

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH **RAIL**

BIG PLAN BIG CHANGES

The Rail Delivery Group's blueprint for rail's future



ROB FRANCE.

Rail Delivery Group

 National Rail

 **Big Plan.
Big Changes.**



Introduction

“When you’re up to your backside in alligators, it’s easy to forget that your initial objective was to drain the swamp.”

That wonderful old saying has applied to the rail industry for the entire time I’ve edited *RAIL* - and that’ll be 25 years in 2020! In that time, there have been plenty of startling successes - the most notable being the doubling of passenger numbers from 800 million on the last day of the BR regime to 1.6 billion today. On the West Coast Main Line, 17 Euston-Manchester expresses a day in 2002 has become 47 today. From 15 million in pre-Pendolino days, the WCML smashed through its 30 million target some years ago, and it now stands at 40 million. By 2025 it will be 50 million, going by current estimates.

High Speed 2 cannot come quickly enough to provide that desperately needed step-change in capacity which no amount of upgrading of trains, stations, infrastructure and signalling could ever deliver. But alongside

(and, sadly, all too often obscuring) the railway’s clear successes of the first 25 years after the Railways Act, there has been a stream of really testing and often damaging internal and external challenges. This has meant that the industry has been pretty much permanently on a back foot... or, as that old saying says, ‘up to its backside in alligators.’

‘Draining the swamp’ - finding that sweet spot where private delivery of a superb public railway delivers what everyone wants - therefore remains a tantalisingly (and stubbornly) elusive objective. It would be easy for disillusion to set in. It’s therefore important once in a while to pause, take stock, and look back over our shoulders and objectively assess progress.

Any hiker plodding up a seemingly endless, steep mountainside knows only too well the benefits of taking a breather to look back at how far they’ve come. This is not only satisfying for the achievement thus far - it also inspires ongoing effort for the major work still

required. That’s the purpose of this special *RAIL* supplement: to look back at progress thus far, before glancing uphill at the stiff climb remaining.

Like all organisations working in the political and media turbulence and relentless scrutiny of public-private initiatives, the RDG would be the first to admit that it hasn’t always ‘got it right’ over the last 25 years. An apparent reluctance to ‘ruffle feathers’ has, in the last couple of years, given way to a steadily emerging more direct and confident approach, with problems now openly and objectively highlighted - even where this has maybe led to discomfort on either side of the public-private frontier.

This new and bolder approach (not least on fares reform) is a very welcome development which can only have a positive impact on new, better aligned strategic approaches both among its members and in government.

This is timely because the railway faces a watershed moment in its history, in several key areas. Major challenges include:

- The stretching of the current network to its limit, which is bringing problems of operations management as congestion increases on the one hand, and concurrent access difficulties for

maintenance and renewal persist on the other.

- Rapid technological change in both train control and signalling, as well as customer information, where the railway has lagged behind passenger access to often more current information via smartphones, leaving the railway looking lead-footed and mired in the past.

- The need for urgent franchise reform which, as the Government’s Rail Review group Chairman Keith Williams has made clear, “cannot continue in its current form.”

- The need to attract new bidders to operate the passenger network on behalf of the Government, delivering the increasing quality at the optimum value to taxpayers.

- Fares complexity and value for money.
- Declining traditional revenues from season tickets as working practices change.

- The difficulty of meeting rapidly increasing customer (passenger and freight) expectations, which are difficult to meet in the face of these combined problems.

- The need for a new, informed, professional and expert arms-length body to lead the industry and deliver the Government’s strategy.

- Develop and recruit the very best and most

diverse workforce to run the railway in its second 25 years of public-private operation.

The private sector and wider rail industry recognise that this is a pivotal moment for once-in-a-generation change and has said it is ready to not only embrace radical change - but to help evolve it and drive it successfully into place. Government has likewise indicated it is also ready to step back from detailed hands-on involvement, which means that Keith Williams faces a unique and very significant opportunity to bring all these threads together.

The scale of the challenge facing Williams in coming up with a suitable structure and strategy to pave the way for this radical change should not be underestimated - nor should the similarly difficult challenge faced by the industry in delivering it ‘on the ground’.

Both have a mountain to climb. This special publication is designed to show that the rail industry, as represented by the RDG, is ready, willing and able to roll up its sleeves and make it happen.

Time to turn back up that hill, shoulder the load and start climbing again! ■

Nigel Harris
Managing Editor and Events Director, *RAIL*

CONTENTS



04 Lots still to do
RDG Chief Executive PAUL PLUMMER says the industry is ‘calling time’ on short-term fixes



08 Growth industry
RAIL presents a snapshot of how public and private investment is yielding major benefits.



10 Building on success
How a public-private partnership has saved the railways from stagnation.



14 Fares reform
RAIL’s fares and services expert BARRY DOE explains why the current fares system needs fixing.

EDITORIAL

Managing Editor: Nigel Harris
Assistant Editor: Richard Clinnick
Contributing Writers: Paul Stephen
Production Editor: Mike Wright
Art Editor: Charles Wrigley
Sub-Editor: Richard Hampson
Managing Director: Tim Lucas

ADVERTISING

Account Director: Julie Howard

LOTS ACHIEVED, LOTS STILL TO DO

It's been more than 25 years since the Railways Act went live (in April 1994), which created the legislative framework and governance for the way in which the current system operates.

