

News story: New improvements for rail passengers in Wales, the midlands and the north

Passengers in Wales, the midlands and the north will get faster and more comfortable journeys quicker under new plans announced by the government today (20 July 2017).

The Department for Transport is setting out plans for new trains on the Midland Main Line, Great Western Main Line and in the Lake District with increased seats and better on-board facilities.

Modern bi-mode trains will be used on Great Western and Midland Main Line, with passengers in Wales benefiting from new Intercity Express trains which will each deliver over 130 more seats and faster services.

Long distance journey times from Nottingham and Sheffield will also be reduced by up to 20 minutes in the peak, with the train operator in the Lake District beginning work to trial an alternative-fuelled train in this World Heritage Site.

Thanks to this new technology disruptive electrification works between Cardiff and Swansea, Kettering, Nottingham and Sheffield, and between Windermere and Oxenholme, will no longer be needed.

Passengers will benefit sooner and experience less disruption compared with putting up intrusive wires and masts along routes where they are no longer required.

Bi-mode trains

The government today also published the [consultation for the next East Midlands franchise](#), which will deliver reduced journey times for intercity services and more seats for long distance passengers at peak hours, as well as dedicated services and more capacity for commuters coming into London. The franchise will maximise the benefits of the upgrade of the Midland Main Line – the biggest investment in the route since it was completed in 1870.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

We are making the biggest investment in the railways since the Victorian era and upgrading services across the country, including in Wales, the midlands and the north.

Passengers expect and deserve high quality rail services and we are committed to using the best available technology for each part of the network, delivering significant benefits for those who use our railways.

Benefits along the specific routes include:

Cardiff to Swansea

From Autumn 2017, passengers in Wales will benefit from new Intercity Express trains which will each deliver over 130 extra seats, faster journey times and improved connectivity for South Wales to London with 40% more seats in the morning peak once the full fleet is in service.

Network Rail will also develop additional options to improve journeys for passengers in Wales. These will include:

- improving journeys times and connections between Swansea and Cardiff, and South Wales, Bristol and London
- improving journeys times and connections across North Wales
- direct services from Pembroke Dock to London via Carmarthen on new, state of the art Intercity Express trains
- station improvements at Cardiff Station
- station improvements in and around Swansea including looking at the case for additional provision

The Secretary of State also welcomed a proposal for Wales' first privately funded railway station at St Mellons. The department will work with the promoters of the scheme as they develop their plans to the next stage.

The first new Intercity Express trains will enter service from this Autumn and once the whole fleet is introduced and electrification to Cardiff is complete journey times between Swansea, London and other stations along the route will be approximately 15 minutes shorter.

Midland Main Line

The next operator will be required to deliver modern, fast and efficient intercity and commuter trains, including a brand new set of bi-mode intercity trains from 2022, maximising the benefits of the largest upgrade of the Midland Main Line since it opened in 1870. This will improve journeys sooner, without the need for wires and masts on the whole route, with further investment to come to ensure Sheffield is ready for HS2.

Benefits include reducing journey times on long distance services from Nottingham and Sheffield by up to 20 minutes in the peak and delivering over 1000 additional seats an hour in the peak into London, an increase of more than 50%.

Oxenholme to Windermere

Passengers in the Lake District will benefit from 4 direct services a day in each direction between Windermere and Manchester Airport from May 2018.

The government has announced plans to ensure passengers enjoy brand new trains from December 2019. Journeys between Windermere and Manchester Airport

will be improved sooner and with less disruption to services and local communities. It also means there is no need to construct intrusive wires and masts in this National Park.

Statement to Parliament: Rail infrastructure funding: 2019 to 2024

I am today (20 July 2017) publishing my [high level output specification](#) (HLOS) and initial statement of funds available (SOFA) for the railway for control period 6, which covers the years 2019 to 2024.

The government is determined that the railway becomes more focused on issues that matter most to passengers – such as punctuality and reliability. A more reliable railway also plays a critical role in underpinning economic growth and bringing the country together. The government is committed to taking action to achieve these outcomes.

The HLOS is therefore focussed on the operation, maintenance and renewal of the existing railway – the areas of activity that will deliver a more reliable railway for passengers. The government is already delivering significant enhancements to the railway, including High Speed 2 and Crossrail and it expects to continue to invest in the enhancement to the wider rail network in the next control period. In light of the findings of the [Bowe Review](#), which emphasised the need to enable better planning, cost control and alignment with the needs of users of the railway, government will take forward the funding of these enhancements separately. The government is developing a new process for delivering enhancements and intends to publish more information on this in the autumn.

On the basis of independent advice from the Office of Rail and Road, as well as from the rail industry, the government has agreed that an increased volume of renewals activity will be needed over the course of control period 6, to maintain safety and improve on current levels of reliability and punctuality, which in places fall short of the levels that passengers rightly expect. This enhanced programme of renewals will be supported by appropriate volumes of operations and maintenance activity required to maintain safety and improve the reliability and punctuality of train services.

Before committing to the specific levels of funding required, I have decided that the government requires more assurance on the likely costs of the work programme. Network Rail's progress on improving its efficiency in recent years has fallen short of my expectations. Improving efficiency is vital if we are to maximise the value of taxpayer spending on the railway in driving improvements for passengers and freight shippers.

The government will therefore carry out further work to examine the approach

to setting appropriate levels of maintenance and renewals activity for control period 6 and to improving Network Rail's efficiency. This will enable me to confirm the extent of government's funding envelope through the publication of a statement of funds available by 13 October 2017. This work will draw on a number of sources, including the new independent review of progress on efficiency planning which the regulator has commissioned

Alongside the publication of the HLOS, I am issuing [new statutory guidance to the independent Office of Rail and Road](#). This sets out my priorities for rail regulation. These include supporting the ORR's work to improve Network Rail's efficiency and improving the experience of users of the railway.

I am arranging for copies of the HLOS and SOFA, and of the statutory guidance to the Office of Rail and Road, to be placed in the libraries of the House.

Notice: Bayston Farms: application made to abstract water

The Environment Agency consults the public on certain applications for the abstraction and impoundment of water.

These notices explain:

- what the application is about
- which Environment Agency offices you can visit to see the application documents on the public register
- when you need to comment by

Notice: Brett Aggregates Limited (NPS/WR/025345): application made to abstract water

The Environment Agency consults the public on certain applications for the abstraction and impoundment of water.

These notices explain:

- what the application is about
- which Environment Agency offices you can visit to see the application

- documents on the public register
 - when you need to comment by
-

Notice: West Cumbria Rivers Trust: application made to impound water

The Environment Agency consults the public on certain applications for the abstraction and impoundment of water.

These notices explain:

- what the application is about
- which Environment Agency offices you can visit to see the application documents on the public register
- when you need to comment by