

News story: Government announces 'root and branch' review of rail

- former British Airways chief executive Keith Williams to lead major review of rail industry, supported by an expert challenge panel
- review to look at the structure of the whole rail industry, including increasing integration between track and train, regional partnerships and improving value for money for passengers and taxpayers
- plans for reform to be implemented from 2020

A sweeping review to transform Britain's railways has been launched today (20 September 2018) by Transport Secretary Chris Grayling.

The review – the most significant since privatisation – will consider ambitious recommendations for reform to ensure our vital rail system continues to benefit passengers and support a stronger, fairer economy.

The review – led by independent chair Keith Williams, the former British Airways chief executive and deputy chairman of John Lewis Partnership – will build on the government's franchising strategy – bringing track and train closer together to reduce disruption and improve accountability, and considering regional partnerships and how we can use innovation to improve services and value for money for passengers.

Keith Williams will be supported by an external panel and will report next year. The government will publish a white paper on the review's recommendations, with the implementation of reforms planned to start from 2020.

The panel will consider all parts of the rail industry, from the current franchising system and industry structures, accountability, and value for money for passengers and taxpayers.

The panel membership will include Roger Marsh, who chairs the body representing the 11 local enterprise partnerships in the north of England and will bring his expert knowledge and experience of business and transport needs across the north of the country.

Privatisation has led to a level of growth never seen under nationalisation, and reversed the decline the railways saw under British Rail, where routes and stations were closing.

Passenger journeys have more than doubled -- from 735 million in 1994-5 to 1.73 billion in 2016-17. Private investment is at record levels, totalling £5.6 billion over the past 10 years, and the rail network has one of the highest rates of satisfaction and safety in Europe.

However, the industry has not kept pace with this significant growth, shown as the industry struggled to deliver for passengers following the May

timetable disruption.

The government has already taken steps to strengthen future train franchises and improve reliability. However, we want to ensure the rail system continues to deliver benefits in the face of these challenges.

The review will analyse all aspects of the industry, alongside the country's changing travel and work patterns. It will make recommendations to improve the current franchising model in terms of reliability, delivering better services and value for money for passengers, commercial sustainability and innovation.

The review has been launched ahead of the interim report by Professor Stephen Glaister into the [timetabling issues in May](#). It will take into account the findings of his final report at the end of the year.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

Privatisation has delivered huge benefits of passengers on Britain's railways – doubling passenger journeys and bringing in billions of private investment.

But it is clear that the structure we inherited is no longer fit to meet today's challenges and cope with increasing customer demand. Following the disruption this summer we took immediate action to improve services and ensure the industry compensated passengers.

We've been clear that the railway needs reform to prioritise its passengers, and we have set out plans for closer partnerships between operators of track and train, including on the LNER and South Eastern networks.

But as part of our vision for the future of mobility, we need to go further and more quickly, to get the best from the public and private sectors and deliver the railway we need for the 21st century. It is vital that this review leaves no stone unturned and makes bold recommendations for the future.

I am delighted that Keith Williams – who has significant experience leading businesses within the transport sector – has agreed to be the independent chair of this review. His expertise in driving customer service excellence will be incredibly valuable as we seek to reform the rail industry to become more passenger focused.

The review has a wide scope and will focus on:

- leveraging the commercial model to ensure improved services for passengers and taxpayers, and more effectively balance public and private sector involvement
- the roles and structures of all parts of the industry, looking at how they can work together more effectively to reduce fragmentation, improve

passenger services and increase accountability

- how the railway can support a fares system that delivers value for money for passengers and taxpayers; and improved industrial relations to maintain performance for passengers

While the review is taking place, the government will continue with its ambitious programme of investment – £48 billion over the next 5 years.

Keith Williams said:

It's clear that Britain's railway has seen unprecedented growth and is carrying more passengers than it did a century ago on a network a fraction of the size. But it also clear it faces significant challenges.

I am looking forward to working with the industry and passengers to tackle these challenges.

While the review is underway, the department will work closely with industry to ensure that rail delivers the day-to-day performance and transformational improvements that passengers expect.

The government will set out the terms of reference of the review and the membership of the panel when Parliament returns. The Transport Secretary has asked that the review engages with a wide range of stakeholders in all parts of the country, including passenger representatives, businesses, and local and devolved bodies and governments.

The department has reviewed all ongoing franchise competitions and other live rail projects in the context of the rail review. Due to the unique geographic nature of the [Cross Country franchise](#), which runs from Aberdeen to Penzance and cuts across multiple parts of the railway, awarding this franchise in 2019 could impact on the review's conclusions.

It has therefore been decided that this competition will not proceed. Services will continue to be operated by the existing franchisee with options beyond this to be considered in due course. The department will consider the responses to the Cross Country public consultation in the development of future options for the franchise.

All other ongoing franchise competitions and other live rail projects are continuing as planned.