During that time the railway has continued to play a fundamental role in Britain's prosperity, connecting workers to jobs and businesses, goods to markets, and people to their families and friends.

The railway has also experienced enormous growth since the first franchises began in 1996, with a doubling in passenger numbers from 800 million to its present level of 1.6 billion.

This, in turn, has enabled a range of privately owned train operating companies to transform the industry's finances, drastically reducing the burden on taxpayers for the railway's day-to-day operation while helping to grow the network by introducing some 4,000 more services per day (see p50-53).

Working alongside government, rail

Rail Delivery Group Chief Executive PAUL PLUMMER tells RAIL how the industry is 'calling time' on short-term fixes with far-reaching proposals of its own for a generational system upgrade



companies have also played their part in refurbishing or rebuilding more than 600 stations across the country including Birmingham New Street, London Bridge and Reading.

Meanwhile, new stations such as Corby, Stratford International and Liverpool South Parkway have all been added to the network and new routes opened, including Oxford-London Marylebone, which was the first

new rail link between the capital and a major British city to be built in over a century.

This work to upgrade and increase capacity across the network continues, with the current partnership between public and private sectors hard at work delivering a £50bn investment programme in new infrastructure and rolling stock, including the delivery of 7,000 new carriages (equivalent to half the nation's train fleet) by 2021 (see p48-49).

But with that growth has come several problems as the system has become more congested and struggles to keep up with changes in technology and the different ways in which people live and work today.

This includes the outdated regulations that continue to govern fares, and an emerging lack of accountability and system integration, with the latter coming to the fore, most visibly during last summer's timetable change when the system failed to cope with the sheer scale of its challenge to introduce hundreds of new services.

The need for lasting and wholesale change was not just recognised by disgruntled passengers and government but the industry itself, which led the calls for a root and branch review into the structure of the industry and the way passenger services are delivered.

The government responded in September 2018 by establishing a Rail Review that is being independently chaired by former British Airways chief executive Keith Williams.

The Review is currently seeking evidence to inform the findings and recommendations that are expected to be published in the autumn.

RDG Chief Executive Paul Plummer explains: "There have been many reviews in the last few years but most of them didn't cover the whole system, and often they haven't been fully implemented. I think that's part of the reason we have ended up where we are with the challenges of misalignment,



a lack of accountability and a lack of customer focus because those reviews were not holistic enough.

"They weren't implemented as fully as we'd like, so we thought it was really important to deal with the very clear challenges for which some people are advocating quite simplistic solutions. We need an alternative to those simple propositions which isn't the status quo, isn't nationalisation but something else, and we need to say what that 'something else' is."

“We need to make it simple for customers and clear to them who is accountable.”

Paul Plummer, Chief Executive, Rail Delivery Group

A further reason that RDG and its members - which include Network Rail and train and freight operators - have welcomed the review is not just to help deal with the problems that have emerged from the last quarter of a century, but also to place the industry on a firmer footing to tackle challenges of the future, not least a 40% growth in passenger numbers that is expected by 2040.

Plummer adds: "We know that lots of positive things have happened since the mid-1990s, but some things aren't as good as they should be. The challenges of the future are also not going to be the same as they were 25 or five years ago, or even today.

"The heart of this [review] needs to be dealing with the challenges the nation has around the economy, productivity, connecting communities, and the situation around Brexit. That context is not the same as it was 25 years ago, and so that's what we're trying to focus on."

On April 30, RDG submitted eight proposals on behalf of the industry to the Williams Review for progressive and bold structural change to help deliver increased accountability, customer focus and responsiveness, in addition to bringing about practical changes like increased capacity and punctuality (RAIL 878).

These proposals (see panel, page 46) are well evidenced and have been developed over the last few months in close consultation with RDG members, passengers, businesses and communities.

The eight proposals also build on the separate outline proposals published by RDG in February for radical reform in fares and ticketing, that were themselves developed using more than 20,000 responses received by RDG during the public consultation phase.

Titled *Easier Fares for All*, recommendations made by RDG include moving to single-leg journeys as the basis for pricing in order to make the system less complicated and eliminate the need for 'split ticketing'.

Meanwhile, it says that a future fares system could enable local prices to be set regionally, which would mean local objectives could better be met, while moves should also be made to facilitate greater use of pay-as-you-go smart ticketing.

Regulations governing peak and off-peak travel should also be changed to encourage a better spread of demand, while the whole reformed system would be backed for the first time by a 'best fare guarantee'.

The proposals have been well received by industry and industry commentators, including RAIL's Fares and Services Expert Barry Doe (see p48-49), and therefore



Great Western Railway 800307 (left) and 800311 stand at London Paddington on January 14, ready to depart with the 1922 to Hereford and 1930 to Weston-super-Mare. The RDG is calling for a fully reformed fares system, backed by a 'best fare guarantee'. ROBERT FRANCE.

