The Train at Platform 1

The Friends of Honiton Station Newsletter 74 - May 2026

Welcome to the May newsletter. This month, we report on an exciting new initiative to promote sustainable tourism across our region, including the Jurassic Coast of Devon and Dorset. We also report on important plans to focus on better safety for women and girls on the rail network. There is a special report on how the engineering work at Seaton Junction affected passengers over Easter, and some ideas how the alternative arrangements could be managed better in the future. And finally, it would not be the newsletter without our regular Engineering Report for May and June.

GWR Class 175 about to operate an Exeter St Davids to Penzance service on April 10th.

New Website To Promote Local UNESCO Heritage Sites

A new campaign and digital platform, called "*Explore UNESCO South West Trails*", has been launched, offering visitors an inspiring and sustainable way to discover the rich cultural and natural heritage of South West England.

Launched in partnership with Great Western Railway, the new online platform (no pun intended) offers a curated collection of two-day trails inspiring opportunities to discover eight UNESCO-designated sites across the region, including the Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site. This designation recognises sites of outstanding cultural or natural importance to humanity.

From dramatic coastlines and historic cities to globally significant landscapes, the platform invites users to explore the South West through immersive journeys that celebrate heritage, creativity, and sustainability. The online platform encourages sustainable tourism aligned with UNESCO values of conservation, education, and community engagement.

Explore UNESCO South West Trails provide a unified gateway for discovering World Heritage Sites, a Biosphere Reserve, Global Geopark, cities of culture and other internationally recognised locations that highlight the area's global importance. The Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site can be reached by bus from local railway stations.

To mark the launch, promotional posters will be displayed at key GWR stations, encouraging passengers to start their journey by rail.

The campaign highlights how rail travel can unlock easy access to multiple trail starting points, supporting low-carbon travel while celebrating the rich diversity of heritage across the South West.

Through interactive content, route ideas, and practical information, users can plan journeys that not only enrich their own experience but also support local communities and reduce their environmental footprint.

As part of the launch, visitors are also invited to take part in a competition designed to encourage engagement with the trails.

By following a QR code link, visitors will have the chance to win a choice of trail-based activities with first place including rail travel, showcasing the very best of the region's UNESCO destinations.

Key features of the trails include:

- Clear and easy to follow routes around eight UNESCO sites in the South West
- Inspirational itineraries to showcase the best of each site over 48 hours
- Information on sustainable travel options and local experiences

The launch comes at a time when travellers are increasingly seeking meaningful, place-based experiences. By connecting heritage, nature, and culture through themed trails, “Explore UNESCO South West Trails” aims to position the region as a leading destination for sustainable and experiential tourism.

GWR Regional Partnerships Manager, Ruth Powell, said:

“We’re proud to support this initiative, helping customers connect with some of the South West’s most internationally-celebrated landscapes and cultural sites by train. Rail is one of the most sustainable ways to travel, and this campaign showcases just how accessible these world-class destinations can be.”

Nushin Hussain, Project Implementation Manager, Local to Global Programme, said:

“We’re absolutely delighted to support the launch of the Explore UNESCO South West Trails initiative through the UK National Commission’s Local to Global programme, made possible thanks to the support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

“This project is a fantastic example of how partnership working can bring together some of the region’s most significant heritage sites, alongside partners such as Great Western Railway, to make them more accessible and inspiring for both local communities and visitors.

“By connecting these unique UNESCO locations through engaging trails, we’re not only celebrating the South West’s rich cultural and natural heritage, but also encouraging more sustainable exploration of the area. We’re proud to be part of a campaign that will help more people discover and appreciate these exceptional places.”

Partners in the initiative include:

- North Devon UNESCO Biosphere Reserve
- Cornwall and West Devon Mining Landscape World Heritage Site
- Visit England
- City of Bath and Great Spa Towns of Europe UNESCO World Heritage Site
- Bristol City of Film
- Great Western Railway
- Exeter UNESCO City of Literature
- English Riviera UNESCO Global Geopark
- Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites World Heritage Site
- Dorset and East Devon Coast: The Jurassic Coast World Heritage Site

Partners in the campaign received funding support from the National Lottery through UNESCO’s UK National Commission ‘Local to Global 2.0’ which has made the initiative possible.

Four Days at Honiton: Notes on the Replacement Service - Easter 2026

The line between Honiton and Yeovil Junction was closed for planned engineering work for four days during the Easter Weekend, between Friday 3rd and Monday April 6th.

The replacement service consisted of hourly buses between Honiton and Yeovil, a two-hourly train between Honiton and Exeter during the main part of the day, calling at all stations, and an additional bus between Honiton and Exeter in the hours when there was no train. In the evening, the whole route was covered by buses. All trains were all-station services, providing a daytime 2-hourly service to Feniton and Whimple.

A series of observations were undertaken, covering parts of all four days. The periods of observation ranged from 1 to 3 hours each. A particular watch was kept on how the shuttle train operated, and how successful this hybrid plan of buses and trains functioned, especially as it had to contend with holiday traffic on the roads, including local roadworks that, unlike most of the major roadworks on the network, could not be lifted during the holiday weekend.

The shuttle was somewhat of an innovation, and there was legitimate local concern that if it did not prove to be workable, SWR could easily revert to a bus-only pattern, which does not meet the needs of passengers from Honiton anything like as well, but is arguably easier to organise.

Initial signs, especially from Saturday and Monday, were that the shuttle trains were popular with local passengers, and also carried a number of passengers from further afield heading to town for sporting fixtures etc. who arrived on the connecting bus.

It was hard to understand why a full-time bus coordinator was allocated to Axminster, for 12 hours a day, while Honiton used a part-time person at the very beginning and end of Friday, leaving the SWR station staff, given extended hours to 9 p.m. (4 p.m. on Sunday), to cope with the extra workload. For instance, when up to 5 coaches arrived and left within a couple of minutes, and passengers needed directing to the appropriate fast or slow bus, this felt unfair on staff.

During the hours when there was no train, 4-5 coaches were timetabled to arrive together, as the up and down service was scheduled to pass at Honiton Station. This caused considerable overcrowding at times in the car park.

On Friday, buses of varying sizes were allocated, including a midibus and a short single deck bus, the latter of which ran so full that there was an alarming amount of luggage in the gangway and was completely full on leaving Honiton.

It was notable that on Saturday all services were being operated by much more suitable large coaches (although hopefully this did not cause any problems in the evening when the buses were required to serve Feniton and Whimple).

One of the main issues on Friday was the use of taxis to deliver train crew from Yeovil. They were caught in the severe traffic. The 1414 train service was delayed slightly at Honiton to await the arrival of a guard being sent to Honiton to travel on to Exeter to operate a later service.

The driver for that later service was due to be taxied to Exeter direct instead, and because (s)he was not due to arrive in time, the 1525 service from Exeter was cancelled by SWR at 1445, leaving a huge gap in service with, it would appear, no buses immediately available to replace it.

A bus from Yeovil Junction arrived with 4 minutes to spare, to connect with that 1414 train, as once again the connecting time allowances over this weekend were quite tight in many instances, and was sorely tested by the traffic conditions. This issue has repeatedly been reported by SWR station staff, yet the time allocations never seem to change.

However, at 1427 another bus arrived from Yeovil with passengers for onward travel. Because the station staff did not have any way of knowing what buses were out there, the train had long gone, and passengers were told they would have to wait for a later bus to Exeter at 1501. One passenger had a plane to catch at Exeter; the station staff offered to arrange a taxi if needed.

This raises the point that apparently bus coordinators have a WhatsApp group to share information about the whereabouts and timing of buses in transit. SWR staff do not seem to be allowed to use this group. Therefore, they were flying blind much of the time, not knowing how many buses to expect, when they were delayed and by how much. This made a difficult job much worse.

During my observations I was sometimes able to learn the estimated time of arrival of buses by talking with people waiting for friends or family members to arrive, who received texts from those on board the buses. It felt awkward that I should sometimes be better informed than the station staff in this way.

