

# Adapting to our surroundings and paying interest in others



**everyone  
home safe  
every day**

Dear all,

This week I visited a number of our signaller locations and maintenance delivery units along the Wiltshire, Somerset, Devon and Cornwall corridor.

I started out at Penzance on Tuesday morning - working backwards along the route. It began with spending an hour with one of our signallers over a coffee and admiring what could be classed as the most idyllic office view of all time ever, as the coastal-located mechanical frame controlling Penzance overlooks the Atlantic, across St Michael's mount.



**Rob Cairns,  
Regional Managing Director**

In awe of the beauty of the scenery before me (and believing he won't mind me saying), the signaller remarked that he no longer notices the scale of the scenery, having worked there for over 20 years. This felt almost unthinkable but totally relatable in the same breath - as humans if we do one thing, we constantly adjust and normalise to the surroundings we are in. How that plays into our culture can't be overstated, in my humble opinion. As humans we are programmed to notice the things that aren't routine to us, and at the same time we stop recognising those things that are constant and non-changing.

That also applies to our health & safety priorities. There are some very broad principles to do with



**My view from Penzance signal box**

each of us recognising the duty we each have to fully investigate and understand the challenges and experiences of those on front line roles, and how the roles that we hold may influence the experiences they have.

At a leadership level, we must *earn* the right to lead. What I mean by this is that no-one is exempt from the need to personally explore where and how our individual influence is felt in day-to-day train service delivery.

I heard from a number of people I spoke to about how they have come to accept poor performance from suppliers. They believe that any form of challenge in that regard will invite a time served *computer says no* response from an impenetrable regime of centrally led procurement. Therefore, many people often no longer place their energies into making the very obvious improvements that hide in plain sight to them. The examples given were against our possession management suppliers, who it's felt fulfil their own agenda, rather than the priorities of those they serve.



**Inside St Erth signal box**

I was heartened by the energy and enthusiasm the teams possess, coupled with their thirst for change. People willingly shared examples of opportunities to improve what we do, along with frustration that they didn't know how to make it happen.

This underlines the importance of connectivity, and the obligation that those in leadership roles have to ensure they spend time on our sites and absorb, first hand, the day-to-day challenges faced by our front line teams. If you are a manager, or a leader (B3 or above), my ask is that you reflect on how much time

you are spending in front line locations. If the answer is 'not enough', then please take steps to address that.

So, it comes down to the inevitable question as to what can be done about things? In one breath, I think to myself how could I possibly have the nerve to request our office based managers and leaders to consider spending at least one day in a front line location for each day, they spend working at home. The answer to this is actually very simple, because I wish to earn the right to look each of our frontline staff in the eye - the real question is how could I not ask this of our line managers and leaders.

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)



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