

In The News: 14th September

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Ministers are ready to seize control of the railways after more than a quarter of a century of private ownership.

That's according to an article in The Sunday Telegraph that says that franchises launched under John Major in the mid-nineties will be ripped up and replaced by fixed-fee contracts from April, according to proposals seen by the paper.

Under emergency measures, train operators have been supported with more than £3.5 billion in taxpayer funding since the pandemic struck.

The arrangement, implemented in March and due to expire next Sunday, guarantees the franchises a fixed profit but is deemed 'unsustainable going forwards given the economic position and significant pressure on public finances', official documents say.

Transport body Network Rail has outlined its vision to decarbonise thousands of miles of rail lines in the West Midlands and across the UK over the next 30 years.

The article on Business Live writes that the UK's railway operator said it wanted to see the lines using electrified trains and those running on hydrogen and battery power by 2050.

The report 'Traction Decarbonisation Network Strategy' says there could be 7,270 miles of electrification, 250 miles of battery power and 560 miles of hydrogen-operated lines, with a further 1,430 miles where there is 'no clear' technical choice at present.

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Train operators are frustrated by government delays in approving new flexible season tickets despite a declaration by Boris Johnson that it is 'working at pace' to help commuters travelling two or three times a week.

The article in The Sunday Times (Scotland) says proposals for 'carnets' of 10 tickets, which passengers can use over a period of a month, were submitted to the Department for Transport last month, but rail companies say they are unlikely to be ready for sale before January, when fares normally rise.

Finally, and five UK-based cutting-edge tech firms announced as the first to join HS2 Innovation Accelerator initiative.

Buildots, Cloudcycle, Dendra Systems, NatureMetrics and Sensat were chosen from 109 applicants to the programme. They will now receive commercial and technical support.

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