

# New fleet for the West Midlands

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It's all change for passengers in the West Midlands, who will soon be climbing aboard a brand new fleet of trains – the first to be introduced in the region in more than a decade.

Twenty-six Class 196 trains are being rolled out as part of **West Midlands Railway's** £690m investment in new trains and infrastructure. The first will enter service on the Shrewsbury Line in coming weeks, serving destinations including Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Telford.

It will be named 'Charles Darwin', in honour of the Shrewsbury-born naturalist recognised as one of the greatest Britons of all time.

The fleet's impending launch was celebrated with an event held at Wolverhampton Station on Friday, with guests including West Midlands Mayor Andy Street and passenger groups.

Ian McConnell, West Midlands Railway managing director, said: "These brand new trains will provide a much-improved travelling experience for our customers with smart air conditioning and power points at every seat.

"We have had to wait a little while to introduce these trains due to the pandemic but I am delighted our customers will soon be able to experience the trains for themselves."

Andy Street, Mayor of the West Midlands, said: "I want to see a golden era for rail travel in our region and

this £690m investment from West Midlands Railway is a vital and very welcome element in realising that overall vision.

“These fantastic new trains will make a real difference for passengers – improving the travel experience, connecting communities and providing extra capacity – which is much needed as public transport usage continues to climb post-pandemic.

“This announcement celebrates a genuine success story and is a great example of what public-private partnership working at its best can achieve for local residents.”

The diesel fleet, consisting of 80 carriages in total, has been constructed by manufacturer CAF at its factories in South Wales and Spain. From next year, trains in the fleet will also serve the Hereford Line, connecting Birmingham with destinations including Bromsgrove, Droitwich and Worcester.