

## News story: More seats for rail passengers as nearly £1 billion is invested in Midlands services

Rail passengers will get new longer trains with more seats and more space as nearly £1 billion is invested in services on the West Midlands network.

There will be 400 new carriages rolled out by 2021 and space for an extra 85,000 passengers on rush hour services in Birmingham and London, with the longer trains providing extra seats and space for passengers.

Under the deal with West Midlands Trains Ltd (a joint venture between Abellio, East Japan Railway Company and Mitsui & Co Ltd) to run the West Midlands franchise, passengers will get:

- free wifi on all main line services by the end of 2019
- for the first time compensation if services are delayed by more than 15 minutes
- improved access for those requiring extra assistance, including disabled people

Smart ticketing and live passenger information will also be rolled out under the deal, as part of a package of reforms that will improve journeys for passengers.

The franchise covers services across the West Midlands, as well as trains from London Euston to Crewe and from Liverpool to Birmingham.

[West Midlands video](#)

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

This is great news for passengers using West Midlands services – with new trains, more space, more regular services and easier access for disabled people.

We are improving the whole travelling experience with live train crowding information, compensation for people delayed by 15 minutes or more, smart ticketing and better value tickets for part-time workers.

This shows we are delivering on our commitment to build a railway that works for everyone.

Dominic Booth, Managing Director of Abellio UK, said:

We are delighted to have been announced as preferred bidder for the West Midlands franchise, driving growth in one of the most exciting regions in the country. We will be investing nearly £1 billion into the network, delivering new trains, better stations and a whole host of other benefits for passengers.

The trains running only in the West Midlands area will be jointly managed by the Department for Transport and West Midlands Rail (WMR), a consortium of 16 local councils.

Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands, said:

We want to see a new golden era for our local trains and today's announcement is an important step towards that.

Having the ability to use our local knowledge and understanding to shape what West Midlands Trains will deliver for passengers under this franchise has also been a game changer.

I believe the deal secured today will help create a railway that can not only improve people's journeys but keep our economy growing and we look forward to working with West Midlands Trains in making that happen.

There will be 20,000 extra seats for rush hour passengers in Birmingham, and 10,000 for people in London.

On top of this, there will be standing room for 50,000 passengers in Birmingham in metro-style carriages, similar to the ones used on the London Overground, for short cross-city journeys, and standing room for an additional 5,000 passengers in London.

The new franchise will see closer partnership working between track and train – delivering the Secretary of State's vision for the network. The West Midlands network of trains and infrastructure will be run by a local team of people with a commitment to the smooth operation of their routes, improving services and performance.

Other key benefits for passengers under the franchise deal include:

- plans to limit the impact of delays caused by leaves on the line in the autumn, including through the introduction of new modern trains

- an extension of smart ticketing in the West Midlands making this available at more stations, and a new smart card season ticket for people using the Northampton to Euston line
- more than 800 new digital information screens across 150 stations providing real time journey information, plus a new mobile service that gives live crowding information to help passengers plan ahead
- passengers will also be entitled to 25% compensation if their train is delayed by 15 minutes for the first time – they already receive 50% of their money back for delays of half an hour and full compensation if it is more than an hour
- more than £70 million invested in new and existing depots to improve train reliability
- more than £60 million invested on station improvements which will deliver:
  - over 1,000 new car park spaces
  - over 2,500 cycle parking spaces
  - a cycle hire scheme
  - new and refurbished waiting rooms
  - more seats at stations

As well as feasibility studies for the development of new stations in the West Midlands.

The new contract will start in December and last until March 2026.

## **West Midlands**

There will be more than 180 new train carriages for the West Midlands, creating more space for people.

This includes investment in 100 new carriages on the Cross City line and 80 new carriages for the Snow Hill line, offering longer and more spacious services.

The carriages for the Cross City line will offer metro-style services with increased space to carry more passengers, and wider doors for quicker access.

Other benefits for passengers include:

- more trains between Birmingham and Shrewsbury with 2 services per hour from December 2018
- a regular 2 trains per hour service between Birmingham and Rugeley via the Chase Line from December 2018
- a new direct hourly service between Birmingham and Stoke-on-Trent from

December 2018 providing much needed additional capacity on this busy route

- an extension of Cross City line services from Longbridge to Bromsgrove
- a new hourly shuttle between Leamington Spa and Coventry serving the new station at Kenilworth.
- two morning and two evening rush hour direct services between Walsall and London from December 2018, helping to unlock economic growth in the region
- more Sunday services on the Cross City line with the number of trains per hour between Longbridge and Birmingham doubling from 2 per hour to 4 in December 2018, and then increasing to 6 in May 2021
- increased Sunday services on the Snow Hill line with the number of trains per hour between Snow Hill and Stourbridge Junction increasing from 2 to 6
- a new Sunday service between Birmingham and Shrewsbury from December 2018, and a second train per hour introduced in May 2021

## London

Passengers on London services will benefit from 225 brand new carriages, with all other carriages being completely refurbished.

