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Train companies thank passengers as railway fully reopens after successful Christmas upgrade work

The railway between London Euston and the northwest has reopened on time after a busy but successful programme of upgrades over Christmas and the New Year.

As part of Network Rail's Railway Upgrade Plan, work was carried out from London to Lancaster and across the West Midlands as tracks were renewed, signals were upgraded and whole bridges replaced over Christmas Day, Boxing Day and into the New Year.

One of the biggest pieces of work was in the Birmingham area and saw track and signalling upgrades completed between Birmingham New Street and Wolverhampton. The work finished this morning as planned and trains began running as normal between the two cities and on the Cross City line through Birmingham.

Other work undertaken included:

- Waterproofing the Trent and Mersey Canal bridge, south of Stafford, on the West Coast main line
- Wyre Viaduct upgrades between Lancaster and Preston
- Track renewal through Crick Tunnel between Northampton and Rugby
- Track renewal through platforms 13 and 14 at Manchester Piccadilly station
- Further work at Liverpool Lime Street as part of the Great North Rail Project

Richard Brooks, customer service director for West Midlands Railway said: "We are pleased to be able to run a full service for commuters this morning and would like to thank everyone for their co-operation and understanding over the Christmas and New Year period while vital improvements were made to rail infrastructure."

Martin Frobisher, London North Western route managing director at Network Rail, said: "I'd like to thank train customers for their patience over the festive period. We understand that work of this magnitude can be disruptive, however the upgrades carried out by Team Orange will help deliver a bigger, better and more reliable railway to meet the ever-increasing demand for rail travel in future."

Across Britain, 32,000 people worked round-the-clock on 260 projects to provide passengers with a better railway.

Passengers can plan their journeys and check before they travel at www.nationalrail.co.uk.

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Notes to editors

For further information on West Midlands Trains, London Northwestern Railway or West Midlands Railway call our **newsroom** on **03300 955150**.

About West Midlands Trains

West Midlands Trains Ltd. will be running the West Midlands rail franchise from 10 December 2017 until 2025/6. Abellio has a 70.1% share of the company, East Japan Railway Company (JRE) and Mitsui & Co., Ltd. (Mitsui) own the remaining 29.9% in a 50:50 split.

About Abellio

Abellio is the international passenger transport subsidiary of the Dutch national railway company, Nederlandse Spoorwegen. Every day our people provide rail, bus and tram services to 1.7m customers across the UK, Germany and in the Netherlands. In the UK we operate buses through Abellio London, as well as ScotRail and Greater Anglia train services, and Merseyrail in a joint venture with Serco. In Germany we operate Abellio Deutschland, serving communities in North Rhine Westfalia, Saxony, Lower Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Hesse and Thuringia. Our role in transport extends beyond the journey from a-to-b. With our international heritage and our policy of sharing best practice, not just amongst ourselves, but across the wider transport industry, we provide thought leadership and truly innovative ideas which make a positive contribution to the communities we serve. For more information on Abellio visit www.abellio.com

About Mitsui

Mitsui is one of the most diversified and comprehensive trading, investment and service enterprises in the world with 139 offices in 66 countries as of March, 2017. Utilising our global operating locations, network and information resources, we are multilaterally pursuing business that ranges from product sales, worldwide logistics and financing, through to the development of major international infrastructure and other projects in the following fields: Iron & Steel Products, Mineral & Metal Resources, Infrastructure Projects, Integrated Transportation Systems, Chemicals, Energy, Food Resources, Food Products & Services, Consumer Services, IT & Communication, and Corporate Development Business. Mitsui is actively taking on challenges for global business innovation around the world. For more information, visit www.mitsui.com.

About JR East

East Japan Railway Company (JR East) was established in 1987, when Japanese National Railways was divided as part of a package of railway reforms. JR East's railway business covers a 7,500 km (approx. 4,660 miles) network in the eastern part of the Japanese main island, including Tokyo Metropolitan area, and provides transportation services, comprising

urban, suburban and high speed operations, for 17 million passengers on a daily basis. JR East also undertakes non-transport commercial activities, which account for more than 30% of the total revenue of JR East Group. JR East contributes to passengers and communities it serves by delivering high degrees of punctuality, reliability and comfort and also continues to pursue higher levels of safety and service quality through technical innovation. For more information, visit www.jreast.co.jp/e.

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