

Countdown to journey for improved rail services for Welsh passengers

Some of the improvements, which will bring about a transformation in rail travel for people and communities the length and breadth of Wales and its borders, will be immediate, including a new customer website and app, new branding appearing across the network and enhanced Welsh language service provision – while other will be introduced as soon as possible.

These include plans to spend £194m on station improvements, including the building of five new stations, and the deep cleaning of stations from this December.

Ken Skates said:

“Our plans go beyond a traditional transport project – they have to become the spark for wider economic renewal. They have to help individuals, businesses and communities who need a reliable, integrated transport system to help them find a new job, support their business to expand, and bring new investment to their town.

The Metro project is not only about dealing with today’s transport problems, but how we provide opportunities for the future –and not just in transport terms, but the impact that the Metro infrastructure will have on economic possibilities for people throughout south Wales.”

Other major benefits of the new Wales and Borders rail contract include:

- An additional 600 staff will be recruited to deliver the service in a range of roles and 450 new apprenticeships (30 every year) will also be created over the life of the contract.
- £1.9 billion will be invested in improving passengers’ travel experience, including an £800 million investment in trains, boosting overall service capacity by 65 per cent.
- By 2023 95 per cent of journeys will be on a 148 brand new trains, half of which will be assembled in Wales.
- The Central Metro will be operated by 100 per cent electric traction, with the electricity sourced from 100 per cent renewable sources, 50 per cent of which will be sourced in Wales.
- By the end of 2023, passengers will be able to take advantage of an additional 285 services each weekday across Wales (a 29 per cent increase). This will include improvements to the Ebbw Vale and

Wrexham – Bidston lines as well as the Cambrian and Heart of Wales lines.

- From December 2022 there will be a 28 per cent increase in Sunday mileage, creating a true seven-day-a-week service.

Smart ticketing will ensure that fares are more flexible and cheaper off-peak fares will be introduced including fare reductions in North Wales and at approximately 50 per cent of stations in the valleys.

Part of the new contract includes the delivery of the next phase of the £738million South Wales Metro project, and the first £119m of that was announced by First Minister Carwyn Jones at the end of last week.

Speaking at the ‘Metro and Me’ conference for business leaders today (Monday 8th October), Finance Secretary Mark Drakeford brought delegates up to speed on developments, saying:

“Our plans go beyond a traditional transport project. The Metro will deliver against a range of our policy objectives by creating a network that will serve communities, accessible to all and operating seven days a week.

It will increase social mobility and widen access, connecting people and communities to employment opportunities, and education, health and leisure facilities.”