



A message from our chief executive, **Andrew Haines OBE**

Passengers and freight users are at the heart of everything we do. We exist to serve them – to get people and goods where they need to go. That’s why it is so important that we put their needs at the heart of all our decision making.

Over the last year we have made significant changes to help us do just that. We have created five new regions, each with its own managing director who sits on our executive leadership team. Within the regions we have 14 new routes, committed to delivering the best service possible.

This new structure allows the people who are closest to our passengers and customers, and have the best understanding of what they want, to deliver for them. It is early days, but we have already had positive feedback from customers and wider stakeholders about the benefits of this relationship and dialogue. It was encouraging to see that progress being reflected in some of the best passenger satisfaction results for five years.

That improved ability to implement fast, localised changes has been critical in our response to the Coronavirus pandemic. The railway plays a pivotal role in supporting

the country through this crisis. We have made sure that passengers who need to travel can get to their jobs and essential freight like food, medicine, fuel and NHS supplies, can still get where they need to be. The full effects of the virus are currently unknown, but we will do whatever is needed to support Britain through the immediate crisis and through recovery.

In such an unprecedented and constantly evolving situation, the safety of passengers, the public and our colleagues has remained at the forefront of our minds. We want everyone to get home safe every day. Tragically, over the past year this has not been the case for three of our colleagues and friends.

In July 2019, Gareth Delbridge and Michael ‘Spike’ Lewis were struck by a train while at work in Margam, South Wales. An investigation immediately followed to learn what we could about the incident and prevent it from ever happening again. That the railway remains a dangerous place to work, however, was brought home once again on 8 April 2020 when Aden Ashurst, a colleague working for AmcoGiffen, was fatally struck by a train in Roade, Northamptonshire. Investigations are underway and the Transport Worker Safety Task Force is working hard to understand the underlying causes of these accidents so that we can quickly address them and keep our colleagues safe. We have been deeply saddened by the loss of Gareth, Michael and Aden, and we owe it to them to make the railway safer for everyone, every day.

Alongside a relentless focus on safety, it’s important we keep our sights set on providing what passengers want most – a reliable and punctual journey. Many infrastructure failure modes have been at a record low this



Chief executive's review continued



year, but the consequences of running a congested network with more trains, more complex timetables and more passengers has meant that as an industry we have not made the progress we know passengers deserve. The enhanced timetable that was introduced between Cardiff and Paddington in December 2019, with faster journeys and many more services, demonstrates that we can deliver large-scale change successfully when track and train work seamlessly together. But this is not yet happening consistently across the network.

Better operations alone, however, will not fix everything. Record high temperatures last summer plus storms and unprecedented flooding in November and February caused widespread disruption. The reality is that climate change is no longer a future threat, but a present challenge and not one that the rail industry has been designed to accommodate. A comprehensive response will require significant change over a very long period, but the task is urgent and one we have started to address.

More frequent weather events are a pertinent reminder of how much our climate affects our railway and that it is our duty to ensure that we are as environmentally sustainable an industry as we can be. Rail is already the greenest and most reliable method of mass transport, but it's vital that we work hard to keep it that way so that rail is able to play a vital role in the country's green economic recovery and future growth. This year we will launch an ambitious, long-term environmental sustainability strategy, which sets out how we will do that. It will focus on five priority areas: minimising our carbon emissions, minimising train delays caused by climate change, minimising waste, looking after plants and wildlife and contributing to a quieter and healthier environment for all.

I am especially pleased with how well we have performed in efficiencies this year. We outperformed our regulatory

target to achieve £385m in efficiency savings in 2019/20 by making more efficient use of railway resources and working smarter. It's important because it helps demonstrate that we deliver on our promises, and we face some much tougher challenges to do that in the remaining four years of the Control Period.

Becoming an organisation that truly puts passengers first remains a key focus for Control Period 6 (CP6) and beyond. And to deliver most effectively for passengers, diversity is critical. Our workforce should look like the society we serve. The disadvantages and injustices faced by people from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds across the world has been brought into the spotlight by the Black Lives Matter movement and by the disproportionate impact of Coronavirus. We have a lot to do to be a more diverse business and our first ever Ethnicity Pay Gap report, published in March 2020 shows that. Diversity is, however, about much more than how we look. It is about welcoming difference and genuinely celebrating the value and challenge that comes from a workforce that contributes a variety of ideas and perspectives. I want our organisation to be a place where that is a reality and everyone is given the opportunity to be the best they can be. I am committed to making real improvements to diversity and inclusion at Network Rail and I know it will help us to deliver the safe and reliable railway our passengers deserve.

Inevitably the Coronavirus crisis generates uncertainty around demand, future ways of working and the challenge of reforming the rail industry to ensure that it is more adaptable both to emerging user demands and a radically altered economy. At Network Rail we are utterly committed to working alongside stakeholders and playing our part in delivering the necessary reforms to ensure that our vision of putting passengers first is increasingly the experience of those who use our system.

Andrew Haines OBE,
chief executive

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