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West Midlands Grand Rail Collaboration launched

Rail industry bosses have come together in a ground breaking deal and the first of its kind in the country to drive up standards for rail passengers in the West Midlands.

Areas the new West Midlands Grand Rail Collaboration (GRC) will tackle include train service performance, simplifying fare structures, improving the quality of trains and stations, sharing busy track capacity in the most efficient way and delivering timetables to improve reliability.

Launched by Mayor of the West Midlands Andy Street on Thursday 19

September the GRC brings West Midlands Railway together with four other train operating companies, Network Rail, the West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE), Vintage Trains, Transport Focus and the Birmingham Centre for Railway Research and Education to put the focus on excellent customer service.

The partnership has been set up to ensure even closer working across the rail industry to coordinate improvements in the best interests of the customer.

Mayor Andy Street, who is also the independent chair of GRC 2019-2020, said: “Rail patronage in the West Midlands is growing faster than the rest of the UK and we are investing massively in the railways and delivering new stations.

“However we know problems still exist, particularly around punctuality and capacity, which is why I have launched the GRC so we can tackle these challenges effectively.

“Quite simply, this new collaboration is about putting the customer first - whether that is with reliable and dependable services that meet where and when people want to travel, or by creating stations that are modern, clean, and accessible to all.”

As part of its new role, the GRC has established a performance task force, which is in place to tackle train reliability and punctuality challenges. The train operators and Network Rail are communicating openly to make sensible decisions about how trains are run in the best interests of the customer.

Communities, accessibility and improving the overall station experience are also at the heart of the GRC. Ensuring that every user pays for their travel is another example of revenue protection managers from all train operators working together. A total of 206 ticketless train travellers using Birmingham New Street were issued with penalty fare notices by collaborative working on Friday 16th August.

Members of the GRC have pledged to tackle problems head on and promised action right here, right now. Invited stakeholders at the launch conference heard this commitment from lead representatives of the partner organisations.

Jan Chaudhry-van der Velde, managing director of West Midlands Railway, said: "With travelling by rail more popular than ever, this vital collaboration enables us to work together across the industry to provide the West Midlands 'travel to work area' with a joined-up, easy to understand rail network.

"By coming together with partners in this unique way we can be more proactive and make a real impact as the West Midlands transport network continues to grow."

About West Midlands Trains

For further information on this release, call our press office on 03300 955150 or email press.office@wmtrains.co.uk

West Midlands Trains operates both West Midlands Railway and London Northwestern Railway services.

- **London Northwestern Railway** services operate between Liverpool and Birmingham, and on the West Coast mainline to and from London Euston.
- **West Midlands Railway** services operate to destinations across the West Midlands via Birmingham New Street.

For more information on these services visit westmidlandsrailway.co.uk or londonnorthwesternrailway.co.uk

The West Midlands Trains franchise started on 10 December 2017 and will run until 2025/26.

West Midlands Trains operates 1,300 services a day, manages 150 stations and provides over 70 million passenger journeys a year. Over the course of the franchise, West Midlands Trains will be investing £1 billion into the rail network to deliver new trains, improved routes and station upgrades. This will include 400 new train carriages across the network and space for an extra 85,000 passengers into Birmingham and London at peak times.

The franchise is a joint venture between Abellio (70.1% share) and East Japan Railway Company / Mitsui & Co., Ltd (29.9% share in a 50:50 split). Abellio is the international passenger transport subsidiary of the Dutch national railway company, Nederlandse Spoorwegen. In the UK, Abellio operates ScotRail and Greater Anglia train services, Merseyrail services in a joint venture with Serco and buses through Abellio London. For more information visit www.abellio.com

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