



Transport for
West Midlands



Midland
Metro Alliance

Connecting SANDWELL & DUDLEY

ISSUE 22 FEBRUARY 2024



Welcome

Welcome to 'Connecting Sandwell & Dudley', a regular publication designed to keep those working and living in the area up-to-date on the progress of the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro extension which we're building on behalf of Transport for West Midlands (TfWM).

This highly-anticipated project will be delivered in two phases. The first will see trams travel 6.5km through Sandwell to Dudley town centre serving a new terminus at Flood Street, providing convenient interchanges with local bus and rail services.

In the second phase, the tramway will extend a further 4.4km to Brierley Hill with a funding strategy agreed.

Getting Around

For the latest information, advice and live info on the region's roads follow @wmroads feed on X and for transport updates follow @transportforwm.



In brief: Progress highlights in the last year A selection of the key works undertaken on the Wednesbury to Brierley Hill Metro extension in the last nine months or so.

October 2023 – January 2024: Ahead of rail being installed in coming months, the team began laying ballast in the railway corridor which makes up most of phase one of the route.

Elsewhere, in Dudley, the town centre started to have more rail installed and finishing activities like paving began to get underway.

The first localised closure also took place either side of the Hanson's Ale Bridge on Birmingham New Road, in early December, as the structure was removed ready to be replaced with a purpose built bridge fit for the needs of a modern Metro network set to be installed this year.

August – September 2023: A purpose-built structure, in Wednesbury, which will link the existing Metro line to the new route, saw rapid progress. Elsewhere, in Dudley areas around the terminus began look more final as tracks continued to be laid in areas like King Street and Flood Street.

May – July 2023: Tram stops started to take shape across Sandwell and the terminus of phase one of the route, in Dudley, started to see track laid following the delivery of more than 860 tonnes of steel rails.

① What you need to know...

We have so much to update on in our first edition of *Connecting Sandwell & Dudley* for 2024!

As usual, we'll give a quick snapshot of everything we think you need to know following our last issue on this page. But if you would like a bit more detail, everything here is covered at length elsewhere in the newsletter.

Wednesbury is in the spotlight this issue!

From sitting down with local employers in the Black Country town chatting about "why Metro matters", to staff blogs on the depot expansion project and sharing a 2023 retrospective of our delta junction structure construction – it's all been going on in Wednesbury since our last issue.

You can find out more about a progress visit for the massive structure and what the work to tie in new tracks to the existing tramline means for operational Metro services between Wednesbury and Birmingham for a couple of weeks at Easter (beginning 23 March) over on page **four**.

Keep moving on Birmingham New Road in March...

The next stage of our work to replace the aged Hanson's Ale Bridge on the Birmingham New Road is also set to get underway in mid-March.

The forthcoming work is a little less impactful than last year's weekend closures but will still mean some localised lane restrictions will be in place. Find out more about how you should plan your journey if travelling through the area between 15 and 18 March on page **three**.

Inspiring and showcasing the next generation of construction professionals...

At the time of publication, we're just a couple of weeks past National Apprenticeship Week 2024 which was celebrated in early February.

The national celebration aims to celebrate those working across the UK in apprentice roles whilst also highlighting that the route is a fantastic way to get on the career ladder in your chosen field.

For National Apprenticeship Week 2024, we took the time to introduce two of our newest staff members who are taking their first steps in the construction industry through an apprenticeship.

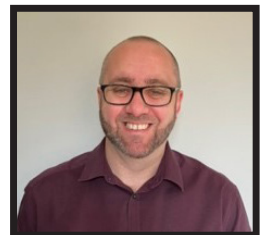
We also showcased three new work placement students, from Thomas Telford University Technical College in Wolverhampton, who have joined the alliance studying for a T-Level qualification. Find out more about all of these five talented new colleagues via page **six**.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *Connecting Sandwell & Dudley*. And until the next issue, remember, you can always get the latest updates from us on social media (follow us on Facebook, X, Instagram and Threads).

Kind regards,

Tom Bissell,

Your dedicated Stakeholder Liaison Manager



How can I get further
information?

