

# Mid-year update: Safely improving performance - part one



everyone  
home safe  
every day

Dear all

We're halfway through our first year of CP7. A good time to reflect on the progress we've made and the challenges ahead. I will do this in three instalments this week, beginning with this message.

We started the year with a significant train performance problem which, as well as letting our passengers and freight users down, put us very much on the regulator's radar. We have had court proceedings relating to the 2019 fatalities in Margam. More recently, a new government and, with that, a renewed focus on rail reform.



**Rob Cairns,**  
Regional Managing Director

When I joined W&W, one of my first actions was to set three clear priorities: ***trains on time, everyone home safe every day, and living within our means. Since then, our efforts have focused on:***

- taking steps to insert safety at the very top of our agenda, and looking closely at the factors that create the culture needed to sustain the very best health and safety outcomes
- understanding what is happening with our train performance (our data), investigating trends/repeated themes
- taking deliberate steps to establish both 'quick wins' and focused improvement priority areas

In parallel, there have been several key changes in our region, to ensure steady but sure progress in tackling our performance challenges. Firstly, there have been leadership changes in the Wales & Western executive team, including:

- the introduction of infrastructure directors in the region and both routes, to bring asset management and maintenance closer together. A phrase often coined is 'giving the routes the levers' within which to best control the balancing act, which we know is constantly needed to run a 'right time' railway. To see how passionate our route directors are about improvement, but not having the necessary control, was frankly not helping anyone.

- Rupert Walker has joined the Wales and Western executive team, to lead and strengthen our involvement in the development of the significant Old Oak Common project – the largest new station to be built on Britain’s railways in the past 100 years. This investment will be a flag carrier for the UK economy and transport scene. Not having a dedicated directorate, within which we can widen our focus on the many deeply complex moving parts, was beginning to make less and less sense. Many will know that the station build is being re-dated whilst we re-align the programme of infrastructure works into the station build, which is being led by HS2 colleagues.

These changes go hand-in-hand with changes to our operating model. The first stage of this has focused on devolving accountability for asset management to the routes, aligned with maintenance under the infrastructure directors.

Alongside that, we’ve looked closely at the root causes of our performance challenge. One of the findings has been that the current asset management policies have not delivered the train performance outcomes we require. We’ve put several changes in place to address this and other challenges we’ve identified. These include:

- Further and deeper devolution to reflect the needs of our routes, linking their strategic priorities with asset reliability, assurance, cost and faster decision-making
- Launching our new safety strategy, which identifies the key behaviours and activities to deliver everyone home safe every day
- Heavily revising our maintenance philosophy, separating and revising our approach for specific assets that are required to operate to a level of performance (reliability and availability) greater than the original intended design.
- Re-thinking the principles of our regular track access strategy for Thames Valley
- Re-prioritising critical inspections to improve the management of system risk
- Improving our control and response capability

In my next message, I will turn to where we currently stand with our performance, and our focus for the second half of the year.

Stay safe

Rob

This update is provided by the Wales and Western Communications team. For any queries, please contact [walesandwesterncomms@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:walesandwesterncomms@networkrail.co.uk)



POWERED BY

