



INTRODUCTION BY OUR CHAIR

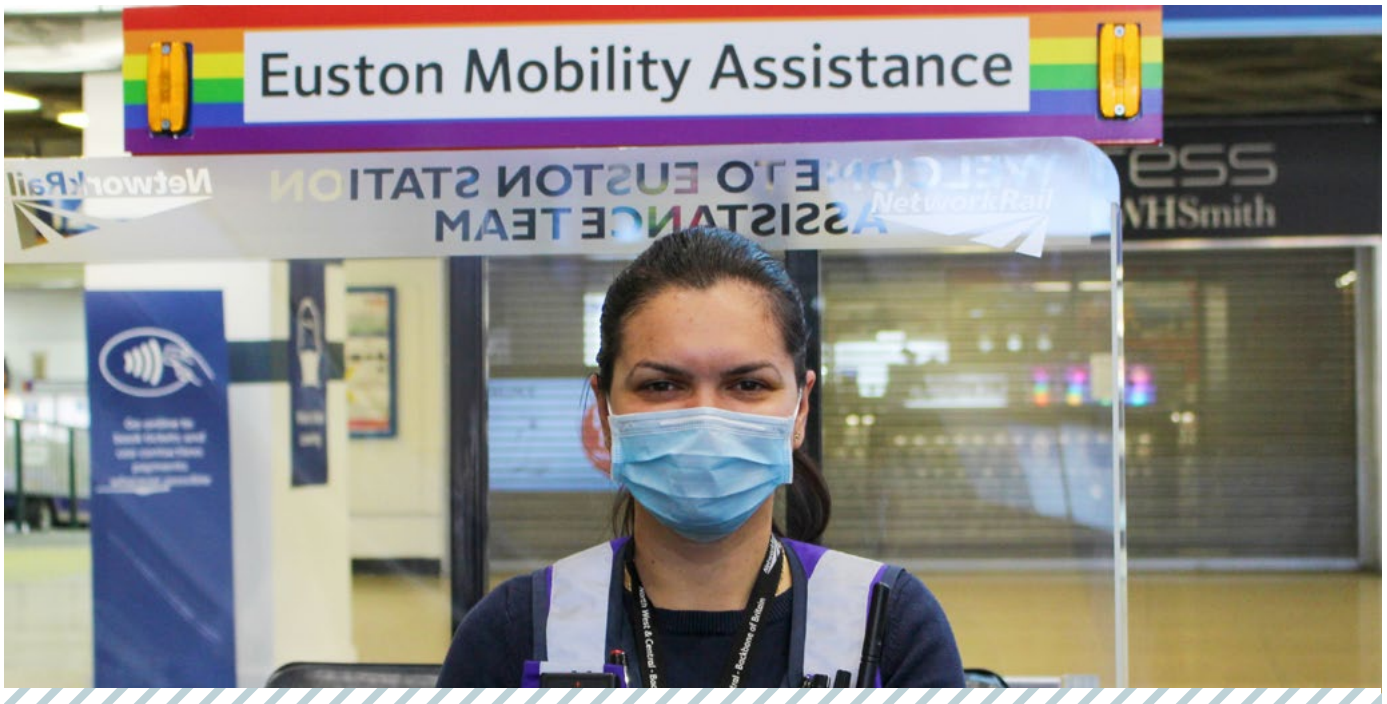
Sir Peter Hendy, CBE

This year, the railway has proved itself to be vital in keeping Britain connected.

Throughout the pandemic, the railway has delivered goods such as food, power and medical supplies, while providing a reliable service for those who needed to keep going to work, including doctors, nurses and retail workers. As Britain emerges from the worst crisis of our lifetimes, the railway will continue to play an important role. Connectivity drives economic growth, jobs, housing and social cohesion, which are all even more critical against a very difficult economic landscape. One of the Government's main priorities is levelling-up and rail will help deliver this, while also supporting its ambitious decarbonisation targets by making rail greener and getting more people and goods off the road and onto trains. Equally importantly, the railway will help to reconnect people – bringing friends, family and loved ones back together and allowing businesses to once again reap the benefits of the innovation and competition that comes with being clustered together in towns and cities.

To provide those essential services, our colleagues have been on the front line to keep Britain moving. Their dedication has allowed us to safely run a flexible timetable, as well as target our investments and upgrade work so we're better placed to provide returning passengers with a reliable railway and help our freight customers continue to move more goods, more efficiently. Many of those colleagues have also made time to help out in the community, with hundreds of hours given to supporting those in need. This has been recognised at the highest level, with eleven honours awarded to our people this year – a record.

This year has seen the rail industry come together in a way it hasn't for many years and we are determined to nurture this for the future. This teamwork will be vital in restoring confidence among passengers who've been away from the railway for so long, and in turning our stations back into bustling hubs that are destinations for retail and hospitality.



Putting passengers first is more essential than ever – the pandemic has shown that we cannot take them, or our freight customers for granted. Keeping the railway running with greatly reduced passenger numbers has been costly and only possible through immense Government support. That inevitably and rightly means we must provide value for money as we build back better and greener.

For rail, building back better includes the reform of the industry. We have already made great strides in our commitment to putting passengers at the heart of our own organisation, but there is much more to do to provide Britain with the reliable and sustainable railway it needs and deserves. The Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail maps how drastic changes to the system, including how it is organised, will provide a better railway. As Great British Railways takes shape, we will give our full energy and support to making it successful.

Another big part of achieving a better railway will be a relentless focus on safety. In a year during which far too many have lost loved ones too soon, and even more people have felt unsafe for the first time in their lives, the railway community has also experienced tragedy. The devastating loss of five lives on our railway since August has accelerated our efforts to make things safer for our people and passengers. Nothing is more important.

I have absolute confidence in Andrew Haines, our chief executive, and his executive leadership team, to deliver

these changes with commitment and pace, with the support of our Board. Mark Bayley, Fiona Ross and Michael Harrison joined the Board in May 2020 and Ismail Amla and Stephen Duckworth joined the Board in April 2021. While Sharon Flood left Network Rail in August 2020 after six years of service as a Board member. I thank Sharon for her many contributions, particularly as a champion for a greener railway. Her energy has given us a sustainability strategy that will help us to play a vital role in growing a sustainable economy.

Most of all, I want to thank our Network Rail colleagues and suppliers who have delivered for Britain day-in and day-out, and take a moment to remember those we have lost, during a truly difficult year. The next year will bring fresh challenges as we adapt to make sure the railway's infrastructure, trains, people and processes are fit for new working and travelling habits. I know that together we can deliver this, providing passengers and freight users with the clean, reliable service they deserve, as they return.

Sir Peter Hendy CBE,
chair

15 July 2021