Saturday's timetable worked rather better. There was no evidence of staff delayed by taxis, and buses were sometimes terminated at Honiton and parked up for an hour or two, meaning that they were ready and in position when the train arrived from Exeter to move off promptly to Yeovil. This was especially important as traffic delays were anticipated again due to ongoing holiday traffic jams; one driver described local main roads as "a car park."

Buses had been hired from a wide area. Most drivers were doing their jobs with calm efficiency as always. It is worth mentioning, however, that one driver from Martock in Somerset had very little local knowledge, explaining her late arrival at Honiton, far behind the other bus who was running the stopping service to Exeter.

It transpired that she did not know the route. She was doing a Yeovil to Honiton and then Central and St Davids only run. But as the first passenger got on, she asked him: "Do you know where the two stations in Exeter are?" Thankfully, he did.

Throughout the line closure, station staff, as always, did an excellent job getting people to their destinations, providing support, information and advice. But the lack of a specialist bus co-ordinator at key times in the middle of the day was noticed and felt. At these times, it is so important that station staff feel supported and appreciated by SWR.

As an observer, I felt they were being asked to do too many different jobs at the same time, with limited tools and limited information.

The train service was a great success, especially on Saturday. Unlike other weekends when buses have carried the whole burden, large numbers of passengers travelled to Exeter on the 1014, 1214 and 1414 trains, for leisure, pleasure and to attend sporting fixtures etc. This pattern was then repeated on Monday, with a home game for Exeter City on the Bank Holiday.

Of course, these successes would be for nothing if there were any problems with the later returning trains to get these large number back to Honiton again, as it would be doubtful how easy even the two buses available in each departure from Exeter would cope if a train was cancelled as it had been on Friday.

On Sunday, the train observed (the 1614) carried fewer passengers than on other days. However, it still ran with the full 6 carriages that had operated out of Exeter for the weekend. SWR crew indicated that the service had run with a more sensible 3 carriages earlier in the day, while the other three carriages were being refuelled in Exeter.

With traffic running more smoothly on the Sunday, buses ran on time from Yeovil. The train operated on time, and passengers to Yeovil left on time. However, the crew member who had reached Honiton on the 1557 arrival from Exeter had to wait until 1615 for a taxi to take him back to Yeovil.

On Monday, the focus of the final observation was a head count of the 1214 departure from Honiton, as well as to check the extent to which Bank Holiday traffic continued to be an issue affecting bus connectivity. The latter seems to have been the case as, after the observation ended, the 1414 service did not leave Honiton until 1426.

The 1100 buses to Yeovil arrived on time, although no passengers from Honiton got on. There were few passengers on board.

The 1100 bus departures to Exeter saw 12 people board the stopping service when it arrived at 1111, but only because the fast service did not arrive until 1126, 25 minutes late. Two coaches operated the service, with only 1 passenger alighting from either, and one boarding. One coach was more or less empty and the other only had a handful of passengers. For some reason, both coaches parked in the road outside the station.

Moving on to the next hour's departures, the 1202 bus to Yeovil left on time, and almost full, having picked up at least 20 passengers travelling from Honiton and a similar number from the incoming train.

The focus of the head count, the 1214 shuttle train, left on time with 94 passengers. Around 20 of these transferred from the incoming bus from Yeovil, the rest consisting of football supporters, families and a large number of groups of teenagers, as well as assorted others.

The number of families and teenagers, who anecdotally have tended to make other arrangements, or not make the journey at all, on days when the line is closed, to avoid the replacement buses, may confirm the difference having the shuttle trains could have, in retaining more of the regular passenger traffic on such days. This was, however, a very small sample to make any judgements on.

My conclusions were:

- The shuttle trains were a success, proving popular with local passengers. It is an experiment well worth repeating.

- It is important that station staff and bus co-ordinators both have access to sufficient and accurate information in real time, to support their work.

- Bus scheduling may need adjusting, to minimise overcrowding of buses using the car park simultaneously, and to give adequate time for buses to make connections with the trains.

- Planning, and therefore timings, need to take fuller account of whether planned engineering work is taking place during public holidays, where traffic levels on main routes may cause additional delays.

