

# Railtex / Infrarail: the importance of customer care

May 11, 2022



Simon Blanchflower delivered the keynote speech for the opening of Railtex/Infrarail.

He used the speech – which replaced the originally-billed Rail Minister Wendy Morton, who needed to be at the House of Commons for the Queen’s Speech – to discuss the rail pf past, present and future.

Amongst his call to modernise, attract talent and deliver sustainable transport was a seemingly common thread: the railways had to continue to adapt to the needs of and “delight” customers.

He said back when he started at British Rail in 1982 it was not the “halcyon days” of rail many might portray them as, but that passenger numbers had been falling for some time. He added there “wasn’t a particular focus on the customer,” adding safety performance was “particularly woeful at that stage.”

But he also added there was “also great engineers and great operators with real pride in their job.”

He said that now, in the present, rail was likewise coming out of difficult times and building towards something greater: albeit this time rail was in a state of recovery from the pandemic. He drew particular

note to the shifting landscape of passenger types, saying that at times leisure travel was back to 100% of its former self pre pandemic.

“It’s essential this market recovery continues,” he said. “Rail is a critical component of this country’s transport policy.”

As part of this it was important to “delight customers and have a positive travel experience.”

To do this he stressed the industry must continue to remove any barriers to rail travel – physical, psychological, and any which make it a worrying prospect for women or people who come from different minority groups.

He also said that a socio-economic background should not keep people from rail travel.

The focus must be on customer experience and improving rail, he said, rather than being too distracted by the changing organisational mechanisms running through the sector.