



Welcome to the Red Letter

A message from Phil



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The award will see us continue to run the franchise through to at least 31st March 2019, with the option for up to a further one-year extension at the DfT's discretion. The new contract bridges the gap between the existing franchise and the new West Coast Partnership, which we have been shortlisted to bid for along with our bidding partners Stagecoach and SNCF, the French national operator.

We'll be making a number of improvements across the network, including investing £3m in improving our stations and our toilets, lighting, and carpets on board, accepting contactless payment on all our ticket machines, and providing additional staff at stations during busy times. We'll also be rolling out improved customer information during disruption and creating new apprenticeship opportunities. We're also in the process of partnering with some of the most exciting names in technology, to bring new innovations to our customers to improve their experience still further. I look forward to sharing further details of these initiatives with you soon.

Making Wi-Fi free for passengers along our route



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The £7.5m investment is part of the recent direct award agreed with the Government. The upgrade works will start in May 2018 and will be undertaken by the UK-based rail supply chain, supporting skilled jobs in the sector. The new technology will be 'future-proofed' so it will be compatible with 5G mobile networks as they come on stream and offer further speed improvements.

We will also be investigating how to eliminate 'not-spots' - places without mobile phone coverage - across the West Coast to enable our customers to work more effectively during their journeys.

Launching the UK's first train driver apprenticeship scheme



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Working with Aslef, the train drivers' union, we recently advertised for three people to join a year-long training course to become a driver. During the programme, apprentices receive training in all aspects of being a train driver, as well as additional learning opportunities and shadowing staff across the organisation to get a full understanding of how the driver's role fits within the business.

The scheme follows last year's successful pilot which received over 1,200 applications. The upcoming apprenticeships will be based at Glasgow, Wolverhampton, and London Euston.

Transforming old uniforms in pioneering recycling scheme



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With around 30 million tonnes of corporate wear sent to landfill each year in the UK, we looked for a creative solution to transform our old uniforms. Under our new scheme, these clothes will now become new items such as blankets, bags, and coats to help those living on the street. They will be donated to the Albert Kennedy Trust, which supports young LGBT homeless people, HMP Askham Grange and our charity partner, Rethink Mental Illness. The partnership is also part of a rehabilitation scheme that helps to prepare prisoners for employment and life outside of prison.

Leading the way in passenger satisfaction

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Along with our East Coast route, which scored 92%, we achieved the highest customer satisfaction on the UK franchised rail network. We use the results of the NRPS and other surveys to inform the improvements we make to our services, including ticket buying facilities and station environment enhancements.

Record growth on the Chester route



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522,000 journeys were made between the two cities in 2017, an increase of 23% compared to five years ago. Over the past 20 years we have transformed travel between London and Chester, increasing the number of direct services from three to 14 a day and reducing the journey time by 20 minutes to two hours. Fares start from £17 one-way between the two cities.

Opening our Coventry Bike Hub



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We opened our new bike hub at Coventry station in November 2017, the final in our scheme which has created over 500 additional spaces on our route. Working in partnership with the DfT, Coventry City Council and the Rail Delivery Group, the hub was built with funding from the Government's Cycle Rail Fund. Along with hubs introduced at Rugby, Birmingham International and Preston, £1.25m has

been invested in hubs over the past year.

Cyclists can use their own security fob to access the hub, which will more than double the number of cycle parking spaces available.