

News story: Keith Williams: a railway with today's and tomorrow's passengers at its heart is the future

Trade-offs and tough choices will be an essential part of the move to creating a more customer-centric railway, the head of the government rail review has said.

Keith Williams, who was [speaking at the Accelerate: future of rail conference](#) in London, has set out the scale of the challenge facing both government and the industry and that the changes will not be easy.

Mr Williams also announced the [criteria that the Rail Review](#) will draw on to develop a new model for the UK rail network, and launched the next phase of the [review's call for evidence](#) to focus on them.

The assessment criteria are the first step towards developing a blueprint for the railway of the future, setting out what the review aims to achieve for passengers, freight and taxpayers, and the industry changes needed to deliver them.

Alongside these assessment criteria the review has also published evidence on the lessons that the UK can learn from other networks around the world, and on the factors affecting public trust in the railway.

Key findings include:

- perceptions research finds that – despite UK passenger satisfaction rates being amongst the highest in Europe – trust is low because passengers feel that the industry is not competent to run a quality service, and is not motivated to
- re-building trust will require passenger-centric reform
- the vast majority of railways have a mix of public and private sector involvement
- performance issues and low satisfaction rates are not unique to the UK

Keith Williams said:

There needs to be a much stronger focus on passengers. This has been common ground from everyone we have spoken with. Passengers must be at the heart of the future of the railway.

And not just the passenger of today, but also the passengers of tomorrow, who will look at rail differently than we do today and hopefully, if we do our job right, as part of a more integrated transport network.

Moving to a customer focused railway won't be easy and I want to

make it absolutely clear that trade-offs will be unavoidable when I come to make my recommendations – for example, between a system that delivers a national network and is responsive to local interests.