Dear Meg,

I am writing to inform you of the award of the West Coast Partnership. Following a rigorous competition, First Trenitalia will operate the West Coast Partnership from 8 December, pending completion of a standstill period on 27 August.

This unique Partnership will deliver significant benefits for passengers and marks a departure from flawed systems of the past. As you will be aware, the Williams Rail Review continues its work to establish a framework that puts passengers – and punctual trains – at the heart of the industry. I am pleased to say that the West Coast Partnership’s unique structure has been welcomed by Keith Williams, for delivering the swift introduction of improved journeys while fitting with the direction of the Review, enabling the implementation of Williams’ recommendations in due course.

For passengers travelling along the West Coast Main Line, First Trenitalia will deliver brand new trains, replacing the diesel Voyager trains by December 2022 with new bi-mode and electric trains. The existing Pendolino trains will be fully refurbished, with new standard class seating, reservation systems and passenger information throughout. First Trenitalia will also invest in best in class 5G Wi-Fi connectivity. Passengers will benefit from simplified fares, including options for those who travel less than five days a week and enhanced smart ticketing.

New services will be delivered from December 2020, with Llandudno and Walsall joining the West Coast network and Motherwell becoming a major stop with a quadrupling of services. Further improvements will be delivered in December 2022, with two trains an hour operating between London and Liverpool including a stop at Liverpool South Parkway, subject to approval by the regulator, the Office of Rail and Road. Journeys to Chester, Liverpool and
Manchester will be faster, and services across the network will operate earlier and later than today.

Importantly, the West Coast Partnership will be at the forefront of the Government’s commitment to deliver a cleaner, greener rail network. The new bi-mode and electric trains will reduce emissions, while also improving reliability and comfort for passengers. New solar panels and energy efficient air conditioning will be introduced, and there is a commitment to an 80% reduction in non-recyclable waste from products sold or supplied on-board trains.

First Trenitalia will work closely with Network Rail to develop and deliver infrastructure capacity and capability. This Partnership will help facilitate opportunities to improve connectivity and train performance along the route.

Finally, and importantly, the use of a Forecast Revenue Mechanism, will ensure that the Partnership is sustainable, and that there is not a repeat of the issues that affected the East Coast Main Line route. This mechanism will be supported by a new Annual Review process, to ensure partnership working is effective, collaborative and continually improving.

This is a very exciting moment for UK rail and we look forward to working closely with First Trenitalia to ensure they deliver the high-quality rail services that passengers expect and deserve.

Yours ever,

Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT