

West Coast marks new partnership model for rail

- First/Trenitalia announced as the successful bidder to run the West Coast Partnership from December 2019 to 2031
- Transport Secretary and Chair of Rail Review confirm new Partnership is departure from flawed systems of the past, which will provide flexibility to help implement the future Williams Review recommendations
- Confirmation that government intends to publish Williams Review white paper in due course
- Passengers to benefit from more seats and 263 extra services every week, station upgrades and 61% reduction to fleet CO2 emissions through brand-new, modern trains

First Trenitalia has today (14 August 2019) been announced as the successful bidder to operate the West Coast Partnership, set to provide passengers with new trains, more seats, simplified fares and more frequent services on the West Coast Main Line.

Both the Transport Secretary Grant Shapps and Keith Williams, chair of the [Rail Review](#), have heralded the Partnership as vital to deliver the swift introduction of significant benefits for passengers. The new Partnership is also designed to fit with the direction of the Review and to facilitate the implementation of Williams' recommendations in due course.

It also reflects a significant move away from the previous flawed franchising system to tackle issues already highlighted by the Williams Review, with the use of a forecast revenue mechanism (FRM) to avoid a repeat of the issues that affected the previous East Coast Main Line. This mechanism will be supported by a new annual review process, to ensure partnership working is effective, collaborative and continually improving.

The Transport Secretary has also confirmed that the government intends to produce a white paper in due course setting out the recommendations of Williams, to bring forward his vision for a truly passenger focused industry centred on clear, accountable leadership.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

This award is positive news for passengers, with more services, more direct connections and ambitious plans for a cleaner, greener railway, and also represents a decisive shift towards a new model for rail.

It is a Partnership supported by Keith Williams, built with the flexibility to respond to his recommendations and deliver fundamental reform to a flawed system. Meeting Keith last week confirmed our shared determination to deliver a future that puts

passengers at the heart of the railways, and get our trains to run on time.

That is why I have asked Keith to produce his recommendations for a white paper, with fearless proposals that will deliver a railway system fit for the 21st century.

Keith Williams, Chair of the Rail Review, said:

The railway needs reform that prioritises the customers and communities it serves, with an absolute focus on delivering benefits for passengers. I have also been clear that my review must not stop or delay investment and innovation.

This West Coast Partnership delivers for passengers. It is a step forward that is firmly in line with the review, introducing benefits for passengers today and capable of incorporating the reforms needed for the future.

Today's award confirms that, from December 2022, passengers will benefit from 263 extra train services every week, with Motherwell set to become a major calling point for most West Coast Partnership services. Destinations including Llandudno and Gobowen will now be served by direct trains to and from London, and Walsall will receive its first direct intercity services. Subject to approval from the Office of Rail and Road, 2 trains per hour will run between Liverpool and London.

First Trenitalia will also oversee the introduction of new environmentally-friendly trains, entirely replacing the diesel-only fleet and reducing CO2 emissions by 61%. It will also invest £117 million in a major refurbishment of the current Pendolino fleet, providing more comfortable seats and additional luggage space.

The new operator will also strive for ambitious green targets by investing in stations and depots to reduce the environmental impact of the Partnership. This includes introducing new solar panels and energy efficient air conditioning, alongside a commitment to achieving an 80% reduction in non-recyclable waste from products sold or supplied on-board trains.

First Trenitalia will also oversee the introduction of:

- more flexible and convenient smart ticketing options
- free wifi and high quality mobile connectivity on board services
- improved delay repay compensation for all passengers
- £32 million of investment into developing and delivering infrastructure capacity and capability improvements
- 10 new secure cycle storage facilities; improved bus facilities; 900 new car parking spaces, and 100 new Electric Vehicle charging points
- new ticket machines at stations, removal of the administration fee and enabling on-the-day changes to both advance tickets and seat

reservations

- new initiatives to increase diversity, inclusion and skills retention in the rail industry

First Trenitalia will also act as the Shadow Operator responsible for HS2. The government will shortly launch a review into HS2 and the Partnership has been designed in order to ensure that it can implement the review's outcomes.