

Paper A

Meeting: West Midlands Rail Executive Board of Directors

Venue: Room 116, 16 Summer Lane, Birmingham / Microsoft Teams

Subject: Minutes

Date: Thursday 3 April 2025 at 15.45pm

Present:

Richard Parker (Chair)	Mayor of the West Midlands
Councillor Peter Butlin	Warwickshire County Council
Councillor Pervez Akhtar	Coventry City Council
Councillor Qaiser Azeem	City of Wolverhampton Council
Councillor Peter Hughes	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Phil Larratt	West Northamptonshire Council
Councillor Majid Mahmood	Birmingham City Council
Councillor Ian Nellins	Shropshire Council
Councillor Simon Phipps	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Ollie Vickers	Telford and Wrekin
Councillor Philip White	Staffordshire County Council

In Attendance:

Mal Drury-Rose	West Midlands Rail Executive
Councillor Timothy Huxtable	Chair of Transport Delivery Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Ian McConnell	Managing Director West Midlands Trains
Tom Painter	West Midlands Rail Executive
Toby Rackliff	West Midlands Rail Executive
Peter Sargant	West Midlands Rail Executive
Denise Wetton	Managing Director Network Rail Central Route

Apologies:

Councillor Marc Bayliss	Worcestershire County Council
Councillor Ian Courts	Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
Councillor Gary Perry	Walsall Council
Councillor Mike Rouse	Worcestershire County Council
Councillor Chris Robinson	Stoke – on – Trent Council
Councillor Izzi Seccombe	Warwickshire County Council

1. Welcome, Apologies & Introductions

The meeting commenced with Mal Drury-Rose informing attendees that the mayor and Councillor Majid Mahmood would join later. It was confirmed the meeting was quorate Councillor Peter Butlin was nominated as the interim chair.

2. Railways Bill Consultation

Councillor Simon Phipps introduced paper C. He outlined the WMRE response to the consultation on the railways reform bill. He emphasised the importance of WMRE representing the entire network, not just the combined authorities. The consultation response was discussed, with the submission date set for 15 April 2025.

Resolved:

(a) The summary of the Railways Bill consultation be noted.

(b) West Midlands Rail Executive draft response be approved.

3. 2025/26 WMRE Business Plan

Tom Painter introduced paper E, covering the 25/26 WMR Executive business plan. The plan included the completion of new stations and ongoing work with Great British Railways. Councillor Tim Huxtable raised concerns about the ambition for new railway stations, while Peter Hughes emphasized the need for accessibility improvements at existing stations. The board approved the 25/26 business plan, changes to delegated financial authorities, and the principle that approval of the business plan constitutes approval to spend up to the amount stated in the business plan.

Resolved:

The 2025/26 WMRE Business Plan be approved including the amended levels of delegated financial authority.

Actions: Accessibility: Mal Drury-Rose to provide an update on access for all schemes in the region

4. West Midlands Train Update

Ian McConnell and Denise Wetton provided an update on railway issues, focusing on punctuality, reliability, new trains, and industrial relations challenges. He highlighted the improvement in driver availability since the start of the year, with a reduction in cancellations due to better management of driver absence and a new rest day working deal for overtime. He reported that despite these improvements, underlying conditions such as reliance on voluntary working and the need to modernise terms and conditions remained. He shared that pay talks were upcoming, but it was uncertain if they would address these issues.

He acknowledged ongoing issues with the Snow Hill and Hereford lines, including short-forming and pre-cancelling services due to train maintenance problems. And confirmed that collaboration with suppliers was ongoing to speed up the supply chain and validate the continued use of trains with life-expired components, aiming to reduce the time needed to bring trains back into service. He also reported that various communication efforts were made to keep

customers informed, including press releases, station posters, social media updates, web pages, and emails.

Denise Wetton provided an overview of infrastructure performance and maintenance efforts. She reported that the Central Route achieved its target across the board for the year, with a declining trend in service-affected infrastructure failures. She reported to the board that external events such as trespass, vandalism, and fatalities had been significant challenges, and Network Rail focused on mitigating these issues by working with local authorities and the British Transport Police.

In response to questions from Councillor Ollie Vickers and Councillor Qaiser Azeem, Ian McConnell confirmed that a detailed response regarding the reduction in carriages on the Shrewsbury to Birmingham line, leading to overcrowding and the delay in high-quality cycle facilities at Wolverhampton station, and Ian promised to follow up and provide an update.

Councillor Peter Butlin expressed concerns about the proposed closure of the Dorridge to Stratford link, and it was agreed to explore ways to maintain services and reconsider engineering tolerances.

Ian McConnell acknowledged the challenges and committed to providing regular updates and working towards resolving the issues affecting the West Midlands train services.

Resolved: The update was noted.

Actions:

- (a) Ian McConnell to provide a remediation plan for the Snow Hill line issues along with weekly updates to the executive team on the progress of resolving these issues.

- (c) For the Midlands Rail Hub, Denise would send the final version of the development work to Mal for further action and lobbying efforts. Lastly, officers would continue their lobbying efforts for the Midlands Rail Hub, including discussions with the transport minister.

Meeting Close

The next meeting would be held 12 June 2025.

[The meeting ended at 5.00pm]