short-notice closure of the line between Redhill and Tonbridge from 28 October until 1 November inclusive, for urgent repairs to an embankment at Godstone.

Berrylands: Although the rebuilt platforms at Berrylands came into use on 28 September, the stairs up to them did not. They have been replaced by temporary scaffolding staircases, pending further work.

Windsor: There are no trains between Staines and Windsor & Eton Riverside from Monday 26 October to Sunday 1 November to allow repairs to bridges and track.

Havant: From Monday 26 to Friday 30 October all lines through Havant are closed to allow 61 new axle-counters to be installed. At the same time there will be track renewals in the Fishbourne area. Buses run from Portsmouth to Petersfield and to Chichester. In addition, the line between Farlington Junction and Cosham Junction was closed on Saturday 24 October. Buses replaced Southern services between Havant and Southampton, but passengers might have preferred to travel by train via Hilsea or Fratton. On Sundays 25 October and 1 November the line is closed between Guildford and Havant and on Saturday 31 October between Haslemere and Havant.

Isle of Wight: The line is closed between Ryde Pier Head and Ryde St Johns Road from 31 October until 29 November and between St Johns Road and Shanklin from 31 October until 15 November. This is principally for track maintenance and renewals and for work to signalling.

CREDITS: Colin Duff, John Goodrich, Stuart Hicks, David Rowlands