People travelling between Northampton and Euston and on the Abbey Line between St Albans Abbey and Watford Junction will be able to pay for their travel with a smart card for the first time.

In other improvements:

- more space for passengers will be rolled out on the Marston Vale line with earlier and later services between Bedford and Bletchley and a new hourly Sunday service from May 2021 for the first time
- modern trains for the Abbey line and improvements to Sunday services from May 2021 which will provide a similar level of service to that provided on a Saturday
- mobile phone and laptop chargepoints on all London services by May 2021
- more Sunday trains on the line from Euston to Northampton, with up to 4 services an hour running between Euston and Milton Keynes by May 2021

## North-west

New trains will be arriving in the north-west on the Liverpool to Birmingham line, which passes through Crewe and Winsford. These are longer and have more seats for passengers than the existing trains.

A later last train from Liverpool to Birmingham on a Saturday, departing at least 45 minutes later.

Enhanced Sunday services between Birmingham and Liverpool from December 2021 increasing from one train per hour to 2 trains per hour.

A new Sunday service for Acton Bridge from May 2021.

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## Press release: Landmark review places family ties at the heart of prison reform

- New study by Lord Michael Farmer calls family relationships “the golden thread” to help reduce reoffending.
- Research shows prisoners who receive visits from a family member are 39 per cent less likely to reoffend.

Research has shown close ties between prisoners and key family members can significantly reduce the risk of reoffending – which costs society £15 billion every year.

In a landmark review, [‘Importance of strengthening prisoners’ family ties to prevent reoffending and reduce intergenerational crime’](#) published today (10 August 2017) Lord Farmer has identified family as the “golden thread” running through the reforms across the prison estate.

In September 2016 Lord Farmer, in partnership with the membership charity Clinks, was commissioned by the government to investigate how connecting prisoners with their families can improve offender wellbeing, assist in keeping the public safe and reduce reoffending.

Lord Farmer said:

My report is not sentimental about prisoners’ families, as if they can, simply by their presence, alchemise a disposition to commit crime into one that is law abiding.

However, I do want to hammer home a very simple principle of reform that needs to be a golden thread running through the prison system and the agencies that surround it. That principle is that relationships are fundamentally important if people are to change.

The Ministry of Justice has already started developing a strategy which will take forward recommendations from the review.

Progress is being made on a number of the recommendations, including giving governors the budget and flexibility to spend their resources appropriately to help prisoners keep important family ties.

Alongside this the government has started piloting significant relationship performance measures which will provide crucial guidance to deliver more consistent services in areas such as visitations across the entire prisons estate.

The recommendations have been welcomed by Justice Secretary David Lidington who has set out his commitment to creating calm and ordered prison environments to deliver more effective rehabilitation.

Speaking today, he echoed Lord Farmer's view that family relationships are essential to reducing reoffending.

Justice Secretary David Lidington said:

Families can play a significant role in supporting an offender and I am grateful to Lord Farmer for his dedication and research on this important issue.

We are committed to transforming prisons into places of safety and reform and we recognise the need to provide those in our care with stable environments, and opportunities to change their behaviour.

There are numerous examples of good practice in this area, and we will continue work on a strategy to best support offender needs. That has to start with the numbers of prison officers available to support offenders which is why we are increasing staffing number by 2,500.

Lord Farmer's review reflects on progress that has been made in this area over recent years, with many prisons already having defined programmes which puts family relationships at the centre.

Innovative schemes and partnerships with local organisations are also vital vehicles for preparing men for release, and there are already proven partnerships in this area such as Storybook Dads, who help fathers keep in contact with their children, and Partners of Prisoners, who work with prisons to deliver more welcoming visitor environments.

Clinks CEO & Deputy Chair of the Farmer Review, Anne Fox said:

The Farmer Review listened to over 1,000 men in prison and their families, voluntary organisations across the UK, prison staff and academics.

The review concludes that quality family services will help people turn away from crime and it will support families to cope. Voluntary organisations have pioneered best practice for decades and now is the time to spread it far and wide.

The government has secured an additional £100 million a year investment for an extra 2,500 prison officers. With the increasing numbers of prison officers there will be more time available to directly supervise offenders, provide one-to-one support and increase the number of visits.

This, alongside the creation of Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service, will put offender management at the centre of our reform agenda and create a necessary cultural change, bringing with it stability and security – and ultimately reducing the risk of reoffending.

