

A rundown of some of RBD's biggest stories of the past year

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Grand plans for change, adversity and the triumph of generosity have all caught your attention over the past year when reading the latest news on Rail Business Daily.

With 2021 nearly behind us, we decided to take a look back as some of the biggest articles that caught your attention. Of course, many will be fresh in your mind - the [Integrated rail Plan](#), for example was both controversial and proved a commitment to build despite the pandemic. Meanwhile, we saw the world's eyes look upon green rail innovation at [COP26](#), a crucial moment in the spotlight.

But there were some other headlines, going right back to the beginning of the year which also caught the imagination of our readers.



Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail to reform Britain's railways and launch new era for passengers

In May, the UK Government unveiled a masterplan to transform rail — for both passenger and freight services.

The Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail put at its heart the establishment of Great British Railways — a body that will integrate the railways, own the infrastructure, collect fare revenue, run and plan the network, and set most fares and timetables.

People wanted to dive into the details as they emerged, and so it is no surprise that our piece, '[Williams-Shapps Plan - Ten outcomes laid out in the White Paper](#)' proved popular to our readers.

Another well-read article was, unsurprisingly, the [industry reaction](#) to the plan, which was largely positive. People described it as the biggest change in a generation, and what the industry “had been waiting for”.

The RISAS scheme is changing

Changes to the Railway Industry Supplier Approval Scheme (RISAS) also caught people's attention in May.

The change — to something more closely resembling the RISQS model — was to ensure that the scheme

remined fit for purpose, the RSSB said.

Transport Secretary launches £794m investment to boost rail links in North and South

Another major story people wanted to know more about was the ambition of the UK Government to reopen two rail routes closed for more than 50 years.

The money would see work begin on reinstating rail services between Bicester and Bletchley for the first time since 1968, and between Newcastle-Upon-Tyne and Ashington for the first time since the Beeching cuts in 1964.



First export of UK-built trains for over 12 years allows Bombardier to expand manufacturing capacity in Derby

A major deal in January brought excitement to the industry.

A consortium led by Bombardier Transportation confirmed a deal with the Egyptian Government to build

two new monorails thanks to £1.7 billion backing from UK Export Finance (UKEF) — the largest amount of financing it has ever provided for an overseas infrastructure project.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss described overseas trade such as this as being “an incredibly powerful way to propel growth and create jobs as we recover from the pandemic.”

Unlocking Innovation Whole Systems series concludes with a focus on solving challenges to the industry

RIAs webinars on Whole Systems approaches provided a valuable resource to the industry.

They explored everything from developing new technology and software through to how innovation relates to very light rail.



BAM completes successful TransPennine blockade

Delivering in carefully controlled circumstances against the clock is part of what makes rail engineering great.

BAM Nuttall took part in a major project in Manchester. As part of the works, two railway bridges at Dantzic Street and Queens Road were completely reconstructed and two bridges at Bromley Street and Oldham Road were strengthened and waterproofed. Alongside this, over 3,000m of track was upgraded, track was remodelled between Manchester Victoria and Stalybridge and 17 new signals were also installed.

Success was attributed in no small part to early-stage project collaboration.

GBRf extend contract with Belmond for Royal Scotsman, A Belmond Train, Scotland's haulage

GBRf announced it had furthered its collaboration with Belmond to haul the prestigious Royal Scotsman luxury sleeper train, taking passengers through stunning Highlands scenery.

John Smith, MD at GBRf said he was "absolutely delighted" the deal had been extended and said the business was "honoured".

Rail journeys fall to lowest annual levels since 1872

A difficult headline to take in.

According to the Office of Rail and Road, 388 million journeys were made in 2020-21 (April to March), which equates to only 22% of the 1,739 million made in 2019-20.

It said passenger revenue in Great Britain was £1.9 billion in 2020-21, compared to £10.4 billion in 2019-20.



Network Rail donates old laptops to help pupils learn remotely during lockdown

If we learned anything during the pandemic, it is that people are the antidote to the emotional pain caused by COVID-19. The goodwill and industriousness the sector has brought helped many take heart in difficult moments.

A shining example of this was when children at St. Willibrord's R.C. Primary School in Clayton, East Manchester, were donated refurbished laptops by Network Rail. Volunteers at the infrastructure owner and operator put in place a plan to distribute at least 8,000 laptops across Britain to help children who needed them for remote learning.

Avanti West Coast launches new 'Feel Good Travel' campaign

Perhaps what people needed after so much time in lockdown was a laugh. The roller-blading-turtle-themed campaign from Avanti West Coast delivered exactly that.

It's aim was to attract people back to trains and, in the process, support the surrounding communities that Avanti West Coast served.