

Industry reaction to Williams-Shapps Plans for Rail

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Long-awaited plans to reform Britain’s railways and launch a new era for passengers have been revealed.

The biggest change in 25 years sees the creation of the new public body Great British Railways – described as a single, familiar brand with united, accountable leadership.

The Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail aims to bring the fragmentation on the railways to an end as they come under a single, accountable national leadership.

“These proposals can deliver the biggest changes in a generation”

Andy Bagnall, Director General of the Rail Delivery Group, representing train operators, said: “Train companies have long called for many of the reforms in this white paper and these proposals can deliver the biggest changes in a generation.

“Getting the detail right will be crucial to ensuring that the white paper fulfils its potential to improve journeys, offer independent oversight and clear accountability, and create a new set of fares which are

simpler and more value for money.

“For our passengers, we are ambitious to move quickly and work with government so that we can attract people back onto trains with better services and maximise the railway’s contribution to the recovery.

“We welcome the commitment that new passenger service contracts will allow room for local train companies to use private sector expertise to respond to what their customers want on the ground and attract more passengers, boosting Britain’s economy.

“Flexible tickets for commuters and more pay-as-you-go are good news for passengers. To really maximise the benefits and make it easier for people to get good value fares requires government to go further and get under the bonnet to fix the engine of the fares system.

“Train operators called for a guiding mind and Great British Railways will help to bring the whole industry together. To deliver for passengers and freight customers, it must have the independence to hold the operators of both tracks and trains to account equally. Crucially, it needs to allow operators to put their customers at the absolute forefront of decision making.”

In 2018 Keith Williams, former CEO of British Airways, was asked to review the structure of the railways after a chaotic timetable change, the failure of some franchises and the absence of accountability.

The government says the new structure fulfils his recommendations and fundamentally answers those challenges, creating a competitive and viable railway, with ministers holding Great British Railways to account, giving passengers faith in a clear, single point of responsibility where the buck stops to build confidence and trust in the railways.

Under the plans, Network Rail, the current infrastructure owner, will be absorbed into the public body to bring about single, unified and accountable leadership for the national network.

“Passengers deserve a reliable, affordable and sustainable railway, focussed on them”

Andrew Haines, Network Rail chief executive, said: “Passengers deserve a reliable, affordable and sustainable railway, focussed on them. Today’s announcement will help us deliver that by simplifying the railway, paving the way to dismantle the legacy of complexity and fragmentation. Passengers and freight users will once more be put front and centre of a service designed and run for their needs.

“These changes will take time, but I am determined to get to work quickly with the industry and government. The pandemic has created significant challenges for the industry, and that means the changes we have to make are even more urgent. We must attract passengers back, deliver efficiencies and improve the service we provide. Today marks the start of an exciting new chapter for our railway, a chapter that puts the passenger first.”

“We are heartened that the new Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail is a 30-year strategy”

Darren Caplan, Chief Executive of the Railway Industry Association (RIA), said: “It is good to see the

Williams Review published today, giving some certainty to the Government's plans for the railways as we emerge from the Coronavirus pandemic.

"As far as the Railway Industry Association and our members are concerned, we are heartened that the new Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail is a 30-year strategy, which supports modernisation and investment along the lines of the RIA Rail 2050 manifesto we published in November 2019. As we argued then, it is right to take a long-term approach, in order to smooth boom and bust and provide more certainty for rail schemes, decarbonise and digitalise the network, deliver major projects, protect and create jobs, and foster innovation and collaboration between railway partners. We also welcome the ambition to attract passengers and freight back to the network and grow both markets.

"We will of course be examining the contents of the White Paper in further detail over the coming days and look forward to working with Government, the new Great British Railways organisation, Network Rail and other industry stakeholders, to deliver a railway fit for the future. Our major ask at this stage, however, is that the restructure of UK rail does not cause any hiatus in work being done to renew and enhance railway infrastructure or rolling stock, to ensure everyone in the industry can help rail to build back better as we emerge from the pandemic."

"We look forward to working with government and the new Great British Railways organisation"

RSSB's Chief Executive Mark Phillips said: "RSSB welcomes today's publication of the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail providing a little more clarity and transparency following the three-year review. We look forward to working with Government and the new Great British Railways organisation to develop the detail, and continuing to play our part for Britain's railways, passengers and freight customers."

