

## GWR Realises Ambition for Three Trains an Hour on North Downs Line



*Ready to go: GWR driver Carlos Civera Barranco ahead of the 0936 service from Reading to Redhill*

Great Western Railway has started to introduce a third hourly train service on the North Downs line, realising ambitions held for more than a decade. From Monday 14 September, eight extra weekday trains will run between Reading and Redhill – four in each direction – and increasing the number of services from two-an-hour to three-an-hour at key parts of the day.

GWR Business Assurance Director Joe Graham said: “Introducing three trains an hour on the North Downs line has been a long-held ambition of ours and we’ve worked closely with Network Rail and other partners to deliver these improvements, which couldn’t be better timed as we welcome more people back to the railway. A lot of hard work has been done to make sure people can be confident to travel safely, and that includes running more trains and carriages to make extra room, as well as enhanced cleaning and social distancing measures.”

As well as the additional weekday trains, which will increase seat capacity by 11%, from Saturday 19 September the Saturday service will also become hourly throughout the course of the day, with the exception of the first and last hours. This will increase seat capacity by more than a third on Saturdays on the route.

The improvement is a major step towards realising aspirations to provide three trains an hour Monday to Friday throughout the day and builds on a recent promise by the train company of new, tri-mode trains and more carriages for the line early next year. Discussions continue with Network Rail and other stakeholders about when GWR can introduce more trains on the route to realise the full timetable aspiration and extend the additional services being introduced this Monday to Gatwick Airport.



*Ambition realised: Left to right, GWR's Head of Train Planning, Matt Cambourne, Network Rail Western's Customer Relationships Executive, Richard Turner, Deputy Leader of Reading Council, Tony Page, GWR Business Assurance Director, Joe Graham, and GWR Reading Station Manager, David Pinder*

### **Advent of the New Tri-Mode Class 769 trains**

North Downs Line Officer for the Southeast Communities Rail Partnership, David Daniels, said: "The introduction of the third train per hour has been a long-held aspiration of GWR and the communities along the North Downs Line it serves, so we're delighted to see the extra trains being added to the timetable and look forward to trying the 769 fleet when it becomes available."

At the end of August, GWR announced that it had received the first train in the UK able to run on overhead and third rail electric lines, as well as under its own diesel power. Offering more carriages than the trains they are replacing, the Class 769 fleet was specially commissioned by GWR to be able to run under overhead wires in London and the Thames Valley, and to take advantage of third rail provision where it exists on the North Downs line.

The innovative fleet of tri-mode trains will operate in four-carriage sets which have been refurbished inside and out, with free WiFi and power at each seat, air cooling, bigger luggage racks, and new seat covers. Equipped with new diesel engines and combined with their electric capability, each Class 769 will offer a quieter and cleaner experience for customers than the trains they are replacing.

The new services will run from Reading to Redhill at 09:36; 11:26; 12:36 and 13:36, and from Redhill to Reading at 11:14; 13:15; 14:15 and 15:14.