

Great Western Railway runs first electric-only train to and from South Wales

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Great Western Railway has moved a step closer to operating 'crowd-busting' electric-only trains for big-ticket events at the Principality Stadium in Cardiff.

The train operator carried out a test run in the early hours of Saturday, using a 12-car Class 387 to run electric-only from Swindon to the Welsh capital.

It is the first time an Electrostar has passed into Wales since Network Rail completed electrification of the Severn Tunnel in June last year.

A 12-car Class 387 has more than 700 seats and GWR's ambition is to run them alongside its Intercity Express Trains to meet demand to and from Cardiff for major events like the Six Nations Rugby Championship.

GWR Managing Director Mark Hopwood said: "This is a long-term ambition, to help provide additional capacity when 'big-ticket' items in the city require it. The pandemic has obviously slowed the need for such services, but we have been working closely with our colleagues at Network Rail to be able to fulfil this

ambition.

“Our IET fleet has always been capable of coping with the majority of demand on the Cardiff to London corridor for these events – the benefit of using 387s is that we can provide more seats without having to reduce IET services elsewhere to provide them.”

GWR has worked closely with Network Rail to bring the operation of Class 387s to and from South Wales to fruition.

Interim Head of Western Alliance John Lanchester said: “This a real coup for Great Western Railway and Network Rail and it demonstrates how we’ve worked collaboratively to make sure we’re ready to operate electric-only trains into Wales.”

Network Rail’s Wales and Border route director Bill Kelly said: “Delivering electrification through the Severn Tunnel last year was a huge achievement for Network Rail and has resulted in thousands of extra seats, more frequent services and quicker and greener journeys for passengers as they travel to and from South Wales.

“It is great to see GWR has moved another step closer in providing an additional, all-electric passenger service for large-scale events in Cardiff off the back of our electrification work.”

GWR ran electric trains to and from South Wales for the first time in January last year, with its IET fleet switching to diesel to pass through the Severn Tunnel before electrification of that section was completed in June last year.

The train operator is actively working on plans to reduce the carbon emissions of its train fleet, with a view to removing all diesel-only traction from the network by 2040 in line with the Government’s Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

Increasing passengers on trains offers a significant opportunity to help meet with the Government’s legal commitment of reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Testing of the Class 387s to South Wales will now continue before the trains are introduced into passenger service.

Photo credit: Great Western Railway