

Encouraging the right mindset in decision-making



everyone
home safe
every day

Dear all,

As the Regional Managing Director, my main goals are to keep our trains on time, ensure everyone gets home safely each day, and manage within our budget. This means organising our resources in the most efficient way, prioritising the things that matter most.

One of my key focuses is making Health & Safety physically embedded in everything we do. I make sure to communicate my safety priorities clearly by sharing weekly safety updates, so everyone knows where I stand on these issues. You can read these updates here: [Safety Messages](#).



Rob Cairns,
Regional Managing Director

Managing our Health & Safety correctly means encouraging the right mindset in decision-making. Sometimes, there's a belief that safety, cost, and performance are in competition with each other, but this isn't always the case. A decision that prioritises safety can also help with cost and reliability. Conversely, focusing too much on cutting costs can lead to unsafe practices and unreliable services. I'm careful about how regional habits and ways of thinking can influence our decisions, and I'm focused on changing them for the better. While a railway with no trains is safer and cheaper, it's unrealistic to think this is the answer. We need to be cautious of falling into the trap of thinking that safety and performance must always conflict. I'm pointing this out to remind us all that we need to be aware of the pressures that can lead us to make decisions that don't make sense. When our trains run on time, passengers and goods reach their destinations as planned, which makes passengers happy and reduces issues with staff. But punctuality is about more than just good signalling and on-time dispatch - it's about maintaining our assets, managing risks, and reacting quickly to service disruptions.

Preserving a positive approach to safety comprises a small number of things that we have to uphold, and not let the pressures of life cause us to ever lose grip of them:

- **Leadership:** We want our leaders to show us what to do and how to do it. Great safety leaders act as a source of stability and confidence during challenging times. They communicate transparently, make decisions, and inspire their teams to overcome obstacles. Our leaders should be tackling

'head-on' any parts of the organisation that aren't being proactive about safety. Test yourself, and those around you on their safety leadership. Do you/they talk about safety often, do they ask for feedback on safety, do they act on safety concerns, do they recognise and reward safe behaviour, do they make safety a priority, even when it's inconvenient? A good leader will be happy to talk to you about safety and answer any questions you have.

- Clear on Priorities: We'll share the most important health and safety rules every week, and we'll make sure they're easy to understand.
- Roles & Responsibilities: We'll be clear about who's responsible for what, and we'll all work together to make sure we're doing our jobs safely, (for example poor veg management owed to environmental constraints could result in creating a larger contravention of primary legislation in the Health & Safety at Work Act, where our team members hold very specific legal responsibilities to do all that is practical to limit any risk of harm).
- A strong safety culture is led by leaders who understand the shadow they cast, and this means doing the right thing even when no one's watching. People do things that make sense to them at the time, so we need safety rules to take that into account.
 - Our site People have to make really tough choices most of the time, so we need a system for making and recording those decisions.
 - Safety rules are complex and need to be adjusted as things change.
 - Complex rail systems can be unpredictable, so we need to support our frontline by being prepared for anything.
 - Success and failure both come from the same place, so we need to learn from both and not be surprised by this.

Although these outcomes are themselves not complex, our railway is made up of many diverse stakeholders. The connections between them can often be complicated and complicated connections need collaboration. This, and our industry's recognition that we can never be complacent about any aspect of health or safety. It's because of this that we are working hard to increase diversity across our workforce, empowering our colleagues to be their authentic selves at work.

I feel really strongly that neurodivergent people can absolutely thrive at work with the right support, but there are things we need to continue to do more of before we can claim we are putting this consistently into action and fully say we are supporting people with neurodiversity in the workplace, be that providing interview experience, skills training and a year-long work placement to help secure full-time employment. Our partnership with Ambitious about Autism is a great start, and provides work placements across our supply chain division, with focused training for managers and peers on working with neurodivergent colleagues and guiding them through the interview and work placement. We've increased the number of women we employ and the number of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic colleagues but we know we need to do more and go further to make sure our workforce properly represents the diversity of the communities we serve. Therefore it's absolutely the means by which we allow our people to bring the 'how' to life each day based on their reality, and that in turn is about making sure they feel able to bring their full selves to work.

I've spoken a great deal within the region and my weekly messages about 'decency', and that being a guide for how we set about a day-to-day basis. Decency is important because it makes the world a better place. When we are decent to others, they are more likely to be decent to us. This creates a positive cycle of kindness and respect.

For our team, in the here and now, that's about re-thinking Wales as a Railway that best serves its local communities, alongside the continued migration of Western from a mixed pattern long-distance diesel railway to a high-density mixed-use electric railway, where usage of traditional patterns between local and regional traffic is fundamentally changed. Our organisation and leadership continue to re-imagine the structural and cultural changes to reflect this, and we must keep going with this.

What are your thoughts on this? Feel free to [reply to me directly](#), if you wish.

Stay safe,
Rob

This update is provided by the Wales and Western Communications team. For any queries, please contact walesandwesterncomms@networkrail.co.uk