

Welsh rail franchise now in public ownership

February 8, 2021



The Welsh Government has taken the Wales and Borders rail franchise into public ownership to protect services, safeguard jobs, and deliver infrastructure improvements in light of the ongoing challenges of coronavirus.

As of 7th February Transport for Wales is now operating the Wales and Borders rail services under a subsidiary, 'Transport for Wales Rail LTD'.

The move, which was announced in October 2020, comes in the face of a significant reduction in passenger numbers. It is intended to provide for longer term financial stability, necessary to secure plans for infrastructure improvements and deliver future improvements for passengers.

Ken Skates, Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales said: "Our rail service is a critical asset and one we must protect. Since the pandemic began we've provided significant financial support to keep trains running. The need for greater public control is a reflection of the ongoing pressures of coronavirus and the challenges being faced across the rail industry as passenger demand remains low.

"We remain determined to deliver key commitments made at the start of the journey with Transport for Wales, including the creation of Metro systems and the delivery of brand new rolling stock. Bringing the

rail franchise into public control will help secure this better future for passengers. It is a public transport asset, in public ownership, for the public good.”

Lee Waters, Deputy Minister for Economy and Transport, said: “The railway is an integral part of Wales’ transport network and we want it to be of even more importance in the future.

“Tackling the climate emergency means we need to make it easier for people to step out of their cars and walk, cycle and use public transport instead. Transport for Wales will be working across all of these areas as part of our efforts to create an integrated, more convenient transport system.

“The action we have taken to bring the franchise into public ownership will help make this ambition a reality for passengers.”

James Price, Chief Executive of Transport for Wales said: “COVID-19 has presented many challenges for us at TfW and these will continue as we evolve as an organisation. However, we’ve been able to remain resilient and our main priority during these testing times has been to keep our customers and colleagues safe.

“This next step on our journey will ensure that we continue to provide passenger rail services across our network, protect jobs and deliver our ambitious plans to improve the transport network.

“At the start of January, we successfully completed a three-week blockade on the railway lines north of Radyr, allowing us to move forward with the next phase of works for the South Wales Metro.”

“We’re continuing to deliver our transformational plans and this new model will allow us to achieve our vision and improve the lives of people across Wales and the Borders.”

The partnership between Transport for Wales, Keolis and Amey will now be made up of three key components:

- The delivery of day to day rail services is the responsibility of Transport for Wales Rail Ltd. This provides Welsh rail with a stronger footing to sustain services over the next few years as we recover from the pandemic. It will allow government through TfW to ensure that the delivery of rail services in Wales & the Borders, can continue to reflect both the needs of passengers and our wider policy aspirations such as those around decarbonisation and wellbeing.
- Infrastructure management and transformation of the Welsh Government owned Core Valley Lines will continue to be delivered under the current contract with Amey Keolis Infrastructure Ltd. This provides stability to ensure effective delivery of the South Wales Metro transformation work which is already underway.
- A new partnership with Keolis and Amey, led by Transport for Wales, will help drive improvements for passengers. Known as ‘Transport for Wales Innovation Services’, it will progress delivery of important commitments such as: integrated ticketing; on demand transport systems; design and delivery including different modes of transport; and the ongoing integration of light and heavy rail.

Photo credit: Welsh Government