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## MAY 2024 NEWSLETTER

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Welcome to the May newsletter.

### 1. June Timetable Change

The June timetable changes commence on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> June. The changes that affect Bedford and Flitwick are:

#### Thameslink

Some minor changes

#### EMR

There are no changes to EMR services that affect Bedford.

### 2. Advance Warning of Engineering Works

There will be a nine day blockade over the Christmas 2024 period to undertake major engineering work in the Kentish Town area. We anticipate that the work will be undertaken between Christmas Eve and New Years Day but we are awaiting full details from Network Rail and once we have these we will let you know.

### 3. Wixams Station

The latest information we have is that good progress is being made. Approval in principle for the design has been agreed. Thameslink, EMR and Network Rail have approved a network change document that allows the new station to be introduced into all Network Rail systems. Detailed design work can now be carried out. We now await timescales for construction work and the opening of the station.

### 4. Industrial Action

Industrial Action continues with the latest strike on May 7<sup>th</sup> and overtime ban from May 6<sup>th</sup> to May 11<sup>th</sup>. However, there is some positive news in that the Rail Delivery Group has sent a letter to ASLEF offering further talks. We hope that this is taken up and lead to a resolution to the dispute.



## 5. Class 360 Refurbishment

EMR have confirmed plans to refurbish the Class 360s that operate between St Pancras and Corby. All 21 units of the class will receive the refurbishment.

The refurbishment will include:

- 2+2 seating in a mixture of bay seats and airline style. The seats will be to the same style as the seats in the new Aurora Intercity trains
- Increased luggage space
- Charging points
- New passenger information system
- Standard Class only

The work will be undertaken at the Kings Heath Depot in Northampton and is expected to commence later this year.

## 6. Performance

The Chairman has over the last few months been monitoring the level of cancellations to evening services which has been far too high. (The evening service was reduced from 4tph to 2tph to meet DfT requirements to cut costs in May 2023)

Cancellations have been either due to:

- staff shortages
- skip stopping between Luton and Bedford

The result of this has led to gaps of one, one and a half or even two hours between services at all stations between Luton and Bedford. The situation at Legrave, Harlington and Flitwick is made much worse as there are no alternative services unlike Bedford which is also served by EMR

services. Along with APTU, discussions have taken place with Thameslink to try and resolve this issue but to date it remains unresolved. A combined letter from BCA and APTU has now been sent to Angie Doll CEO raising this issue and asking for a meeting. A reply has been received and a meeting is to be arranged in June with the Train Service Director and some of her team to discuss the situation and try to improve performance. We will keep you informed of the result of this meeting.



## 7. East West Railway

A lot has happened over the winter, especially on the Oxford side, and we look forward to trains running there during the summer.

### Oxford to Bletchley track completed

The final section of track connecting Oxford and Bletchley was completed on 7 March. The Rail Minister Huw Merriman pushed home the final track clip at Steeple Claydon. Commissioning of the line should be done by July ready for driver training. In addition, the new station at Winslow is progressing well.

### Chiltern planning to start services in May 2025

The DfT has named Chiltern as the operator for EWR and Chiltern are hoping to start in 2025 (between January and May) with a service from Oxford to Milton Keynes. But it will only be a two car service every half hour – BCA predicts the trains will be very crowded!

### Bletchley to Bedford upgrade

The major upgrade planned for Bedford-Bletchley has been cut back for the time being, including the 100 mph line speed reduced to 60. There won't be a direct link to Milton Keynes, trains from

Bedford will run a half-hourly Bedford-Bletchley-Oxford service. The Chiltern trains will stop at two or three stations to Bletchley (not yet decided), and the hourly all stations service – recently restored – will continue.

### New stations at both ends

Good progress is being made on the rebuilding of Oxford station and with the brand new station at Cambridge South. These, with Bedford, form the main nodes on EWR, though trains will

continue from Cambridge South into Cambridge. In Oxford, the project includes upgrading the junctions and bridges on the Bedford side of the city.

### Great Western is keen

GWR is reinstating direct trains from Oxford to Bristol, hinting at the possibility of Milton Keynes or Bedford to Bristol one day. Unfortunately for the time being it is a token service of two trains each way on Saturdays.

### Parliamentary inquiry into Bedford – Cambridge

On 6<sup>th</sup> March, the Transport Committee of the House of Commons grilled the key players involved in the final phase of EWR: the Rail Minister, the Mayor of Bedford, the Chief Executive of EWR, the Accounting Officer for EWR (a DfT person) and others representing business interests. There was a lot of hot air but the upshot was that there will be yet another public consultation about the project this summer. It's likely the consultation will re-open the route issues.

