

[News story: All aboard the new Intercity Express trains that will transform journeys across Britain](#)

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling hailed the start of a new era in rail passenger services when he travelled on the first of the new fleet of £5.7 billion Intercity Express trains from Bristol Temple Meads to London Paddington today (16 October 2017), joined by Great Western Railway (GWR) bosses and commuters.

The fleet, which is being built at Hitachi Rail Europe's manufacturing facility at Newton Aycliffe in County Durham, will be rolled out across the Great Western and East Coast lines over the next 3 years. The manufacturing facility at Newton Aycliffe has created more than 700 new direct jobs and more at depots across the routes, as well as supporting the UK supply chain. And more than 70% of the parts sourced for building the trains at the facility come from UK suppliers.

Tim Bowles, West of England Mayor, Chris Grayling, Secretary of State for Transport and Alun Cairns, Secretary of State for Wales at Paddington.

Today's launch is the beginning of a huge change for passengers that will deliver more than 4,000 extra seats into London Paddington in the morning peak from 2018, and more than 12,000 extra seats into London Kings Cross by the end of 2020.

[Jobs and skills](#)

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

This government is investing record amounts to modernise Britain's rail network and give passengers the faster, more comfortable trains and the better journeys that they expect.

These new state-of-the-art trains show our commitment to put passengers at the heart of everything that we do and will carry people across Britain, from Swansea to Aberdeen and London to Inverness.

Our railways are a huge success but passengers rightly expect improved services and better trains – and only last week I announced another [£48 billion for the network from 2019](#) that will focus on better maintenance to dramatically improve reliability.

I'm pleased to be on the very first of these brand new trains to welcome them into action.

GWR Managing Director Mark Hopwood said:

Today, we at GWR are once again making history, as we launch the first new Intercity Express Train in almost 40 years – and continue our journey to revalue rail in the hearts and minds of the travelling public.

I am delighted to have this first train in passenger service. Over the next year we will continue to expand the operation of these new trains, including the introduction of another fleet specific to Devon and Cornwall.

The new trains, alongside our new Electrostar fleet for London and the Thames Valley, will bring about a step change in passenger transport – delivering more seats, and enabling us to operate more frequent and faster services.

The new trains are a renewal of the ageing Intercity 125 fleet, which was first introduced in 1976, and they will go on to replace fleets across the country. The government-led Intercity Express Programme (IEP), funded by Agility Trains, has brought together Hitachi Rail, GWR, Virgin Trains East Coast and Network Rail to design, develop and build the new class of state-of-the-art, modern trains and supporting depot infrastructure for the Great Western and East Coast routes.

Karen Boswell, Managing Director, Hitachi Rail Europe, said:

We, at Hitachi Rail, are really proud to have built trains in the UK, designed using Japanese bullet train technology, that are improving passengers' journeys on the Great Western route.

Nine years of hard work has gone into making today happen, from creating a brand new factory and workforce, to establishing modern maintenance facilities from Swansea to London. We've delivered pioneering 21st century trains for passengers to enjoy and sparked a manufacturing renaissance in the north-east.

[New intercity express trains](#)

The first services of the 57 new Class 800 Hitachi trains are being introduced from now into 2018 and will mark the start of the biggest fleet upgrade in a generation for GWR as the InterCity 125 fleet is replaced. Once completed in 2018, trains will then be introduced on the East Coast Mainline.

Agility Trains is working in partnership with the Department for Transport to develop the IEP. Agility Trains West, which is funding the fleet entering service with GWR, is made up of Hitachi Rail Europe, John Laing Group and John Laing Infrastructure Fund.

Press release: Government outlines plan to become the UK's most inclusive employer by 2020

The Civil Service Diversity & Inclusion Strategy outlines a range of ambitious proposals to achieve this aim, including:

- to build a dedicated ethnic minority programme to improve the representation of ethnic minority staff at the most senior levels across the Civil Service;
- to create a Diverse Leadership Task Force that will report to the Cabinet Secretary;
- to publish a data dashboard tracking progress on diversity and inclusion targets by April 2018;
- to establish a new framework for measuring inclusion;
- to embed diversity and inclusion in Single Departmental Plans.

The Civil Service has already made significant progress towards increasing the diversity of its workforce. Introducing measures such as anonymised recruitment and making Permanent Secretaries accountable to the Head of the Civil Service for improving diversity and inclusion have made a positive difference to the amount of under-represented groups in the Civil Service.

