

# Train depot improvements, new trains and station upgrades help Northern mark first anniversary

March 5, 2021



After a year of Northern under new ownership, the train operator is announcing a series of further improvements, including new depot upgrades designed to transform the service it provides to its customers.

Over the past 12 months, Northern has transformed its fleet with a multi-million pound investment in brand new trains, completed the refurbishment of more than 250 trains, retired its Pacers, and continued to extend platforms to make way for better, longer trains.

Throughout the lockdown period, Northern has invested in a series of new projects and upgrades across the network to further improve customers' experience. These include a £2.5million facelift of more than 40 sites and £650,000 of car park improvements

The operator has proudly introduced an industry leading mobility scooter policy, opening up 140 stations across 21 routes to customers using mobility scooters.

Northern has also revealed improvements at its Newton Heath train depot in Manchester are almost complete, and has unveiled plans to deliver further enhancements at its Botanic Gardens train depot in Hull. New features, including maintenance equipment, infrastructure upgrades and a wheel lathe, will improve reliability which, in turn, will give customers across the Northern network a better journey experience.

Nick Donovan, Managing Director at Northern said: “Our first year has been an unusual one and has been dominated by the impact of coronavirus. We have, however, used the time when our network has been less busy to good effect and have delivered significant improvements across the network to ensure our customers have better journeys when they return.

“Our customers are at the heart of everything we do and our goal back in March 2020 was to get the basics right and build from there. Since then we have completed the initial refurbishment of our older trains, have introduced 100 brand new trains and have delivered millions of pounds worth of improvements at our stations”

The enhancements at Hull Botanic Gardens and Newton Heath are the latest phase of this ongoing programme of improvements at Northern.

Nick added: “Working with colleagues at Network Rail we are investing a lot of money at our Hull Botanic Gardens site to improve the capability and capacity of the depot, allowing it to provide resilience for our site in Leeds.

“We’ll be delivering new facilities at Hull that will allow us to stable our Class 170 and 155 fleets and provide all the maintenance those trains need. This means we’ll need to construct new buildings, install new equipment and build additional infrastructure to increase capacity at the site.

“By having a dedicated site for these trains we’ll be able to help our staff develop specific engineering expertise so repairs and routine maintenance will be more efficient and trains will spend more time on the network to get customers where they need to be.”

Matt Rice, North and East Route Director for Network Rail said: “I’m delighted to have been able to support our partners at Northern Trains in their first year operating with us, and the developments at Hull Botanic Gardens are a very tangible example of that close working.

“Train depots and maintenance sites may not instinctively sound like the most critical part of running a railway, but they’re absolutely vital to keeping passengers and rail workers safe, and trains performing to the high standards passengers expect of us.

“In partnership with Northern, I’m looking forward to delivering more improvements in the months ahead that passengers will be able to feel the benefit of when they start to return to rail later in the year.”

At Newton Heath Northern has built a facility designed to provide stabling and maintenance of the new Class 195 trains. The dedicated team of engineers have state-of-the-art equipment that will allow them to keep the trains in the best possible working order and to deal with any potential mechanical issues quickly

and efficiently.

Nick added: “We have also installed a wheel lathe which is absolutely vital in autumn when leaves on the tracks can damage train wheels. The additional lathe – we already have similar equipment at depots across the north – means we will be able to repair more wheels more quickly and will, in turn, improve reliability and resilience for our customers.”

The next stage in the operator’s transformation will include further modernisation to ensure Northern continues to make a positive impact in the north for its customers. This will include use of new digital technologies to improve customers’ experience such as smartcard solutions and instant refunds.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said: “Rail passengers across the north deserved better, and Northern has worked hard over the past 12 months to win their confidence and trust.

“From getting rid of Pacers, upgrading the entire fleet and modernising stations, this year has seen a real focus on delivering long overdue improvements. We will continue working hard to rapidly deliver a network that passengers can truly rely on as we recover from COVID-19.”

*Photo credit: Northern*