We anticipate that this consultation will commence during June. The BCA will be responding to this consultation.

### 8. Flitwick Access For All

The latest update we have from Network Rail is as follows:

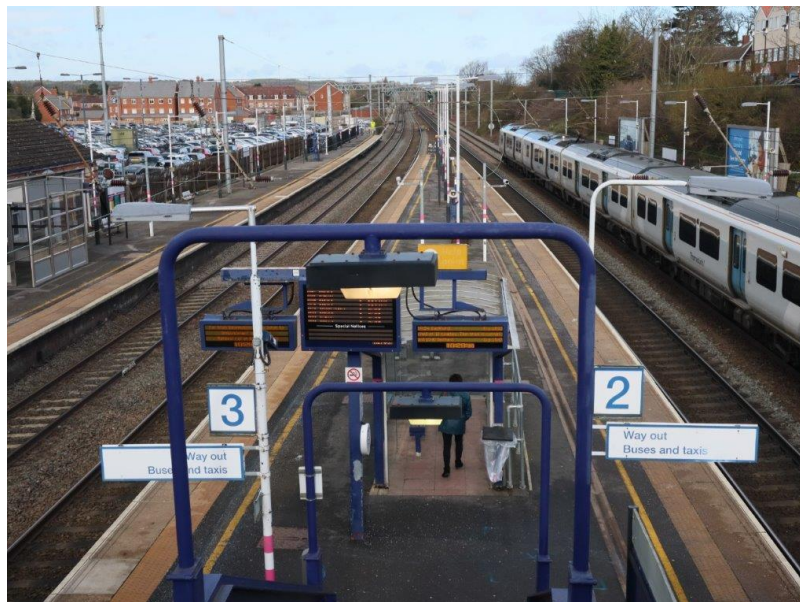
“We are currently reviewing the contractor we will have for delivery.

We have designed the initial structure which we had been hoping to be a new innovation material, but this has still lots of practicalities to solve before it can be used by us.

We wanted to deliver quicker than this new approach offers so we are looking to move to detailed design with a new contractor whom we would be looking to get them in for the coming months, over the summer.

When we have that in place we will have a full programme from the contractor - which I will be happy to share and would give a fuller understanding of the milestones and delivery signed up to by our delivery contractors

We are pushing to get this delivered as soon as we can, and indeed we are currently purchasing the required land around the site required for the project delivery.”



## 9. Weekly Capping Introduced to keyGo

We have received the following from Thameslink:

"I'm writing to let you know that customers using Southern, Thameslink and Great Northern can now benefit from weekly capping when using keyGo.

keyGo is available on GTR's Key Smartcard as a tap in, tap out, pay as you go option. It has already been providing passengers with the best value daily walk-up fares available when travelling between two stations on our keyGo network.

Now, customers can travel as often as they like between the same two stations, Monday to Sunday, knowing that when the weekly season ticket threshold is reached, the cost will be capped.

Any subsequent trips between those two stations will be included in the price and, depending on the journey, this could activate from as few as three days of travel during a week. This change makes planning easier and potentially cheaper for the thousands of people already signed up for keyGo, and for future users.

For those who are unsure about how many days they may need to travel during the week, this new automatic capping means they won't need to work out their tickets in advance or miss out on the weekly season fare savings – a real benefit for those now working more flexibly.

Any journeys that are taken outside of the identified weekly season cap will then be charged at the normal pay as you go rate.

With this keyGo product, any Delay Repay compensation will be calculated at the end of the week and customers who have opted in for automatic delay repay notifications will receive a prompt to claim.

We want as many customers as possible to take advantage of this new development which makes planning weekly journeys and buying the tickets easier, more flexible and potentially cheaper. We'll be advertising this change across our communications via emails to our customers, adverts at stations and on our on-board screens, as well as through local media.

You are welcome to share this among members of your group or community. Customers can find full details, including the terms & conditions, on our websites."

## 10. Local Transport Plan

Central Bedfordshire Council is consulting about the future of transport in Central Bedfordshire. The BCA will be responding highlighting the need for the new Interchange at Flitwick to be served by all bus routes. On East West Rail we will be urging the creation of a Park and Ride at Ridgmont station and full commitment to East West Rail. We would urge members to respond, details can be found on the Central Bedfordshire Council website. The consultation closes on June 30<sup>th</sup>.

For more information, see our website - [www.bedfordcommuters.org.uk](http://www.bedfordcommuters.org.uk)

If there is something you want to tell us about, please email: [admin@bedfordcommuters.org.uk](mailto:admin@bedfordcommuters.org.uk)

This newsletter is published by the Bedford Commuters Association.

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