→ now form the basis for the first of RDG's eight proposals to the Williams Review.

"The 20,000 responses and huge engagement we received from across the country on fares was really critical, and an early part of what we submitted to Williams," adds Plummer. "Beyond that, we have further talked to customers and stakeholders because, in my view, people in the industry have a responsibility to inform decision making and how it should be changed to enable it to work better.

"As we developed our proposals we tested them against six principles which we set out early in the process. The first one, very importantly, is that customers must be at the heart of everything. The industry is complicated but its customers, quite rightly, don't really care how it is organised. They care about simplicity, clarity and accountability and how it is joined up to work for them.

"So we need to make it simple for customers and clear to them who is accountable. That is the central organising thought behind all our proposals so people see the railway as one system."

The second RDG proposal is to create a new independent body that would be in charge of the whole system that would remove politics from the running of the railways by sitting at arm's length from the Department for Transport or any other arm of government. RDG says it would act as the glue binding the industry together, join up political decision making so that customer needs are prioritised, and hold the industry to account when it falls short on keeping its promises to passengers.

THE EIGHT PROPOSALS RDG SUBMITTED TO THE WILLIAMS REVIEW

- 1. Deliver easier fares for all
- 2. Put a new independent organising body in charge of the whole industry
- 3. Introduce customer-focused 'public service contracts' to replace franchising
- 4. Give customers more choice on long-distance routes
- 5. Make sure track and train are working together
- 6. Bring decisions about local services closer to home
- 7. Enhance freight's central role in the economy
- 8. Invest in people

Crucially, it would combine regulation of infrastructure with the contracting of passenger services.

"The organising body needs to be accountable for national decision making and long-term issues. It can't and shouldn't try to do things that elected politicians do because they also need to make decisions about the future railway we want.

"It also shouldn't try and make decisions that should be made locally, but align decisions and incentives so that everybody nationally and locally is focused on customers."

The new independent body would also have oversight over franchising, or the new 'public service contracts' with which the RDG is proposing to replace the current system. In mass-commuter areas these would be tightly specified with an integrated transport body given more devolved control.

RDG is also calling for more choice and competition on long-distance inter-city routes, and tough outcome-based contracts for services in other areas, in place of today's tightly specified input-based model and to better incentivise the private sector to innovate

and improve performance.

This should result in a more flexible approach to franchising in which the private sector continues to play a central role.

"We do think we need to replace the current system of franchising with a new set of arrangements that gets the most out of the private sector but recognises that the public sector has a critical role in saying what it is we want. We see that as being in some parts of the railway - mass commuting areas - more of a concession model like Transport for London and quite a prescriptive model in city regions where people have limited choice.

"At the other end of the spectrum we believe that there needs to be more outcome-based contracts which are specified as what customers want to achieve but then allows the private sector to innovate and deliver those outcomes in the best way possible, rather than the one-size-fits-all model we have at the moment.

"In other markets, we need to have real competition, be it open access competition on long-distance routes, or overlapping franchises so that customers have a real choice, which is



London North Eastern Railway 43310 and 43317 provide traction for the 1000 London King's Cross-Aberdeen service on April 26 at Hougham, Lincolnshire. The RDG is calling for greater competition on long-distance routes such as this as part of its submission to the Williams Review. PAUL CLARK.



“ We need to replace franchising with a new set of arrangements that gets the most out of the private sector but recognises that the public sector has a critical role.”

Paul Plummer, Chief Executive, Rail Delivery Group

something we know they really value."

The new independent body would play a further role in delivering RDG's fifth proposal to the Williams Review, which is to join up train and infrastructure operations so they are all working towards the same customer-focused goals, and bringing about an end to the blame game in which NR and TOCs blame each other for causing passenger disruption.

This builds on the various methods of bringing track and train closer together that have been trialled or proposed in recent years, including the introduction of joint operations centres on some parts of the network, the rollout of supervisory boards on some Network Rail routes, and even the creation of vertically integrated organisations such as East West Rail.

"We have to align the regulation of infrastructure with the contracting of train operations because we don't think you need to put those things into one legal entity to achieve that alignment. What you need is the right behaviours and we don't need to jump into one organisation that does track and train."

The final three proposals concern the greater devolution of decision making and regulatory control from Westminster to the communities served by the railway, and the need to develop a clear national framework to protect access for freight across the network. RDG says it will be publishing a separate document to provide more detail on freight in the coming months.

RDG would also like to see the continued investment in people placed at the heart of any reforms, to provide the rail workforce with the

skills, resources and rewards needed to deliver these generational changes.

Plummer adds: "Ultimately it is a political decision, but in some places it is probably beneficial to devolve accountability to local authorities, and our proposals would allow for that if that is the political direction, which it clearly is in many cases.

"We also need to ensure that freight maintains and builds on its central role in the economy and the environment and so we need to ensure the stability of the current framework, but making all of this happen will depend on our people and how we continue to invest in new skills, engage with government, unions and people directly on a longer term strategy.

"There's a call to action there in terms of making sure we join that up and take it forward in a positive way to deliver these building blocks."

Plummer is understandably pleased with the eight proposals now being put before Keith Williams and his team.

