

West Midlands Trains Staff Q&A Document

This document has been produced for you by the West Midlands Trains mobilisation team.

Hopefully this Question & Answer (Q&A) summary will answer some of the questions you have about the transition to the new franchise, and about our plans for the new franchise.

The communications team at your current employer, London Midland, is also handling questions that you and colleagues raise regarding some of the current practices within the business (for example the Share Incentive Plan). You can ask and find the answers to these questions within your own internal communication channels, as usual.

If the answer to your question doesn't appear here, please drop us an email to: questions@wmtrains.co.uk. We'll endeavour to reply to it as soon as possible and will add the most frequently asked ones to this document. If your question is one that you would not like shared in this forum please let us know when asking.

This document will be updated on a weekly basis and the latest questions to be included will be highlighted in **Green**.

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Question and Answer summary about the new franchise

1. Mobilisation

Mobilisation is the period between us being awarded the franchise and starting to operate it on 10th December 2017. During this time we have a team that is sorting out all the details to enable a smooth and successful transfer of operations from London Midland to West Midlands Trains.

Question	Answer
We've heard that between now and December you are 'mobilising' but what does this involve?	The type of activities this includes are: getting our Safety Certificate and Licence from the Office of Rail Regulation for running London Midland; arranging leases for the rolling stock we need; reviewing and setting up hundreds of contracts with suppliers used by London Midland; making sure the IT platforms and information are transferred for Day 1, this covers most things in the business from operation systems (eg Trust) to ticketing and accounting - and also the rostering and payroll systems so you get paid after 10 th December; and many more. Please feel free to chat to members of the mobilisation team if you see us around.
How long is the new franchise for?	The West Midlands Franchise will run until 2026, with an extension of up to two years at the Secretary of State for Transport's discretion.
What are Abellio's immediate focus?	Our immediate priority will be to work with the DfT to ensure that the mobilisation of the new Franchise goes as smoothly as possible.
Can you tell me more about Mitsui?	Mitsui is one of the most diversified and comprehensive trading, investment and service enterprises in the world with 139 offices in 66 countries as of March, 2017. Utilising their global operating locations, network and information resources, they are multilaterally pursuing business that ranges from product sales, worldwide logistics and financing, through to the development of major international infrastructure and other projects in the following fields: Iron & Steel Products, Mineral & Metal Resources, Infrastructure Projects, Integrated Transportation Systems, Chemicals, Energy, Food Resources, Food Products & Services, Consumer Services, IT & Communication, and Corporate Development Business. Mitsui is actively taking on challenges for global business innovation around the world. For more information, visit www.mitsui.com
I would like to know about JR East?	East Japan Railway Company (JR East) was established in 1987, when Japanese National Railways was divided as part of a package of railway reforms. JR East's railway business covers a 7,500 km (approx. 4,660 miles) network in the eastern part of the Japanese main island, including Tokyo Metropolitan area, and provides transportation services, comprising urban, suburban and high speed operations, for 17 million passengers on a daily basis. JR East also undertakes non-transport commercial activities, which account for more than 30% of the total revenue of JR East Group. JR East contributes to passengers and communities it serves by delivering high degrees of punctuality, reliability and comfort and also continues to pursue higher levels of safety and service quality through technical innovation. For more information, visit www.jreast.co.jp/e
Is the West Midlands Trains brand going to cover the entire franchise?	West Midlands Trains name is the operating business name of the franchise. We are introducing two new brands which will be visible to our customers. For services between London Euston and Liverpool Lime Street the brand will be called "London Northwestern Railway", and for all other services the brand will be called "West Midlands Railway". So two separate brands both operating under the one company.
With it not being possible to access Facebook on our station PC's will you	Within the Abellio Group we currently have Facebook groups for staff in each of the rail companies. These Facebook groups are seen as a really valuable way to engage with the workforce and opens up easy two way communication

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be creating a second group source - perhaps Google Groups?	channel between the business, teams and staff. At this late stage we are unable to develop and manage another social media communication tool such as Google Groups, however I'm confident that a large proportion of staff will have the option to engage with the Facebook group via their mobile phones. Indeed, we already have many drivers, conductors and CSAs who have joined the group.
If London Midland are sending documents to colleagues that will still need to be used once the LM franchise comes to an end (e.g. unit diagrams) do we use the London Midland logo or the WMT logo?	Please continue to use the London Midland logo for now and then re-issue once the franchise starts. We are not allowed to communicate as West Midlands Trains, West Midlands Railway or London NorthWestern Railway until 10th December.

