

Transport for Wales confirm major client agreement with Global Centre of Rail Excellence

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Transport for Wales (TfW) and GCRE Limited have this week signed heads of terms for TfW to become a major commercial client of the Global Centre of Rail Excellence (GCRE).

The Global Centre of Rail Excellence is a £400m research, testing and certification facility for rolling stock, infrastructure and innovative new rail technologies being constructed at the head of the Dulais and Swansea Valleys.

As part of the GCRE membership model, companies can take guaranteed testing and research time at the site when it opens, according to their innovation needs.

The agreement demonstrates TfW's intent to take the highest level of membership at GCRE and become a 'Premium' client of the facility, due to be completed in 2025. The collaboration will see GCRE support Transport for Wales with its rail testing, innovation and R&D.

As well as testing, R&D and innovation, the deal paves the way for TfW to use other GCRE services, including storage, training and product approvals in future as these are developed.

Chief Executive of GCRE Limited Simon Jones said the agreement was a 'natural' one and would support the passenger delivery focus of Transport for Wales as well as the major infrastructure programme it has across Wales and the Borders.

Welsh Government Deputy Minister for Climate Change Lee Waters said: "The Global Centre of Rail Excellence is one of the most exciting and important pieces of infrastructure being built anywhere in Europe today. It will be at the forefront of rail innovation, supporting the development of new products and technologies that will be the backbone of the high-quality, integrated and net zero transport networks we need right across the continent in the coming years.

"It's fantastic that this agreement between GCRE and Transport for Wales has been finalised and that passenger delivery is going to be a central focus of the collaboration, ultimately benefiting communities and commuters right across Wales."

Chief Executive of GCRE Limited, Simon Jones, said: "I'm pleased to finalise this exciting partnership with Transport for Wales, a long-term agreement that will see TfW become a premium client of the Global Centre of Rail Excellence and secure access to the world class testing and innovation facilities we will have on site.

"What GCRE can provide to Transport for Wales is an international quality, purpose built and offline facility, right here in Wales, that can support the TfW team as they implement their ambitious strategic programme.

"Passenger delivery is a critical focus for TfW and through this agreement with GCRE we can support new and innovative ways of delivering for customers along the Wales and Borders route.

"Transport for Wales has a hugely ambitious slate of major projects – from the transformational valleys line electrification; Metro programmes in South Wales, Swansea Bay and North Wales as well as a significant list of station enhancement and upgrades right across the Wales and Borders. GCRE can assist in the delivery of these major projects through greater assurance of the innovations and ideas being deployed.

"This tie-up is a natural one in many ways – as a world class facility here in Wales, GCRE can support the development of Wales' national transport system through a long-term collaboration with TfW.

"Both of our organisations have shared ambitions to decarbonise the railway. With GCRE set to become the UK's first Net Zero railway in operation, working together with TfW we can make a tangible difference to the national effort needed to tackle the climate crisis.

"Following on from the recently announced Hitachi deal, this partnership shows that GCRE is taking the next step in its journey. Not simply constructing an internationally significant facility but also signing up important and significant clients to take testing and research time when we open – showing both the quality of our services we are offering as well as the commercial strength of the business."

Chief Executive of Transport for Wales, James Price said: “The rail industry in Wales is currently going through a major transformation with the South Wales Metro being built and the introduction of brand-new trains throughout the network.

“I’m pleased this agreement continues our close working relationship with GCRE. Having these world class facilities in Wales is a key enabler for the industry as a whole and for Tfw in delivering our ambitious plans.”