

News story: Rail Review Chair says franchising cannot continue in its current form

- reform must put passengers at its heart
- ORR to look at compensation and accessibility
- review to make recommendations in the autumn

Keith Williams, independent chair of the first 'root and branch' [Rail Review](#) to be supported by government, will today (26 February 2019) announce that the rail franchising system cannot continue in the way it is now.

In the George Bradshaw Address, Keith Williams is expected to say:

I have heard a great deal about the franchising model...driving growth in passengers and benefits to services. But with this growth the needs of passengers have changed whilst many of the basic elements of our rail system have not kept pace.

Put bluntly, franchising cannot continue the way it is today. It is no longer delivering clear benefits for either taxpayers and farepayers.

I believe that for the railway to be successful it needs to put passengers at its heart.

We need to recognise that there is unlikely to be a 'one size fits all' solution which will work for every part of the country and all types of passenger.

The former British Airways chief executive and deputy chairman of John Lewis Partnership, will set out that the reason he took on the review was because he had a clear commitment from the government to deliver change:

This is the first full-blown rail review to be supported by government for some considerable time – with a very clear commitment from the Transport Secretary and from Bernadette Kelly, and the whole of the department's executive.

I see our role not just to tackle those recent problems that passengers have experienced but also to tackle the more fundamental underlying causes of those problems.

In his address, he will also say that the rail industry is adapting to a fast-changing world but unable to respond to consumer demand:

We are spending on the railway, in offering new services, purchasing new rolling stock, and renewing and enhancing the network. The May timetable change, for instance, was designed to offer thousands of new services, hundreds of new trains, and much improved critical infrastructure – but as a system we were unable to deliver on this investment. And the customer suffered.

Williams will summarise the progress made on the Rail Review as well as the next steps. He will say:

There's real hunger for change within the industry as well as outside. We will continue listening to what you have to say and learning from your insight and experience.

We need to do more on making it easier for customers to access the compensation they are entitled to and improving accessibility for all users, including disabled people.

I've asked the ORR to advise me on what more could be done by rail operators to improve this, and whether more regulatory powers are required to ensure it happens. They will report back within the timescale of the review recommending action to help transform compensation and accessibility across the network.

In the autumn we will bring everything together and alongside government, recommend change through a white paper. It will be the culmination of the biggest and widest review of the railway for generations.

- the Rail Review was established to recommend the most appropriate organisational and commercial frameworks to support the delivery of the government's vision for the railway
- former British Airways chief executive Keith Williams leads the major review of the rail industry, supported by an expert challenge panel
- the government will publish a white paper on the review's recommendations, with the implementation of reforms planned to start from 2020
- the annual Bradshaw Address is named in honour of George Bradshaw (1800 to 1853), who developed the Bradshaw's Guide to the railways
- the review's first evidence paper, The role of the railway in Great Britain, will be published at 7pm today (26 February 2019)