

# [News story: New rail academy to train 500 apprentices opened by Transport Secretary](#)

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling today (October 4 2017) opened a new north-west rail academy which is due to train 500 apprentices over the next 5 years.

Thousands of extra rail apprentices will be needed in the coming years as the network grows rapidly, and the government is investing £1 billion in the Great North Rail Project up until 2020.

The Alstom Academy for Rail in Widnes, Cheshire, is due to take on 20 new apprentices this autumn, and offer further 30 apprenticeship places to current Alstom staff. The numbers will rise to 135 by 2021.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

Our rail network is growing and I have been clear we will need thousands more people working in the sector in the years ahead.

I'm delighted to open Alstom's top class new Rail Academy will help train up the next generation of talent.

We are investing £13 billion in transport across the north and there are some great, rewarding careers working on our railways.

The Alstom Academy for Rail will be giving young people and mature employees a rounded education and will work with other education providers to deliver its apprenticeship programs. Students will take engineering classes at local colleges such as Riverside College and then learn rail specific skills at the academy.

Nick Crossfield, Managing Director at Alstom UK & Ireland, said:

Today we celebrate a fantastic new industrial facility for the UK, and even more importantly, our first intake of new apprentices.

In year one the Alstom Academy for Rail will train 20 apprentices, 5 of whom have been taken on to help repaint the iconic Pendolino trains right here in Widnes.

It is a particularly proud moment for us to welcome the Secretary of State to see our progress on that project, because it demonstrates how transport contracts can deliver real jobs and training on the ground.

Not just creating a better railway, but also building a new generation of highly skilled railway engineers.

The training that students undertake will include safety and maintenance of vehicles such as Alstom's Pendolino trains which are used on the West Coast Mainline, or the Citadis trams that are used in Nottingham.

Alongside the academy, Alstom are repainting 56 Pendolino trains next to the training academy in their train modernisation facility, for use by Virgin on the West Coast Main Line.

The team is 80-strong and includes 5 new apprentices who will work on the project.