For further information or to view past issues of the newsletter please visit:
www.metroalliance.co.uk

or email:
communications@metroalliance.co.uk

Alternatively, you can follow:

[company/midland-metro-alliance](https://www.linkedin.com/company/midland-metro-alliance)

[@midlandtram](https://twitter.com/midlandtram)

[Midland Metro Alliance](https://www.facebook.com/MidlandMetroAlliance)

[@midlandmetroalliance](https://www.instagram.com/midlandmetroalliance)



Connecting SANDWELL & DUDLEY

Recent Progress Sandwell Railway Corridor

Ahead of track laying, which is set to begin using primarily British steel later this spring, much of the recent activity along the railway corridor (which makes up the majority of phase one of the Metro route) has been to prepare the site for tram tracks.

Previous issues of *Connecting Sandwell & Dudley* have highlighted the clearance works and laying of foundation ballast, whilst recently the team have been busy installing drainage pipes and electrical ducting in this area of the route.

Elsewhere across the Sandwell footprint of our works, tram stops continue to take shape in the Tipton area.



Parkhead Viaduct

Historic Parkhead Viaduct is a key structure for the second phase of the Metro route and will help carry passengers further through Dudley borough to Brierley Hill.

Work to strengthen this key structure has been underway for a number of years but is set to wrap-up next month. The innovative construction activity has essentially strengthened the local landmark, designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel, from the inside out preserving the heritage structure and ensuring it is able to meet the needs of a modern tramway.

In recent weeks, as construction has been wrapping up, the team are cleaning parts of the brickwork ready for scaffolding to be fully removed and the much-loved local viaduct to be unveiled again after years of important and innovative construction activity.

Dudley Town Centre

ISSUE 22 FEBRUARY 2024

With the majority of tram tracks now installed across Dudley, since our last issue, our team have begun to complete important finishing works across the town centre installing new paving, crossing points, tactile markings, lighting columns, and the like.

Flood Street and King Street, have joined Castle Hill, in this late stage of delivery with attractive crossing points – adding to the look and feel of the area – installed in recent weeks and these opened up for usage illustrating that this phase of the Metro route is beginning to take its final shape.

Elsewhere in Dudley town centre, a period of overnight highway restrictions are wrapping up today (Thursday 29 February).

The activity has been undertaken to complete a series of snagging activities with the least impact possible for those in the local area and to reinstate some paving towards the top of the busy thoroughfare.

In addition, from Monday 9 March, for up to nine weeks, nearby King Street will close at the junction with Flood Street. This allows our team to complete finishing activities.



**How can I get further
information?**

For further information or to view past issues
of the newsletter please visit:
www.metroalliance.co.uk

or email:
communications@metroalliance.co.uk

Alternatively, you can follow:

 [company/midland-metro-alliance](https://www.linkedin.com/company/midland-metro-alliance)

 [@midlandtram](https://twitter.com/midlandtram)

 [Midland Metro Alliance](https://www.facebook.com/MidlandMetroAlliance)

 [@midlandmetroalliance](https://www.instagram.com/midlandmetroalliance)

Connecting SANDWELL & DUDLEY

ISSUE 22 FEBRUARY 2024

Birmingham New Road

Localised Wolverhampton bound
lane closure

15 - 18 March

Plan ahead

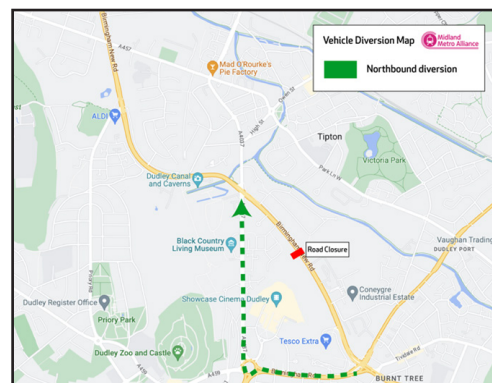


Plan ahead:
www.tfwm.org.uk

Further short weekend closure of Birmingham New Road to take place next month

Following last December's successful activity to remove the aged Hanson's Ale Bridge on Birmingham New Road, the next phase of activity, ahead of landing a new structure, is set to get underway next month (March 2024).

The works are to install supporting cill beams for the final bridge installation and will mean that the Wolverhampton-bound lanes will close to traffic while traffic heading towards



Birmingham will use one lane only. This temporary traffic management will be implemented approximately 100 metres in either direction of the iconic "Hanson's" bridge on Birmingham New Road.

These changes will be in place from Friday 15 March until Monday 18 March (inclusive) with the road set to re-open by 4am on Monday 18 March.

