

News story: Bristol commuters to benefit from new fleet of modern spacious trains and contactless payment

Passengers travelling into and out of Bristol are set to benefit from a fleet of modern trains providing extra seating, air-conditioning, wi-fi and at-seat plugs.

Smart ticketing is also to be rolled out locally with trials of contactless payments now underway at 11 stations in the area to make journeys easier.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling today (6 July 2017) visited Bristol Temple Meads station to welcome the modern diesel Turbo trains, which launched for the first time on the Severn Beach line into the city this week and also to see progress on the smart ticketing trials.

The first train in the modern fleet marks stage one in a full rollout in the Bristol and wider area, providing passengers with more space and more comfort on their journeys to and from work.

They are being introduced on commuter routes into Bristol, Taunton, Cardiff, Gloucester and Portsmouth over the next year. The route between Temple Meads and Severn Beach via Clifton Down and Avonmouth was chosen first because it has seen some of the strongest growth of any community rail line in the country.

The introduction of electric trains between Maidenhead and London Paddington since May has allowed the release of the more modern diesel trains for passengers in the Bristol area.

Mr Grayling also saw a new pilot scheme at the station to introduce ticketless travel on rail journeys into and out of the city. The 'Touch' smart ticketing pilot is currently being tested at stations on the same Severn Beach line into Bristol and is jointly funded by train operator Great Western Railway (GWR) and Bristol City Council.

It is due to launch in September and will allow passengers the option of tapping in and out using cards as well as tickets. Gates along the route are being upgraded with smart readers as part of testing for the scheme. Smart ticketing is much more convenient for passengers because it allows paperless commuting and speedy, tap-and-go travel. It allows them to avoid queues when buying tickets and makes it easier to replace lost, stolen or damaged tickets.

During his visit, Mr Grayling met with GWR's Engineering Director Andrew Mellor and representatives from Bristol City Council to see progress on the

scheme and to take a look inside the cabs of the new Turbo fleet. He said:

The rollout of the more modern trains is great news for passengers in and around Bristol because they offer more seats, more facilities and greater comfort. It is a demonstration of our determination to put passengers at the heart of everything we do.

I applaud GWR and the City Council as well for their investment in the future of our railways with their smart ticketing venture. This is an excellent example of the vision the government spelled out at the end of last year – to give every passenger across the country the option of travelling on rail with a smart ticket or card by the end of 2018.

Nationally, the government has committed £80 million to expanding smart ticketing across the country. Around 450 stations across the south-east have already been upgraded to support the initiative.