

West Coast Partnership holds first ever Stakeholder Conference

March 29, 2021



West Coast Partnership's (WCP) first ever Stakeholder Conference saw rail leaders and politicians gather to discuss the future aspirations of the industry.

Speakers provided insight into how rail will recover post-COVID and beyond to more than 150 stakeholders from across the country.

The virtual event held on 24 March, featured online presentations, panel debates as well as question and answer sessions around the upcoming plans for the West Coast Main Line.

The conference was organised by WCP, which operates Avanti West Coast and the West Coast Partnership Development (WCPD) – that works with HS2 Ltd and the Department for Transport to develop and operate high speed rail services.

Opening the conference, Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris, said: "I want our railways not just to get people from A to B, but to help transform people's lives spreading opportunity and increasing aspiration."

He added: “We have a real opportunity now to build a lasting positive change for our passengers and our communities and I hope this event gets us closer to that goal.”

Other speakers joining those from WCP included Virginia Crosbie MP, Mayor of the West Midlands, Andy Street, Chairman of HS2, Allan Cook, Tim Shoveller, Managing Director North West and Central Region of Network Rail, and Chairman of First Rail, Steve Montgomery.

Managing Director of Avanti West Coast, Phil Whittingham, said: “It is more important than ever in these difficult times that we work together for the good of the industry. We wanted to give our stakeholders a unique opportunity to hear about our exciting plans for the year ahead, to ask questions and raise issues.”

These plans include a £100m plus investment to refurbish the Pendolino fleet and greater use of digital technology to improve the customer experience. Avanti West Coast’s Voyager diesel trains are also due to be replaced by 23 brand new Hitachi trains from the end of 2022.

Managing Director of the West Coast Partnership Development, Caroline Donaldson, said: “This was a great opportunity to speak to our valued stakeholders across the region and discuss the role WCPD will play in the coming years. It’s vitally important to map out what’s to come to help shape the future of high-speed rail services in this country.”

Steve Montgomery, Managing Director, First Rail, said: “This event reinforced the importance of working together in partnership to deliver the rail services that our customers and communities want, maximising investment as well as driving regional growth.

“As we recover as an industry, we want WCP, like all our train companies, to continue to be a model of partnership in practice and believe collaboration with our stakeholders is critical to achieve this aspiration.”

Photo credit: Avanti West Coast