- Arrangements need to be robust enough that train crew can join up with their trains without excessively long taxi rides and without risking delaying train services.

Questions will still be asked as to whether, especially on the Saturday of such closures, an hourly shuttle might be possible during the main part of the day, using the 6 available carriages as two 3-carriage sets.

The demand from passengers may be there, especially at peak hours, and it would make the hybrid arrangements of buses covering alternate hours less complicated to understand for passengers, to plan and to operate. However, this would of course double the number of crew needed to operate the service during these times.

That said, the overall impression of the weekend was that the Honiton shuttles were worth running, especially on Saturday and Monday, and provided a valuable service, including to the villages of Feniton and Whimple, which was appreciated by the passengers who used the services on offer.

May and June Engineering Report

For further details of any work described in this report, see SWR's website.

Saturday May 9th

The lines between Woking and Basingstoke will be closed all day due to maintenance work.

London Waterloo to Exeter St Davids services will start from Basingstoke.

Buses will run between Woking and Basingstoke (non-stop).

Buses will run between Woking and Basingstoke via Farnborough.

Additional services will run between London Waterloo and Woking.

Sunday May 10th

The lines in the Basingstoke area will be closed all day due to maintenance work.

London Waterloo to Exeter St Davids services will start from Andover and will call additionally at Grateley.

A revised service will run between London Waterloo and Woking.

Buses will run between Woking and Basingstoke.

Buses will also run between Woking and Andover via Basingstoke.

Sunday May 17th

The lines in the Salisbury area will be closed all day due to maintenance work.

London Waterloo to Exeter St Davids services will start from Gillingham.

A revised service will run between London Waterloo and Andover.

Buses will run between Andover and Gillingham (non-stop).

Buses will run between Andover and Gillingham via Salisbury.

Saturday 30th and Sunday May 31st

The lines in the New Malden area will be closed all weekend due to maintenance work.

Saturday

London Waterloo to Exeter St Davids services will be revised (see further announcements later).

London Waterloo to Salisbury stopping services will start from Basingstoke.

London Waterloo to Basingstoke stopping services will start from Woking. London Waterloo to Woking stopping services will start from Surbiton.

Sunday

London Waterloo to Exeter St Davids services will be revised with some services starting from Basingstoke.

London Waterloo to Basingstoke stopping services will start from Woking and will run hourly.

Saturday 6th and Sunday 7th, Saturday 13th and Sunday 14th and Saturday 27th and Sunday 28th June

The lines in the New Malden area will be closed all weekend due to maintenance work.

Saturday

London Waterloo to Exeter St Davids services will be revised.

Sunday

London Waterloo to Exeter St Davids services will be revised with some services starting from Basingstoke.

Football: It's A Funny Old Game!

It just goes to show how far ahead engineering work needs to be planned, and how the best laid plans and all that…

Major engineering work was announced some time ago between Woking and Basingstoke on Saturday 25th and Sunday 26th April. So far, so uncontroversial. And then, to great acclaim from their supporters (and much surprise?) Southampton qualified for the FA Cup Semi Final which was to be played on that Saturday.

SWR and Network Rail carefully reviewed options to move this work, but with no alternative dates until at least 2027 and a significant cost impact, it was decided that it was not possible to reschedule.

The safety-critical work, which has been planned since 2024, must be completed before the summer, they said, to avoid speed restrictions and reduced performance at one of the busiest parts of the SWR network.

Engineers refurbished a vital set of switches and crossings at Farnborough and carried out power supply improvements in the Woking area. In Winchfield, engineers completed a broader package of work that included signalling maintenance, vegetation clearance and power supply upgrades.

The result of this work was that there were fewer direct trains between Southampton and London. Those that did run were diverted via Havant and took longer than usual. Supporters were therefore advised to use alternative means to travel to London.

Southampton sold out their allocation of 33,000 tickets for the semi-final against Manchester City, and while additional services will run, SWR said that they were not expected to cater for all fans looking to travel by train.