Not only do they represent the culmination of many months of conversation and discussion with stakeholders, but also a careful balance between delivering a sufficient level of change while retaining the key ingredients of a system that has also delivered much success over the last 25 years.

The proof of the pudding is always in the eating, but Plummer remains confident that Williams will find this contribution from the RDG extremely valuable in reaching his final conclusions.

In any case, the alternative would be to do

nothing. In a constantly changing world that would, effectively, mean going backwards.

Plummer concludes: "Taking all of that together, you end up with a package which offers concessions in some markets, genuine outcome-based contracts to enable innovation in others, and real competition and choice in other places. All of that is overseen by an independent body and underpinned by a radical reform of fares.

"All of this is about delivering for people who use the railway - both passengers or freight operators - and delivering for the economy and communities. It's also about generating great opportunities for the people who work on the railways.

"Inevitably, pulling something like this together is a huge challenge and people here at RDG have done a great job in confronting some of the issues. There's obviously a huge range of views across the industry. Addressing that range and coming up with a coherent package that is sufficiently bold and radical to represent genuine change, and doesn't throw away a lot of good things we already have in the system, was a challenge.

"I think we've risen to it and have given Keith Williams something to contemplate. We hope to see quite a lot of that in whatever he proposes. We have to change now because the future challenges are very different and there is no credible do-nothing option on fares or how we organise the industry.

"There is no one way of running a railway but we need to use this pivotal moment to come to a consensus on how we're going to make it work and then implement it." ■

GROWTH INDUSTRY

St Pancras International provided the backdrop for the launch of the *In Partnership For Britain's Prosperity* industry plan that is being underpinned by more than £50bn worth of investment, including the delivery of 7,000 new carriages by 2021. PAUL SHANNON.

Proposals for wider industry reform are being considered, as an ambitious £50 billion plan is rolled out across the rail network. **RAIL** presents a snapshot of how this major flow of public and private investment is already beginning to yield tangible benefits



On October 30 2017, the Rail Delivery Group launched a unified plan to facilitate further improvement in the railway and deliver significant economic growth.

Titled *In Partnership for Britain's Prosperity*, the plan committed all RDG members - which include Network Rail, train and freight operators - to four key pledges to improve services for passengers, secure more jobs, better connect communities and deliver the best deal for taxpayers.

These pledges have been accompanied by the delivery of a pipeline of £50 billion worth of private and public investment in new trains and infrastructure, supporting an estimated

“ Investment in new trains and infrastructure has generated an estimated 100,000 new jobs in the rail sector and supply chain ”

100,000 new job opportunities in the rail sector and supply chain, and a potential £85bn of wider economic growth from providing better connections to housing, employment and new business opportunities.

The plan was launched at St Pancras International which, having reopened in 2007 as the UK's gateway to Europe following an £800 million refurbishment, serves as a powerful reminder of how transformative benefits can be delivered by combining public and private investment, and from the industry working together in partnership. ■

GREAT WESTERN ELECTRIFICATION PROGRAMME

The £2.6bn Great Western Electrification Programme (GWEP) marks the biggest investment in the route from London Paddington to Cardiff since it was built more than 150 years ago.

As well as more than 600 miles of track being electrified, GWEP has included the rebuilding of Reading station which serves some 20 million passengers a year, and reopened a year ahead of schedule in July 2014.

The eastern section of the Great Western Main Line has also been upgraded to accommodate Elizabeth Line services between Paddington and Reading, which will bring 1.5 million people within 45 minutes of central London.

These works were completed by NR in September 2018, having taken more than

eight years and 13 million work hours to complete.

The section from Stockley to Maidenhead was energised in spring 2017 to enable the introduction of three new sets of rolling stock in a 12-month period, which created more than 4,000 extra seats into Paddington each morning.

Great Western Railway now operates a new fleet of Class 387 electric multiple units to Reading, while Class 800 Intercity Express Trains are now in squadron service to destinations as far west as Penzance.

Nine-car Class 345 units are also now running from Paddington to Hayes & Harlington and further west on test in advance of a full Elizabeth Line service.

Electrification is expected to be completed to Cardiff Central by the end of the year,



Great Western Railway 387165 trails 387135 into Didcot Parkway as the 1157 London Paddington-Didcot Parkway semi-fast on April 6. JOHN STRETTON.

which should eliminate 15 minutes from current journey times between the English and Welsh capitals.

GREAT NORTH RAIL PROJECT

The GNRP is a multi-billion-pound programme of improvements across northern England that is being implemented by Network Rail to enable 2,000 extra services to run each week and 40,000 more passengers to travel each day, bringing up to £46bn of wider economic benefits to the region per annum.

Major components of the GNRP include the £1bn Northwest electrification programme to electrify more than 300km of track on routes from Manchester to Preston via Bolton, Preston to Blackpool, and Manchester to Liverpool.

The construction of the £317m Ordsall



Chord was another key element of the project, which has provided a direct link between Manchester Piccadilly and Manchester Victoria ever since its opening in December 2017.

