



Oct 09, 2018 12:27 BST

## Leaves off the line: leaf-busting locos and autumn timetable to keep Cross City line passengers moving

A fleet of four specialist trains and a new and improved timetable will help keep customers moving on the Cross City line this autumn.

Network Rail and West Midlands Railway have drawn up a revised autumn timetable designed to keep passengers travelling without disruption in and out of Birmingham New Street during morning and evening rush-hours.

Meanwhile four specialist trains, known as leaf-busters, are blasting leaves off the line using high-pressured water jets as part of the annual effort to tackle the widely-mocked problem of leaves on the line.

The leaf-busters' jets are so powerful that if they sprayed one spot on the track continuously, the water would cut straight through the steel rail.

On the Cross City line alone, nearly a million litres of water will be used to remove leaves from the tracks. The leaf-buster trains will cover more than 6,000 miles en route between Lichfield, Redditch and Bromsgrove, via Birmingham New Street, during the 10-week treatment period.

The reality of leaves on the line is no joke: they get flattened onto the rails by trains creating a Teflon-like, slippery coating which limits trains' ability to accelerate or brake - rather like cars driving on black ice. The outcome is a disrupted timetable as trains, which can weigh several hundred tonnes, need more time to start and stop and must travel more slowly through affected areas.

That's why Network Rail and West Midlands Railway have developed an ever-improving autumnal plan to help keep passengers moving.

Martin Colmey, current operations manager for Network Rail's London North Western route, said: "Leaves on the line is no joke. If we didn't work to remove them, their impact on train passengers wouldn't be funny either.

"They have the same impact on the railway as black ice does on roads, making it impossible to drive a train normally.

"Our leaf-buster trains and the revised timetable for the Cross City line will help keep customers safely and swiftly on the move."

Richard Brooks, customer experience director at West Midlands Railway, said: "Autumn time poses a number of significant operational challenges for rail operators around the country and causes us particular issues on the Cross City Line, which is often subject to delays caused by slippery rails.

"Network Rail's leaf-busting trains are going to be extremely helpful in ensuring services run on time during this period and our passengers keep

moving. This, combined with the introduction of our new leaf fall timetable, will further help punctuality, which has improved by over fifty percent during the autumn."

Cllr Roger Lawrence, chair of the West Midlands Rail Executive, said: "In the past we have had to reduce or slow services during the autumn leaf fall period, but thanks to our joint working with Network Rail and West Midlands Railway we will have these four leaf-busting trains keeping the rails as clear as possible during this 10-week period.

"It means that while there will be some changes to services, our peak time commuters on the Cross City line will be able to take their regular journeys into Birmingham New Street during the morning and out during the evening without disruption.

"This shows how by bringing the region's rail franchise under local control we have been able to improve services for passengers."

The autumn timetable will operate from Monday 15 October until Friday 7 December 2018, affecting services from Lichfield, through Birmingham New Street, to Redditch and Bromsgrove.

Some trains will have an amended stopping pattern on weekdays. A normal timetable will operate from 8pm in the evenings and at weekends. For all the information, visit [www.westmidlandsrailway.co.uk](http://www.westmidlandsrailway.co.uk).

The treatment trains can also apply a special gel which increases trains' grip on the tracks in key areas. Sand is also carried on many passenger trains and released in front of the wheels to help boost grip on the rails.

Across the West Midlands and up and down the West Coast and Chiltern main lines, the four trains will cover a total of 25,000 thousand miles this autumn and use more than 10 million litres of water.

For all travel information visit [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk).

## **Contact information**

Passengers / community members  
Network Rail national helpline

03457 11 41 41

Latest travel advice

Please [visit National Rail Enquiries](#)

Journalists

Network Rail press office -London North Western route

0330 854 0100

[LNWmediarelations@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:LNWmediarelations@networkrail.co.uk)

---

## About West Midlands Trains

For further information on this release, call our press office on 03300 955150 or email [press.office@wmtrains.co.uk](mailto:press.office@wmtrains.co.uk)

West Midlands Trains operates both West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway services.

- **London Northwestern Railway** services operate between Liverpool and Birmingham, and on the West Coast mainline to and from London Euston.
- **West Midlands Railway** services operate to destinations across the West Midlands via Birmingham New Street.

For more information on these services visit [westmidlandsrailway.co.uk](http://westmidlandsrailway.co.uk) or [londonnorthwesternrailway.co.uk](http://londonnorthwesternrailway.co.uk)

The West Midlands Trains franchise started on 10 December 2017 and will run until 2025/26.

West Midlands Trains operates 1,300 services a day, manages 150 stations and provides over 70 million passenger journeys a year. Over the course of the franchise, West Midlands Trains will be investing £1 billion into the rail network to deliver new trains, improved routes and station upgrades. This will include 400 new train carriages across the network and space for an extra 85,000 passengers into Birmingham and London at peak times.

The franchise is a joint venture between Abellio (70.1% share) and East Japan Railway Company / Mitsui & Co., Ltd (29.9% share in a 50:50 split). Abellio is the international passenger transport subsidiary of the Dutch national railway company, Nederlandse Spoorwegen. In the UK, Abellio operates ScotRail and Greater Anglia train services, Merseyrail services in a joint venture with Serco and buses through Abellio London. For more information visit [www.abellio.com](http://www.abellio.com)

If you have been sent this press release, this is because we believe this to be of interest to you.

To sign up for all future releases, visit our newsroom and subscribe to our updates. You can unsubscribe to our releases at any time.

## Contacts



### **Press Office - Media Use Only**

Press Contact

[press.office@wmtrains.co.uk](mailto:press.office@wmtrains.co.uk)

0330 095 5626