2. Employment in the new franchise

If you currently work for London Midland and are transferring into the new West Midlands Trains franchise then your rights are protected under legislation, known as 'TUPE'. For more details about what this means, please read through the Q&A in this section:

a) Transfer

Question	Answer
What is TUPE?	TUPE is the abbreviation for the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006. TUPE protects employees' terms and conditions when a business or undertaking, or part of one, is transferred to a new employer.
Will my employment transfer under the TUPE Regulations?	Employees who are in-scope and assigned at the point of transfer (i.e. working in identified roles to deliver the current services) will TUPE transfer to the new franchise on 10 th December 2017, with all their existing terms and conditions.
Is the transfer permanent?	Yes, you will receive formal notification of the intention for you to transfer and then confirmation that the transfer has been completed.
Will my length of service be fully transferred?	Yes. Continuity of employment is protected, which means that employees who transfer to West Midlands Trains will take their existing length of service with them as if they had always worked for us.
If I am selected for TUPE, will I receive a job offer or new contract from West Midlands Trains?	No, you will not receive a job offer or new contract as under TUPE your employment transfers automatically. Your current contract of employment will continue to apply, but you will get a letter confirming a change of employer to West Midlands Trains.
How does the TUPE process affect people off sick?	Anyone off sick does not affect the transfer, employees will still TUPE across on the same terms. Sickness and absence records will also transfer across as part of the continuity of employment.
If I have concerns regarding the transfer, who should I talk to?	Please talk to your line manager or speak to the current HR team, who will be able to advise. Also, your staff representatives will be involved in the TUPE consultation. They will collate questions and pass any information back to you.

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Question	Answer
What happens if I am on holiday or off sick during the consultation process?	Line managers and the existing HR team should make arrangements to ensure those on leave are kept up to date with any communications. This applies to people on maternity leave, career breaks, and long-term sick leave or deployed in the Reserve Forces.
What are the implications for me if I am on a fixed-term contract that is coming to an end on 9 December?	We are currently reviewing the details of fixed term employees and consultants received from London Midland. Each contract will be considered on an individual basis in relation to the future business requirements to ensure we have consider all the factors as to the way forward. We appreciate this is a difficult time for individuals and would encourage anybody concerned to speak with their line manager. The West Midlands trains' management team are working closely with the current London Midland management team and expect to be in a position to communicate to people who have fixed term contracts or consultants in early November as to the proposed way forward.

b) Terms and conditions

Question	Answer
Will my job change?	New franchises do mean change. At the same time, our plans build on solid foundations and they avoid change for change's sake. For a lot you and your colleagues, not a great deal will change. We'll make an effort to involve you by letting you know how things are developing and getting your ideas. However for some of you, the changes will affect you and we'll ensure that your views and ideas are taken into account before any plans and drawn up. Where changes are proposed to people's jobs we will consult appropriately.
Will any of my Terms and Conditions change?	You will transfer on your existing contractual terms and conditions. The TUPE Regulations is the employee protection legislation that applies in the UK. It has the effect that anyone whose principal work moves to another employer, transfers to that company with contractual terms and conditions that are directly comparable to the ones they already enjoy. Any changes to terms and conditions remain the subject of consultation or negotiation.
Will I need to submit my CV or go for an interview?	All employees in-scope will automatically transfer. We will not require CVs and applications for that process.
On transferring will I get a new contract?	No, your current contract of employment will continue to apply, but you will get a letter confirming a change of employer to West Midlands Trains.
Will my hours of work alter?	There should be no change to your contractual hours of work. If there is a requirement to change working arrangements at any time, this will be done following the established consultation processes in the normal way.
How will people returning from maternity leave after the transfer date be affected?	People in 'assigned' posts who are on maternity leave from London Midland on transfer day will transfer under TUPE. They will continue to be employed by West Midlands Trains on their transferred terms and return to work as agreed with London Midland, once their maternity leave has ended.

