

# Final tenders invited as Wales nears decision on next rail service

The new rail service will deliver a step-change in the quality of rail travel in Wales. Since January 2017, officials and bidders have been discussing a range of innovative solutions to find those which best meet the needs of people in Wales and the border regions.

Rather than follow the traditional model for procuring a rail service, with the issue of a set specification that companies bid for, this approach has allowed new ideas to be explored and collaborative working relationships to be developed – setting the tone for the new service.

Proposals for the South Wales Metro are being developed alongside the Wales and Borders service to aid development of an integrated transport system in the region. The deadline to submit final tender is 21 December.

Economy Secretary, Ken Skates said:

“I’m delighted to confirm that Abellio Rail Cymru, Arriva Rail Wales, KeolisAmey and MTR Corporation (Cymru) Ltd have all been invited to submit final tenders for the next Wales and Borders Rail Service. From rolling stock to frequency of services, Metros to profit thresholds, this final tender will provide the blueprint for what these four giants of the rail industry are bidding to provide Wales.

“Detailed discussions with all four of the shortlisted potential operators have only served to reinforce our optimism that the next service will see big improvements. I look forward to seeing how the detailed tenders tackle our ambitious requirements for the next 15 years before making a decision on the successful operator in early 2018.

“We intend to create a rail service that benefits the whole of Wales, communities along the border and in England. One with passengers at it’s heart and today’s announcement is another

important step towards that.”

In inviting final tender for the franchise, the Economy Secretary provided an update on progress with UK Government on fair funding. He said:

“There is will on both sides to ensure that the settlement works for Wales and the Border and, following positive talks, a resolution is near. It’s great news for rail users across Wales that this ensures the services modern Wales expects and have been promised, will be fully delivered.”