

RIA Innovation Conference day two: Getting better at sharing information

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“If we are going to be able to tackle some of the problems that we need to be able to do, such as sustainability, resilience, net zero, we are going to have to get far better at being able to share information across organisational boundaries and across our sectorial boundaries.”

That was the message from Alexandra Luck, Head of Programme, National Digital Twin Programme, Department for Business and Trade. She was speaking at the Railway Industry Association’s (RIA) Innovation Conference, at the ICC in Wales.

“We’re also going to have to get far better at how we engage with that information, how we visualise it, how we analyse it, and how we then use that to be able to start optimising decisions that we need to be able to make,” she said.

“What the National Digital Twins programme is there to do is create all those underpinning rules that will enable us to start being able to do this. So the standards guidelines frameworks processes and tools that will support ultimately that creation of not only individual digital twins, but connected digital twins, and to

be able to do that in a way that is appropriately safe, secure and trust worthy, that is also ethical, sustainable, adaptable and importantly Interoperable.”

This year’s conference was themed on the topic of ‘Inspired by Innovating’. Among the other speakers included Dr Joanna White, Research, Development and Innovation Director at the National Highways, who spoke about the challenges being faced and ambitions around innovation.

“We want everybody to be able to set those problems, set those challenges and then we work with the business in order to find the solutions to help solve those challenges that people are experiencing today and those that we set out in our future strategy,” she said.

“We must demonstrate value and impact from the research and innovation that we do and that comes from either working with organisations to develop new solutions and processes through to things like this where we have the opportunity to connect with a great innovation community.”

During her keynote speech, Dr White spoke about robot dogs, climbing robots clearing graffiti, cosmic rays, connected automated plant, and exploring how plastic can be reused in new materials.

“Robert Ampomah (Chief Technology Officer at Network Rail) and I have regular meetings and we talk about our shared challenges and what we’re really trying to do is make sure that we are sharing the innovation and research that we are doing, learning from each other and not duplicating our efforts in that space,” she said.

“I think overall we need to work better. We have lots of opportunities and we need to be able to transfer our innovation so whether it is from space, maritime, aviation, rail, highways. I am quite happy to steal with pride, I don’t want to duplicate any efforts that have already been done and I do want to give credit where credit is due.

“I think we have lots of opportunity to improve our line of sharing across sectors. This conference in itself has been a great example of that with the diversity of speakers that we’ve had. I think we can collaborate so much better and share that information and knowledge.”

RIA’s Innovation Conference is an award-winning flagship event in its Unlocking Innovation programme, which brings together inspirational leaders, pioneering engineers, ambitious entrepreneurs and passionate railway professionals.

This year’s event features its largest exhibition hall with 74 companies exhibiting, as well as Network Rail and Transport for Wales Zones. There was also be 23 exhibition spotlight pitches, Future Focus zone full of new innovations and robots, pitch sessions and tech talks.

Among the other speakers on Wednesday included Murven Wan, Mechanical Design Engineer, Transmission Dynamics; Dr Steven Carden, PA Consulting Transport Innovation Lead; Joanna Binstead, Siemens Mobility; Tom Salter, Deputy Director National Security Science and Research at the Department for Transport; and a UK Rail Research and Innovation Network Pnale featuring Professor Paul Allen, Centre of Excellence in Rolling Stock, Professor Paul Plummer, Centre of Excellence in Digital Systems, and Dr Joel

Smethurst, Centre of Excellence in Infrastructure.

Day two also saw the launch of a new report by RIA which aims to provide a fresh blueprint for improving fares and ticketing across UK rail. 'Destination: Revenue Growth' aims to meet the aspirations of the Government's Plan for Rail; boost ridership; enable decarbonisation; and drive revenue growth.

RIA Innovation Director Milda Manomaityte, opening Wednesday's conference, said: "We hope rail policy makers, stakeholders and all those in the railway industry with an interest in fares and ticketing, find this report a useful contribution to the debate on how we can boost revenues and rebuild trust in rail in the future."

On day one Network Rail's Chief Technology Officer Robert Ampomah, spoke of the need to create a culture of innovation. Among the other speakers on Tuesday included Rebecca Jeffrey, New Mobility Lead at Uber; Dave Looney, Head of Product Strategy at telent; Dr Rachel McInnes, Co-Director for Joint Centre for Excellence in Environmental Intelligence, Met Office; Arjen Zoeteman, Senior Program Manager - Research at ProRail; and TechTalks from ABB, Capgemini, Complete Cyber, Helix Rail and Thales; and Scott Waddington, Chair of Transport for Wales.

Scott said: "Our vision at Transport for Wales is to create a high-quality, safe, integrated, affordable and accessible transport network that the people of Wales are proud of and innovation is key to our success in that and collaboration is absolutely essential in achieving that."

[You can read a roundup from day one here.](#)

- Details have been released about RIA's award-winning Annual Conference which will take place on November 6-7 at the Leonardo Royal Hotel, London. This year's conference focuses on the theme 'A fresh start for UK rail' and will feature a large interactive exhibition area and spotlight pitches where new services and products will be showcases.

A limited number of early bird tickets for the conference will be available to purchase until Friday, June 28.

[Click here for more details.](#)