"This raft of changes is what the rail industry and its passengers have been waiting for"

Maria Machancoses, CEO of Midlands Connect, which is the transport partner of the Midlands Engine, and the Midlands' Sub-national Transport Body, said: "This raft of changes is what the rail industry and its passengers have been waiting for, and if implemented correctly, could have huge benefits for travellers. By specifying timetables, service levels and operating standards, this concession model will reward operators for delivering what passengers want most - trains that run on time, friendly service and clean stations.

"The rail network has become very fragmented over the last 20 years, so coordinating the network via a centralised organisation, the 'Great British Railway' presents many opportunities, including providing the public with much needed clarity on decision making - who is ultimately responsible for what. However, this centralisation also presents risks - namely that the new structure will be less agile or have a lesser understanding of local issues than the previous franchising model. We must prevent decisions about local services being made centrally, impeded by a limited understanding of the local area, its economic needs or people that live there. As we continue to identify and develop the key strategic rail priorities for the region, Midlands Connect, alongside our local councils is best placed to support Government and the proposed GBR in achieving this.

“This simplified system will make it a great deal easier to develop and implement an ‘oyster-style’ smart ticketing system for our region – including the simplification of fares. While it’s great that flexible season tickets are being deployed to support flexible working post-COVID, a multi-modal, capped and contactless payment system is what’s truly needed. Flexible ticketing should go beyond rail and we look forward to working with GBR in developing an affordable ‘tap and cap’ scheme that works across all public transport modes.”

The Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail, published today, sets out the path towards a truly passenger-focused railway, underpinned by new contracts that prioritise punctual and reliable services, the rapid delivery of a ticketing revolution, with new flexible and convenient tickets, and long-term proposals to build a modern, greener and accessible network.

“We welcome the publication of the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail”

John Larkinson, Chief Executive of the rail regulator, the Office of Rail and Road, said: “We welcome the publication of the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail and will continue to work closely with government and industry to facilitate reform, and reshape rail for the future.

“Our independent oversight and assurance will be important in bringing transparency to decisions and will help ensure the new public body, Great British Railways, is held accountable for working in the best interests of all users, funders and passengers.”

“The Williams-Shapps plan is an opportunity to build on the success of devolved rail networks”

The Managing Director of Transport North East, Toby Hughes, who leads for Urban Transport Group on rail, said: “Railways are a key component of local public transport networks, and they also provide our towns and cities with the regional and national connectivity they need. This is why transport authorities are some of the biggest investors in the railway and why one in three rail trips are made on services for which devolved authorities and administrations are responsible.

“The Williams-Shapps plan is an opportunity to build on the success of devolved rail networks like London Overground and Merseyrail Electrics by giving transport authorities a stronger role in line with local aspirations and capabilities. There is an immediate opportunity on fares and ticketing to better integrate rail with existing city region smart and multi-modal ticketing products. Passengers in the city regions want a joined up public transport network with a single ticketing system and rail needs to be part of this, not standing outside of it.

“If the city regions are to build back better after the pandemic then we need to expand urban rail networks – with new routes and services and more capacity. This in turn means the railway needs to become more responsive and efficient. A streamlined structure, clearer lines of accountability and tighter contracts should help underpin this so that the railway can play its full part in working with us to support a green and robust recovery from COVID-19.”

“It is right that new contracts will prioritise quality services, with a focus on punctuality and reliability.”

David Brown, Managing Director of Arriva UK Trains, said: “Arriva shares the Government’s ambition for a passenger-centric railway that puts high quality services at its heart and responds to the changing needs of consumers, so we welcome reform and stand ready to deliver a modernised and financially stable railway as the country recovers from COVID.

“We are pleased that the private sector is recognised for the significant role we play and in particular, the recognition of the London Overground concession model, which Arriva operates for Transport for London. It is right that new contracts will prioritise quality services, with a focus on punctuality and reliability. We look forward to working alongside Great British Railways to deliver long-term reform and the commitment to growing the network, as part of a modern and green railway, that meets the needs of the nation.

“It is crucial to bring customers safely back to rail and we welcome measures, such as flexible season tickets and digital ticketing that reflect consumer needs and changing working and leisure patterns. We look forward to working alongside Government to help shape the details of these plans and to deliver reform at pace.”

“This is an historic moment for the West Midlands rail network”

Councillor Peter Butlin, chair of West Midlands Rail Executive said: “This is an historic moment for the West Midlands rail network as it brings to an end a quarter of a century of inefficient fragmentation within the rail industry.

