Exeter Central
Work on the forecourt at Exeter Central has been completed to give the station a much better appearance – and there is sufficient left in the budget to allow further improvements, to the entrance canopy.

More importantly still, Network Rail is about to start work on the repair and repainting of the platform canopies – so passengers standing under them will no longer need umbrellas during a downpour of rain. There will also be improvements to the footbridge. By the summer Devon’s capital city should have a worthy gateway, rather than the depressing portal that was Central station at the start of the last franchise.

Also promised, at ALRUG’s suggestion, are improvements to the bus stop at the New North Road entrance, which provides a good connection with buses in the Tiverton direction.

Exton platform raised
In early March work was undertaken to raise the platform height at Exton along part of its length to a level where trains are as easy to board or alight as at other stations on the line. The section of platform that has been raised is less than a train length, so not all doors will stop over the higher section. Those wishing to get off the train at the higher section should seek advice from the conductor.

St James Park tidy up
On March 15th a joint initiative at St James Park station by ALRUG and the Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership saw 25 volunteers clear masses of brambles, ivy and other out of control vegetation from the station area. First Great Western supported the day, as did Exeter City Football Club, who kindly provided a room and urn for a much needed continuous tea supply. As well as planting flowers for immediate colour, the volunteers planted herbs which, once established, passengers can pick.

February storms
The Avocet Line once again stood up well to all that the weather could do. Minor wave damage to the estuary wall during the Valentine’s Day storm was assessed and repaired by Network Rail with commendable speed, despite all the problems occurring simultaneously on the main line. Work is also taking place to strengthen the sides of the cutting either side of Blackboy tunnel and prevent future landslips.

Engineering work
There will be considerable engineering work over the Easter and Spring Bank Holiday weekends, though very little of it should affect passengers from Exmouth. Services to Paddington will run to a revised timetable at Easter and any journeys via Swindon are likely to involve bus replacement. Check online journey planners or call National Rail Enquiries on 08457 48 49 50.