



Introduction by our chair, Sir Peter Hendy CBE

Our railway network is critical to Britain's success, by supporting and sustaining economic growth and, in the light of Coronavirus, recovery. Connectivity by rail for goods and passengers, enables house building and creates and supports jobs.

Passengers are starting to see the results of recent investment across the railway. Alongside some major capacity improvements, including electrification, and the redevelopment of some of our managed stations, we are in the midst of one of the biggest refreshes of rolling stock in decades. Many trains are now longer, with more seats and greater capacity, meaning better and more comfortable journeys for passengers.

At least in normal circumstances, we're also seeing an evolution in the way passengers use our stations. At a time when the high street is struggling, our station retail sales have grown. Stations are becoming a destination in themselves for people to eat, drink and shop, providing us with more income to reinvest straight back into the railway.

Unfortunately, despite improvements in some elements of passenger experience, performance has not shown a similar trend. A much greater focus on seamless operations and increasing the resilience of our network will go a long way to helping this. But on a network that is almost full, actually full, or already has an excess of demand over capacity in many places, a step change in capacity is crucial.

Creating new lines through major infrastructure programmes, HS2, Crossrail and Northern Powerhouse Rail, are an effective way of doing this, but these are costly schemes with long lead times. We must invest wisely and efficiently, constantly looking for innovative and creative ways of increasing capacity, in an environmentally sustainable way, so that rail can continue to support economic growth without adding too great a burden on the taxpayer.

Recently, we have been reminded on a daily basis how valuable Britain's railway is, as many of our colleagues

have been on the front line of the fight against Coronavirus. We are proud of how the industry has come together throughout this crisis – the efforts of the entire rail industry to support the nation and keep Britain moving have been immense.

But what we can't forget is that we will also be measured on our ability to come together through the recovery. With passenger numbers at around 15 per cent of what they were pre-pandemic, working together as an industry to provide a truly safe and reliable, phased return to the full timetable will be essential.

Coronavirus has given some opportunities to bring forward maintenance and renewals, but it has also forced us to scale back or delay other planned engineering work. We will have to work closely with the supply chain and wider industry as we re-plan, to give us the best chance of supporting those who have been affected through this crisis, while still providing the best possible service for passengers and freight users.

Throughout this crisis we remain committed to safety, as we do our best to protect the public, our passengers and our people. Safety is always a priority and because of that we have been deeply saddened this year by the deaths of three colleagues, in two separate tragic accidents. Our thoughts are with everyone affected, and we will do everything we can to learn from these terrible incidents and make the railway safer for everyone.

We remain committed to putting passengers first, and this year has been pivotal in setting us up to do just that. Our Putting Passengers First programme is helping us to refocus on the people we serve – ensuring that their needs are at the centre of our decision making. But this is not yet

Chair's introduction continued



happening on an industry-wide scale. Coronavirus has accelerated change within the industry and shown what we can achieve when we are truly aligned. The government has made clear its commitment to delivering wholesale reform of the rail industry to put the priorities of passengers first and support the country in its recovery from Coronavirus.

This year we said goodbye to Board members Chris Gibb, Richard Brown and Bridget Rosewell. I'd like to thank them all for their commitment during their time serving on our Board. Thank you, too, to our executive leadership team for the brilliant work they have done in setting us up to be more passenger focussed. There is still more to do but I have confidence in them, and particularly in Andrew Haines, our chief executive, to keep the momentum needed for change. And finally, I want to thank all our Network Rail and supplier colleagues for their continued commitment, especially through the present challenging times.

Sir Peter Hendy CBE,
chair

16 July 2020