

Passenger satisfaction is priority for new Grand Rail Collaboration chair

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A West Midlands rail industry group committed to boosting train reliability and passenger satisfaction has appointed a new chair.

Alex Warner is the new chair of the Grand Rail Collaboration (GRC), taking over from West Midlands Mayor Andy Street whose one year term ended this month.

The Grand Rail Collaboration, which also acts as the rail industry's West Midlands Supervisory Board, brings together the West Midlands Rail Executive, Network Rail, passenger and freight operators and other rail industry partners.

The GRC is committed to leading the rail industry in the West Midlands by working together to provide passengers, freight operators and stakeholders with a better service. Alex's role as chair is independent of the industry but as the leader of the supervisory board, he reports to Network Rail chairman Sir Peter Hendy.

Commenting on his appointment, Alex Warner said: "I am delighted to be taking over from Andy Street in leading the Grand Rail Collaboration and building on the excellent work he has done to date.

"I'm massively excited by the opportunity to help deliver a shared approach to driving customer

satisfaction across the region. We will be developing some exciting plans to achieve this, alongside, of course, working with passenger and freight operators, Network Rail, local government and other key industry bodies to deliver punctual and reliable services, which are the key priority for all customers.

“A key challenge over the coming months will be to ensure the network continues to serve our key workers and then, as the ‘lockdown’ eases, to give customers the right environment and a great service so that they feel safe and confident to travel again.

“Our long-term goal is to stimulate social mobility and the prosperity of the West Midlands and beyond. As well as passengers, I am determined this collaboration focuses intently on the vital role that freight continues to play in supporting the region’s economy.”

Malcolm Holmes executive director, West Midlands Rail Executive and director of rail for Transport for West Midlands, said: “I welcome Alex Warner’s appointment as chair of the Grand Rail Collaboration which has, since its inception in 2019, laid down strong foundations to deliver significant tangible improvements for the West Midlands’ rail passengers.

“I look forward to working with Alex and our Grand Rail Collaboration partners to create an easier to use, more joined up rail network for the people of our region.”

Dave Penney, Central route director for Network Rail, said: “I warmly welcome Alex to his new role as chairman of the Grand Rail Collaboration. He has a wealth of experience in the rail industry and other sectors which I’m confident he will use to help improve passenger experience and satisfaction across the West Midlands.”

Members of the Grand Railway Collaboration include: West Midlands Trains, CrossCountry, Avanti West Coast, Chiltern Railways and Transport for Wales; Network Rail, Rail Freight Group, West Midlands Rail Executive, and Transport Focus.

Areas of the rail industry the GRC will tackle include passenger and freight train performance, simplifying fare structures, improving the quality of trains and stations, sharing busy track capacity in the most efficient way and delivering resilient, reliable timetables.

Photo credit: Network Rail