

# Alstom plans to run new direct train services between North Wales, Shropshire, the Midlands and London

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**Alstom**, global leader in smart and sustainable mobility, plans to operate a new passenger rail service across England and Wales. Working in partnership with consultancy **SLC Rail**, the open access operation will be known as **Wrexham, Shropshire and Midlands Railway (WSMR)**.

As the country's foremost supplier of new trains and train services, and a leading signalling and infrastructure provider, Alstom will operate its own rail service in the UK for the first time.

WSMR is seeking to introduce direct connectivity to and from North Wales, Shropshire, the Midlands and London that doesn't exist today, linking growing communities and businesses, and making rail travel more convenient, enjoyable and affordable.

WSMR offers passengers in Wrexham, Gobowen, Shrewsbury, Walsall and Coleshill a direct link with the capital, alongside Darlaston once its new station opens. Meanwhile, journey times between Shrewsbury and Walsall will be dramatically reduced from the current alternative.

“These exciting proposals could see better connections for communities across North Wales and the Midlands, including direct services to London from Shrewsbury, Telford and Wrexham,” said Huw Merriman, Rail Minister.

He added: “Competition delivers choice for passengers and drives up standards, which is why we continue to work with industry to help make the most of open access rail.”

It is anticipated that WSMR services could begin as early as 2025 and it is expected the new operation will create around 50 new jobs, with roles mostly based in North Wales and the Midlands.

“As the country’s leading supplier of rolling stock and train services, it makes perfect sense that we now move into operating our own fleet to serve passengers directly. Having been part of the fabric of UK rail for two centuries, we’re excited to enter this new era as an open access operator,” said Nick Crossfield, Managing Director UK and Ireland at Alstom.

He added: “Alstom is also committed to embedding sustainability into every element of our organisation, and WSMR will help drive a modal shift from road to rail by offering a greener alternative for travellers across England and Wales.”

The proposal envisages a service of five trains per day in each direction Monday to Saturday, with four travelling both ways on Sundays. Trains will stop at Gobowen, Shrewsbury, Telford Central, Wolverhampton, Darlaston, Walsall, Coleshill Parkway, Nuneaton and Milton Keynes on their journey between Wrexham General and London Euston.

WSMR estimates it would serve a core catchment area of around 1.5 million people outside London, a population which is set to grow by 16 per cent over the next decade.

“From the Welsh borders to the Midlands, our routes will forge new connections, linking overlooked regions of England and Wales with direct services to and from London. Passengers will benefit from more competitive fares and new technology to simplify ticket purchasing for our new services. Delighting the customer will be at the forefront of what we do; we want WSMR passengers to experience a new excellence in customer service onboard our intercity trains,” said Ian Walters, Managing Director at Midlands-based SLC Rail.

He added: “Our proposal will support sustainable housing growth, nurture communities, and unite business, leisure, and commerce along the corridor. This will enhance economies and bring a positive impact to both communities and the environment – and we can’t wait to get started!”

In the West Midlands, WSMR trains will avoid Birmingham – one of the most complex and congested parts of the British rail network – by utilising the Sutton Park line, which is currently only used for freight services. This would enable Wolverhampton and Walsall to serve Nuneaton directly for the first time,

offering new travel options across the West Midlands, North Warwickshire and beyond.

As an open access operator, WSMR is a wholly commercial operation, which remains separate from the Government's franchised rail operations. WSMR will submit a formal application to add its services to the UK network to the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) on Thursday 14 March. Details regarding WSMR's fleet, brand and service provision will be announced at a later date.

Alstom is the market leader in rail services, supporting customers over the entire asset lifecycle with the broadest portfolio of services solutions. Alstom's train operation and system maintenance solutions cover the full spectrum of customer needs, including operations for all types of fleets, maintenance for trains, rail systems and infrastructure, as well as turnkey and Private Public Partnership (PPP) solutions.

With over 40 years of experience, Alstom is the only original equipment manufacturer (OEM) to maintain and manually operate trains worldwide. Alstom has more than 50 active train operations and system maintenance projects globally, holding a solid track record and a satisfied customer base – with a contract renewal rate of over 95 per cent. The company is the first and largest private rail operator in North America.

Andy Bagnall, chief executive of Rail Partners, has responded to Alstom and SLC's open access application: "If approved, the proposed open access operations between London, the Midlands, Shropshire, and North Wales will be good news for passengers, who will reap the benefits that healthy competition between operators brings in terms of a choice of services, innovation on fares, and improved performance.

"The evidence both here in Britain, on the East Coast Mainline, and across Europe shows that where more commercial freedom exists for operators, it leads to better service, cheaper fares and greater efficiencies.

"To deliver more benefits to passengers, government should make it a priority to remove barriers to open access operations now and during the next parliament, in parallel to wider reform that harnesses private sector operators within a new public body."

For more information on Wrexham, Shropshire and Midlands Railway (WSMR) please visit [www.wsmr.co.uk](http://www.wsmr.co.uk).