During the brief four-day closure, those travelling towards Wolverhampton will be able to continue their journeys using a short and clearly signed diversion route.



Delta junction structure in Wednesbury makes its TV debut

It was lights, camera, action as TV news crews and local journalists flocked to see the recent progress on the Wednesbury delta junction earlier this month as it neared completion.

They came to interview Mayor of the West Midlands, Andy Street and Councillor Peter Hughes, Sandwell Council's Cabinet Member for Regeneration and the West Midlands Combined Authority, for an ITV Central News feature during a special visit to see the feat of engineering in its near final state.

The pair spoke of their excitement at seeing such an important milestone being achieved as they walked along the 6.2m high structure.

The visit, which coincided with the announcement of upcoming works to tie the existing line with the new track (more on this over the page), and the day was also captured by our videographer in a short video.

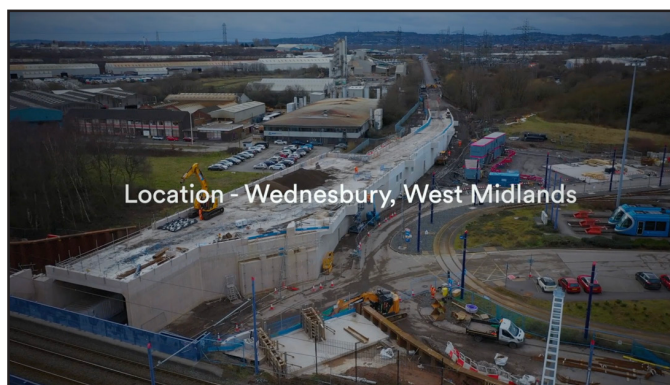
Check it out by visiting <https://vimeo.com/913659709/6c6b96a7fb?share=copy>.

"This is a crucial milestone in the construction of the new extension...Talked about for decades, we're now actually making it happen. Our investment in the Metro offers residents a convenient alternative to the car, helps us tackle the climate emergency and draws in investment that supports the regeneration of our much-loved towns and cities."

Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands

"The progress witnessed is a testament to the hard work and dedication of all involved. I was very pleased to see another piece of this important route brought into being."

Councillor Hughes, Sandwell Council



Location - Wednesbury, West Midlands



**How can I get further
information?**

For further information or to view past issues
of the newsletter please visit:
www.metroalliance.co.uk

or email:
communications@metroalliance.co.uk

Alternatively, you can follow:

 [company/midland-metro-alliance](https://www.linkedin.com/company/midland-metro-alliance)

 [@midlandtram](https://twitter.com/midlandtram)

 [Midland Metro Alliance](https://www.facebook.com/MidlandMetroAlliance)

 [@midlandmetroalliance](https://www.instagram.com/midlandmetroalliance)



Connecting SANDWELL & DUDLEY

ISSUE 22 FEBRUARY 2024

Travelling between Wednesbury and Birmingham this Easter? Plan ahead!

Works are set to get underway to tie the new track in Dudley with the existing operational tramline this Easter and there will be some unavoidable disruption to West Midlands Metro services.

From Saturday 23 March until Tuesday 9 April 2024 there will be no operations between Wednesbury and Birmingham City Centre.

Sandwell Council will also be completing the demolition and construction of Dudley Street bridge at the same time, with these works continuing for a further six weeks, resulting in changes to evening services between Wednesbury and Edgbaston Village from Wednesday 10 April 2024.

Throughout both phases of work, Metro services between Wolverhampton and Wednesbury will be unaffected.

Further information, including revised timetables and alternative travel arrangements will be available from West Midlands Metro's website shortly.

Track construction and bridge works

Impacting West Midlands Metro services

From Easter 2024

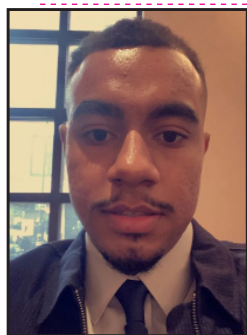
Plan ahead





Transport for
West Midlands

Plan ahead:
www.tfwm.org.uk



Transforming Potters Lane: Assistant Project Manager, Milan, shares more on the first year of the Wednesbury Depot expansion

Alongside work to extend the Metro from Wednesbury to Dudley town centre (and beyond), our team are also undertaking complementary works to expand the HQ of West Midlands Metro in Wednesbury.

