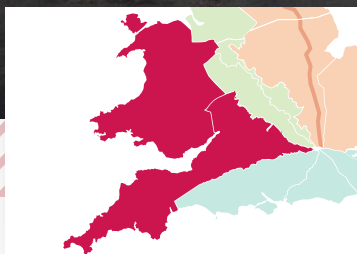




WALES & WESTERN



Mike Gallop
interim managing
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Western
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Connecting two nations and two capital cities – we serve people, businesses, and communities the length and breadth of Wales and borders, Oxfordshire and the Thames Valley, west of England and the south west peninsula. We connect people and freight to international airports and ports including Heathrow.

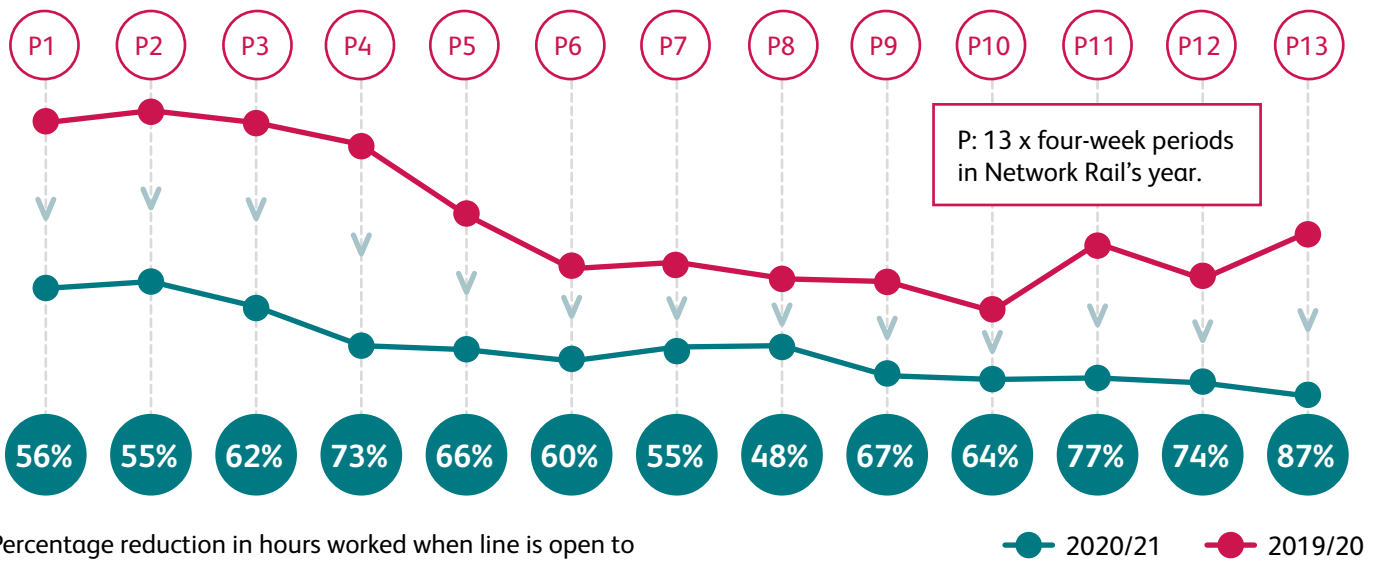
Safety

Our workforce accidents have reduced both in number and severity and we've seen fewer passengers getting injured at our managed stations. We failed to deliver our fatality weighted index (FWI) target but achieved all other safety targets. We know that three-quarters of our accidents are preventable, and we had events planned to improve FWI. Although Covid-19 forced the postponement of planned workshops with frontline colleagues, next year we plan to use our new engagement vehicle for a series of face-to-face safety improvement events.

The Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB) published its final investigation into the tragic loss of Gareth Delbridge and Michael 'Spike' Lewis at Margam, South Wales in July 2019. The findings highlighted the need to improve our

safety culture and assurance activity. We've increased our staff numbers to deliver our cultural improvement programme and committed an initial £38m in Control Period Six (CP6, 2019-24). In comparison with 2019/20, we've already achieved a 60 per cent reduction in the average number of hours colleagues have worked on the track while trains are running.

