

First full day of new Wales and borders rail service contract starts today

This is the message from First Minister, Carwyn Jones who will be on Pontypridd station today to mark the first full day of the new Wales and Borders rail services.

At the launch, which sees the 15-year relationship with Arriva Trains Wales come to an end, the First Minister will talk of the historic and economic significance of the new contract.

He will say:

“This is an important moment for rail in Wales – indeed for devolution itself.

Led by Transport for Wales with our partners KeolisAmey this will be the very first ‘made in Wales’ rail service, designed and delivered by the Welsh Government

The opportunity to re-design and re-purpose our railway network in Wales is a once in a generation opportunity and I am confident that by 2033 it can be the best passenger rail service in the UK.

The chance to develop an integrated transport system that encourages economic growth and better supports our public services is supported across all political parties, and the opportunities to develop Metro systems here in South East Wales, in the North East and around Swansea Bay are drawing attention from across the globe.”

He will also pay tribute to the people on the front line:

“It is important to understand that our bold ambitions will take time to bring to fruition and won’t be achieved overnight.

However, when I talk to the drivers, the guards, the maintenance crews or ticket hall staff across Wales I’m always struck by their enthusiasm and their belief in what our rail network can be in Wales.

We are lucky to have so many people, who come to work for a service every day, genuinely wanting to make it better – and who see in it the potential for growth.

We need to harness their ideas and make our railway the envy of the world.”

Speaking at an earlier event in North Wales, Transport Secretary Ken Skates outlined some of the many improvements passengers can expect to see in the next few weeks, months and years:

“With investment totalling almost £5bn over the next decade and a half, our network will be transformed. We have committed £800m to deliver new trains across the network, which by 2023 will see 95% of rail journeys made on new trains. A further £194m will be put to improving the passenger experiences at our stations across the Wales and Borders network.

There is £738m earmarked to modernise the central metro lines, support the next phase of Metro and run more trains every hour. Transport for Wales rail services will offer 600 new jobs and 450 apprenticeships over the 15 year lifespan of the contract.

Passengers will enjoy the benefits of the introduction of smart ticketing across the network, and through the extension of free travel to under-11s with half-price fares for 16 to 18 year olds, they will see economic improvements also.

This is an exciting time for Wales, and we wish Transport for Wales every success in bringing about these transformational changes on our behalf.”

James Price, Chief Executive, Transport for Wales added:

“Transport for Wales has innovative plans to revolutionise transport across Wales and ambitions to create a rail service that puts customers first. Taking over the running of the Wales and Borders rail service is an important first step on an exciting journey of transformation that will also see the creation of the South Wales Metro.”

Kevin Thomas, Chief Executive, Transport for Wales Rail Services commented:

“Our customers, the people of Wales and border areas, deserve a rail service that matches Welsh Government’s vision. We know people have high expectations of the transformation that will happen in the coming years. We’re determined to win their trust and develop a rail service that exceeds their expectations.”