**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 3rd JULY 2020**

**Ship to shore for Avanti West Coast’s new fleet of trains**

* *First body shells for Avanti West Coast’s new trains arrive in the UK*
* *Assembly work will start in earnest at Hitachi’s Newton Aycliffe factory later in the year*
* *Trains due to enter service on the West Coast Main Line in 2022*

The first nine body shells that will become Avanti West Coast’s new fleet of Hitachi trains have landed in the UK.

The more spacious, comfortable, and greener models made by Hitachi Rail are due to enter service on the West Coast Main Line in 2022. They will replace the current diesel-powered Super Voyagers and serve the West Midlands, North Wales and Liverpool.

The aluminium shells landed in the UK this week by sea at Southampton docks from Hitachi Rail’s Kasado factory in Japan, ahead of the train building work that will start at Hitachi’s Newton Aycliffe plant later this year.

When completed, the fleet will comprise of 13 Class 805 Bi-Mode trains and 10 Class 807 Electric trains. Each Bi-Mode train comprises five carriages. The Electric trains will have seven.

While initial empty body shells of the Bi-Mode fleet will be sent from Japan, the Avanti West Coast order marks an important change in Hitachi’s train building approach. 56 body shells will be fully welded together in the North East, marking an exciting new chapter for Hitachi’s factory, where £8.5million is being invested to allow the full build of trains to take place in the UK. The final assembly, where all components and electrics are fitted, of the entire fleet will take place at the Newton Aycliffe facility.

“Our new trains are really going to make a difference and it’s very exciting,” explained Liam Hockings, Senior Project Manager, New Trains for Avanti West Coast. “Together with our partners Hitachi Rail and Rock Rail West Coast, we will be looking to raise the bar for our customers on the West Coast Main Line route.”

Rock Rail West Coast, a joint venture between Rock Rail and Aberdeen Standard Investments, is financing the trains and will be leasing them to Avanti West Coast.

Notes to Editors

1. The first nine vehicles are from the Class 805 fleet, a full set from 805001 and four from 805002.

ENDS

**About Avanti West Coast**

Avanti West Coast, operator of intercity rail services on the West Coast Main Line, is a joint venture between FirstGroup and Trenitalia, delivering a cleaner, greener railway that drives the West Coast forward.

We’re on a mission to revolutionise train travel, linking together the towns and major cities of the UK to create an iconic railway the country can be proud of. We’ve got big plans including a fleet of new intercity trains, as well as the complete refurbishment of the existing Pendolino train fleet. There will be 263 more train services every week by 2022 with new routes added, and a much-improved onboard service with enhanced free Wi-Fi, plug sockets, 25,000 brand new seats and improved catering. Since 8 December, passengers have benefited from improved passenger compensation, available for journeys delayed by just 15 minutes.