

'Safety first' as rail companies work together to minimise impact on passengers of Hitachi train issues

May 10, 2021



Rail companies are prioritising safety as they work together to get passengers moving again on routes affected by the problems found on Hitachi high-speed trains.

Cracks have appeared under the train carriages on the lifting points, which are blocks of aluminium that sit under the train carriage. The lifting points are used in depots for maintenance when teams need to lift a train. They are not used as part of the normal operation of the train. However, there is a small risk that they could become dislodged.

Britain's railway is recognised for having one of the most rigorous testing regimes for the introduction and maintenance of trains in the world, which is independently checked by the regulator. Hitachi, the rail regulator and train operators will not put trains back into service until they are all confident it is safe to do so. Hitachi will continue to inspect all trains on a daily basis.

In the meantime, operators are doing everything they can to keep passengers informed and to find

solutions to get people moving again. This includes:

- Getting those trains that are not affected back into service.
- Establishing the best way to fix those trains with more serious issues.
- The industry pulling together, with operators lending trains to each other to help minimise disruption to passengers, or operators using suitable alternative trains. This will take time as relevant regulatory clearances are needed.
- LNER is bringing two InterCity 225s back into service later this week.
- Offering passengers the option of using other train operators' routes at no additional cost where they offer an alternative way for people to make their journeys.
- Using alternative trains to run shuttle services, including CrossCountry Trains running a service from Bristol to Swindon, from where passengers can catch a GWR train for their onward journey. Where possible, Great Northern services running at peak times between the capital and Peterborough and Stevenage have been lengthened from 8 to 12 carriages to provide additional space. Transport for Wales and Southwestern Railway have also strengthened relevant services where possible.

Hitachi will continue to check and re-check all trains so the number of trains available to operators may change. Therefore, the service that can be offered to passengers will be subject to alteration at short notice.

The latest update on services from those train operators affected, as of 1630 on Monday, is:

- GWR long-distance routes are heavily impacted and those passengers are being advised not to travel, over all GWR is running 85% of its services when regional and commuter routes are taken into account.
- LNER has high-speed trains available to use and it is able to run a limited service with no trains north of Edinburgh, although passengers may travel in both directions on Scotrail services using their existing tickets. Some trains will be cancelled and passengers are being advised to check before they travel and to make a reservation on the LNER website.
- TPE will be confirming an amended timetable for tomorrow as soon as possible.
- ScotRail is able to run a normal service with no cancellations. Fewer than one per cent of ScotRail's 2,000 daily services will see reduced carriages.
- Hull Trains are currently running a normal service with their rolling stock having been cleared to re-enter service.

Robert Nisbet, director of nations and regions at the Rail Delivery Group, said: "We are sorry for any disruption experienced by passengers as a result of the necessary withdrawal of Hitachi trains on some routes. While the vast majority of the network remains unaffected, we understand that any disruption is frustrating, however our passengers' safety must always be our first priority.

"Rail companies are working closely together to minimise any impact of the Hitachi recall wherever possible, including loaning alternative trains across the network, installing shuttle services and offering cross ticket acceptance for alternative routes.

“We also continue to work closely with Hitachi to finalise a plan to bring as many trains back in to service as quickly as it is safe to do so. In the meantime, passengers are advised that there is likely to be a reduced service on affected routes for some time so passengers should check their train operator’s website for the latest information.”

Photo credit: Rail Delivery Group