Meanwhile, its construction has enabled the restoration of Grade 1-listed viaducts and should encourage regeneration on surrounding land that was previously derelict.

A £140m upgrade has also been completed at Liverpool Lime Street as part of GNRP to upgrade signalling and remodel platforms

The Ordsall Chord will help deliver a 25% increase in capacity through central Manchester. PAUL SHANNON.

so that more trains can run in and out of the station, while work continues to extend over 100 platforms at more than 70 other stations throughout the region to accommodate longer trains being introduced by Northern and TransPennine Express.

Looking ahead, the TransPennine Route Upgrade will aim to deliver faster and more frequent services between York, Leeds and Manchester. Options for potential new infrastructure have now been submitted to the Department for Transport for consideration, with some £3bn allocated to cover the works that are expected to commence later this year.

BREAKDOWN OF £50BN+ INVESTMENT IN RAIL

£12.7bn in renewals work*

£15.1bn in enhancements*

£7.7bn on HS2*

£6bn on Crossrail*

£11.6bn in new and refurbished rolling stock by 2021

*Mainly between 2014-19

THAMESLINK

Network Rail's £7bn Thameslink Programme is now nearing completion to provide higher frequency services through central London to a wider range of destinations, including Peterborough, Ashford and Cambridge.

Beginning in 2009, the project has given an additional 80 stations direct access to St Pancras International and has involved the rebuilding of several major stations, including Blackfriars and London Bridge, to accommodate a new fleet of 12-car Class 700s.

Peak time capacity through the Thameslink 'core' between St Pancras and Blackfriars will eventually rise to 24 trains per hour in each direction, made possible by the installation of ETCS (European Train Control System) Level 2 and ATO (Automatic Train Operation) digital in-cab signalling technology.

One 12-car Class 700 can carry 50% more passengers than the '319s' they have replaced, and the same number of passengers as 21 double-decker buses.



Southern 377114 and 377624 stand at London Bridge on May 11 2017. The UK's fourth busiest station has been rebuilt to enable more Thameslink services to call, providing 30% more capacity. JACK BOSKETT/RAIL.

CROSSRAIL

The Elizabeth Line will remain Europe's largest construction project until main works get under way on HS2 Phase 1 from Euston-Birmingham later this year.

Having been originally billed as 'the £15bn railway', its construction has been estimated to have created 55,000 full-time jobs across the country with 61% of contracts going to British companies based outside the capital.

Once open, it will provide a high-frequency metro-style service to 40 stations between Reading and Heathrow in the west,



and Shenfield and Abbey Wood in the east.

It will provide a 10% increase in rail capacity in central London and a £42bn benefit to the UK economy from the

345035 arrives at Reading on April 3 while on test with the 0945 departure from Old Oak Common. Seventy nine-car '345s' are being delivered by Bombardier to provide Elizabeth Line services. MARK PIKE.

enhanced connectivity it will provide to the capital's major commercial and business districts, and from supporting regeneration in parts of the city and its suburbs.

The construction of more than 90,000 new homes along the route is predicted by 2021 and 180,000 by 2026, while 12 major property developments are being created over new Elizabeth Line stations to create over three million square feet of office, retail and residential space, helping to reinforce London's status as a global city.

BUILDING ON SUCCESS

You have to know the past to understand the present. So as the industry contemplates the prospect of great change, it is worth taking stock of how the last 25 years has been a story of significant progress.

Passenger numbers in the UK have doubled since 1997, and grown faster than any other European country, including France, Germany and Spain. Many of the problems we face today are down to overcrowding - but that's a

“Financially, the railways are now in rude health.”

A public-private partnership has saved the railways from stagnation, and the challenges ahead can be faced with the knowledge that the UK network is now steadily evolving

symptom of success, rather than failure.

The industry must not be complacent about the challenges ahead, but it should also be proud of some of the gains that have been made since the mid-1990s, thanks to the public and private sectors working in partnership.

Financially, the railways are now in rude health. Train operating companies have helped transform the industry's finances, drastically

reducing the burden on taxpayers for day-to-day railway operations.

This frees up taxpayers' money for investment in other vital public services and has been driven by a large increase in revenue that is, in part, due to the TOCs' commercial activities.

This has enabled the number of TOC employees to increase from 40,000 to



A MAIN LINE REBORN

When Chiltern Railways took over the line from Birmingham Snow Hill to London Marylebone in 1996, it had been in steady decline since the 1960s. Many sections had been singled by BR and after decades of underinvestment in stations and trains, it was seen as a backwater of the national network.

Chiltern Railways embarked on a vision to provide a main line rival to Virgin Trains (which operated inter-city traffic on the West Coast Main Line) between London and Birmingham. Handed a new 20-year franchise agreement in 2002, the operator has invested more than £600m in new tracks, new trains, refurbished stations and three new parkway stations at Warwick, Aylesbury and Oxford.

Two new platforms have been added at both Birmingham Moor Street and London Marylebone, while new track and trains have allowed Chiltern Railways to deliver a saving



Chiltern Railways 165022 races past Hatton North Junction on February 21 with a service for London Marylebone. A fleet of 34 '165s' was inherited by the operator from BR in 1996 before being overhauled in 2003-05. JACK BOSKETT.

of 25 minutes on the journey time from London to Birmingham.