Upon arrival at Southampton Central, supporters had to join a queuing system to board the next available train. Other stations including Fareham, Havant, Clapham Junction and London Waterloo were also busier than usual.

As if that was not enough, the FA scheduled the match to suit broadcasters, so supporters had a difficult return journey, as there were only a very limited number of trains from London to Southampton after 8pm.

A Strategy to Tackle Violence Against Women and Girls

This month's "explainer' piece focuses on an important issue for society at large: persistent levels of violence against women and girls. The Police and Crime Commissioner for Devon and Cornwall, Alison Hernandez, has commented several times recently on her commitment to working with partners to improve the safety of women and girls on trains across the region.

To that end, readers may be interested to know that a new BTP and Rail Partnership Strategy has just been launched by the Rail Delivery Group, British Transport Police, Network Rail and others.

Launching the new strategy, is authors say,

"Ensuring the safety and confidence of women and girls across our railway network is not just a shared responsibility - it is a moral imperative."

"The Joint Industry VIAWG Strategy sets out a united commitment to reduce Violence and Intimidation Against Women and Girls (VIAWG) affecting passengers and frontline colleagues across the rail network.

"It sets out the societal issue facing the railways, progress to date and recent activity, the aims and objectives of this plan, and our joint industry-wide commitments to take forward in response to this challenge.

"This strategy reaffirms our unwavering commitment to making our railways places where women and girls are not only safe, but feel safe, every single day."

The UK rail industry is committed to ensuring the safety and security of everyone who travels or works on the railway network. This commitment extends to both passengers and employees, reflecting the industry's responsibility to provide a safe environment at every stage of the journey.

The Policing & Security Strategy embraces a holistic approach to policing, recognising that effective safety and security require coordination between enforcement, rail organisations, government, and the wider community.

By addressing issues proactively, fostering strong partnerships, and integrating prevention, enforcement, and support measures, the strategy seeks to create a secure and welcoming rail network for all customers and rail staff.

Rail Partnership Strategic Aim and Objectives

We are committed to creating a railway network that is safe and feels safe for everyone. Together, we will foster a culture where all forms of Violence and Intimidation Against Women and Girls (VIAWG) are clearly recognised as unacceptable and are actively challenged.

Our Objectives

- We will build on our collaborative efforts to date and go further, being bold and innovative to tackle offenders.
- We will amplify our collective efforts to make the railway safer and more welcoming for all.
- We will continue to make a meaningful and lasting difference for the travelling public.
- We will transparently track and share our progress in tackling VIAWG.

The Government has designated VIAWG as a national emergency, aiming to halve such incidents within ten years. Recognising transport as a key frontline, the strategy calls for staff to identify, challenge, and respond to harmful behaviour, and to support victims while addressing perpetrators early.

The Government's approach is described as a whole of society and cross-sector responsibility, mirroring the Door-to-Door workstream's focus on joined-up safety across the transport network.

The strategy is set out in two volumes: one cross-government strategy and one action plan.

The strategy has three main objectives:

- Preventing abuse through early intervention,
- Relentlessly pursuing perpetrators,
- Supporting victims and survivors.

The 4P policing framework (Prepare, Protect, Prevent, Pursue) closely aligns with these aims, and the strategy underlines that reducing VIAWG requires more than just the criminal justice system, with transport playing a pivotal role. This strategy sets out our shared commitment to make Great Britain's railways safe for all, with a clear and united focus on tackling VIAWG.

Built on strong partnership between the rail industry, British Transport Police, government and wider industry stakeholders. It establishes a coordinated framework to prevent harm, protect passengers, pursue offenders and prepare the network to respond effectively.

The authors of the new strategy conclude:

"By aligning our national objectives with the 4P policing approach, we will deliver practical, measurable action that strengthens safeguarding, improves reporting and victim support, creating a culture where unacceptable behaviour is consistently challenged.

"We will pursue the goals set out in this strategy and hold ourselves accountable through transparent monitoring, partnership leadership and continuous learning."

