



Colin Major, honorary secretary at Railfuture West Midlands and Aidan Morland, Class 196 project engineer, West Midlands Trains

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Stakeholders sit down and relax with West Midlands Trains

West Midlands Trains has given Rail User Groups a sneak preview of the seating being developed for a brand new fleet of trains.

The new seats, developed by FISA and Schoenemann Design Ltd were unveiled at the train operator's maintenance depot in Tyseley, Birmingham. They are due to be installed in new Class 196 units being manufactured by Spanish business, CAF. As well having the chance to test out the new seats, visitors were taken on a tour of the facility and given an insight into the development process for the new units, set to be introduced on the

Birmingham Snow Hill lines in Summer 2020.

Customer experience has been at the heart of the design process, with a particular emphasis placed on the comfort and configuration of new saloon seats. The new Class 196 units will have additional capacity in comparison to existing West Midlands Trains regional fleets and the final design scheme allows improved seat pitch and window views in all positions.

Additionally, passengers will all have access to a USB point or a plug socket and every seat in standard or priority positions will have either a seat-back or fixed table. The cantilever design of the seats will also improve cleanliness and allow luggage to be stored underneath more easily.

The Class 196 units and their improved seating form part of a £1 billion pound investment package by the train operator to improve services across the network. This includes £700 million investment in new and refurbished trains; £70 million into new and existing depots to improve reliability; 20,000 extra seats for rush hour passengers in Birmingham and standing room for 50,000 more commuters in new, metro-style carriages.

Neil Bamford, engineering director at West Midlands Trains, said: "We've undergone a lengthy consultation process to get this right but the results will speak for themselves. Passengers travelling on the new units will be able to enjoy industry-leading standards of comfort and accessibility. Our customers are at the heart of everything we do and it was clear from the start that we needed to deliver something that really hit the mark. The feedback we have received today shows we have made the right choice.

"West Midlands Trains has a strong relationship with CAF and it's extremely pleasing to see that increasing numbers of customers, us included, has encouraged the manufacturer to expand outside of Spain, with plans to open a new production facility in Wales."

Fraser Pithie of the Shakespeare Line Rail User Group, said: "Thank you to West Midlands Trains for today's tour of Tyseley. It's not until you can see behind the scenes that you realise just how much planning and work goes into preparing for a whole new fleet of trains."

Colin Major, honorary secretary at Railfuture West Midlands, said: "I am sure

from the positive comments made by my fellow invitees that everyone found it a very informative event and I look forward to informing our members of the well thought out design for these DMUs."

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Notes to editors

For further information on West Midlands Trains, London Northwestern Railway or West Midlands Railway call our **newsroom** on **03300 955150**.

About West Midlands Trains

West Midlands Trains Ltd. will be running the West Midlands rail franchise from 10 December 2017 until 2025/6. Abellio has a 70.1% share of the company, East Japan Railway Company (JRE) and Mitsui & Co., Ltd. (Mitsui) own the remaining 29.9% in a 50:50 split.

About Abellio

Abellio is the international passenger transport subsidiary of the Dutch national railway company, Nederlandse Spoorwegen. Every day our people provide rail, bus and tram services to 1.7m customers across the UK, Germany and in the Netherlands. In the UK we operate buses through Abellio London, as well as ScotRail and Greater Anglia train services, and Merseyrail in a joint venture with Serco. In Germany we operate Abellio Deutschland, serving communities in North Rhine Westfalia, Saxony, Lower Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Hesse and Thuringia. Our role in transport extends beyond the journey from a-to-b. With our international heritage and our policy of sharing best practice, not just amongst ourselves, but across the wider transport industry, we provide thought leadership and truly innovative ideas which make a positive contribution to the communities we serve. For more information on Abellio visit www.abellio.com

About Mitsui

Mitsui is one of the most diversified and comprehensive trading, investment and service enterprises in the world with 139 offices in 66 countries as of

March, 2017. Utilising our global operating locations, network and information resources, we are multilaterally pursuing business that ranges from product sales, worldwide logistics and financing, through to the development of major international infrastructure and other projects in the following fields: Iron & Steel Products, Mineral & Metal Resources, Infrastructure Projects, Integrated Transportation Systems, Chemicals, Energy, Food Resources, Food Products & Services, Consumer Services, IT & Communication, and Corporate Development Business. Mitsui is actively taking on challenges for global business innovation around the world. For more information, visit www.mitsui.com.

About JR East

East Japan Railway Company (JR East) was established in 1987, when Japanese National Railways was divided as part of a package of railway reforms. JR East's railway business covers a 7,500 km (approx. 4,660 miles) network in the eastern part of the Japanese main island, including Tokyo Metropolitan area, and provides transportation services, comprising urban, suburban and high speed operations, for 17 million passengers on a daily basis. JR East also undertakes non-transport commercial activities, which account for more than 30% of the total revenue of JR East Group. JR East contributes to passengers and communities it serves by delivering high degrees of punctuality, reliability and comfort and also continues to pursue higher levels of safety and service quality through technical innovation. For more information, visit www.jreast.co.jp/e.

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