

# A word from our CEO: Celebrating the last 12 months

December 23, 2021



Dear rail industry friends and colleagues,

As 2021 draws to a close another year of serious challenges – that probably few of us envisaged – where does sentiment currently lie in our industry? In what frame of mind do we approach 2022? With ongoing lockdown uncertainty, familiar restrictions on international travel and a new COVID variant that seems just as potent, if not more so, than all of its predecessors, the year is ending pretty much where it started.

For the industry, material and labour shortages and supply chain disruption is likely to continue, leaving some organisations quaking somewhat at the size of the looming and ongoing challenges they face. But equally, according to some of the conversations I've been having recently, plenty of us are also excited at the opportunities that lie ahead. I think we can be immensely proud of what has been achieved in an era of such turmoil.

Although I'd be hard to argue against those who feel it is a case of déjà vu to 12 months ago, reflecting back a lot has happened, the railway has made great strides, and there is a huge amount of opportunity in the coming months and years ahead. Look no further than the release of the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail

and with it the launch of the new public body Great British Railways (GBR) – the biggest reform to the railway in three decades.

Another significant moment for the rail industry this year was the publication of the government's long-awaited Integrated Rail Plan. Whilst some have welcomed it and others have raised serious questions, at least we now have some clarity about the way forward.

I would describe 2021 as the year of great progress. Trial Operations are underway ahead of the opening of the Elizabeth Line, tunnelling is well underway as part of the HS2 project, of which Phase 2a was also given Royal Assent, and trains are back running on the Island Line. We've seen green lights for the Wigan to Bolton electrification, Global Centre of Rail Excellence and services returning to the Dartmoor line for the first time in half a century.

Transport for Wales has seen the arrival of the first of its new trains, with work also well underway on new fleets for both Merseyrail and Tyne and Wear Metro. Sticking with trains and it was only in January that it was revealed a consortium led by Bombardier Transportation confirmed a deal with the Egyptian Government to build two new monorails – first export of UK-built trains for over 12 years.

After a year of preparation for COP26, 2022 will see a huge emphasis on sustainability – particularly when it comes to materials used. By being adaptable to change, and using new materials and methods, the rail industry can accelerate the move towards carbon neutrality.

As the UK Government looks to deliver an infrastructure revolution and build momentum in addressing climate change, one of the key stories for 2022 will be the pressure placed on companies to go beyond minimum requirements and standards. The more responsibility we take as an industry, with new, more-efficient techniques for embedding safety and sustainability into our operations, the smarter we can ensure new regulations will be in delivering safety, but also in fostering innovation and driving up standards beyond the basic transaction.

Here at Business Daily Group we have had an incredible 12 months. With 50,000 daily subscribers, railbusinessdaily.com continues to be the go-to media news outlet for all daily news and this year we have published more than 3,250 stories – evidence of the huge amount that has been going on in the industry. Here are some of our highlights:

- January we launched RBD Stride, our superb white collar recruitment business that has ripped up tress in 2021
- February industry stalwart Nigel Wordsworth joined the Rail Business Daily family in the role of group managing editor and creator of Inside Track
- March we bought and refurbished 5,000sq ft of modern office space for our new HQ off the M1 in Wakefield
- April we acquired Rail Insider – an in-depth weekly online news business that now has 45,000 weekly readers and our first edition of Inside Track was published

- May we announced that former KPMG director Steve Burch would lead our advisory business, RBD Advisory, as MD
- June Eli Rees-King joined the business as head of product and marketing and we formally launched the RBD Community
- July Christian Wiles and his excellent sales team reached a major milestone of £1m in advertising sales in less than 12 months
- August we published our 12th edition of Rail Director magazine – support from the industry has been phenomenal
- September Cheryl Ellerington was appointed to head up Business Daily Group's FM offer...to be launched in Q1 2022, watch this space
- October Rachael Dean joined RBD Marketing services to head up the business – supporting organisations from a profile enhancement perspective
- November we announced the appointment of Martin Little, a senior industry professional, as COO of our advisory business
- December we acquired Rail Alliance with 830 new organisations joining the RBD family alongside a unique partnership with Achilles

We now have offices in Wakefield (HQ), Birmingham, Rayleigh, Mumbai and Queensland in Australia. In 2021, we were delighted to support Rail Aid and the Railway Children, Rail Wellbeing Live, White Ribbon, Women in Rail, Women's Aid and we signed the Safe Spaces and the industry's equality, diversity and inclusion charter.

The launch of our successful Eagle Lab at Railtex/Infrarail and delivering for RSN and RIN topped off what was a great year – we look forward to working with those organisations again in 2022. This is all a sign of our ambitious nature and a passion to help the industry to thrive and myself and the whole team is very excited about what lies ahead. Keep your eyes peeled for two very big announcements early in the new year.

Although there is no doubting 2021 was a challenging year for the reasons I mentioned earlier, I think it further highlighted the ingenuity, flexibility and overall passion to succeed. This kind of attitude is why I for one am optimistic that our industry will take the necessary steps to implement even more sustainable solutions in 2022. Our stakeholders will accept no less, and the opportunities are enormous. If I was to sum up the approach to tackling these undoubted challenges, I would say that, for those with mindsets of innovation, diversity, responsibility and collaboration, a promising year lies ahead.

I personally would like to thank the whole Rail Business Daily Community – team members, customers and readers – for their efforts, good humour and sense of unity that have once again been a feature in 2021. Out of a true global crisis, I hope change and innovation will gather momentum again next year. We are certainly of that mindset at Rail Business Daily.

I extend my very best wishes to you and your families for a peaceful and safe festive period. I am aware that many of you will be continuing to work long hours over the Christmas period. I very much hope that you get at least some quality time with your family in the weeks ahead and I am sure that I speak for many in thanking those of you who will be working throughout to improve Britain's railways...keeping passengers and freight safe and on the move. Your work is greatly appreciated.

Best wishes,

David McLoughlin  
Chief Executive of Rail Business Daily