

# Unveiling of the first brand new trains in Wales in a generation

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The backbone of Transport of Wales' (TfW) services across the length and breadth of the Wales and Borders network in the coming years.

That is how TfW brand new £800 million fleet of trains have been described, when the first one was officially launched in North Wales on Thursday (January 26).

Built in Wales by leading train manufacturer CAF, the 77 (51 two-car and 26 three-car) new Class 197 trains will become the backbone of TfW's services across the length and breadth of the Wales and Borders network in the coming years.

Offering leather seats, modern air conditioning systems, wider doors and customer information screens, the brand-new trains will play a key role in TfW's plans to transform the customer experience on its services.

The new trains entered into passenger service on the Conwy Valley line at the end of 2022 and were unveiled at a ceremony at Llandudno railway station today.

The Deputy Minister for Climate Change with responsibility for Transport, Lee Waters said: “This is great news. Funded by our £800m investment in a new fleet of trains, the Class 197s play an important part in our plans to transform rail services in Wales.

“Having travelled on the Class 197s, I can vouch for the greater comfort, speed and capacity offered by these new trains that will not only be used by Welsh passengers but were also made in Wales.”

Minister for North Wales, Lesley Griffiths said: “I was very pleased to officially launch Transport for Wales’ impressive new trains in Llandudno today.

“This made-in-Wales fleet signals an important improvement to rail services and I’m sure passengers will enjoy travelling across North Wales lines on the Class 197s.”

Providing an increase in capacity and enhanced comfort onboard, the new trains will allow TfW to run faster and more frequent services to destinations such as Holyhead, Fishguard and Liverpool.

The 77 trains being built by CAF have also been fitted with electronic charging points and disability features for those with limited mobility.

James Price, Transport for Wales CEO, said: “The official launch of the Class 197s is a landmark day in the history of Transport for Wales and the Welsh rail industry, with the unveiling of the first brand new trains in Wales in a generation.

“The construction of our new trains has been four years in the making, and we’re incredibly proud and excited to formally welcome passengers onto them. The trains will be an important part of the transformation of the Wales and Borders network and will enable us to run more services and carry more customers in comfort.

“It’s also important to recognise that these trains have been made in Wales at the CAF factory in Newport and the building of them has provided jobs and supported the local economy.”

CAF UK Director Richard Garner commented: “This is a memorable day for CAF. We are extremely proud to play a key role in delivering TfW’s commitment to transform rail travel for passengers, ensuring a high quality, reliable and comfortable journey.

“Our trains are being built in Wales to serve the Welsh communities, supporting highly skilled jobs and bringing local employment opportunities whilst focusing on sustainability issues and addressing the needs of the Welsh economy.”

The Class 197s will sit alongside the 71 brand new trains and tram-trains being built for the South Wales Metro, the first of which has recently entered into passenger service.

A total of 148 brand new trains will deliver faster, more frequent and greener services.

Network Rail has been working with Transport for Wales to carry out upgrades to the railway so the new

trains can operate. This includes gauge clearance, whereby the tracks are altered to ensure the, often wider, new fleet can safely pass through old Victorian bridges, platforms and tunnels. At some stations, Network Rail engineers have raised platforms, to reduce the stepping distance between the train and platform, and new stop car markers – a type of stop sign for trains – have been installed at some platforms to help drivers stop in the correct position.

Nick Millington, route director at Network Rail Wales and Borders said: “Today marks another major leap forward for the railway in Wales and we are grateful to be part of this journey, working closely with Transport for Wales to upgrade our Victorian-built infrastructure, so their brand new trains can safely run on our railway.

“We’re excited for passengers across Wales and the borders who are set to benefit from the ongoing transformation of the railway, with more comfortable and more frequent rail services, providing a boost to tourism in rural areas, and more reliable transport links for local communities.”

*Photo credit: Transport for Wales*