“The Williams-Shapps Plan sets out a clear vision for a greener, more customer-focussed railway, based on collaboration and the devolution of key decision-making to the most appropriate regional level.

“The rail industry urgently needs to adapt to the changing post-COVID requirements of passenger and freight customers, and the proposals put forward in today’s Government White Paper should help ensure that the railway is able to respond to current and future challenges in a more effective, more efficient and more sustainable way.”

“We particularly welcome the development of a 30-year vision for the sector”

Philip Hoare, Chair of the Rail Supply Group, said: “The Rail Supply Group (RSG) welcomes the Williams-Shapps Review and the long-term Government commitment to prioritise the needs of passengers and freight under the new single body, Great British Railways.

“We particularly welcome the development of a 30 year vision for the sector that presents a once in a generation opportunity to transform all aspects of how we provide services. The rail supply chain is ready to rise to the challenge of improving efficiency, accelerating innovation, driving towards a net zero carbon future and investing in the new jobs and skills that will be necessary to turn this vision into reality.”

“Welcome this plan, but the devil will be in the detail”

Paul Tuohy, Chief Executive of Campaign for Better Transport, said: “We welcome this plan with its focus on the needs of passengers, simpler fares and contactless ticketing. But the devil will be in the detail. Will

flexible season tickets – so sorely needed to encourage commuters back onto trains – offer a decent discount? Will there be single-leg pricing to make fares fair and transparent?

“Will the very welcome commitment to grow the rail network be backed by proper funding so that disconnected communities can access the opportunities that rail brings? It’s also vital that Network Rail can be held to account under these new arrangements.

“If we’re to avoid a car-led recovery after COVID, with disastrous traffic jams, pollution and communities being left behind, it’s more vital than ever that the rail network properly meets people’s needs.”

“The Plan sets out a series of sweeping changes that provide both a challenge and clear sense of direction”

Andrew Went, Arup’s UKIMEA Rail leader, said: “The launch of the long-awaited Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail marks the beginning of a new chapter for the rail industry. Living up to its billing as ‘a fresh start’, the Plan sets out a series of sweeping changes that provide both a challenge and clear sense of direction for the industry.

“The creation of Great British Railways will fulfill the anticipated role of the ‘single guiding mind’, combining track and train as well as cost and revenue, and becoming the primary funder of research, development and innovation.

“Structuring Great British Railways into regional divisions that will work closely with local partners is a positive step, building on the devolution of Network Rail by bringing everyday decision-making closer to local communities. There’s good news for London too, where a new strategic partnership will support housing, economic growth and the environment across the transport network.

“Stations are front and centre of improving the passenger experience – joint management teams will be established, and the Government’s property development company, the LCR, may take a greater role in their development. Integration with other transport modes will be enhanced, with stations potentially supporting local communities in different ways. This could include hosting on-demand shopping collection or facilities for education or training.

“In another potential boost for passengers, flexible season tickets will arrive next month and the process of buying tickets will become smoother via a single website and app. These changes are a welcome move towards simplifying the complex fares and ticketing structure.

“Great British Railways will take on new responsibilities to accelerate innovation, which is likely to result in some streamlining of the diverse range of organisations currently operating in the research, development and innovation space. These responsibilities include facilitating and promoting rail freight and removing barriers to data sharing. The body will also play a significant role in enhancing sustainability, including bringing forward electrification proposals.

“We welcome the commitment to the electrification of the network and alternative technologies such as hydrogen and battery powered trains and look forward to the opportunity to support Great British Railways

in the development of options and innovation to support decarbonisation.

“The promised comprehensive environment plan by 2022 as an integrated part of the 30-year rail strategy will be key in creating clear accountability for decarbonisation within the Great British Railways organisation, providing the urgency required to achieve net zero across the system.

“Legislation will also be needed to fully embed the changes, including to manage access to the railway and to put in place the right incentives, accountabilities, and levers of power to enable effective decision-making.

“These reforms are undoubtedly significant and put us on a path toward improvement on several fronts. Arup will be looking closely at the Plan, engaging with our rail clients and partners from across the industry to contribute to the important discussions around its implementation.”

“The government is changing the model, but protecting the privateers, and privatising any profit.

