

Guidance

Great British Railways and the public ownership programme

Updates on the programme to transfer rail services into public ownership and establish GBR as the body responsible for passenger services and infrastructure.

From: **Department for Transport**
(/government/organisations/departments-for-transport) and DfT Operator Limited
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▶ [Show all updates](#)

Contents

- Great British Railways is on track
- Establishing Great British Railways
- Public ownership programme
- Publications

— Announcements

— Consultations

Great British Railways is on track

Great British Railways (GBR) will be the single ‘directing mind’ for the railways, bringing track and train together, putting passengers and customers first, rebuilding trust in the railway and operating the majority of passenger services under public ownership and control.

Integrated leadership teams combining track and train, which will be the model for GBR, have already been set up for Anglia, South Eastern and South Western, with further regions to come.



GBR will end years of fragmentation and will have a relentless focus on driving up standards for passengers, including simpler fares and ticketing. It will have the independence and tools it needs to deliver improvements to rail services and plan and run the railway on a long-term basis in the interest of its passenger and freight customers and taxpayers.

Instead of having to navigate multiple train operators, passengers will once again simply be able to use ‘the railway’. In place of private franchised

services, they will travel on GBR trains, running on GBR tracks, and working to a GBR timetable – all run by a single body focused on the interests of passengers and customers.

By unifying track and train under one organisation, GBR and public ownership will focus on getting the basics right for passengers and customers, as well as better value for taxpayers.

A whole-system approach will allow GBR to:

- act more efficiently
- make better, more informed decisions
- fix problems faster
- give local leaders a say in how services are run in their regions

The new GBR app will also help to simplify fares and ticketing by providing tickets, train times and support all in one place. This will build on what has already been achieved in simplifying fares and ticketing – long-distance fares trials, extensions to Pay As You Go and the historic fares freeze.

GBR's brand is being rolled out across the railway network in a phased way to ensure value for money.

Establishing Great British Railways

The Railways Bill (<https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/4030>) was introduced in the House of Commons on 5 November 2025. Scrutiny of the bill continues in the House of Lords. GBR is expected to be operational around 12 months after the bill receives Royal Assent.

Under public ownership:

- South Western Railway has accelerated the rollout of its new £1 billion fleet of Arterio trains, introducing 39 new trains into service already
- a new East Coast Mainline timetable has been introduced to add 10,000 extra LNER services annually, meaning 60,000 more seats a week and more, cheaper tickets available
- Southeastern Railway has invested £2 million in video and camera technology to help identify potential faults on the rail network so they can be fixed quickly
- wi-fi will be upgraded on more than 1,400 trains across the network, creating more reliable connectivity for passengers

Public ownership programme

The Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Act 2024

(<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2024/25/enacted>) makes provision for rail passenger services to be provided by public sector operators, instead of by means of franchises.

This act, which became law in November 2024, has enabled the government to deliver its manifesto commitment to bring passenger services into public ownership as a first step towards wider rail reform. The legislation applies to England, Scotland and Wales.

Under the legislation:

- South Western Railway's services were the first to transfer into public ownership on 25 May 2025
- c2c's services transferred on 20 July 2025
- Greater Anglia's services transferred on 12 October 2025
- West Midlands Trains' services transferred on 1 February 2026
- Govia Thameslink Railway's services transferred on 31 May 2026
- Chiltern Railways' services transferred on 20 September 2026

Great Western Railway's services will be the next to transfer on 13 December 2026, followed by Avanti West Coast's services on 7 March 2027.

The transfer of passenger services operated under contracts with the Department for Transport (DfT) is expected to be completed by the end of 2027.

Ahead of the establishment of GBR, services are being transferred to a new publicly owned operating company, which will be a subsidiary of DfT Operator Limited (DFTO).

