

[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.

[News story: Continued EU access for UK airlines, hauliers and bus and coach operators agreed](#)

EU Ministers today (19 March 2019) formally adopted laws which mean UK airlines, hauliers and passenger bus and coach operators will continue to be able to provide services to and from the EU in a 'no deal' scenario.

For UK hauliers, this means permits will not be required for the vast majority of journeys to the EU until the end of 2019. ECMT permits will enable hauliers to transit the EU to third countries.

Operators of regular bus and coach services who have existing authorisations can also continue to provide services between the UK and the EU until the end of 2019.

The UK has already announced that it will grant equivalent access to the UK for EU airlines, hauliers and passenger transport operators. This will ensure vital supply chains and connections are maintained.

Roads Minister Jesse Norman said:

The government believes that the best outcome is for the UK to leave the EU with a deal, but we will continue to progress sensible contingency plans.

The measures formally adopted by the EU today, together with the UK's decision to grant equivalent rights, means that UK hauliers and coach operators will have continued access to the EU after 29 March 2019 whatever the outcome.

The government also this week signed a separate agreement with Norway which will ensure that hauliers and commercial bus drivers can continue to drive to, from and through Norway as they do now.

Any [UK citizens driving to the EU will need additional paperwork after UK Exit in a no deal scenario](#), including an international driving permit, GB sticker and insurance green card. Commercial trailers weighing over 750kg and

non-commercial trailers weighing over 3,500kg will also need to be [registered regardless of the outcome](#).

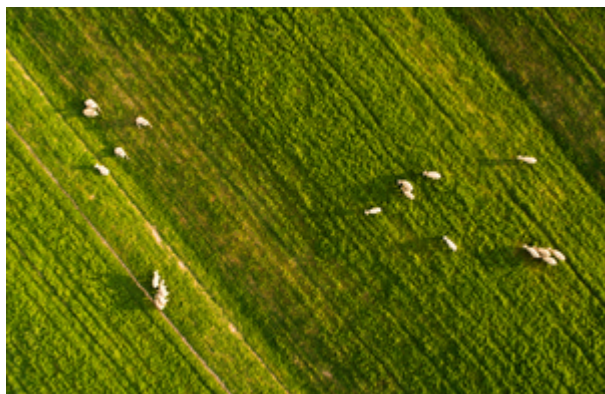
The government confirmed in March the technical details of [measures that will ensure flights will continue if the UK leaves the EU without a deal](#).

Aviation Minister Baroness Sugg said:

The measures adopted today by the EU will ensure that flights can continue in any scenario; deal or no deal.

This is good news, not only for the industry but most importantly it reaffirms the fact that passengers can book flights with confidence, as normal.

[News story: Combating food shortages: apply for funding](#)



£3 million is available for projects to develop agricultural and food systems with African organisations.

Food and resource scarcity are among the defining challenges of the 21st century. [Global estimates for undernourishment rose from 775 million people in 2015 to 821 million in 2017](#), with African countries seeing the highest prevalence, estimated around 20% of the population in 2016. This risk is made greater by the growing threat of climate change to crops.

Up to £3 million of funding is available through Innovate UK and the Department for International Development (DFID), for organisations looking to boost the rate and scale of food systems innovation in Africa.

The competition is part of the Agri-Tech Catalyst, which provides funding to projects that have a positive impact on poverty through agricultural technology and innovation.

Picking up the pace

Projects must look to increase the rate and scale of development in ground-breaking agricultural and food systems technology in Africa across the supply chain.

They can be based within any sector or discipline, and must:

Applicants may want to focus on DFID funding priorities, including:

- reducing food loss on the farm and through the value chain
- control of crop pests, weeds and diseases
- food safety issues through the supply chain

Competition information

- the competition opens on 1 April 2019, and the deadline for registration is at midday on 29 May 2019
- UK-based organisations of any size are eligible to apply
- Online brokerage events will be held on 5 April, with a focus on:
- briefing events will also be held in Birmingham on 22 March 2019, and online on 9 April 2019

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Last updated 19 March 2019 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 19 March 2019 Removed initial CTA that linked to old Agri-Tech Catalyst.
2. 18 March 2019 First published.

[News story: Labour market statistics March 2019](#)

Latest [figures from the Office for National Statistics \(ONS\)](#) show that Scotland's unemployment rate is 3.4% which is the lowest on record and below that of the UK as a whole at 3.9%. Furthermore, the number of people employed in Scotland is close to the recent record high at 2,676,000. Although, Scotland's employment rate, at 75.3%, remains below the UK's rate at 76.1%.

In response to today's [19 March 2019] labour market statistics figures Scottish Secretary David Mundell said:

"It is great news that employment continues to rise in Scotland.

"Scotland's two governments are working together to strengthen our economy and create jobs, with initiatives such as our growth deal programme beginning to reap rewards. In the last few weeks we have co-signed the £250 million

Ayrshire growth deal and announced £345 million in joint government funding for the Borderlands.

“The UK Government’s investment in growth deals in Scotland is now more than £1.35 billion, and shows our huge commitment to growing Scotland’s job sector.”

For the three months to January, Scotland’s overall labour market provides a mainly positive picture: employment increased robustly (+13,000); unemployment fell moderately (-9,000) and activity has increased slightly (+4,000). However, monthly claimant count numbers are worsening over the month of February, as there are 105,700 people in Scotland claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance and out-of-work Universal Credit (seasonally adjusted); this is up 6,600 on the month of January (provisional) and 18,900 up on the year before.

[News story: Places of worship to get security funding boost](#)

The Home Secretary has boosted funding for next year’s places of worship protective security to £1.6 million to reassure communities and safeguard mosques and other places of worship. This is double the amount awarded last year. In addition a new £5 million fund will be opened to provide security training.

The funding boost, announced in a [written ministerial statement](#), comes after the terror attack in Christchurch claimed the lives of 50 people and injured 40 more. Following the incident, police presence was stepped up at mosques across the UK to reassure communities fearful of similar attacks.

The places of worship fund, established in 2016 as part of the government’s hate crime action plan, provides financial support for physical protective security such as fencing, lighting and CCTV. Government previously committed funding of £2.4 million over 3 years.

So far, more than a third of grants under the places of Worship Protective Funding scheme have been awarded to mosques.

The Home Secretary Sajid Javid said:

The horrific events in New Zealand are a direct attack on the values of tolerance and freedom of worship that unite us all.

Nobody should ever fear persecution of their faith and it’s vital we stand together to reject those who seek to spread hatred and

divide us.

I know many Muslim communities are feeling vulnerable and anxious. But they should seek comfort from knowing we are doing everything to tackle hate and extremism.

That's why we are doubling next year's places of worship fund – providing physical protection as well as peace of mind.

In addition, the government will open a consultation with faith representatives and organisations including the Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group, Tell MAMA, the Independent Advisory Group and other faith representatives and organisations, on improvements to existing policy to protect faith communities.

To increase uptake in the fund and ensure it reaches those most vulnerable to hate crime, the bidding process will also be simplified so organisations no longer have to prove they have previously experienced a hate crime incident directly. In addition the government will be streamlining the supplier arrangements for bidders, after which the programme will open for applications.

Places of worship, including mosques, will also benefit from a new £5 million fund over 3 years to provide protective security training to build on some of the positive work already happening in communities. This is in recognition that physical protective security is only part of the solution, and institutions, their staff and volunteers need to have security understanding to ensure the protective measures work effectively. We will engage closely with communities on the scope of this new scheme to ensure it meets the needs of all places of worship covering security. We will then undertake a competitive process to determine providers of the training and plan to start delivering in 2019 to 2020.