Mick Whelan, general secretary of ASLEF, the train drivers’ trade union, said: “The railway is a key artery in the industrial body of Britain and the social fabric of this country. It is one of the prime means of moving people, and goods, around the UK.

“That’s why it is deeply disappointing that we have had to wait 18 months for the publication of a report which was finished in November 2019. The people who work on the railway – and the passengers and businesses who depend on us – deserve better.

“We welcome the – albeit belated – admission that the privatisation of our railways by John Major’s Tory government in 1994 has been an abject failure. Everyone is delighted to see the back of the franchise system.

“The big question is why are private operators still involved in what is, and will always be, a service monopoly where there is, and can be, no real competition? The old arguments of “risk and reward” don’t apply. There are no risks, so why should there be rewards?

“Under these plans the private companies will still pocket a profit, but all the risk – the revenue risk – is being dumped back on the public purse. The government is changing the model, but protecting the privateers, and privatising any profit.

“Great British Railways? Well, we believe in a great British railway – in the public ownership of a public service – where the wheels and steel – the locomotives, carriages, and the rails on which they run – are brought back together in a vertically-integrated operation to benefit businesses and passengers.

“We fear that, with capacity falling through the floor because of COVID-19, and a £2.9 billion shortfall in revenue at the fare box, the government is going to use the Williams-Shapps plan to try and justify cuts in services.

“We want to see proper investment in the railway, integration with buses in towns and cities and villages, to help people and to help businesses. The railway is the green transport of the future – if it is electrified – and will help the UK meet its emissions targets. Sadly, this report comes up short in too many respects.”

“This will do nothing to encourage people back to our railways”

TSSA General Secretary, Manuel Cortes, said: “Our union always welcomes a repentant sinner and today the Conservatives have admitted that their Frankenstein privatisation experiment on our railways has failed – and the franchising of train services has hit the buffers.

“Grant Shapps might like to pretend this is the biggest shake up of the railways in a quarter of a century but that is misleading. Rather than take the bold action that our rail network desperately needs this is an attempt merely to paper over the cracks.

“A concessions based model will still see passengers and taxpayer money leak out of our industry in the form of dividend payments for the greedy shareholders of the private operators who will hold them.

“This will do nothing to encourage people back to our railways – and Ministers should be straight about that. In some ways we are going back to the future with the creation of a strategic body for our railways. We used to have one called the Strategic Rail Authority and it was abolished because it failed to end fragmentation.

“The fact of the matter is that only a fully integrated rail network in public ownership will do this. Shapps, Boris Johnson and rest must think again and stop tinkering around the edges.

“Coming out of this pandemic our country needs a railway that works for people not profit. Nothing else will do.”

“Promises to herald the start of an exciting new era for UK rail”

Richard Robinson, CEO, Atkins UK and Europe, said: “The Williams-Shapps plan promises to herald the start of an exciting new era for UK rail and we welcome the decisive steps taken by government.

“In particular, we hope that Great British Railways will provide a more solid foundation from which the public and private sector can innovate together to create a modern, low carbon, digital network that improves passenger experience and delivers better value for money for the taxpayer.

“Now, we need to pull together as an industry, recognising that it’s going to take a lot of hard work – and new, digitally driven ways of working – to realise this bold vision for the future of our railways.”

“Rail connectivity is a vital cornerstone of the UK’s economic recovery as we look to a more sustainable and better balanced future.”

David Whysall, Managing Director UK infrastructure at Turner & Townsend, said: “Rail connectivity is a vital cornerstone of the UK’s economic recovery as we look to a more sustainable and better balanced future. It

is welcome to see the government reinforcing this through the Williams-Shapps plan, particularly with its focus on planning for the long term and the backing for major rail programmes that will serve as a catalyst for green growth.

“The plan represents a momentous change for UK rail and the industry will today be collectively getting its head around the magnitude of this reform and the market opportunities this centralised model presents. Further detail is now needed on both this and the Integrated Rail Plan to enable the industry to approach and build these programmes in a joined up way. This will have the dual benefit of modernising the passenger experience, while creating a sustainable and world-class rail construction industry and ultimately delivering a fairer, better connected and greener UK.”

“Change is desperately needed on the railways and so I welcome today’s announcement”

Councillor Martin Gannon, Chair of the North East Joint Transport Committee, said: “Change is desperately needed on the railways and so I welcome today’s announcement.