On gender whilst 42% of current Senior Civil Servants are women, in 2017, 49% of all new recruits into the SCS were women. The proportion of women at Senior Civil Service level (42%) is now greater than the representation of female executives and Board Directors in FTSE 100 companies (26%).

The proportion of ethnic minority civil servants has increased rapidly from 9.4% in 2012 to 11.2% today, and representation of disabled people within the Civil Service has increased every year since 2010, from 7.6% to 9.9% in 2017. Only 4.6% of Senior Civil Servants are from ethnic minority communities, however, and only 3.3% report having a disability, so there is more to be done.

Speaking today at the launch of the strategy, Caroline Nokes, Minister for Government Resilience and Efficiency, said:

The Civil Service leads the way on diversity in many ways. The gender pay gap is lower than in the private sector, we have significantly increased our representation of minority groups at every level, and our award winning Fast Stream programme is now broadly representative of the wider population in terms of diversity characteristics and social background. We are committed to driving this further, however, and I am proud that we are

putting inclusion at the forefront of our agenda and for the Civil Service to act as a leading light for other organisations across the UK.

Cabinet Secretary Jeremy Heywood said:

In order to serve the country to the best of its ability, the Civil Service must ensure that it reflects the diversity of the UK. Having a diverse workforce is not enough though, if it is to be truly brilliant, the Civil Service must strive to be inclusive and must create an environment where differences of thought and outlook are not only respected, but expected.

Although progress has been considerable over the past few years, today's strategy highlights how we must go further. Our ambition to become the most inclusive employer by 2020 is testament to our commitment to diversity and inclusion and to making the best use of talent that exists in all parts of society.

John Manzoni, Chief Executive of the Civil Service and Cabinet Office Permanent Secretary, added:

There are many studies and reports that evidence that diverse and inclusive organisations perform better and have happier people. The Civil Service, in order to ensure that it delivers the best quality service to the taxpayer, has a duty to attract and retain the best people from all corners of society. Our commitment to becoming the most inclusive employer in the UK by 2020 should also set an example to other public and private sector organisations.

[News story: PM call with Chancellor Merkel: 15 October 2017](#)

A Downing Street spokesperson said,

The Prime Minister spoke to Chancellor Merkel earlier this morning.

They discussed Iran and President Trump's decision not to recertify the nuclear deal. They agreed the UK and Germany both remained

firmly committed to the deal. They also agreed the international community needed to continue to come together to push back against Iran's destabilising regional activity, and to explore ways of addressing concerns about Iran's ballistic missile programme. They agreed to discuss further at the European Council in Brussels next week.

They looked ahead to next week's Council, agreeing on the importance of continued constructive progress in the UK's exit negotiations.

News story: Foreign Secretary statement on Somalia attack

The UK condemns in the strongest terms the cowardly attacks in Mogadishu, which have claimed so many innocent lives. My thoughts are with families of the victims, and the Government and people of Somalia at this difficult time. I would also like to praise the swift response of Mogadishu's security and first responders.

Those responsible have shown no regard for human life or the suffering of the Somali people. The UK will continue to support Somalia in the fight against terrorism.

News story: Foreign Secretary hosts talks with European foreign ministers

The Foreign Secretary today (Sunday 15 October) held talks with foreign ministers from eight European allies.

Boris Johnson was joined by the foreign ministers of Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia at Chevening House to discuss shared challenges and the UK's continued commitment to European security.

The Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said:

Our departure from the EU will make no difference to Britain's unconditional and immovable commitment to the security and defence of Europe.

This meeting was a further demonstration that the UK is a vital partner in the security of our continent.

The Foreign Secretary will tomorrow (Monday 16 October) travel to Luxembourg for the EU Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) where he will continue his discussions with European counterparts on the implications of the US announcement on the Iran nuclear deal.

The UK will continue to work closely with the international community to preserve the deal. In parallel with efforts to keep the nuclear deal, collective concerns about Iran's ballistic missile programme and regional activities must be addressed.

NOTES

The Foreign Secretary hosted the following European foreign ministers at Chevening today:

- Bulgarian Foreign Minister Ekaterina Zaharieva
- Croatian Foreign Minister Marija Pejčinović Burić
- Czech Deputy Foreign Minister Ivo Sramek
- Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjártó
- Polish Foreign Minister Witold Waszczykowski
- Romanian Foreign Minister Teodor Melescanu
- Slovakian State Secretary Ivan Korčok
- Slovenian State Secretary Andrej Logar