The number of services operated by Chiltern Railways has increased from 240

to 432 each weekday; 24.5 million annual journeys were made with the operator in 2018 compared with a low of just 7.7 million in 1996.

DB 66004 leads the 1004 Wakefield Europort-Felixstowe South intermodal service through Soham (Cambridgeshire) on February 26. As well as a doubling of the number of passengers using the railway, there has been a 90% increase in container freight moved by rail since 1998. JEREMY CALDECOAT.



HIGH-SPEED JOURNEYS TO KENT

How does the idea of taking 40 minutes off your morning and evening commute sound? For someone working Monday to Friday, that's six hours and 40 minutes given back to you each week. That's exactly what happened for passengers travelling from Dover, Canterbury and Ashford to London St Pancras International following the introduction of high-speed domestic services on High Speed 1 in 2009.

Designed to travel at 140mph on HS1, Southeastern began its high-speed services with a new fleet of Hitachi 'Javelin' trains that are also able to run on the existing network to serve towns in Kent.

The operator found significant demand

with passenger numbers rising 12% year on year, and it regularly scored more than 90% in customer satisfaction surveys.

As well as transforming the passenger experience for commuters, the new services have helped transform Kent too - an estimated £3.8bn of economic and social benefits have been brought to the county, and over £300m brought in by visitors to Kent's tourist economy.

Southeastern 395007 crosses the Medway Viaduct on September 8 2016. The '395s' were built by Hitachi between 2007-2009 to operate the UK's only domestic high-speed service. PHIL METCALFE.



BOOSTING COMMUNITIES ACROSS A REGION

A great example of the increased focus on regional connectivity since the mid-1990s is the service between Cambridge and Norwich operated by Greater Anglia. Until 2002, rail travellers had no direct services between these two cities, with a change at Ely required and a limited number of services.

To address this long-running anomaly, £10m was invested in 2002 in four new two-car trains to provide a new hourly direct service for commuters, business travellers, students, tourists and passengers of other kinds.

The service was an immediate success,

with 390,000 journeys made in the first year so that, by 2010, three-car trains were added to the service.

Annual journeys on the route have now topped one million, with 40% of passengers having switched from their cars to the train to avoid congestion on the A11, cutting carbon emissions.

Travellers between Norwich and Cambridge haven't been the only ones to benefit, however, with more frequent services also now serving Sheringham on the North Norfolk coast and an hourly service introduced between Cambridge and Ipswich in 2005.

The development of the Stansted Express dedicated airport service has also triggered remarkable growth. Rail now accounts for more than 30% of all passenger journeys to the UK's fourth busiest airport.

Further success is set to come, with GA investing £1.4bn in a new fleet of 169 trains to replace every single carriage on its network.

Greater Anglia 379029 departs Stansted Airport with a service bound for London Liverpool Street on March 21 2018. Ten 12-car Class 745s are currently being built by Stadler to replace the current fleet of Class 379s on these services. PAUL SHANNON.



ScotRail 156499 waits at Fort William with a service for Mallaig on May 28 2018. The West Highland Line has frequently been voted the top rail journey in the world, ahead of other rivals for the title including the Trans-Siberian line in Russia. PHIL METCALFE.

GREAT SCENIC RAILWAYS OF SCOTLAND

With over 165 million visitors in 2017, spending more than £11bn in total, tourism plays a vital part in Scotland's economy.

One of the best ways to see the country's natural beauty is by rail, for which demand for short trips and longer journeys to more remote areas remains high.

When train operator Abellio began running ScotRail services in 2015, it built on the Great Scenic Railways of Scotland brand by expanding it to cover six lines.

From the sweeping views of the West Highland Line to the newly redeveloped Borders railway, the views from the train are unbeatable. ScotRail has tried to improve the passenger experience, including a £40m refurbishment of its trains to increase reliability and provide more comfort and better facilities.

Passengers can now enjoy locally sourced

food and beverages from trolley services and an onboard media service with entertainment and information on local visitor attractions.

Carriages have been equipped with new seats that are better aligned with windows to maximise the view while significant improvements have been made to provide access for passengers with reduced mobility.

Meanwhile, many ticket offers are now available, including reduced entry to visitor attractions and convenient passes to cover rail, bus and ferry trips around Scotland.

In 2013, passengers took almost one million scenic journeys. That figure has now grown to 3.5 million - a boost for the railways and the revenue for hotels, restaurants and shops in local towns and villages.

→ 59,000 since 1997, while the railway now supports a total of 240,000 jobs and contributes £10bn to the economy every year.

With 97p in every £1 of revenue going back into running and improving services, TOCs are now able to run 28% (4,000) more services each week than in 1997, while there are also 25% more carriages on the network.

Placing the railways on a sounder financial footing has also given government the confidence to increase investment in the railways, as recently demonstrated by the £47bn funding package agreed for Control Period 6 (Apr 2019-Mar 2024) which represents Network Rail's largest ever five-year financial settlement.

