

In The News | 29th November 2022 | Latest Rail News

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InTheNews: The latest rail news on Tuesday, 29th November 2022

The government has been warned that a failure to focus on attracting customers to the railway risks a permanently smaller rail network.

Rail Partners, the new association for independent passenger and freight rail companies is calling for the new government to act now to better enable operators to attract customers back to rail. This would help fund a return to growth, in turn reducing the railway's burden on the taxpayer and avoiding a declining network with fewer services.

In a new report, *Fork in the Tracks: Attracting customers back to the railway*, Rail Partners argues the contractual system that was right to support the railway through the pandemic, now needs to evolve at pace.

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Transport Secretary Mark Harper has written a letter to RMT's Mick Lynch following a meeting last week, calling for next month's industrial action to be called off.

In it he says: "There is a way forward to meet everyone's needs. By modernising working practices, we can deliver the savings that lower post-COVID passenger numbers require, restore financial sustainability and not place an unfair burden on taxpayers."

In the letter he says that his role is to facilitate and support – not negotiate. He says negotiations will continue between trade unions and employers, but he can see scope for an agreement.

Network Rail senior non-executive director Rob Brighthouse has been asked to support a Department for Transport (DfT) study into the delivery of the Elizabeth line.

An article on New Civil Engineer says Network Rail board minutes from September, but just made publicly available, reveal that Brighthouse was asked "to support a review by DfT of learnings from the Crossrail project in relation to governance and sponsorship".

Brighthouse has 40-years' experience in the rail industry and was formerly managing director of Chiltern Railways where he was responsible for the operation and safety of the passenger rail service between London and the West Midlands.

Just over a year after the Dartmoor Line reopened to regular passenger trains, journey numbers on the line have passed 250,000 this Monday morning (28 November), with the arrival of an extra special visitor, Rail

Minister, Huw Merriman MP, to officially open the renovated station building.

The line reopened on 20 November 2021, restoring a regular, year-round service for the first time in almost 50 years following more than £40 million of government investment.

The previously mothballed rail line, which runs between Okehampton and Exeter, was restored in just nine months and delivered £10 million under budget, becoming the first former line to reopen under the government's £500 million Restoring Your Railway programme.

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Photo credit: Great Western Railway