To learn more, go to: https://www.raildeliverygroup.com/publications/13205-viawg-btp-rail-partnership-strategy-2026-2028/file.html

A Tale of Two Newsletters (1): The State of Our Railway

The latest newsletter from our friends at Railfuture Wessex had much to say on the present sate of the railway. Members will have their own view on the extent to which they agree or disagree with what they had to say. However, as always, it raises very important points.

They comment on how the stated aim of rail industry leaders and senior politicians is to achieve a "a boringly reliable railway". However, it is clear that at present that we are far from reaching that most worthy goal.

The keynote article in the Railfuture newsletter suggested that there are three main reasons why travelling by train has become so unreliable, and they are mostly nothing to do with money.

These are:

- Risk aversion: Trains are stopped for the slightest reasons, just in case, or if even the smallest work is being undertaken near the track.

- Deskilling of the workforce: Local staff are no longer able, or trusted, to solve minor problems or to take charge of situations themselves.

- A lack of local leadership: So often it is junior management at local level who are best placed to get things done and to keep things moving. But it is this grade of staff who have been progressively thinned out as costs have been cut.

The article ends with a call to arms:

"This is not about high level industry structure or spending more money, it is about creating an organisation that works operationally and this requires a different mindset and a much more balanced approach to the overall assessment of risk."

A Tale of Two Newsletters (2): SWR and Network Rail Wessex Leaders Set Out Their Stall

At the end of last month, Lawrence Bowman, Managing Director of SWR and Network Rail Wessex introduced the first edition of the new-style regular newsletter from the combined leadership team of the new organisation.

In his introduction, Lawrence wrote:

"I have now been in this role for almost a year, having taken up the position at the same time as SWR returned to public ownership back in May of last year. It has been a pleasure to travel around the network meeting stakeholders and hearing your views and experiences on SWR.

"I am writing at an incredibly exciting time for our railway, as we further integrate track and train across SWR and NR Wessex. Joining our two businesses in this way brings responsibility for all aspects of operating our network together. This unified approach will mean we're better placed to deliver a smoother, more joined-up experience for customers.

"I am driving improvement across performance our network – I know it is not where it needs to be and we are working hard to improve for our customers. This newsletter provides a snapshot of the recent and planned works we are doing to improve track and train for our customers. This will include: the ongoing rollout of the Arterio fleet, the upcoming timetable refresh, engineering and infrastructure works and accessibility improvements.

"Thank you for your interest and continued support of our railway. I hope you enjoy reading our newly integrated newsletter and I look forward to sharing future updates on track and train with you."

As Lawrence said, the newsletter included a number of updates. Here is a summary:

October 26th to November 1st: Planned engineering work will be taking place around Honiton Tunnel. See information nearer the time for details of replacement buses etc.

Fare Freeze: In November last year, the Department for Transport announced that rail fares would be frozen for the first time in over 30 years. Standard Class rail fares, including Season, Off-Peak and Anytime fares on South Western Railway and across England will remain frozen at the same price until March 2027. This rail freeze of regulated rail fares will help all customers, including commuters, save on their journeys.

Timetable Refresh: South Western Railway and Network Rail Wessex are embarking on the first full refresh of their timetable since 2004. The new timetable will, they say, be transformative, and will respond to post-pandemic travel patterns, the introduction of the new Arterio trains, and changes to how the network infrastructure is managed.

The authors of the newsletters say:

"The refresh will seek to strike the balance between improving connectivity in our communities, improved journey times, better train performance and increased value for the taxpayer. A full consultation will begin in autumn this year, with the timetable introduced no earlier than December 2027 and when we are confident it can be delivered reliably for our customers."