“As a region we have a bold vision for integrated transport as outlined in the North East Transport Plan, and we want more influence over our local railways, focusing on improving access for communities. We’re pleased to see a commitment to giving local leaders greater control over local ticketing, timetables and stations. These decisions should not be taken by people based hundreds of miles away.

“Railways connect our communities to jobs and education, link us to the rest of the UK, and provide sustainable arteries for freight. The operating system that has been with us since rail privatisation has not worked. Secondary routes that are hugely important to our towns and cities have deteriorated while companies have competed ferociously for profitable passengers on trunk routes. Yet strangely the companies running the profitable East Coast Main Line have gone out of business several times over. The system does not work.

“The fragmented system has also led to absurd scenarios like there being too many services planned for the track capacity available, something affecting the North East right now which will lead to negative consequences. As Great British Railways will be responsible for the whole railway, I look forward to better and more joined up planning for the future, aligned to what the economy needs, taking account of input from local areas.”

“Lays down a significant marker to transform our railways for the better”

Matthew Fell, CBI Chief UK Policy Director, said: “The Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail lays down a significant marker to transform our railways for the better. Not only can these reforms bring real day-to-day benefits to passengers, but they can also play a meaningful role in building the levelled-up, low-carbon economy of the future.

“The new system will be public transport, privately delivered. Implemented effectively, it will see some of the UK’s most dynamic firms working in partnership with the new Great British Railways body to modernise UK rail provision and taking important first steps to make fares simple, transparent and flexible.

“Bringing together track and train, with genuinely independent oversight, should further boost accountability and tackle the current fragmentation which has hampered service improvements. A 30-year strategy offers the stability required for long-term business investment and innovation.

“It’s critical that this blueprint is now backed by swift action – in partnership with industry – to drive the return of passengers to the railways after the pandemic and in the years to come.”

“This is a major national moment and a shift in how the railway is run”

Tim Wood, Transport for the North’s Interim Chief Executive, said: “The North saw first-hand the effects of a fragmented rail industry during the 2018 timetable crisis. The fact that Great British Railways will bring track and train together as the guiding mind and put the needs of passengers first is a giant leap forward and something we’ve championed.

“This is a major national moment and a shift in how the railway is run. But this national approach must not be a missed opportunity for further devolution, giving the North’s leaders greater oversight of services and infrastructure investment to deliver more integrated regional networks that work for all.

“The commitment to growing and investing in the railway over the next 30 years only emphasises the real need for the Government to publish the Integrated Rail Plan for the North and Midlands without delay, to give us much-needed certainty on delivery of major schemes like Northern Powerhouse Rail, HS2 and the Transpennine Route Upgrade.

“As an established and effective partnership in the North of England, Transport for the North will collaboratively engage with Government as it begins to work through the detail and we stand ready to drive positive change in the interest of our passengers.”

“Passengers must come first, and their needs must be put ahead of profits”

Dan Jarvis, Mayor of the Sheffield City Region, said: “I welcome the Williams-Shapps Review and the plan that local leaders will be given greater control, but it’s vital that alongside these controls comes the investment needed to improve our railways. Rebranding the railways will not solve the underlying problems for passengers nor level up the North.

“Passengers must come first, and their needs must be put ahead of profits. In South Yorkshire and across the North we need transformational investment to upgrade our decrepit Victorian infrastructure and improve connectivity between Northern towns and cities.

“If this government want to be taken seriously on the levelling up agenda, this will be a key test that they must meet.”

“We warmly welcome the commitments set out by the government for reforming and reinvigorating our railways”

Jools Townsend, chief executive of Community Rail Network, said: “We warmly welcome the commitments

set out by the government for reforming and reinvigorating our railways – aiming to make these vital sustainable transport arteries even more productive and valuable to the communities they serve. We'll be working hard to help communities engage with and feed into this process of change, ensuring local voices are heard and needs understood.

“Community rail is a thriving grassroots movement spanning Great Britain, working with the rail industry to deliver positive local impact. Our members are dedicated to engaging communities with their railways and stations, and enabling everyone to access and benefit from the sustainable mobility that rail offers. Through this work, it's plain to see how important our railways are to community life – but they have an even greater role to play going forward, as we look to rebuild from the pandemic, and shift onto greener forms of transport. The community rail movement looks forward to working with local authorities, rail and transport partners, and the wider community sector, to ensure rail is firmly at the heart of a sustainable and inclusive transport future, which everyone can benefit from.”

