

Major commercial agreement signed between GCRE and Transport for Wales

The Welsh Government's flagship Global Centre of Rail Excellence (GCRE) project has signed heads of terms for Transport for Wales to become a major commercial client. The world's first rail testing centre in Wales, currently being constructed at the head of the Dulais and Swansea Valleys, is a £400m research, testing and certification facility for rolling stock, infrastructure and new rail technologies.

It will include two 25KV electrified test loops, a 6.9km high speed rolling stock track, and a 4km ~60km/h infrastructure test track. As part of the GCRE membership model, companies can take guaranteed testing and research time at the site according to their needs.

The agreement sees Transport for Wales, wholly owned by the Welsh Government, take the highest level of membership at GCRE and become a premium client of the facility, due to be completed in 2025, for rail testing, innovation and research and development. Transport for Wales will also be able to use other GCRE services, including storage, training and product approvals.

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GCRE chief executive Simon Jones said the agreement would support TfW's passenger delivery focus and its major infrastructure programme across Wales and the Borders. He said: "I'm pleased to finalise this exciting partnership with Transport for Wales, a long-term agreement that will see TfW become a premium client of the Global Centre of Rail Excellence and secure access to the world class testing and

innovation facilities we will have on site.

“What GCRE can provide to Transport for Wales is an international quality, purpose built and offline facility, right here in Wales, that can support the TfW team as they implement their ambitious strategic programme. Passenger delivery is a critical focus for TfW and through this agreement with GCRE we can support new and innovative ways of delivering for customers along the Wales and Borders route.

He added: “Transport for Wales has a hugely ambitious slate of major projects – from the transformational valleys line electrification; Metro programmes in South Wales, Swansea Bay and North Wales as well as a significant list of station enhancement and upgrades right across the Wales and Borders. GCRE can assist in the delivery of these major projects through greater assurance of the innovations and ideas being deployed.

“This tie-up is a natural one in many ways – as a world class facility here in Wales, GCRE can support the development of Wales’ national transport system through a long-term collaboration with TfW. Both of our organisations have shared ambitions to decarbonise the railway. With GCRE set to become the UK’s first Net Zero railway in operation, working together with TfW we can make a tangible difference to the national effort needed to tackle the climate crisis.

“Following on from the recently announced Hitachi deal, this partnership shows that GCRE is taking the next step in its journey. Not simply constructing an internationally significant facility but also signing up important and significant clients to take testing and research time when we open – showing both the quality of our services we are offering as well as the commercial strength of the business.”

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TfW chief executive James Price said: “The rail industry in Wales is currently going through a major transformation with the South Wales Metro being built and the introduction of brand-new trains throughout the network.

“I’m pleased this agreement continues our close working relationship with GCRE. Having these world class facilities in Wales is a key enabler for the industry as a whole and for TfW in delivering our ambitious plans.”

Welsh Government Deputy Minister for Climate Change Lee Waters said: “The Global Centre of Rail Excellence is one of the most exciting and important pieces of infrastructure being built anywhere in Europe today. It will be at the forefront of rail innovation, supporting the development of new products and technologies that will be the backbone of the high-quality, integrated and net zero transport networks we need right across the continent in the coming years.

“It’s fantastic that this agreement between GCRE and Transport for Wales has been finalised and that passenger delivery is going to be a central focus of the collaboration, ultimately benefiting communities and commuters right across Wales.”

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