Community Rail Awards: Every year the Community Rail awards recognise all the wonderful work and initiatives by Community Rail Partnerships. SWR were delighted to win awards in partnership with its Community Rail groups:

- 1st place - Community Creative Projects and Station Arts – Small Group - 'Railway 200 Artwork' – Wokingham Learning Disability Partnership Board

- 1st place - Railway 200 Legacy Award - Large Group - '200 Blue Plaques' - Southeast Communities Rail Partnership

- 1st place - Railway 200 Legacy Award - Small Group - 'Motspur Park 100' – Motspur Park Station Adopters

- 3rd place - Empowering Diverse Groups - 'Suit Yourself: Free 12-week back to work course' – Fran Shelley and Helen Blake with Isle of Wight CRP

- 3rd place - Involving Children and Young People - 'Travel Training: A Respite Day for Young Carers' – New Forest CRP with Community Action New Forest and Young Carers

A Game of Sardines

April saw the unwelcome return of short-formed trains on our line, with a number of trains cut to three carriages. The worst offender was the 09.16 from Honiton to Exeter, returning at 10.25, although on the first say of the new College term the 07.52 from Honiton, returning at 9.25 suffered this fate instead.

Worse was to come a few days later, on April 23rd, when several services were due to be formed of only TWO carriages. In the end, even that was academic as trains were severely disrupted or cancelled for several hours, due to a single failure and a trespass incident at Pinhoe.

Rail Industry Launches New Nationwide Safety Campaign

New research just released reveals dangerous overconfidence is putting young adults' lives at risk when using railway level crossings across Britain. Even though eight in ten 18-34 year olds claim to understand the risks, the same number also fail to recognise key warning signs of an approaching train. Furthermore, seven in ten young adults feel confident they could move out of the way in time if a train appeared while crossing, despite trains travelling up to five times faster than cars.

Worryingly, almost all young adults surveyed - a staggering 98% - didn't know approximately the distance it takes for a train travelling at 80mph to make an emergency stop **(Try the question for yourself. The answer is at the end of this article)**.

The findings come as train operators, Network Rail and British Transport Police (BTP) join forces to launch No Second Chances - the first ever industry-wide level crossing safety campaign, following recent tragic incidents at level crossings. The campaign comes as the rail industry moves towards a unified Great British Railways.

The campaign - centred around a series of uncompromising 20-second films - focuses on the deadly consequences of distraction at level crossings.

It is aimed primarily at young adults who, in a survey commissioned by Network Rail, were much more likely to admit to distracted behaviour while crossing, including:

- Chatting to others (28%)
- Using their phone (24%)
- Not removing headphones (26%) – twice as likely as for among those aged 55 and over (13%).

There are 299 level crossings in operation across the South Western Railway network, with various safety features based on their location and levels of use. These safety features include lowering full or half barriers to block access to the track, as well as audible sirens and flashing lights warning of an approaching train.

The rail industry is urging the public to stay safe when using level crossings by following this advice:

- Stop, look, and listen. Every crossing is different so always read the signs and follow the instructions.

- Understand warning signs (lights, barriers, alarms) and obey them fully. Always follow instructions at each level crossing completely.

- Check both ways before crossing. If there is a train coming, wait behind the barrier or marked line until it has passed. Remember there may be more than one train, and they may be coming from different directions.

- Cross quickly and safely. Make sure your exit route is clear and do not stop when crossing.

Speaking on behalf of South Western Railway & Network Rail Wessex, Priti Patel, Chief Health, Safety & Wellbeing Officer, added:

"We know how easy it is to get distracted, whether that's listening to a favourite podcast, looking at your phone or just taking familiar surroundings for granted. But stepping onto a level crossing without stopping to look and listen can be fatal – there are no second chances."

Answer: It takes at least a mile for a train to make an emergency stop from 80 mph, even with good track conditions.

Members' Information

"Planter Update" Update

A huge thank you to the team who worked so hard last month on the planters. The first stage of the project to update and re-plant them took place when Steve, members of his family, and Paul spent the day clearing out a large amount of vegetarian that was in poor condition.

Following a visit from a local expert, who runs the plant stall on the Saturday market, Steve and the team have devised a new planting scheme, which will see the planters on the two platforms updated with a range of new planting.

Newsletter Dates

Members should be aware that I will not necessarily always be sending out a monthly reminder that the newsletter is on the website. However, please be reassured that the newsletter will continue to appear on the first working day of each month.

Coffee and Conversation

I plan to hold the next Coffee and Conversation session at The Beehive Cafe, on Monday June 1st at 11 a.m. I do hope that as many members as possible will come along, for updates and our usual rail-related chat.