

# GTR and Porterbrook announce £55 million fleet modernisation programme

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Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) and Porterbrook, the owner of trains leased by the operator, have announced a five-year, £55 million programme to modernise the Southern, Gatwick Express and Great Northern 'Electrostar' fleets, 270 trains in all.

Enhancements range from real-time passenger information screens and USB/power points to high-tech on-board operation systems.

The trains include 214 'Class 377s' that provide suburban and commuter services on the Southern network between London, Surrey, Sussex and the south coast, and over 56 'Class 387s' working on Great Northern or Gatwick Express routes.

While parts of the fleet, including the Gatwick Express Class 387s, are just five years old, most have been in service for between 15 and 20 years. This upgrade will bring all 270 trains up to the same level of passenger facilities and the latest "smart" on-board diagnostic systems.

GTR's engineers will install features called for by passengers in recent research led by Transport Focus and

funded by Porterbrook. These include USB/power sockets and on-board real-time information through media screens. The trains will also be fitted with new energy-saving LED lighting to make them more environmentally friendly.

To improve reliability, the trains will be fitted with an upgraded on-Train data recorder that will help predict and diagnose faults and streamline maintenance.

Passenger-counting technology will also be fitted, to allow GTR to better analyse how busy trains are, further helping to support social distancing.

New forward-facing CCTV cameras will help GTR and Network Rail investigate incidents that have delayed the service that day.

GTR's Engineering Director Steve Lammin said: "Taking on board our passengers' feedback, this multi-faceted upgrade by our own team at Selhurst Depot will provide a better on-board experience and more reliability.

"I'm really pleased that GTR is working with Porterbrook and Bombardier to deliver this improvement programme that will continue to 'build back' a better railway for our customers."

Mary Grant, Porterbrook CEO, said: "We are committed to helping GTR meet the needs of its travelling customers. This is why Porterbrook are investing £55 million in the Electrostar fleet to significantly enhance passenger facilities and improve reliability using digital analytics. These are excellent and popular trains and I am delighted that their upgrade will be undertaken by GTR's own workforce at Selhurst Depot."

The first train to enjoy the full update is expected to emerge from GTR's Selhurst Depot in the autumn. When the programme is in full swing, GTR's engineers, guided by the trains' manufacturer Bombardier, will be working on a constant one-per-week stream of trains.

*Photo credit: Govia Thameslink Railway*

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