This has been matched by a 63.5% increase in private investment during the last decade, which includes more than £11bn currently being invested to deliver 7,000 new carriages by 2021.

Not only does this further reduce the railway's reliance on taxpayers' money, but it will help facilitate the 6,400 extra services per week that are expected to be introduced in the next two years to help tackle overcrowding and enhance connectivity.

“The UK now has the safest railway out of Europe's ten largest networks.”

While it is accepted that the current fares system is now outdated and ripe for reform, innovation and new products introduced over the last 25 years enabled more than 73 million passengers to benefit from discounted advance fares in 2018. Meanwhile, the Two Together railcard - which was the first new railcard to be introduced in over 30 years - has saved passengers more than £196m since it was first issued in 2013.

Last but not least, in the last 25 years safety has been transformed. Following a spate of accidents at the turn of the century, the UK now has the safest railway out of Europe's ten largest networks, and no passenger fatalities have occurred due to an accident since 2005. The landmark of zero fatalities among workers on the railway in a calendar year was also reached for the first time ever, in 2015.

It is worth saying that customer satisfaction has also grown over the last two decades. Overall passenger satisfaction has risen from 76% to 83% since surveys began in 1999, before dropping down to 79% in 2018.

While this indicates that further improvement and structural change is now needed, it also goes to show how the private sector has been able to help drive positive change and play a part in the success of Britain's railways. These case studies offer just a few highlights from along the way. ■

For more information on how private and public sector investment and innovation has brought real benefits to the people and communities that rely on rail, visit: <https://www.bigplanbigchanges.co.uk>

TREBLING TRAINS FROM MANCHESTER TO LONDON

When Virgin Trains took over inter-city traffic on the West Coast Main Line in 1997 there were only 17 trains from Manchester to London each day. In 2008 that was almost three times higher, with 46 trains per day.

This step change in frequency and capacity helped passenger numbers to double at Manchester Piccadilly during the same period to 28 million per year. It also supported the broader growth of the city, which now has 1.4 million workers contributing some £62.8bn to the national economy.

Manchester has become an international hub in high-tech sciences. Major employers, including BBC and ITV, have moved large parts of their operations to Media City in Salford.

The visitor economy is now worth over £7.5bn; many people visit by train for Greater Manchester's cultural, retail and sporting attractions.

The increase in rail capacity has also helped reduce congestion and carbon emissions - rail now carries 92% of all rail and air journeys from Manchester.

Further south, the local economy of Rugby has also significantly benefited from the introduction of Virgin Train's high-frequency timetable in 2008

when the Midlands town went from 15 to 25 inter-city services a day.

With journey times to London falling by 17% to just 48 minutes, it is now the only major town on the WCML where a trip to either central London or central Birmingham takes less than an hour.

Passengers using Rugby station have grown from 750,000 to 2.5 million per year, since 1997. The number of season ticket holders is now five times higher, having risen from 168,000 to 836,000 today.

Rugby's regional rail connections and its proximity to the M1 and M6 motorways has helped make it one of the best connected places in the UK which is why, even when the British Chambers of Commerce named Warwickshire as the fastest growing area of Britain in the UK in 2018, Rugby's local economic growth was 40% higher still.

The town's population is expected to rise by a further 20% in the next 20 years.

Virgin Trains 390104 passes Cathiron near Rugby on February 7 2018 with the 1035 Manchester Piccadilly-London Euston. There are now 46 inter-city services per weekday between the two cities. PAUL BIGGS.



REFORM OF THE FARES SYSTEM



RAIL's fares and services expert BARRY DOE explains why the current fares system is broken and applauds the Rail Delivery Group for seizing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to fix it

Many people mistakenly believe I am an advocate of nationalisation. My objection to the abolition of British Rail in the mid-90s was the break-up and fragmentation of a highly successful, unified railway.

Had it been merely a change of ownership by way of sale, I would have been ready to invest in a 'BR plc'. I had travelled extensively since the 1960s and I witnessed an era of constant improvement that I expected to continue.

The InterCity sector had become profitable, running high-quality services with onboard service levels unseen on the majority of routes today.

Network SouthEast was coming close to break-even and was to have become all-electric within a few years (it still isn't today).

Yet political dogma insisted on fragmentation, with the promise of increased competition.

However, with an expanded motorway network, the competition was always going to be rail versus road (nowadays also rail versus air).

Sadly the dogma also stipulated that BR couldn't compete for any of the new franchises and the highly able staff who were part of the command structure that held the railway together were left working for new franchises, often owned by people with no railway background.

“The very bold approach advocated in the RDG's proposals is that operators should only set fares for their own domain.”

In the early days, there were a few exceptions. GNER was, in my opinion, the only inter-city operator to exceed the quality of BR's InterCity, though Anglia Railways matched it. In what was the Network SouthEast area, Chiltern Railways invested in its Evergreen projects with great success.

Service frequency increased - just as it had already been doing - and, coupled with road congestion and fuel prices, so did usage. My contention is that a single 'BR plc' railway would have increased usage even more.

Initially, franchising was handled by

OPRAF, the Office of Passenger Rail Franchising (later absorbed into the Strategic Rail Authority, SRA) and most of today's problems stem from the latter's abolition in 2005, with franchising in England passing to the Department for Transport (DfT).

