



Department
for Transport

Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill
Minister of State for Rail

Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Tel: 0300 330 3000
E-Mail: lord.hendy@dft.gov.uk

Web site: www.gov.uk/dft

30 January 2026

Dear Ruth,

Sunday 1 February will mark a further step in the Government's commitment to return the railways to the service of passengers, with West Midlands Trains' (WMT) services, operating as London Northwestern Railway (LNR) and West Midlands Railway (WMR), coming into public ownership. WMT is now the fourth operator to transfer into public ownership under new legislation. We are building a railway fit for Britain's future, owned by the public, for the public.

We want to assure you that continuing to drive forward improvements for passengers is a top priority for us – as Minister for Rail and as Managing Director of the new public sector operator, WM Trains Limited, respectively.

WMT is an operator on the up, with improving operational performance and service quality results. Whilst there is still much to do, this is great news for the region. Following the introduction of the state-of-the-art Class 730/2 fleet on the London Northwestern Railway network in 2025, next month will also see the opening of five new stations in the West Midlands. This highlights the investments that have and continue to be made to deliver an enhanced service for passengers.

Public ownership alone is not a silver bullet and cannot fix years of structural problems or renew Victorian-era infrastructure overnight. The Railways Bill, currently progressing through Parliament, is a cornerstone of the government's Plan for Change and will unlock the full potential of the railway to shape communities and the lives within them. It will create Great British Railways (GBR), a new publicly owned body that

will run and manage the tracks and trains for passengers and freight use every day. The Bill also gives passengers a powerful new voice with a passenger watchdog, and an enhanced role for devolved governments and England's mayors to have a bigger say in how the railway is run in their regions.

GBR will bring fares and ticketing into the 21st century, simplifying the baffling array of fares and ticketing that passengers currently endure, ensuring they get best value for money. The new GBR app and website will allow passengers to buy tickets, check train times and access a range of support all in one place.

Ahead of the establishment of GBR, track and train are already being brought closer together with integrated leadership across DFTO train operating companies and Network Rail routes in defined regional areas to deliver improvements for passengers and freight users.

Furthermore, for the first time in 30 years, rail fares will be frozen for a year from March. This will put money back in passengers' pockets and ease the cost of living for hard working people, including delivering savings across over a billion journeys.

As we embark on a new journey for WMT under public ownership, and for our national railway system as a whole, we look forward to continuing to work in partnership with you to deliver a railway people can be proud of and rely on. As WMT's Managing Director, Ian will continue to be visible and responsive as the person who has overall responsibility for running train services for both the WMR and LNR routes. Ian will ensure that he and his team continue to engage with you directly to hear your views.

Yours sincerely,



Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill
Minister of State for Rail



Ian McConnell
Managing Director, WM Trains Limited