

Avanti West Coast to transform Motherwell services with major timetable boost

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Avanti West Coast is set to transform rail services at Motherwell, following approval of plans for a major timetable boost on its Anglo-Scottish route.

The change in Avanti West Coast's timetable will see the cross-border operator serve Motherwell with an additional 96 services per week – the most significant increase in cross-border rail services for the Scottish town in decades.

Approval of the timetable changes means Avanti West Coast has the capacity to more than double the number of weekday services calling at Motherwell from eight to 20. Weekend services will also be bolstered – with more than six times the number of Sunday services (27) and over three times as many of services on Saturday (19). This will mean that around half the hourly Glasgow-London services and two-hourly Glasgow-Birmingham services can call at the North Lanarkshire town.

The changes will reshape Motherwell into a major calling point on the West Coast Main Line and one of the best-connected locations in Scotland for cross-border travel, after significant investment by the Scottish Government and ScotRail to make the station a key transport hub.

It is hoped the improved connectivity will help attract investment to the region in the coming years and persuade more passengers to choose train over plane when travelling to London and Birmingham, helping with both Scottish and English governments' carbon reduction targets.

Avanti West Coast is exploring options to introduce some of the additional stops from December 2020, with the remaining stops being added to the timetable next year, depending on how things develop with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The uplift in services was planned by Avanti West Coast after taking over intercity passenger services on the West Coast Main Line last December and will be delivered in partnership with Network Rail, as part of the industry's timetable changes that take place every May and December.

UK Rail Minister, Chris Heaton-Harris, said: "It's fantastic that Motherwell will be a major port of call for Avanti West Coast, with a significant increase in the number of services helping improve connectivity, boost the economy and encouraging people to use a greener, more sustainable form of travel between our two nations.

"As we build back better from the pandemic, boosting cross-border connections will be key to helping support, sustain and strengthen our communities as we level up the whole of the UK."

Bill Reeve, Transport Scotland's Director of Rail, said: "We are delighted to have worked in partnership with Avanti West Coast to enable a future increase in their cross-border services calling at Motherwell station.

"Our investment in customer facilities and services at this key station increases opportunities for commuters, business users and tourism alike. It also underpins a fast-growing transport hub served by not only ScotRail, Avanti West Coast and other cross-border operators, but also by local operators such as bus.

"At the right time in the future, this additional service provision will enable operators to drive market growth in joined-up journeys. With that we can generate a healthy future for rail across the West Coast and beyond as we seek to recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic."

Councillor Paul Kelly, deputy leader of North Lanarkshire Council, said: "I am very pleased that Avanti West Coast is backing Motherwell as one of the best-connected places in the country, which fits with the council's vision for the local and regional economy.

"Our current and planned investments in Motherwell and the wider area will bring huge benefits to people who live, work and invest in North Lanarkshire. Upgrading Motherwell's status as a major rail calling point is a critical part of our vision and Avanti West Coast's decision to invest here with such a significant increase in service is very welcome news indeed."

Gus Dunster, Executive Director of Operations at Avanti West Coast, said: "We are excited to make Motherwell one of the best connected places in Scotland, as we work with Network Rail to deliver a major uplift to services to and from the town.

“At Avanti West Coast we want to connect people and places to opportunity and with Motherwell set to become a major calling point on our route we’re sure it will boost Scotland’s regional economy, improve local and cross-border connectivity and encourage more passengers to make the switch from plane to train. We look forward to continuing to play our part in making Motherwell a key transport hub.”

Liam Sumpter, Network Rail Scotland route director, said: “This increase in Avanti West Coast services through Motherwell will open up long-distance rail to new customers and, coupled with the redevelopment of the station, shows the rail industry’s commitment to investing in the town. Rail has a vital role to play in helping the country go greener and meet its decarbonisation targets and these additional services offer passengers greater choice – keeping the train competitive with air travel to London and Birmingham.”

The awarding of the additional stops comes just months after work on the first phase to Motherwell station’s redevelopment began. This will deliver improved links between bus and rail services as part of its regional transport integration hub.

Photo credit: Avanti West Coast

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