

Government: £84 million investment will improve journeys in the North West

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The Government has said that a package of works worth £84 million will cut delays and improve train reliability in the North West.

At Manchester Victoria station, rail minister Wendy Morton MP pledged a package of infrastructure improvements designed to transform train journeys in the region.

The work is part of the secretary of state's Manchester Recovery Task Force's (MRTF) plans to boost service reliability and put the passenger at the heart of the journey. Works are now underway with upgrades to trackside equipment between Manchester and Liverpool and platform extensions on the Cumbrian route. This will support the introduction of longer trains with extra seats and an upcoming timetable change across the region will increase reliability.

Further works next year will see additional platform extensions to some of the busiest routes across the North West and West Yorkshire, supporting the roll-out of longer electric trains by Northern.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said: "This £84m investment will make trains more reliable for the

people of Manchester and beyond and kicks off a decade's worth of improvements across the region.

"The Transpennine Route Upgrade, the Integrated Rail Plan and Northern Powerhouse Rail will transform the lives of passengers across the region for generations to come.

"As we level up the country, we're determined to use rail to boost local economies, create greener journeys and changes lives for the better."

The funding will also allow vital development work to continue schemes across Greater Manchester that will benefit passengers across the North West, including:

- Improved passenger facilities at Manchester Piccadilly, Victoria, and Manchester International Airport stations
- Re-signalling along the Castlefield Corridor and remodelling of Manchester Oxford Road station.
- Work on the Transpennine Route Upgrade (TRU) also continues with the electrification and re-signalling of the line and track renewals all to deliver faster, more frequent, and reliable trains for passengers.

TRU will pave the way for Northern Powerhouse Rail, transforming rail journeys across the North including between Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds and York, delivering on the Government's levelling up agenda; improving connectivity, supporting economic growth and delivering real benefits for passengers and communities in the North.

The next stage of work on the TRU continues with further track and signalling upgrades, following on from works over Christmas and New Year. This work, along with future electrification, will deliver faster, more frequent, and reliable trains for passengers.

All of these improvements are in addition to the Integrated Rail Plan, which is investing £96bn investment across the North and Midlands to transform rail services, boost economic growth and prosperity, level up the region and create thousands of jobs up to ten years quicker than under previous plans.

Dave Penney, passenger strategy director for Network Rail's North West and Central region, said:

"Improving passenger journeys has been at the heart of the rail industry's hard work to tackle congestion through Central Manchester and this major government investment will mean fewer delays and add 20% more peak-time seats from December 2022.

"Network Rail has worked with the whole industry as part of the Manchester Recovery Task Force on how to maximise this £84m investment which promises to boost capacity and improve connectivity across the North of England as part of Britain's rail recovery."

Matthew Golton, managing director at TransPennine Express, said: "We're committed to delivering real change for our customers across the North and into Scotland. This multi-million-pound package that enables the development of needed infrastructure capacity will work hand-in-hand with our own investments in new journey opportunities, new trains and station improvements to give customers the modern, reliable and efficient rail service they deserve."

Nick Donovan, managing director, Northern Trains: “This investment will improve the infrastructure that will allow trains with more carriages to run through Manchester benefiting the wider network and the thriving leisure economy of the North.

“Our customers returning to rail will have already noticed many improvements we have made in the last two years. These include better stations and new trains, and this project will further add to that improved experience.”

RIA North has welcomed the announcement that £84 million will be invested in rail in Manchester and the North West. Justin Moss, Chair of RIA North, said: “Rail suppliers will welcome the investment announced today in Manchester’s railway network, which will help alleviate the bottleneck around the Castlefield Corridor and improve capability and capacity. We hope this is the start of a number of rail projects from the Integrated Rail Plan and the outstanding Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline.”