

A simpler, better approach to driving revenue growth

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Suzanne Donnelly, director of passenger revenue at GBRTT, talks about the best way make rail more affordable and accessible to more people.

1.8 billion trips were made by more than 8 million people on our railways in the last full reporting year before the pandemic. That accounted for 9% of total distance travelled, with most other journeys made by car. From a 'glass half full' perspective, these figures go to show that there are many people and many journeys that rail could attract.

The 'glass half empty' point of view is that changes to the way people commute to work are now likely permanent: rail's revenue recovery had steadily increased since the start of 2022 but has begun to flatline over the summer at around 81%.

Of these two views, I'm firmly in the glass-half-full camp, but I'm also a realist. Further recovery of rail passengers will need a simpler, better approach towards how we drive growth as an industry. In short, we must find ways to make rail more affordable and accessible to more people, so that they want to take the train more often.

I've worked in the rail industry for 17 years, most recently as commercial director for LNER. I led the Rail Revenue Recovery Group, set up in early 2021 to advise the Department for Transport on revenue recovery, and am now Director of Passenger Revenue at GBRTT – taking on the challenge of driving the railway forward commercially at a national level.

It's my job to bring together commercial leaders and specialists – from operators, Network Rail, the Rail Delivery Group (RDG), the private sector and government – to share, learn and deliver solutions for growth, while ensuring revenue remains a hot topic for key decision makers and lever holders.

I oversee the cross-industry teams within GBRTT responsible for revenue forecasting and analysis, behavioural insights, marketing, brand and commercial strategy. And I'm also the lead sponsor for the £360m fares, ticketing and retail programme that will transform passengers' experience of train travel, revolutionising fares, tickets and the way these are sold.

I'm confident that if, as an industry working together, we make the right interventions and have the right cross-industry commercial strategies, there is a bright future ahead for rail: a simpler, better railway that works for everyone in Britain.

At GBRTT, from a revenue growth perspective, our challenge is twofold: bringing the railway together to deliver commercial benefits now, while laying the foundations for Great British Railways to maximise revenue opportunities in the years ahead.

With that in mind, I've four key areas of focus right now:

- Simpler, faster and more joined-up decision making
- Making revenue growth a railway priority
- Getting initiatives to market
- Modernising how rail is bought and experienced

To learn more, including the best way to approach each of Suzanne's four key areas of focus, visit the [GBRTT blog](#).