

Brand new West Midlands Railway fleet welcomes passengers on board

October 18, 2022



A brand new **West Midlands Railway (WMR)** train fleet has welcomed its first passengers on board today (Monday 17 October).

Passengers – plus a small band of railway enthusiasts – climbed aboard the Class 196 train at Shrewsbury railway station shortly before 7am for the maiden journey to Birmingham New Street.

The train was officially named ‘Charles Darwin’ last week by the High Sheriff of Shropshire Selina Graham, in honour of the Shrewsbury-born naturalist recognised as one of the greatest Britons of all time.

Charles Darwin is one of 26 trains which make up the new Class 196 fleet,

It is one of 26 trains which make up the Class 196 fleet, the first new fleet to be introduced to the West Midlands franchise for more than a decade, and will bring some exciting new features to passengers across the region. Benefits include intelligent air conditioning, plug and USB chargers at every seat, extra storage space and 25% more capacity than the fleet they are replacing. The fleet is part of WMR’s £690m investment in new trains and infrastructure

Jonny Wiseman, WMR customer experience director, said: “I am delighted to see our Class 196 trains carrying passengers for the first time today.

“With smart air conditioning, power points at every seat and extra space on board, I am certain these trains will prove a hit with passengers.”

Charles Darwin and his 25 colleagues will first run on the Shrewsbury Line as the new trains are drip-fed into service over coming months. The trains are then due to enter service on the Hereford Line next year, connecting Birmingham with destinations including Bromsgrove, Droitwich and Worcester.