

Grand Union

New express rail services between South Wales and London Paddington

Background:

Grand Union is an 'open access' train company, seeking to operate passenger train services outside the franchise system.

Previously new, successful open access services have been delivered on the East Coast Main Line by Grand Central between Sunderland – York and London King's Cross, and Bradford – Doncaster – London King's Cross. A new service has also been approved between Blackpool and London Euston – due to begin in 2020.

Proposal:

Following discussions with the Welsh Government, Assembly members, Transport for Wales and Keolis/Amey, the initial application to provide new express services between Cardiff and London Paddington has been revised and extended to Llanelli. Due to the lack of electrification west beyond Cardiff, the timeline for introduction of services has been altered.

Initially services are now planned to operate every 2 hours between Cardiff and London Paddington using fully electric Class 91 trains off the East Coast Main Line and 7 passenger vehicles. These trains in 7 coach formation have similar performance characteristics to the new Hitachi trains used on the route. First train from Cardiff @ 0635, last train @ 1835. First train from London @ 0835, last train @ 2035.

Services would begin in May 2021.

The Class 91s would then be replaced with a new build fleet of Hitachi 802 trains – bi-mode – which will enable them to operate to Llanelli under diesel power. The service would then also be increased to hourly. First train from Llanelli @ 0525, last train @ 1925. First train from London @ 0835, last train @ 2135.

Extended services would begin in May 2023.

The entire operation would be based in South Wales with around 150 new full-time jobs created by the service arrival once the full service is operational. Further employment will be created in maintenance and support services.

Investment is also planned at Severn Tunnel Junction in further extended car parking, motorway 'junction' upgrade and improved passenger facilities.

Trains would also carry express light freight, including urgent biological items for the NHS. Partners at Intercity Railfreight are developing further this part of the proposal with the aim of providing a parcel concentration hub on the route.

Process for approval:

Grand Union is currently consulting with the industry about its application which has been made to the Office of Rail and Road (ORR). The ORR has specific timescales on decision making, and a decision is expected early in 2020.

Support from political and commercial bodies is very significant during the decision-making process.

GRAND UNION TRAINS LIMITED

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Registered Office: Fulford Lodge, 1 Heslington Lane, Fulford, YORK, YO10 4HW

A Company registered in England & Wales No: 11408012

www.granduniontrains.com

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Timeline:

ORR positive decision Early 2020

April 2020 – April 2021 Mobilisation for start of operations

May 2021 initial service start – 2 hourly between Cardiff and London Paddington

Target journey time Cardiff – London Paddington 1 hour 45 minutes

Stopping pattern:

Cardiff Central

Cardiff parkway (when opened)

Newport

Severn Tunnel Junction

Bristol Parkway

London Paddington

May 2023 service extended to Llanelli and becomes hourly. New train fleet introduced

Target journey time Llanelli – London Paddington 2 hours 45 minutes

Target journey time Swansea – London Paddington 2 hours 35 minutes

Stopping pattern:

Llanelli

Swansea

Cardiff Central

Cardiff Parkway (when opened)

Newport

Severn Tunnel Junction

Bristol Parkway

London Paddington

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