Milan Parchment, Graduate Assistant Project Manager at the Midland Metro Alliance, took the time to share more on the project's first year in a blog post over on our website.

In the post, Milan shares images from the 2023 works highlighting that last year was the year in which works moved from design and into delivery. He also gives a look ahead on what the project will be delivering in 2024, too.

Check it out at <http://tinyurl.com/MilanBlog2024>.



ICYMI: "Fast-Forward" through a year's worth of progress for Wednesbury's Delta Junction structure

In this short video you can watch 2023 pass-by in a little over a minute and see the amazing behind-the-scenes efforts that continue to bring this massive structure to life.

The video was released across our social channels just ahead of the previously mentioned progress visit (more info on this on the last page) earlier in the month from Mayor of the West Midlands, Andy Street, and Councillor Peter Hughes, Sandwell Council Cabinet Member for Regeneration.

Visit <https://vimeo.com/897277874/1a4add9bc4?share=copy> to watch 2023's progress on this massive piece of purpose-built infrastructure.

"Knowing that we were shortly to announce the unavoidable Metro disruption during the Easter track tie-in works, we wanted to give our followers a sneak-peek at the works going on in the Wednesbury area to highlight that this stage of construction was coming to a close and there would be some impact on public transport as the next stage got underway begun."

Antony Lowbridge-Ellis, MMA Head of Communications



How can I get further information?

For further information or to view past issues of the newsletter please visit:
www.metroalliance.co.uk

or email:
communications@metroalliance.co.uk

Alternatively, you can follow:

 company/midland-metro-alliance
 [@midlandtram](https://twitter.com/midlandtram)
 [Midland Metro Alliance](https://facebook.com/midlandmetroalliance)
 [@midlandmetroalliance](https://instagram.com/midlandmetroalliance)



Connecting SANDWELL & DUDLEY

ISSUE 22 FEBRUARY 2024

KUKA Robotics explain “why Metro matters” to their Wednesbury HQ

Our “why Metro matters” series has returned for a second episode!

This month we caught up with staff at the Wednesbury KUKA Robotics site to hear how the new route will be a game changer for attracting new employees from across the West Midlands.

KUKA is one of the world's leading suppliers of intelligent robotics, plants and systems engineering and CEO of the UK branch, Jeff Nowill, reveals how the expanded network will create an easy and sustainable way for staff and visitors to get to their Great Western Street site from across the West Midlands, while some of their workers also share their excitement for how it will open up employment opportunities in the region.



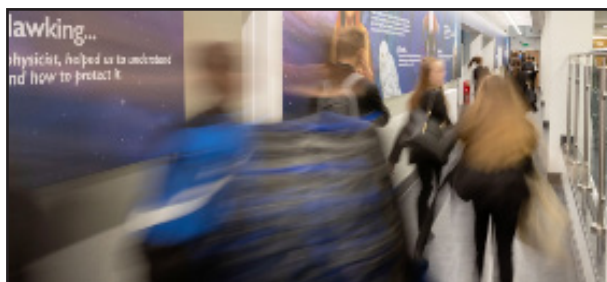
You can check out our latest video with KUKA visiting <https://vimeo.com/midlandmetroalliance/wmmkuka?share=copy>.

If you represent a local community group, or business, and would like to feature in the series during 2024, please do not hesitate to get in touch with our communications team at news@metroalliance.co.uk. And, look out for the next episode of “why Metro matters” in coming weeks across on our social media channels.

Empowering Future Talent: Our Senior Project Manager goes “Back to School” for National Apprenticeship Week

As part of activities undertaken to mark National Apprenticeship Week 2024 (more on this on the next page), Andy Jacques, Senior Project Manager, took a nostalgic trip down memory lane to his old school at Beacon Hill Academy in Sedgley.

Amidst the buzz of the week-long celebration, Andy, embraced the opportunity to give back to communities across the Black Country as part of the alliance's ongoing skills workstream. National Apprenticeship Week is about rolling up your sleeves and getting involved. For Andy, it meant stepping into assembly halls to support eager students with mock interviews, offering guidance and wisdom gleaned from his own career journey.



“The experience of returning to Beacon Hill Academy was a great way to celebrate National Apprenticeship Week. There's so many routes into the construction, engineering, and light rail industries and it felt a privilege to be able to support up-and-coming local kids by developing their interview skills and sharing more about what it is we do to inspire them to consider our sectors as a future career path.”