“The report has recognised the importance of open access operators”

Louise Cheeseman, Managing Director of Hull Trains, said: “As an open access operator that has always put passengers first, Hull Trains welcomes the reforms proposed in the Williams-Shapps report that has been published today. The report has recognised the importance of open access operators in delivering first class rail travel and that operators like Hull Trains have a role to play in reforming the industry moving forward.

“Hull Trains has been the main provider of direct train services between Hull and London since 2000 and our routes are vital to the economy of East Yorkshire. The invaluable role we play in supporting the regional economy is recognised by city leaders and our local MPS. We are proud that our trains carry the name of our city when travelling along our route.

“A main focus of the report is making customer satisfaction a priority, and this is already at the core of our service offering. Only last year we were awarded one of the highest scores in the country in the National Rail Passenger Survey, illustrating the value of open access operators to the rail industry.

“The ten outcomes that this review aims to deliver are aligned with all that we stand for. However, there is clearly more detail to be explored further.

“This is yet more positive news for our industry at a time when we are delighted to be welcoming more and more passengers back onto our trains.”

“The plan sets out clear priorities”

Andy Bell, VP Ground Transportation Systems, Thales in the UK: “Thales fully supports the bold vision detailed by the Williams-Shapps plan for Rail in the UK. We look forward to working with government to transform Britain's railways and unlock the benefits of cleaner, greener journeys. The plan sets out clear priorities that will rightly focus on the passenger experience, while providing modern, integrated transport solutions.

“It also presents a framework that will foster increased levels of innovation through more dynamic competition, which presents the opportunity for Britain to establish itself as a world leader in rail.”

“Thales looks forward to playing its part in realising the vision set out by the Williams-Shapps plan, helping Britain to build back better and deliver value for money for UK taxpayers.”

“Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail is a once in a lifetime opportunity to transform the sector“

Craig Scott, Managing Director at SYSTRA, said: “SYSTRA welcomes the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail – the Government’s 30 year vision to prioritise the needs of passengers and freight under a new single body, Great British Railways. In particular, SYSTRA welcomes and is well-placed to support the government’s commitment to improving customer experience including ticketing reform and the importance placed on the connectivity of stations.

“Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail is a once in a lifetime opportunity to transform the sector and SYSTRA is ready to step up to the challenge of leading the industry’s response to climate change and a net zero carbon future. We are already developing new ways of improving efficiencies and driving change through our in-house research and development programme.

“The commitment shown in this White Paper and the infrastructure investment already in place is essential as we recover from the pandemic and build back better. Our role as a forward-thinking dynamic organisation will be to invest in our people and their skills, drive innovation across all our projects and ensure that we continue to offer value for money.”

“Passengers and the rail sector require a fresh start, and this review provides that opportunity”

Matthew Farrow, director of policy at the Association for Consultancy and Engineering (ACE), which represents the companies large and small that design, deliver and manager our built environment and infrastructure, responds to the Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail: “Following the pandemic, both passengers and the rail sector require a fresh start, and this review provides that opportunity. The plan for an integrated ‘guiding mind’ – Great British Railways – is welcome and should enable a joined-up strategy with an eye on the longer term, especially vital as we move towards tackling overarching issues such as the decarbonisation of the railway and fare reform.

“The elephant in the room is the finances of the network – more than £12 billion has been provided in emergency investment by the Government since the start of the pandemic – and nurturing the emergence of a economically sustainable system which is also attractive to passengers looking for more flexibility than before, will be key. Moving to a new simplified organisational structure will enable better strategic decision-making which balances financial considerations, ambitions for us to build back better post-pandemic, and Net Zero goals.

“The emphasis on accelerating network upgrades is also welcome and reinforces key issues outlined in ACE’s recent Project Speed briefings which showed how our members’ skills could be used to achieve this. However, with much of the detail still to be revealed, and two years before the new system is in place, we

will need clarity on how the industry transitions to these new arrangements. For example, how will this affect preparations for Control Period 7? Furthermore, understanding how Great British Railways works with, and alongside, regional transport bodies will require more detail.

“ACE and its members are ready to work with the Government to ensure the paper’s aims are delivered, as together we nurture a sustainable rail sector – in every sense of the term – that is attractive to passengers.”

[Click here for an overview of the Williams-Shapps plan](#)

[Click here to read the 10 outcomes laid out in the White Paper.](#)

Photo credit: Rail Delivery Group