

Work to extend passenger rail services to Hirwaun

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Development work towards extending rail services from Aberdare to Hirwaun is underway, after Rhondda Cynon Taf Council secured Welsh Government funding through the Cardiff Capital Region Transport Authority.

The council has secured £239,633 to fund further studies towards delivering the Metro Plus project, which will complement the ongoing delivery of the South Wales Metro that will see four trains an hour serving Aberdare. Previous work within the project's appraisal process (which is currently at WelTAG Stage 2, Outline Business Case) considered two options for the project, and identified a preferred option for development.

The preferred option would extend the rail service from the existing Aberdare Railway Station to Hirwaun, by providing three new stations at Llwydcoed, Hirwaun Station Road/Penyard and Hirwaun Tower Colliery.

Transport for Wales is managing the project and the latest funding will enable various actions to be completed by the appointed consultant Atkins Global Ltd This work would enable the WelTAG Stage 3 (Full Business Case) to take place in 2023/24.

Councillor Andrew Morgan OBE, Leader of Rhondda Cynon Taf Council and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure and Investment, said: "I'm pleased the council has successfully secured £239,633 funding for the next stage of development towards this Metro Plus project, which is a major extension of rail services from Aberdare to Hirwaun. It is an exciting project that is supported by the Cardiff Capital Region to complement delivery of the South Wales Metro – and is being progressed by the Council and Transport for Wales.

"The Metro will bring huge benefits to local communities in Rhondda Cynon Taf. It will electrify around 170km of track around the South East Wales railway network, enabling high frequency fast trains to run from 2024. For example, these trains will run four times an hour from Aberdare and Treherbert, and 12 times an hour between Pontypridd and Cardiff. The trains, railway stations and signalling systems will be upgraded, while a multi-million pound depot to service the trains is under construction in Rhondda Cynon Taf, at Taffs Well.

"The Aberdare-Hirwaun extension is a Metro Plus scheme intended to complement delivery of the Metro. Last year, the project's appraisal process identified a preferred option to be developed – to extend the Aberdare line with three new stations. The council also acquired the former chicken factory site near Llwydcoed in 2021, and continues to explore funding options for a station halt, park and ride, and modern business unit development at that site.

"The council will work closely with Transport for Wales and the appointed consultant Atkins over the weeks and months ahead, as further development work towards the Outline Business Case is completed – with the intention of progressing to the Full Business Case during the next financial year."

Photo credit: Rhondda Cynon Taf Council