

## Alstom's Widnes site welcomes its first-ever passenger service

- Unique rail tour visited Alstom Transport Technology Centre at Widnes
- UK Railtours charter traversed Alstom's 13,000 m<sup>2</sup> site

**11 September 2025** – Alstom, global leader in smart and sustainable mobility, has welcomed the first-ever passenger service into its Widnes modernisation facility.

On Saturday 6 September, a UK Railtours charter – [The Industria Ditat](#) – visited the 13,000 m<sup>2</sup> Alstom Transport Technology Centre as it traversed rare track across the British network on its journey between Hertfordshire and North Wales. The Latin phrase 'Industria Ditat' translates as 'Industry Enriches' and is the motto of the Cheshire town of Widnes.

Topped and tailed by GB Railfreight locomotives 57303 and 60087, the train arrived at 1Z15 at Widnes at around 10:30am. It was welcomed by Mark McGrath and Tony Whitehead from Alstom's Central Operations team, who were on hand to ensure its safe arrival and stay.

The train entered the facility onto the arrival/departure line, parking behind a newly refurbished unit that was awaiting departure later in the day. The train remained on site for almost an hour, allowing the enthusiastic passengers on board a chance to observe and capture rare footage of a facility most have never had access to before. 1Z15 then left the site through Ditton Sidings to Ditton East Junction.

Opened in 2017, Alstom's Widnes facility is the UK's largest and most sophisticated centre for train modernisation. Its vast size and close embrace of digital principles, makes it ideal for work on both intercity and commuter trains. Recent projects completed by the site include a [£117 million refurbishment programme of Avanti West Coast's Class 390 Pendolino trains](#) – the UK's biggest-ever fleet upgrade – and a [£25 million renewal of South Western Railway's Class 458 fleet](#).

"Welcoming our first-ever passenger service to Widnes was a proud moment for the entire team based here. The visit by UK Railtours not only showcased the scale and capability of our Transport Technology Centre, but it also celebrated the passion and heritage that drive our work every day," said John Clerk, Widnes Head of Operations and Parts at Alstom.

He added: "Seeing rail enthusiasts engage with our site from the train was a powerful reminder of how far we've come and the exciting journey ahead."

After its Widnes stop, The Industria Ditat continued on towards its final destination of Glan Conwy Freight Depot via Llandudno Junction, before returning to Watford Junction along the West Coast Main Line. Passengers travelled in a mixture of Mark 2 and Mark 3 heritage carriages provided by Eastern Rail Services, all of which were built at Alstom's Derby Litchurch Lane Works.

In lieu of an access fee, UK Railtours made a donation to Alstom Transport Technology Centre's chosen charities – Halton Haven Hospice and Widnes Foodbank.

“UK Railtours is tremendously grateful for all the assistance they received from Alstom to make this unique charter train possible. The professionalism of the Alstom team was second to none, and ensured the safe and smooth operation of the train. To be able to offer such unusual ‘rare track’ charter services – to fascinating industrial locations – to our enthusiast passengers is a great opportunity to enhance our diverse range of trains. It also allowed them to see and experience the continued evolution of our proud railway history in this 200th anniversary year, which Alstom is such a major part of,” said Liz Morris, Managing Director at UK Railtours.

She added: “UK Railtours wishes to extend a sincere thank you to the fantastic team at Alstom, and our friends at GB Railfreight and Eastern Rail Services, who collaborated to make this special day possible. We look forward to bringing more exciting exploration opportunities to our passengers in future and would be delighted to work with Alstom again!”

One of the railtour passengers was the man who made it all possible, [Ken Davies, who recently retired as Alstom’s Movements Manager after a 50 years on Britain’s railways](#). He was seen gazing out of the window with pride as he revisited the site he had helped establish in 2017 – and championed ever since – and once again caught a glimpse of the [Class 08 locomotive named Ken Davies in his honour](#) earlier this year.

Not only does September 2025 mark the first time Alstom’s Widnes site has welcomed a passenger service, celebrations are also being held around the world to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the modern railway. Alstom marked [Railway 200](#) in August when it hosted the world’s largest-ever gathering of historic and modern trains. [The Greatest Gathering](#) took place at Derby Litchurch Lane Works between Friday 1 and Sunday 3 August, welcoming 40,000 visitors from around the world and raising over thousands for charity.

Ken Davies’ Class 08 (08721) also took centre stage at The Greatest Gathering, where it helped moved exhibits into place and highlighted the shunter’s importance to Britain’s railways since the 1950s. Meanwhile, Avanti West Coast’s Pendolino (390119 Progress) was also on display. It was one of 56 Alstom-built Class 390 trains which had been refurbished at Widnes as part of the upgrade project for the fleet.

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For more information, please visit [www.alstom.com](http://www.alstom.com).

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