Andy Jacques, Senior Delivery Manager

Connecting Futures: T-Level Advocacy with our Head of Engagement and Skills

As part of a national campaign, in partnership with the Department for Education, our Head of Engagement and Skills, shared her insights on the game-changing impact of T-Level qualifications.

T-Levels are a new qualification, equivalent to three A-Levels, which team classroom theory with practical work experience with local employers.

You can read more about Rose's thoughts via a piece published in The Sun newspaper earlier in 2024 at: <https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/24952613/skills-placement-learning-experience-career-t-level-dfe/>



How can I get further information?

For further information or to view past issues of the newsletter please visit:
www.metroalliance.co.uk

or email:
communications@metroalliance.co.uk

Alternatively, you can follow:

 [company/midland-metro-alliance](https://www.linkedin.com/company/midland-metro-alliance)

 [@midlandtram](https://twitter.com/midlandtram)

 Midland Metro Alliance

 [@midlandmetroalliance](https://www.instagram.com/midlandmetroalliance)



Connecting SANDWELL & DUDLEY

ISSUE 22 FEBRUARY 2024

Celebrating our Rising Stars during National Apprenticeship Week

As mentioned on the previous page, National Apprenticeship Week 2024 (NAW) was celebrated across the nation earlier in the month (between 5 and 11 February), and the MMA used the national campaign as an opportunity to spotlight the incredible journeys of our newest apprentices and T-Level students.

NAW isn't just about recognising the commitment of employers making roles available via apprenticeships; it's also the chance to share first-hand insights on what it is like to begin a career in this way with the aim of inspiring others to do the same.

Enter Dante McLeod and Kyree Hendricks-Sewell, our dynamic Rail Systems Technician Apprentices who shared their thoughts on "skills for life" - the theme of this year's celebration - in a specially made social media video. Listen to Dante and Kyree explain more at <https://vimeo.com/907821927/bb3c114f18?share=copy>.

Beyond honing their craft in their respective roles, Dante and Kyree understand that their apprenticeships are about more than just career advancement; they're all about personal development, resilience, and lifelong learning.

In addition to our apprentices, we also supported "T-Level Thursday" during the week-long celebration and used it to welcome Rawan, Alina, and Christabel, our newest T-Level students.

Studying Design, Surveying, and Planning for Construction at Thomas Telford UTC in Wolverhampton, these bright minds are embarking on a journey that blends academic excellence with hands-on experience.

As they begin their placement at MMA, we're excited to discover their fresh perspectives and innovative ideas.



**Transport for
West Midlands**

£24m scheme to help West Midlands businesses reduce energy usage and bills

Thousands of businesses from energy intensive manufacturing firms to coffee shops and hairdressers are being offered help to cut their gas and electricity use through a £24 million scheme being led by West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ).

Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands and WMCA chair, and Lord Callanan, Minister for Energy Efficiency and Green Finance, launched the Government-funded Business Energy Advice Service (BEAS) pilot scheme in recent weeks at Wednesbury-based automotive components manufacturer Alucast - one of the 500 local businesses that have already signed up to the scheme.

The region's large advanced manufacturing sector means the West Midlands has a higher proportion of energy exposed businesses than any other part of the UK. As a result, the WMCA is working with local SMEs to help identify and fund new ways of working that use less energy and support the region's transition to net zero.

Businesses can get a free energy audit and then apply for up to £100,000 of match funding towards the cost of all or some of the recommended measures. This could include supporting investment in new machinery and equipment, improved manufacturing processes or LED lighting and insulation.

Businesses can register their interest by visiting: <https://www.businessgrowthwestmidlands.org.uk/business-support/business-energy-advice-service-beas/>



**How can I get further
information?**

For further information or to view past issues
of the newsletter please visit:
www.metroalliance.co.uk

or email:
communications@metroalliance.co.uk

Alternatively, you can follow:

 [company/midland-metro-alliance](https://www.linkedin.com/company/midland-metro-alliance)
 [@midlandtram](https://twitter.com/midlandtram)
 [Midland Metro Alliance](https://www.facebook.com/MidlandMetroAlliance)
 [@midlandmetroalliance](https://www.instagram.com/midlandmetroalliance)