

Network Rail Chief Executive reflects on CP6

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The Chief Executive of **Network Rail** has paid tribute to the supply chain, thanking small SMEs and global players alike for their efforts during Control Period 6 (CP6).

“We spend some £6 billion a year with our suppliers and we require their help more than ever to create an efficient railway and spend tax and farepayers’ money as wisely as we can,” said Andrew Haines, commenting as Network Rail reflected on CP6.

CP6, which is the infrastructure manager’s sixth five-year funding period, began on 1 April 2019 and will end 31 March 2024. Network Rail said that, during this period, it had successfully delivered major rail upgrades across Great Britain, improving the railway for its passengers and freight users. It added that it had undertaken this work while navigating unprecedented change, both within and outside the railway.

Commenting on Network Rail’s CP6 recap, Darren Caplan, Railway Industry Association Chief Executive, said: “I welcome Network Rail CEO Andrew Haines’s recognition of the role the UK supply chain has played in working to create an efficient and safe railway for passengers, freight and taxpayers over the last five years. And we at the Railway Industry Association congratulate him and his senior team on completing his first full Control Period, with notable successes.

“As we embark on Control Period 7 between 2024 and 2029 the supply sector, from global players through to SMEs of all types and sizes, stand ready to support Network Rail in meeting the challenges of its climate resilience and train performance priorities, and to work to grow revenues and deliver rail reform. With rail

passenger numbers and revenues increasing all the time, it really is an exciting time for everyone, whether rail clients, suppliers or other stakeholders, to be working in UK rail.”

A difficult legacy

Network Rail’s Chief Executive said that it began the period with a difficult legacy, citing the 2018 timetable change and its Chair’s review of what it called an “unaffordable enhancement programme”. He added that it had navigated a pandemic, changes in passenger numbers and behaviours, and industrial action – all while ensuring that it prioritised passengers and freight customers. Looking ahead, he said that it was now set to embark on the process of bringing track and train closer together again.

Reflections from Network Rail’s CEO

Reflecting on the period, Andrew Haines, said: “The last five years has seen unprecedented change, not just at Network Rail, but across the world. Our railway kept essential workers and freight moving during the Covid pandemic, and of course we’re now faced with a different challenge – building passenger numbers back.

“We are doing that through putting passengers first and getting closer to our customers.

“We started that process right at the beginning of the period as Network Rail devolved into five regional business, themselves split into 14 routes, to better respond to, and work with, our train operating colleagues, the Welsh and Scottish Governments, combined and local authorities and funders. It put us in a strong position to respond to the enormous change that hit us with the pandemic, and gave us the flexibility to bounce back afterwards.

“Through those changes we delivered a safe and reliable railway for our passengers and freight customers throughout the pandemic, through the Queen’s platinum jubilee, her subsequent funeral and the King’s coronation, as well as for the Commonwealth Games and Eurovision.

“We also took control of costs when delivering upgrades and renewals – slashing the cost of electrification, with the Glasgow-Barrhead project, for example, delivered for under £64m – and bringing in around £4bn of efficiencies over the period.

“That’s a huge achievement and means we are able to begin Control Period 7 in a position to deliver far, far more for our money.

“Mixed with these successes, though, the period also sadly saw tragedy. We will never forget the tragic events at Carmont, Scotland, in August 2020. Following this, we have brought about a huge change in the way we approach managing and mitigating the impacts of extreme weather.

“Climate change is perhaps the biggest challenge we face and almost £3bn of our Control Period 7 plan will go towards improving the resilience of our railway over the next five years.

“We also lost colleagues from Network Rail and our supply chain working on and around the railway, albeit

at a much lower level than historically. We carry their memories with us as an example of how we can never be complacent and never stop trying to improve the way we work and make the railway safe.

“We began the control period with many working practices on tracks that would be familiar to our Victorian ancestors. We ended it having fundamentally changed the way we work, with a 99 per cent reduction in putting workers out on the ‘live’ railway to act as lookouts. That change has come at significant cost and some short-term loss of productivity but it was the right thing to do.

“As CP6 draws to a close I also pay tribute to our enormous and diverse supply chain, from small SMEs to global players. We spend some £6bn a year with our suppliers we require their help more than ever to create an efficient railway and spend tax and farepayers’ money as wisely as we can.

“You may be surprised to hear that during CP6 we have facilitated the building of over 17,000 homes through land sales, building joint ventures and by unlocking developments around railway stations. In comparative terms that would make us one of Britain’s top housebuilders. This couldn’t happen without the hard work of our property team and our development partners.

“Now, we look forward to the start of CP7, which sees climate change, train performance, industry revenue and reform as the focus and challenges before us. The creation of a new integrated rail body – Great British Railways – is designed to re-join track and train and aims to deliver a better, simpler, greener railway for all users. It will mark the end of Network Rail but that is something we look forward to in the interest of better serving our nations.

“It will also see us mark the 200th anniversary of the railway in 2025, a railway that has transformed the face of Britain, and the world and will continue to drive economic growth and prosperity, social cohesion and a greener economy.”