2020/21 was challenging for frontline colleagues as well as those adapting to home working. Colleague safety and wellbeing has been a priority and 190 mental health first aiders have been trained to support colleagues with their own or other's mental wellbeing. We also held virtual wellbeing events to support colleagues through the challenges of the pandemic.



Percentage reduction in hours worked when line is open to timetabled trains (unassisted lookout and other warning systems)

In August 2020 a freight train derailed near Llangennech, West Wales causing a major fire and diesel spillage in an area of international environmental importance. We won praise from industry partners and our stakeholders for our response to the recovery operation. Work at site included the skimming of 22,500 litres of contaminated soil and water, as well as the excavation of 12,000 cubic metres of contaminated ground. The event wasn't caused by an infrastructure failure but has prompted a refresh and improvement of our resilience plans, especially for key freight routes.

Train service delivery

We kept all our railway lines open for passenger and freight services despite the challenges of Covid-19. In response to the drop in passenger numbers our timetable was reduced but as passengers were able to return we worked with our industry partners to 'build back better' and provide more on-time services. We expect the future needs of passengers to change significantly. Our priority is to deliver a timetable that provides the right balance between capacity and world class performance and reliability.

New trains were introduced for Heathrow Express services using the European Train Control System (ETCS) that continuously calculates a safe maximum speed for each train. This implementation was the first of its kind on the Heathrow branch and demonstrated strong collaboration between Network Rail and our stakeholders.

Extreme weather continued to impact train performance with railway lines affected by flooding in Wales. As well

as developing schemes to increase resilience across our network, we now have a team to focus on weather risks and mitigations, working jointly with our industry partners.

As a region we move over 500,000 tonnes of freight per week and this has been a vital service in keeping goods moving during Covid-19. We exceeded our targets for freight performance, but improvements are still required especially at Merehead and Whatley quarries.

Efficiency

Responding to Covid-19 meant we spent an additional £19m in 2020/21 with a further £10m expected in 2021/22. This included funding to ensure frontline colleagues could work safely through the pandemic, following public health and construction industry guidance. We hired over 100 additional road vehicles to enable social distancing when travelling to and from worksites and provided enhanced personal protective equipment and handwashing facilities. Where required we also recruited temporary resource to cover colleagues who were self-isolating.

Despite these challenges we continued to manage our business within our CP6 funding settlement. Our teams and the supply chain responded quickly to implement new ways of working and to deliver our plan for infrastructure renewals. For some assets we delivered more than planned due to efficient delivery. We used our CP6 risk fund to pay for the additional Covid-19 costs.

We delivered £10m more in efficiencies than planned. We're also planning to deliver an additional £52m in 2021-24 and we remain committed to meeting our CP6 efficiency targets. Covid-19 has impacted the implementation of some efficiencies, but we're developing new plans particularly around the use of more technology.

Sustainable growth

We continued to deliver our planned infrastructure investment to benefit passengers and communities, to support economic recovery, and to help sustain our supply chain during the pandemic.

Electrification of the Severn Tunnel was completed in May 2020, providing a seamless electric link from South Wales to London for the first time. Work also started on our three year £25m restoration of the Grade II listed Barmouth Viaduct, demonstrating our long-term commitment to this vital transport link for communities in North West Wales.

We've been developing a master plan for Oxford station. This is part of a wider plan to transform west Oxford into a nationally significant innovation district.

In Devon and Cornwall, we successfully delivered sea wall works at Marine Parade, Dawlish. Construction also started on the second section from Coastguard to Colonnade breakwater. This uses an eight-legged, walking jack-up barge called a 'Wavewalker' to install foundations at the sea wall. The new promenade will provide a more spacious and safer surface for the public, protecting the town and the railway for the next 100 years. A lift is also being installed at Dawlish station for the first time, creating easier and safer access between both platforms.

We started the two-year refurbishment of the station roof at Bristol Temple Meads. This contributes to a wider vision

of transforming the station to be a world class transport hub. We're also actively involved with the Bristol Temple Quarter regeneration programme and to support this we purchased the original Brunel train shed.

At Gipsy Patch Lane in Bristol, we installed Britain's heaviest precast concrete bridge to provide room for new bus lanes and shared use cycle and pedestrian pathways. The installation over-ran by two weeks due to the hydraulic transporter becoming stuck in soft ground, so we completed a lessons-learned exercise to prevent incidents like this from reoccurring.

