

Tyne and Wear Metro will return to a full timetable from Sunday 11 April

March 31, 2021



The Tyne and Wear Metro is to restore a full timetable, with more trains providing more frequent services for customers following the completion of driver training that was held up by lockdown.

Nexus, the public body which own and manages Metro, confirmed the new timetable will start from Sunday 11 April now that 30 new drivers have passed the course and have officially started work.

It means that trains will run every six minutes through the centres of Newcastle and Gateshead and every 12 minutes system-wide on weekdays. The pattern of additional peak time services will return. Between Pelaw and Regent Centre/Monkseaton customers will be able to board a train every three to six minutes in the morning and evening rush hours.

It coincides with the scheduled re-opening on non-essential retail – a key milestone on the Government's roadmap out of lockdown.

The Government's instruction to only travel if a journey is essential has now ended, and people are now advised to minimise the number of journeys that they make, where this is possible.

Chief Operating Officer at Nexus, Martin Kearney, said: “Metro’s timetable will go back to its full level of service from April 11. There will be more frequent services for people who need to travel, creating more space for social distancing as we gradually emerge from lockdown.

“This is great news for our customers and I’d like to thank them for their patience over the winter while we operated a slightly reduced level of service on Metro.

“The issue was caused by the impact of lockdown on our ability to train a record intake of new Metro drivers. The assessment centres we needed to use for the aptitude tests were all closed.

“That situation has gradually eased off and I’m pleased to see all of the new trainees have passed the course and are now on our roster. We have expanded our driver training school and two more groups are currently undertaking the training course.”

Nexus implemented the reduced winter timetable on 29 November last year.

This was because training across the UK rail industry was unable to take place during the first lockdown because national assessment centres that put candidates through the mandatory aptitude tests had to be closed.

It impacted on the availability of Metro train crews,

But 30 new driver recruits who started in September have now successfully gone through the six-month driver training school – which was the largest single intake since Metro began in 1980.

Nexus doubled its annual driver trainee intake in September 2019 from 24 to 48. This allows for six training schools to run per year.

This new training programme was being fulfilled up until the UK was locked down in March due to the coronavirus outbreak – which is why trainee intakes were enhanced again to catch up.

Photo credit: Nexus