

## Porterbrook awards Alstom £25m fleet upgrade contract

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Porterbrook, the rolling stock owner and asset manager, has announced that it had signed a £25m contract with Alstom to upgrade one of its most versatile electric train fleets.

The announcement follows the decision by South Western Railway (SWR) to extend the leases on Porterbrook's award-winning Class 458 fleet until 2027.

Porterbrook's contract with Alstom will see the trains uprated to a top speed of 100mph, a complete upgrade of the passenger saloon to meet the needs of long-distance customers, and reconfiguration of the trains to enable the faster acceleration required to meet established journey times on key routes.

Alstom will undertake this work at the company's Widnes facility in Cheshire, securing jobs and protecting key skills. The enhanced Class 458 fleet will be based at SWR's Bournemouth depot.

Mary Grant, CEO of Porterbrook said: "I am delighted that our customer South Western Railway has decided to retain our Class 458 fleet. Partnership is at the heart of our business. To demonstrate this, we will be taking responsibility for the performance of these trains and supporting SWR as they transform

South Coast and long-distance services.

"I am also pleased that our partner Alstom will continue to play an active role in their future. Not only is this good news for SWR passengers, it is also great news for Widnes and Bournemouth, where the railway family at both locations help keep Britain moving every day."

Neil Drury, Engineering Director at SWR, said: "This fully refurbished fleet of 458s will provide an even better experience for our customers, while delivering efficient and flexible capacity on our medium range services."

Peter Broadley MD Services, UK & Ireland, Alstom said: "We are very pleased to have been awarded this important contract, a reflection of our excellent relationships with Porterbrook and SWR, as well as the skills and professionalism of our team at Widnes. Passengers can now look forward to the upgrade of the very reliable Alstom-built Class 458."

Porterbrook's Class 458 fleet of electric trains achieved a record breaking run of Modern Railway's 'Golden Spanner awards', based on independent industry performance data, in 2009, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016.

*Photo credit: Porterbrook*