Customers and Communities

In 2020-21 we had fewer complaints from the public about our work, and we addressed them more quickly. We carried out extensive community engagement to support our projects, including the St Ives £3m track upgrade, Conwy Valley Line resilience work and the restoration of the Heart of Wales line.

We received public complaints at Llanfairfechan in Wales about the environmental impact of our improvement works. In response, we engaged extensively with the public and carried out additional ecology surveys to reassure the community and our stakeholders that we take our environmental responsibilities seriously. In Dawlish, we listened to feedback from more than 1,600 community responses for our planned resilience works along a vital 1.8km stretch of railway between Parsons Tunnel and Teignmouth. We decided to revise the proposals further and have delayed the submission of our planning application until we can consult the local community again in summer 2021.

Throughout the pandemic, we issued consistent and regular communications to passengers on the steps taken to comply with government restrictions and make it safe to travel. We demonstrated our support for critical workers



by lighting Royal Albert Bridge, Plymouth Bridge, Britannia Bridge, and many of our stations in blue. Colleagues across the region also assisted the NHS to build a mass vaccination facility in Exeter.

Great Western electrification has delivered significant regional benefits to passengers including faster journey times, modern trains, more seats, and greener travel. To help highlight this we published 'Our Electric Future', setting out the economic benefits of electrification within the areas we serve.

At London Paddington we installed new seats in the lawn area and provided more charging points. Public Wi-Fi is also now available, and we've recruited 14 new customer service assistants to provide greater support to passengers.

Reading station won Major Station of the Year at the National Rail Awards. The recent refurbishment of the Brunel arcade toilets, new free water fountains, and increased seating have contributed to enhancing the customer experience and we were incredibly proud to see this recognised.

People

Our people are at the heart of our region and future success is dependent on how we develop, empower and invest in them. Ensuring our employees are motivated and proud to work for the region has remained a focus and our employee engagement measure has increased from 55 to 58 per cent. We introduced Pulse Surveys to regularly assess employee views and will continue to act on the results. A priority has been to provide more direct human resources support to frontline managers and we achieved this through the creation of new support roles. This has helped free up manager's time to focus on safety and performance.

66 per cent of our workforce will be eligible for retirement over the next 15 years, so addressing the potential loss of skills and knowledge is a priority. We've therefore strengthened our teams in strategic resource and talent management. At the start of the pandemic, we transformed an old depot in Newport, South Wales, into a state-of-the-art training centre to ensure we had enough skilled railway signallers throughout the crisis. We also opened a new signalling training centre in Bristol Parkway to train the signallers of the future.

More than 300 colleagues have taken part in our Great People Manager course, with over 145 completing all five modules

since 2019. This course upskills managers and prospective managers in areas including performance management and recruitment, coupled with behavioural based training focussed on how we interact with each other at work.

Something we're proud of

While passenger numbers were low, we accelerated some work into 2020-21 which was originally planned for later in the year. The acceleration means more services can run during summer 2021 due to less engineering work taking place at this time. As an example, the extension of a line closure in Bristol presented us with an opportunity to carry out extensive overhead line inspections. These inspections would normally take 96-night shifts but were completed in just one week.

Something we want to improve

Fewer than 20 per cent of our colleagues are female and just nine per cent are from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. We're proud of the improvements we've already made but the numbers fall considerably short of our aspirations. Our diversity and inclusion strategy is at the heart of this, setting out a pathway towards creating an inclusive environment that attracts and retains the best people from the diverse communities we serve.

Plans for the year ahead

Safety will remain our top priority and we'll continue to improve workforce safety and provide mental health and wellbeing support as we recover from the pandemic. We'll encourage passengers back to the railway, delivering a reliable timetable and supporting economic recovery. We recognise that the industry must become more efficient and work even more collaboratively through industry reform and we've already started work to reduce costs for passengers and taxpayers. We'll continue to enhance our network and will be remodelling Bristol East Junction to allow trains to come in and out of Bristol Temple Meads more easily and to increase capacity for additional services. We'll support the Crossrail project by completing readiness of our infrastructure to support services between Reading and Shenfield. We'll also continue to work with Welsh Government and Transport for Wales to support improvements to cross-border connectivity and the development of regional Metros.