### Notes to editors:

- Ministry of Justice research shows that prisoners who receive visits from a family member are 39% less likely to reoffend.
- [The Prisons Reform White Paper](#) outlined that family members may encourage offenders to take responsibility for their offending, and the impact it has on their lives and the lives of those around them. If a prisoner receives visits by a partner or family member (one measure of family ties) the odds of reoffending are 39% lower than for prisoners who had not received such visits.
- Clinks supports, represents and campaigns for the voluntary sector working with offenders. Clinks aims to ensure the sector and all those with whom they work are informed and engaged in order to transform the lives of offenders and their communities. Contact details for Clinks, Ben Watson Communications Manager, 07809 332084, [Ben.Watson@clinks.org](mailto:Ben.Watson@clinks.org)
- Storybook Dads is a national charity that operates in 90 prisons nationwide, including women's prisons and Young Offenders establishments. It helps to maintain family ties by enabling imprisoned parents to read personalised bedtime stories to their children. The recordings are enhanced by adding sound effects and music and are sent to the children, so that the children can listen to their parents' voice whenever they need to. Storybook Dads helps approximately 5,000 families annually to keep in touch in this unique and meaningful way.

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## [News story: DVSA aims to stop violence against its staff](#)

Between April 2016 and March 2017, more than 300 driving examiners, vehicle testers and roadside enforcement staff suffered physical or verbal abuse while doing their jobs. This was an increase of more than 50% on the previous year.

Attacks on staffs have included:

- verbal abuse and death threats
- damaging staff cars and offices
- serious physical assaults
- lorry drivers trying to run DVSA enforcement cars off the road
- failed driving test candidates driving off with their examiner still in the car against their will

DVSA's campaign aims to put a stop to this completely unacceptable abuse against its staff.

## **Don't take it out on our staff**

Around 4,600 people work for DVSA. They help you to stay safe on Great Britain's roads by:

- testing learners to make sure they can drive safely
- helping keep vehicles safe through MOTs and annual tests
- taking unsafe drivers and vehicles off the roads

They all have a right to come to work without being abused, threatened or assaulted.

The campaign will:

- warn people what will happen if they do abuse, threaten or assault staff
- show how being assaulted at work affects members of staff
- encourage staff to report any instance of abuse so offenders can be dealt with

Posters warning about the consequences of assaulting staff will be displayed at DVSA sites across Great Britain

## **At driving test centres**

Learner drivers who swear at or verbally abuse staff will be forced to:

- use a different test centre the next time they take a test
- take future tests with an extra supervisor present

Anyone who threatens or assault examiners, drives off with an examiner still in the car, or damages DVSA property will:

- be reported to the police
- face the strongest possible penalties

Although it's extremely rare, driving instructors sometimes try to influence the results of a driving test by harassing or threatening examiners. They face being:

- banned from specific driving test centres
- removed from the approved driving instructor register

## **At the roadside, at operator sites or authorised testing centres**

DVSA will:

- record any abuse from commercial drivers and vehicle operators as evidence for any investigation by the traffic commissioners – they have the power to suspend or take away driving licences and operator licences
- report serious incidents to the police



In some busy sites, enforcement staff are starting to trial body-worn cameras to capture evidence of abuse.

Body-worn cameras will be trialled by DVSA

## **Abuse will not be tolerated**

Gareth Llewellyn, DVSA Chief Executive, said:

Our staff work incredibly hard to help you stay safe on Britain's roads. We do not tolerate anyone abusing, threatening or assaulting them.

Our message is clear – whatever has happened, don't take it out on our staff. If you do, we'll press for the strongest possible penalties.

The Traffic Commissioner for Wales, Nick Jones, said:

My fellow traffic commissioners and I welcome the agency's campaign to tackle the unacceptable abuse which staff may face whilst carrying out their professional duties.

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## **News story: Vasquez report published**

MAIB's report on the investigation of the of the fatal carbon monoxide poisoning on the small motor cruiser Vasquez on 12 November 2016, is now published.

The report contains details of what happened and the subsequent actions taken:

PDF, 1.52MB, 12 pages

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## Press enquiries

Press enquiries during office hours 01932 440015

Press enquiries out of hours 020 7944 4292

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## [News story: UK Government invests £3.5m in Ayrshire](#)

The UK Government is set to invest £3.5 million in an ambitious regeneration programme in Kilmaronock. The HALO project in the former Diageo bottling plant will strengthen Ayrshire's economic prospects, create nearly a thousand new jobs and benefit local businesses and residents.

Scottish Secretary David Mundell said:

This £3.5 million investment, part of the UK Government's industrial strategy, will help create an innovation hub at the heart of this ambitious regeneration project. The scheme has huge potential to transform the Ayrshire economy, drive businesses innovation and attract new talent to the region.

The new innovation hub will foster the next generation of entrepreneurs, with a strong focus on innovation, digital skills, and cyber security.

The wider project will see the first commercial deep geothermal heat pump installed in the UK in nearly thirty years, providing green energy at below-market prices to nearby homes and businesses. It will also create new office space and retail areas which will attract dynamic businesses into Kilmaronock, as well as affordable homes.

The UK Government's Industrial Strategy is helping industry succeed and supporting the private sector in achieving ambitious projects which can have a transformative impact in their local economies. Coming on top of around £1 billion invested in UK City Deals in Scotland, the support for the HALO project demonstrates the commitment of the UK Government to help support the Scottish economy and deliver for people in Scotland.