c) Pension

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Question	Answer
What does the change in franchise operator mean for our pensions?	The only thing that will change will be the name of the pension fund Section – to the West Midlands Trains Section. If you are currently a member of the Railway Pension Scheme (RPS), London Midland Section, you will continue to be a member of the RPS and your accrued benefits transferred to the re-named Section. The existing pension contribution rate and benefits remain unchanged. If you are part of the Salary Sacrifice arrangements (sometimes called Smart Pensions), this arrangement will also transfer.
Is it possible to transfer in non-railway pensions into the WMT pension scheme?	The new West Midlands Trains Pension scheme will not permit any external transfers into the section. However your current London Midland pension will transfer across to the West Midlands Trains section from 10th December.

d) Entitlements

Question	Answer
What is happening to our London Midland free travel cards?	We have been made aware that your current London Midland passes are due to expire on 30th November 2017 and interim arrangements have already been put in place for you to keep using your existing pass up to the franchise launch date on 11th December. We are currently working with providers to have your new West Midlands Trains staff travel pass with you asap.
What annual leave will I be entitled to?	As your contract of employment is unchanged, your annual leave entitlement is unaffected. Any days you have already taken for the year up to the transfer date will of course be deducted from your normal annual entitlement.
Will accumulated lieu leave be carried over to West Midlands Trains?	Yes - they will transfer with you and can be taken in accordance with the current arrangements for taking such leave.
What happens to my sick pay entitlement?	Under the terms of the transfer, your existing sick pay arrangements continue, any already taken will be taken into account for future sickness as now.
Will there be training & development opportunities available to me?	We really value our People and as such will be investing £18m in people development over the length of the franchise. This includes over 900 new apprenticeships and £13m on developing existing staff.
What employee benefits will West Midlands Trains offer?	We will be working closely with London Midland to review your current employee benefits packages including staff travel arrangements. We will look to provide where possible similar arrangements, in relation to staff travel. Further details and discussions will take place as part of the mobilisation consultation process. We are arranging a number of roadshow events, where you will be invited to come along and hear about our exciting new plans, as well as have an opportunity to ask questions.
Does Abellio run a share incentive scheme?	No unfortunately, Abellio is actually privately owned by the national Dutch railways, so no share incentive schemes will operate on West Midlands Trains which is consistent with our other companies.
Will West Midlands Trains be retaining E-Pay?	Our payroll team are currently looking to provide an electronic payslip viewing mechanism for employees. The decision as to whether or not to retain the E-pay system currently in place is still being explored. As soon as we have an agreed mechanism in place we will communicate this out to all employees.

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e) HR Policy

Question	Answer
Do Abellio have an equal pay policy?	As part of the work we are currently undertaking to be compliant with the Gender Pay Gap legislation, we are reviewing our existing arrangements and look to take the appropriate approach at the right time.
Are you going to publish your gender pay gap?	Yes, we are currently working to comply with the government's legislation on reporting gender pay gap data by 2018.
What will the ratio for Senior Conductor: "off-the-street" be for the new Driver recruits?	There is no set ratio for this and we will both internally and externally advertise the new Driver posts. Existing Conductors will be encouraged to apply as clearly their experience could be complementary to the role of a Driver however there is no preferential treatment in this regard.
There are a number of Senior Conductors in the pipeline waiting for testing/interviews so how long before these are moved forward?	There has been a temporary halt in recruitment during franchise change-over, following the 10th of a December we will review the business need and communicate the way forward.
Will we still have a budget for this year's Xmas party?	Yes of course, we will honour a budget of £25 per person for the Xmas parties.

