

Grand Central and Hull Trains suspends services

January 5, 2021



Open Access train operators Grand Central and Hull Trains are to suspend all its services following Monday's Government announcement of a new phase of national lockdown in England.

Grand Central plans to hibernate services on both its North East and West Riding routes from Saturday January 9, with a return to service currently planned for March 1.

A Grand Central spokesman said: "It's hugely disappointing for us to be starting 2021 by removing our trains from the communities they serve. However, even before Monday's Government announcement of a total lockdown, the impact of tightening tier restrictions and ongoing engineering work on the East Coast Main Line had caused a major drop in passenger demand for January and February.

"As an Open Access operator, relying exclusively on income from ticket sales, it's clear we would best serve the needs of our business and our staff and passengers, by taking a period of hibernation. We are currently planning to return on March 1st and our services will remain open for bookings to travel from that date. Meanwhile we will continually monitor the national situation and provide updates through our usual communication channels. We may return sooner if the lifting of restrictions allows."

The spokesperson added: "Following discussions with rail unions, our crew and some of our support staff will be switched onto the Government furlough scheme during this hibernation period. Once again we thank our staff for their understanding, professionalism and commitment following this difficult but necessary decision.

"Grand Central will be back, until then please follow Government advice and stay safe."

Meanwhile Hull Trains is temporarily suspending all services from 0.01am on Saturday in response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

This is the third time the rail operator has hibernated the business following national restrictions calling for people to stay at home and stop all non-essential travel.

Louise Cheeseman, managing director of Hull Trains said: "We are again in a position where it is the right decision for the business to temporarily suspend all our direct rail services to London.

"The travel restrictions impact our income from ticket sales significantly, so hibernating allows us to protect the business for longer so we can return as a sustainable rail operator once restrictions ease."

Ticket sales are central to Hull Trains' income stream and its position as an open access operator means it is not entitled to additional financial support from the government.

Louise added: "It's another challenge we all face, but I am confident that the decision to temporarily suspend services is the right one to help safeguard the future of the business. The majority of our staff will be furloughed until we are back up and running. At this time, we don't have a planned return date, but we will be reviewing the situation as it evolves.

"Our direct rail route to London plays a vital role in supporting the local economy in Hull and East Riding and we shall continue to play a key part in the region's growth in the future. I look forward to returning when restrictions are relaxed and more people start to travel again.

"All the information about this temporary measure and what this means for customers and refunds is available on our website."

The rail operator's direct services between Hull and London have been affected since March 2020; the business has suspended services on two separate occasions (in March and November) and has been running a reduced timetable.

Photo credit: Grand Central