

Tributes to railway pioneer Adrian Shooter CBE

December 14, 2022



It is with deep sadness to learn of the passing of railway pioneer Adrian Shooter CBE.

He began his career with British Rail in 1970 and is considered one of the leading architects of the modern railway and worked at and led maintenance depots throughout the country, managed London St Pancras station and held various senior positions within the industry.

Adrian is especially famed as the founder of Chiltern Railways and the chairman of DB Regio UK, which later became known as Arriva Rail.

Paying tribute, Richard Allan, managing director of Chiltern Railways, said: “We are deeply sorry to hear about the death of Adrian Shooter CBE, the founding Managing Director of Chiltern. We and our customers owe him an enormous debt of gratitude for the vision, drive and passion that he and his team brought to bear in creating and developing Chiltern from 1996 onwards.

“Adrian was a leader, a colleague and a friend to many current and former colleagues at Chiltern and in the wider railway industry. It was only a few months ago that a group of industry colleagues were delighted to welcome Adrian to Marylebone to commemorate his immense contribution to Chiltern and the rail industry over his 50-year career. Adrian and his family unveiled a statue of him on Platform 1 of

Marylebone station and he was so very proud to be asked to unveil a train named in his honour.

“The Chiltern train that bears his name is unit 168001 – this was the very first train ordered following privatisation in the UK. The thoughts of everyone at Chiltern are with Adrian’s family at this very sad time.”



More recently Adrian was chairman of Vivarail and of SLC Rail, praised by the latter as consistently challenging received wisdom and the conventional way of doing things.

SLC’s managing director Ian Walters said: “I am deeply saddened by the passing of this great man. I met Adrian on my first day working in the rail industry in November 1991, and I feel lucky and honoured to have had his mentorship and friendship since then.

“As chairman of SLC Rail, we have benefited from Adrian’s leadership, wisdom and experience – and focus on what worked for passengers – as we’ve grown as a business. It has been a privilege to have him as part of the SLC team for so many years.

“It is no exaggeration that his involvement and advocacy has been fundamental to our success and our work will continue his unrivalled legacy. Our thoughts and condolences are with his family during this extremely sad time.”

While managing director and chairman of Chiltern Railways, he was the visionary and determined driving

force in its doubling of passenger numbers through innovation and investment in the ambitious development of train services and infrastructure.

He chaired London Overground, Tyne & Wear Metro, DB Regio UK (Deutsch Bahn), Laing Rail, the West Midlands CBI Council and was involved in many other groups. After retiring from Chiltern Railways, Adrian set up Vivarail in 2012 leading the world in developing technology for environmentally sustainable battery powered trains.

Earlier on this year, his efforts were recognised with a nine-foot bronze statue and plinth, which was unveiled at London Marylebone station. The statue was crowdfunded by current industry leaders and close associates of Adrian and unveiled in front of 100 guests with a keynote speech by ex-Transport Secretary Lord McLoughlin.

Modest of his achievements, at the unveiling Adrian said: "I feel very honoured to be recognised by the industry in this way. However, I accept this honour only on the condition that it recognises the amazing efforts of the hundreds of railway men and women who I have worked with.

"All I ever did was create the vision, hire the very best people and then help them to do their best. They, not me, were the people who delighted our passengers. They had to work in all weathers and run a safe railway wherever the problems. Some of them relieved me of the tedium of negotiating and implementing the many over complicated legal agreements we have been saddled with.

"It has been a very real pleasure to see so many people grow in confidence and help create a bigger and much better railway supported by private sector investment."

The thoughts of everyone at Rail Business Daily are with the family and friends of Adrian.



Photo credit: Chiltern Railways