3. Our plans for the new franchise

a) Engineering / Rolling stock / Operational plans

Question	Answer
Do you have any plans to introduce DCO?	Our detailed plans will be shared in due course as part of the normal consultation process. Until we have met with our union colleagues and LM staff to discuss, we are unable to comment.
What is DCO?	DCO stands for 'Driver Controlled Operation' and rather than trying to this in more detail, it may be easier for all staff to simply refer employees in the direction of the ORR's website, who offer a full explanation. Please visit the following website http://orr.gov.uk/rail/health-and-safety/health-and-safety-strategy/driver-controlled-operation-dco
What innovation are you going to bring from Japan?	We are working with two Japanese companies who are world leaders in innovation in the railways, and also the franchise is based in Birmingham which has long been at the heart of rail research. We are investing £2m in innovation over the lifetime of the franchise including the creation of a Community Rail Hub in partnership with Staffordshire University, as well as partnering with Birmingham Centre for Rail Research who are acknowledged

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	as the industry leader in rail engineering and research across the world. Areas of investment for Japanese involvement will focus on continuous improvement for working practices and providing performance robustness including the areas of Train presentation and operations
Is it true that a brand new depot is to be built Between Bletchley and Birmingham for the new 45X5 car Aventura emu trains?	There will be a new depot located in Birmingham and in addition we will also be investing in depot upgrades at Worcester, Soho, Tyseley and Bletchley.
Are the ex-District line tube trains a serious proposition For the Bletchley to Bedford branch line? Or just an idea?	We are considering the possibility of using these for this line as they are very suitable for the 55mph line speed and the increase in capacity the two-car trains will bring, however this is not yet confirmed.
Is Northampton going to reopen as a full Drivers Depot and not a satellite depot of Bletchley?	There are no plans to change any of the Drivers Depot locations.
Are there any plans to open up new routes i.e. Walsall to Wolverhampton not via Birmingham?	Yes we are planning to run services over this line with two new stations at Darlaston and Willenhall. Operating these will be subject to receiving confirmation from NR and the DfT that it is feasible to do so.
Are there plans for any new stations?	Yes, subject to feasibility, we would like to open new stations at Moseley, Kings Heath, Hazelwell, Brierley Hill and West Midlands Safari Park as well as the two at Darlaston and Willenhall.
What plans have you got to introduce more routes say north of Crewe?	we are always looking for ways to enhance West Midlands Trains train services and we are working closely with the DfT, West Midlands Rail and Network Rail to explore any possibilities
Are you going to run trains on Sunday Christmas eve and Sunday new year's eve?	Sunday 24th December is a normal Sunday service albeit with some late evening services not running so please check your travel times carefully. Furthermore buses will replace trains all day between Birmingham New St-Tame Bridge Parkway -Walsall and Rugeley whilst our industry colleagues undertake renewal of the signalling equipment in the Perry Barr area. Sunday 31st December is a normal Sunday service on most routes albeit with some late evening services not running so please check your travel times carefully. Improvement works are taking place between Wolverhampton and Birmingham New St and Coseley, Tipton, Dudley Port, Sandwell and Dudley, Smethwick Galton Bridge (low level) and Smethwick Rolfe St stations will be replaced by buses. Services between Birmingham and Crewe / Liverpool will incur a slightly longer journey times between Wolverhampton and Birmingham New St so please check your train times when travelling on these services.
Are there any plans to strengthen services on the Euston route off peak, particularly at weekends? A lot of services are overcrowded	We are conscious that these trains are very busy and we are currently considering the extent to which we can strengthen these services.

