

Mid-year update: Safely improving performance - part three



everyone
home safe
every day

Dear all

In my message on Wednesday, I reflected on where we stand today in terms of progress against our three key priorities. I also emphasised the importance of celebrating the results of our teams' hard work. This message will be future-focused and talk about the opportunities ahead – which we must grasp with both hands.

Key to success will be:

- making a much more deliberate approach to learning lessons from the things that work
- investing in tools and technology
- making sure we have the right environments and arrangements for people to do their best work.

The culture of saying things are ok when they perhaps aren't, or we don't really know, is dead as dead can be and consigned to Network Rail's history books. The culture of the future is one where people feel safe to say they don't know and safe to reveal the risks they can anticipate. I hope I'm doing a half decent job in letting people know that I'm about openness, and realness.

I've spoken a lot recently about wanting to use 'decency' as a means of testing our day-to-day values. Whilst it's perhaps a loose phrase, it should resonate with most of us as 'decency' conjures many different images in each of our minds, but pretty much all of them will be right.



Rob Cairns,
Regional Managing Director

It's for these reasons that I wish to directly tackle the culture of home working. Frankly, it's not 'decent' to have separation driven into the organisation between those whom we rely on to be present in a workplace, and those who claim they can work just as well from home. That just can't be our reality. There are no issues in the region concerning engineering, HR, finance, investment, or project management, that don't have significant links to how front line workers are being enabled to perform – what is very often tremendously difficult – maintenance and operations activities. For those who choose to work from home, please give me a day back at one of our front line locations, for example a DU or signalling location. Our success will ultimately come from our performance-driven culture. Visibility and working together with colleagues are hugely important to successful collaboration, not to mention wellbeing.

At the heart of our performance plan is a commitment to collaboration with industry partners, including helping contribute to rail reform. The launch of Shadow Great British Railways by the Transport Secretary is a major step towards delivering a unified railway and will pave the way for GBR. I look forward to the opportunity to expand on the collaboration we have already built with partners in the region, to continue to deliver for passengers and freight users.

We must also continue to improve the governance and assurance of our plans. I have talked about these themes regularly in my weekly safety messages this year. This includes expanding our use of the Performance Management Improvement System (PMIS) to develop robust plans, strengthening the management of our plans, establishing a new Industry Programme Board, and continuing use of RM3P performance assessments to drive improvements in performance management.

As we come into autumn – the railway's most challenging season – we must keep our eye on delivering the basics consistently well. Keeping the tracks leaf and ice-free, and staying on top of our flood risk areas, will make the difference between us succeeding or failing to deliver for passengers and freight users. Making sure we manage our December timetable changes well, which will be particularly significant in Wales and Borders route, is also a key part of this.

If we do exactly what we did last autumn, then come April we will have at least a couple of burned out people – and that's the predictable outcome I wish to take all steps towards avoiding right now. We need to spread the load, and take constant steps to ensure the burden and slack is balanced. I want all managers to be present in front line locations, and making sure that every step is taken to ensure the lives of our front line teams are being supported and not hindered.

On a closing note, please can I ask you to refresh yourselves with two things:

- What we have committed to in our regional [Health & Safety Strategy](#). Here we set out the cultural difference we would challenge ourselves to bring
- Our [HSMS document](#). This is the mechanism that links the outcomes, with the activity and the process for them

To link these together: our regional Health & Safety Strategy is a summary of the things we believe need to be really driven upon within our region, in order to arrive at a culture and organisation where we stand the best chance of meeting the health and safety outcomes described by our HSMS.

Although keeping our workforce and passengers safe is one of our three regional priorities, it sets itself apart from the others as safety is a qualifying criterion: that means nothing else really matters if we can't get that aspect right. I also firmly believe that, as a foundation, safety sits with several other key principles that also underpin a positive and sound culture. For example – speaking freely, being open, making sure truth can always be spoken to power, and not obsessing about red tape. If those things are true (which

I'm convinced they are) then it's obvious why we would want the most diverse organisation we can achieve, and that's about promoting decency in all that we do.

Please do continue to reach out. I enjoy receiving your feedback and listening to understand the challenges you face, so that we can work together to resolve them. You can [reply directly to me](#) if you wish – I look forward to hearing from you.

Stay safe

Rob

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