Publications

- GBR: improvements train operators in public ownership are making for customers (<https://www.gov.uk/government/case-studies/gbr-improvements-train-operators-in-public-ownership-are-making-for-customers>) – DfT publication, 8 December 2025
- A railway fit for Britain's future: government response (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-railway-fit-for-britains-future->

government-response) – DFT publication, 5 November 2025

- Railways Bill factsheets (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/railways-bill>) – DFT publication, 5 November 2025
- Our roadmap to an accessible railway (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/accessible-railways-roadmap>) – DFT publication, 5 November 2025
- Public ownership of rail services: facts and figures (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-ownership-of-rail-services-facts-and-figures>) – DFT publication, October 2025

Announcements

- Chiltern Railways brought into public ownership (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/chiltern-railways-brought-into-public-ownership>) – DfT press release, 20 September 2026
- Britain's biggest train operator's services enter public ownership this weekend (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/britains-biggest-train-operators-services-enter-public-ownership-this-weekend>) – DfT press release, 28 May 2026
- More new trains, better journeys: SWR celebrates one year in public ownership (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-new-trains-better-journeys-swr-celebrates-one-year-in-public-ownership>) – DfT press release, 25 May 2026
- Full steam ahead for Great British Railways as first branded train unveiled (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/full-steam-ahead-for-great-british-railways-as-first-branded-train-unveiled>) – DfT press release, 20 May 2026
- London Northwestern Railway and West Midlands Railway services return to public ownership (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/london-northwestern-railway-and-west-midlands-railway-services-return-to-public-ownership>) – DfT press release, 30 January 2026
- All change: The future of British trains arrives as Government reforms broken railways (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/all-change-the-future-of-british-trains-arrives-as-government-reforms-broken-railways>) – DfT press release, 8 December 2025
- Rail reform and Great British Railways (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/rail-reform-and-great-british-railways>) – written ministerial statement, 5 November 2025
- Rail Reform in the Wales and Borders area (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/rail-reform-in-the-wales-and-borders-area>) – written ministerial statement, 5 November 2025

- Journey to Great British Railways gathers steam with landmark legislation (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/journey-to-great-british-railways-gathers-steam-with-landmark-legislation>) – DfT press release, 4 November 2025
- Greater Anglia services transferred to public ownership (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/greater-anglia-services-transferred-to-public-ownership>) – DFTO statement, 12 October 2025
- Half of rail operators publicly owned with Greater Anglia onboard (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/half-of-rail-operators-publicly-owned-with-greater-anglia-onboard>) – DfT press release, 10 October 2025
- Next train services to return to public ownership revealed as government delivers railways reset (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/next-train-services-to-return-to-public-ownership-revealed-as-government-delivers-railways-reset>) – DfT press release, 26 September 2025
- c2c services transferred to public ownership (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/c2c-services-transferred-to-public-ownership>) – DFTO statement, 20 July 2025
- London to Essex c2c services return to public control in step towards Great British Railways (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/london-to-essex-c2c-services-return-to-public-control-in-step-towards-great-british-railways>) – DfT press release, 18 July 2025
- Great British Railways in action – passengers benefit from track and train being united on South Eastern Railway (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/great-british-railways-in-action-passengers-benefit-from-track-and-train-being-united-on-south-eastern-railway>) – DfT press release, 25 May 2025
- New dawn for rail as South Western services return to public hands (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-dawn-for-rail-as-south-western-services-return-to-public-hands>) – DfT press release, 25 May 2025
- South Western Railway services transferred to public ownership (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/south-western-railway-services-transferred-to-public-ownership>) – DFTO statement, 25 May 2025
- Transfer of South Western Railway's services into public ownership (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/transfer-of-south-western-railways-services-into-public-ownership>) – written ministerial statement, 22 May 2025
- Rail reform: a railway fit for Britain's future (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/rail-reform-a-railway-fit-for-britains-future>) – written ministerial statement, 25 February 2025
- New rail watchdog to give passengers a voice and hold railway to account (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-rail-watchdog-to-give-passengers-a-voice-and-hold-railway-to-account>) – DfT press release, 18 February 2025

- First train services to return to public ownership revealed
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/first-train-services-to-return-to-public-ownership-revealed>) – DfT press release, 4 December 2024
- Public ownership: railway passenger services
(<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/public-ownership-railway-passenger-services>) – written ministerial statement, 4 December 2024

Consultations

- A railway fit for Britain's future (<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/a-railway-fit-for-britains-future>) – DfT consultation, 18 February 2025



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