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<p>4-car trains at present, not giving passengers the best journey experience.</p>	
<p>Under the new franchise Wolverhampton station will come under our control. A lot of ticketless travel emanates through this station. When the alterations finish there will be ticket barriers installed. Please can West Midlands Trains make sure they will be fully manned and operational so that anti-social behaviour is kept to a minimum.</p>	<p>We realise that Wolverhampton presently doesn't have a gate line but we do have a plan to rectify this along with including Wolverhampton within our first to last staffing committed obligation. We are in discussions with Cubic about the gateline project currently.</p>
<p>Will the control team be split up at any time during the franchise as we currently work as one control with many staff cross covering each other's desks, i.e. West Midlands & London Northwestern?</p>	<p>Yes our plan is to co-locate our controls with the appropriate Network Rail controls in Rugby & Birmingham. Further details of this will be provided in due course.</p>
<p>Is there anything written in the franchise that requires the Control to be relocated and based south of Birmingham, i.e. Rugby?</p>	<p>Yes our plan is to co-locate our controls with the appropriate Network Rail controls in Rugby & Birmingham. Further details of this will be provided in due course.</p>
<p>Are there any plans for additional control center staff?</p>	<p>We are anticipating an increase in numbers of controllers.</p>
<p>Any plans for some positions in the control center to incorporate a night shift?</p>	<p>This is a possibility which we may look to explore in the future.</p>
<p>Are there plans to take reserved seats off trainline as not possible to reserve?</p>	<p>We will speak to Trainline and look to rectify this problem moving forward.</p>
<p>Do Abellio intend to run trains on boxing day and if so what type of service will they run?</p>	<p>We have agreed with the DfT that we will consider running trains on Boxing day subject to agreement with Network Rail.</p>
<p>Are there plans for drivers and conductors to have the same route knowledge as senior conductors?</p>	<p>We are not aware of any differentials at this stage, however once we take over the franchise we can explore this matter further.</p>

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Concerns over late Liverpool trains - will there be additional security staff - BTP presence?	We are committed to ensuring that all our services are secure and if there are problems with certain routes we will look to provide additional measures if required.
Can committed Sundays be swapped when A/L is allocated as it prevents people taking 1/2 weeks leave. We would prefer to get paid when A/L is booked.	We will explore this issue further once we take over the franchise.
Will there be catering for 1st class passengers?	There are no plans to introduce this currently.
Are there plans to retain DTCM's at Crewe?	As a result of the TUPE transfer these are no plans to make changes to this role.
Are there any plans to reopen Barlaston / Wedgewood, lots of new houses opened plus a new museum. There is time to stop there as we stand 7 mins on up and 3 mins on down at Stoke?	We have supplied proposals to the DfT regarding the work required to re-open one of these stations and we consider there is time to stop.
Any plans to take all depots diagrams and relook at them. Full re-issue to depots currently creates extra-long diagrams (not economical)	We will consider if the diagrams can be produced more efficiently once we take over.
Will we be recruiting drivers internally from Crewe?	We will need to recruit Drivers throughout the franchise area.
Why can't we run the Crewe - Euston to Preston or Warrington? This would be sensible rather than replacement buses.	Unfortunately currently we are not allowed to run our services north of weaver Junction.
Any plans to open Polesworth upside, currently only 2 trains per day and 1 platform a day, will we open up both sides or shut it?	There are no plans to change the level of services at Polesworth

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b) Working Environment, Uniforms and equipment for staff

Question	Answer
Will we be supplied new uniform?	All front line employees will be supplied with updated accessories reflecting the new branding as soon as possible from the start of the new franchise. We'll then run a consultation for you to give your views on what you like your uniform to be. There will be two types of uniform, one for each new brands.
Will the head office stay at 102 New Street?	Our plans include to have our corporate HQ close to Birmingham New Street. We look forward to sharing more information with you at our roadshows, dates to be confirmed shortly.
Will we still have access to Lifestyle hub - for things such as discounted cinema tickets, and various other things?	This is currently accessed via the intranet at LM and any current access to external sites would be moved over.
Will Yammer continue?	Yammer is part of the standard IT structure and is planned to be part of the desktop build, however, in regards to retaining Yammer for the future, this is a decision of the new top tier and management structure if it is to be the preferred communications tool.
What will happen with our email addresses - presumably we'll get new ones?	Your email address will switch over from @londonmidland.com to @wmtrains.co.uk at midnight on the 10th December. We transfer over at 0159 on the Sunday night and all staff will see old info and have directions from old to new.
Will we continue with our Windows phones - or get something better?	Windows phones will be migrated over but will be replaced over time to Samsung S8 type devices. Those staff who do not have a smart device will get an appropriate Samsung device – whether that be a phone, smart device, tablet or laptop. The current LM Windows phones are not compatible with a number of WN trains and Abellio Apps, hence the transfer. The device had been shown at some roadshows.

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