
Terms of Reference for Rail Review Published

The UK Department for Transport (DfT) has announced the terms of reference for the forthcoming Rail Review set up after a systemic failure to implement the recasting of timetables on many routes in May 2018 and continuing issues with the late delivery of projects such as Crossrail.

After the appointment of Keith Williams to head the review, the team of expert advisers has been announced that is made up of Dick Fearn, Chair of Network Rail's (NR) Western Supervisory Board and Margaret Llewellyn who occupies a similar role for the Wales route; Tom Harris, a former Transport Minister; Roger Marsh, Chairman of the Leeds City Region Enterprise Partnership, and Alice Maynard a Transport for London board member. Tony Poulter, who chairs the East Coast Partnership will represent the DfT. The team is described as a challenge panel.

The review follows a number of previous studies into aspects of current railway organisation with FCP having played a significant part in the 2013 Brown review into the franchising programme (published as Parliamentary Command Paper 8526). It followed the failure of the 2012 InterCity West Coast contract bidding process.

Chris Grayling, Transport Secretary of State is on record as saying he is convinced that the evolution of Britain's railway organisation is no longer enough and that the collapse of the East Coast franchise has highlighted the need for radical change.

The review is not confined to the franchising structure and is to consider how the whole industry can improve accountability and generate value for money both for customers and taxpayers. Further devolution is to be considered with the aim of positioning the railway as part of an integrated transport network.

The DfT has asked for recommendations that cover a list of ambitions for a new organisational and commercial framework. These are -

- Commercial models that prioritise the passenger and taxpayer interest
- Structures that create clear accountability and effective joint-working
- Financial sustainability to address long-term cost pressures
- Good value fares that also keep costs down for taxpayers
- Improved industrial relations to reduce disruption
- Future agility to respond to new challenges



The newly appointed Chief Executive of Network Rail, Andrew Haines, has revealed his initial thoughts on the direction of the organisation at a meeting of the Parliamentary All-Party Rail Group.

He intends to increase the drive for devolved decision-making by Route Directors and adopt an incremental approach to capacity enhancement, rather than larger scale projects which the industry has struggled to implement.

There continues to be a commitment to the digital railway where the purpose is to transfer signalling from trackside to the train, but he warned that the benefits have been significantly oversold in terms of an ability to increase capacity. The installation of the system on the East Coast Main Line is seen as an opportunity for the planned East Coast Partnership franchise to demonstrate what a Public-Private Partnership can achieve as a precursor to network-wide adoption of the technology.

The delays that have taken place in implementing large projects have prompted the suggestion of a new NR approach that looks at incremental works to improve capacity and reliability in a faster timescale. The aim is to look at a route as a whole rather than large scale projects that can have the effect of creating new capacity bottlenecks that dilute the benefit of large-scale work at specific locations.



Although the 13-mile tunnelled section of the Crossrail route is largely complete, the Elizabeth Line train services that were due to commence in December 2018 have been postponed. FCP has provided Crossrail with expertise as the proxy operator before implementation of the concession arrangements.

Crossrail which will link the Great Eastern and Great Western suburban lines has been delayed

as the construction of 10 stations due to be handed over to Transport for London (TfL) in August did not take place, with only three being ready for use in the required timescale to allow the first stage of operations between Abbey Wood and Paddington to start at the end of this year.

More time is also needed to test signalling interfaces as different technologies are in use over the route. The full service between Shenfield and Heathrow Airport / Reading is due to be in operation in December 2019.

The finances of TfL have been weakened by the delay with the loss of anticipated revenue so a £350 million repayable loan has been provided by the DfT to ensure funding is available to finish the project. This is in addition to the increase in the construction budget from 14.8 to 15.4 billion agreed by the Government in July.

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