The DfT has ended up specifying everything, right through to the day-to-day running of the industry. The irony is that we have gone from a (nationalised) railway run totally by railway professionals to a so-called 'private' railway that is, effectively, run by civil servants.

We can but hope that the Williams Review will change this. Certainly, some form of unified body run by railwaymen and women is needed to reestablish order in our railway system: an SRA Mk 2.

This is needed to restore a command

East Midlands Trains 222004 prepares to depart East Midlands Parkway on May 2 2018 with a service from Nottingham to St Pancras International. The Rail Delivery Group's fares reform report includes a proposal to introduce single-leg ticketing, which could make travel cheaper and simpler for passengers. PAUL SHANNON.

structure for managing the railway - ticketing systems and the associated hardware, including barriers, a fares policy and structure. These are currently left up to the operators, and so become non-standard across what is meant to be a national network.

On the other hand, an SRA Mk 2 should not specify train design, as responsibility for that must surely rest with operators.

A major consequence of the last 25 years has been the stagnation of any development in fares policy. When I first became involved with BR in a professional capacity, in the early 1980s, I met its pricing manager (sic). Yes, there was just one - the able John Usher from Whitby, based at 222 Marylebone Road (now the Landmark Hotel) shortly before BR HQ moved to Euston House.

He introduced Savers (today's Off-Peak Returns) after a trial and also brought in advance fares. Fares were balanced nationwide and split ticketing was unknown. Under the soon-to-be-invented sectors, each set its own fares on the same basis.

BR had gone from pence-per-mile to selective pricing, invented railcards and reached the structure we know today. I re-emphasise: by the time BR ended, everything we take for granted today had been introduced.

The flip side of this is that had we not had privatisation, BR would have evolved to a new system long ago by continuing the innovation that was a norm.

How ridiculous, therefore, that today's legislative framework for fares is one that was set up in the days before the invention of the Internet! This is something the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) explains in its excellent recent report *Easier fares for all*.

In short, we have wasted a quarter of a century when it comes to fares. Now we need to recoup those lost years as quickly as possible.

I mentioned 'competition'. In my view, the wrong sort of competition has dominated industry thinking - rail versus rail, which will always have a poor outcome.

Take the growth in advance fares. Some operators have them for good reason - capturing users who might not travel at normal reduced rate walk-on fares, but who are happy to trade in flexibility to save money.

Some operators, however, flood the market, causing overcrowding, with walk-on customers standing while those purchasing advance tickets take up most of the reserved seats.

Why? It's down to so-called 'competition', which stems from the outdated way revenue from walk-on fares is allocated.

It's distributed by possible usage (not actual,

as currently nobody knows which trains customers have used). To reduce this loss, operators prefer people to purchase advance tickets, as they keep all the money.

It's a false economy, of course; the more advance tickets operators sell the less income becomes available for distribution from walk-on fares.

Even with the current industry structure, modern technology could address it: all tickets (paper, smartcard or mobile) could be scanned at a barrier and on the train. That way, even with walk-on tickets, the system would know the trains being used and could allocate revenue accurately.

Another negative side of competition is the ludicrous situation whereby, according to competition law, it is illegal for operators to cooperate on fares. It's particularly laughable, seeing as operators are obliged to price fares well beyond the boundaries of their terrain, yet have to second-guess the sort of fare charged by adjacent operators.

It's this that leads to split ticketing being used to save money. The very bold approach advocated in the RDG's proposals is that operators should, in future, only set fares for their own domain and an external system would be used to calculate fares for longer distance journeys. This would reduce fares and end split ticketing for good.

Of course, the industry needs to move to single-leg ticketing to simplify journey planning for all users. It is also inevitable that more and more people are switching to using smartphones to buy and store their tickets. In this respect, the industry must move faster to get technology into stations to read such tickets at gatelines.

The very encouraging thing about the RDG's approach is that its proposals on fares will work with any form of ownership of the railway, be it one that is overseen and managed by an SRA Mk 2, the current (totally flawed) franchise system or, indeed, renationalisation.

To get the best out of any reform, however, the restoration of a command structure of professional railway people is the thing most needed for National Rail as a whole. That way, if we did retain some sort of franchising, the operators would merely be responsible for implementing SRA policy as well as looking after their own customers (including train specification, as I mentioned earlier).

A lot needs to be done to make up for lost time, but I truly believe that the RDG at least understands the needs of the industry and is taking strides to address them. ■

Easier fares for all can be downloaded from the RDG's publications site at www.raildeliverygroup.com/about-us/publications.html

FURTHER READING

RAIL 873 - RDG system overhaul to simplify fares and ticketing.

RAIL 874 - The way ahead for fares: an excellent industry report.

**RAIL COMPANIES
CALL FOR
POWER TO
PASSENGERS,
AN END TO THE
BLAME GAME,
EASIER FARES,
A GENERATIONAL
SYSTEM UPGRADE,
BIG
CHANGES**



Find out more about our plan to change
bigplanbigchanges.co.uk