

# New Managing Director joins South Western Railway – Mark Hopwood determined to transform services for passengers in 2020

January 6, 2020



With over 30 years' experience of managing rail businesses and delivering improvements for passengers, Mark Hopwood is confident that his plans can make a noticeable difference for passengers on South Western Railway.

Mark Hopwood says: "It's my mission to drive through change and make a positive impact for South Western Railway passengers. Frankly, our service has not been good enough in recent months and years.

"I also know that the recent strikes have had a very significant impact on our passengers and staff and I am determined to find a resolution."

"We will focus on changes that can make an immediate difference to the number of trains running on time."

In addition to Mark joining the business, SWR has brought together performance, operations and customer experience functions under the Chief Operating Officer Mike Houghton.

Mike was key to turning around performance in his last job at Melbourne Trains in Australia, and will help

SWR focus on running more trains on time at SWR.

Mark Hopwood says: “We can’t achieve all this alone. Many of the problems we face are caused by the infrastructure, so I have agreed with Network Rail at the very highest levels that we will work hard together to address these issues.

“My previous experience tells me that a strong, collaborative relationship is key. I know that passengers don’t want to hear parts of the industry blaming each other for issues they just want to see fixed. So my approach is that it might not be our fault, but it is still our problem.”

Mark is making five key commitments to passengers:

1. We’ll increase the number of trains running on time, and address problems like trains running with fewer carriages than they’re supposed to and trains missing out stops to make up time.

This will be a slow and steady improvement – I’m sorry to say there’s no silver bullet to solve these issues overnight, and I expect we’ll still have bad days like everyone else. But we have developed a robust ‘performance improvement plan’ to reduce the problems that cause delays and manage those we do have more effectively. I am confident you will see more trains running on time as a result.

2. We’ll introduce new and refurbished trains, that will allow us to bring in new and more reliable services, and to roll out more Wi-Fi, toilets on trains and other things passengers tell us they want.

3. We’ll be open and honest with you. Open about what we’re trying to do and how we’re trying to do it, and honest about the problems we face. We’ll try and do this all in Plain English, cutting out the jargon and railway-speak.

4. We’ll empower and enable our staff to provide the help and advice you need and want. Our job is to get you where you need to be, at the time you need to be there, and our people already work extremely hard to try and do that. I’ll remove obstacles to them doing so.

5. We’ll be approachable and accountable. Tell us when there’s a problem and we’ll try and fix it and explain what we’re trying to do about it. Obviously I can’t reply to each and every one of you. But I’ve got a team of over 5,000 who can, and I’ll report back to you regularly on progress against these promises so you can hold me to them.