

Work set to start on Black Country railway stations after funding confirmed

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Works to pave the way for £55 million construction of two Black Country Railway Stations will begin this Spring following the final approval of Government funding.

The **budget earlier this month** saw the final piece of funding for the construction of Darlaston and Willenhall Stations confirmed as part of a wider package of rail funding for the West Midlands.

It means that contractors will be on site this Spring to prepare the ground for full construction to begin during the Autumn.

The stations will offer the people of Darlaston and Willenhall vastly improved connections to Wolverhampton, Walsall and Birmingham New Street stations when they open in 2023. Encouraging more people to use public transport.

It will be the first time in more than 50 years that these Black Country communities will have been directly connected to the region's rail network. The line is currently used only by freight rail services.

Investment in rail services is key to meeting the climate challenge and achieving the #WM2041 ambition for a net-zero carbon region.

Mayor of the West Midlands Andy Street said: “Mayor of the West Midlands Andy Street said: “The people of Darlaston and Willenhall have waited a long time for these stations, and soon they will see diggers on site as we get to work.

“Not only will the stations hugely improve transport links for the area, but they will also help to create local jobs at this difficult economic time. We will create construction jobs through the building of the stations, whilst we also expect the stations to encourage investment that could create a significant number of jobs by unlocking land for housing, commercial, and industrial development.

“From re-opening railway lines and stations and expanding the midland metro, to improving cycling infrastructure and cleaning up our buses, we’re investing billions in public transport across the Black Country and wider West Midlands to make up for decades of decline.”

Willenhall Station will be sited next to the Bilston Street railway bridge close to the town centre, while Darlaston Station, which will include a 300-space car park, will be built on derelict land next to the bridge over Kendricks Road.

The project is being led by Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), part of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), and the West Midlands Rail Executive (WMRE) working in close collaboration with the Department for Transport, Network Rail, West Midlands Railway, Walsall Council and the City of Wolverhampton Council.

Deputy leader of Walsall Council, Cllr Adrian Andrew, said: “This is massive step forward for the borough and the new stations will open up huge new opportunities for people to visit Willenhall and Darlaston as well as attract investment and new jobs to the area.

“It will also offer the people of Darlaston and Willenhall more convenient routes in Walsall town centre at a time when we are putting huge investment in to make it a more attractive place to work and spend time.”

City of Wolverhampton Council leader, Cllr Ian Brookfield, said: “There are billions of pounds of investment on site or in the pipeline across the City of Wolverhampton, and improving our transport connections with all parts of the region and beyond will play a big part in how we make the most of that investment to boost our economic recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.

“It is great news that works will soon start on the new stations at Willenhall and Darlaston and fits in well with our city’s significant commercial and residential regeneration schemes neighbouring this rail line. It will also provide better connections for people into our award-winning city centre Interchange.

“The new stations will provide further job opportunities for our residents and developments like this are also critical to encouraging more future use of public transport to help support our climate emergency agenda.”

Following an agreement with Network Rail last year two trains per hour will call at the new stations, an hourly service between Walsall and Wolverhampton and an hourly service between Birmingham New Street and Wolverhampton.

Photo credit: Transport for West Midlands