

# Construction of new Black Country railway station is underway

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Work has started on the construction of a new railway station on the Wolverhampton to Walsall line in the Black Country paving the way for the return of passenger services.

The construction team is now on site clearing a rubble strewn piece of waste ground on which a platform for the new Willenhall railway station will be built.

When the station opens the people of Willenhall will be able to travel to either Walsall or Wolverhampton in eight minutes and Birmingham New Street in 25 minutes.

The £54 million project will see the construction of two stations, Willenhall and Darlaston, ready for the return of passenger services on the Walsall to Wolverhampton line.

It will be the first time in more than 50 years that these Black Country communities will have been directly connected to the region's rail network. The line is currently used only by freight rail services.

Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands, was joined by Walsall North MP Eddie Hughes on site to mark the

start of works.

The Mayor said: "It has been a long time coming, but it really is fantastic news that the diggers are on site and our plans to bring Willenhall Station back to life are becoming a reality.

"People in Walsall have waited decades to see this station return, and with Darlaston to follow shortly afterwards as part of the re-opened Walsall to Wolverhampton line, this really is a game-changer for the Black Country.

"Not only will these stations provide a genuine public transport alternative to the car, but they will also help connect local people to the high quality jobs and opportunities being created across the wider region."

The stations will see two trains an hour made up of an hourly service from Birmingham New Street and Crewe, calling at Wolverhampton, and an hourly shuttle between Walsall and Wolverhampton.

Walsall North MP Eddie Hughes said: "The railway station will be a lifeline connecting the people of Willenhall to opportunities for jobs, training and leisure across the region, cutting those journey times.

"It will also be fantastic for the town, bringing people into the centre of Willenhall and supporting the regeneration of the area."

Councillor Adrian Andrew, deputy leader of Walsall Council, added: "This has been talked about for decades, so it is great to see some action on site - we are now entering the final stages of restoring rail service to Willenhall.

"This is a huge investment in both Willenhall and Darlaston and will have a huge positive impact on these communities opening up opportunities across the region for them. It could also be the catalyst for further investment and improvements."

The project is being led by Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), part of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), and the West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE) working in collaboration with the Department for Transport, Network Rail, West Midlands Railway, Walsall Council and the City of Wolverhampton Council.

*Photo credit: Transport for West Midlands*