

News Release from Rail Delivery Group

18 May 2017

Train companies respond to General Election manifestos

Paul Plummer, Rail Delivery Group (RDG) chief executive, has responded on behalf of RDG train company members to the General Election manifestos published this week.

Paul Plummer said:

“We look forward to working with the next government, whatever its political colour, to deliver our promise of a railway that supports a stronger, more secure, skilled economy for the whole of the UK.

“Working together, by the end of the next parliament, we will be running 6,400 extra services a week and 5,500 new carriages. On top of this, train companies are making a range of changes to improve the experience of passengers from simpler ticket buying to better information. This is all part of a £50billion-plus upgrade plan to improve journeys and to make local economies stronger and fairer, now and for the future.”

Ends

Further detail on the views of RDG train company members:

Rail ombudsman & simplifying fares

Of course, train companies support proposals for a rail ombudsman and moves to make fares simpler to understand. Train companies have already been considering how an ombudsman scheme would work and how it might be funded, and they have already begun work on a series of trials to simplify fares. The rail industry is always ready to work on initiatives aimed at giving customers better services and a better deal.

Renationalisation

Together our industry is investing, competing and innovating to improve as one team. Our current promise is to deliver 6,400 extra services a week and 5,500 new carriages by 2021, part of a £50bn-plus upgrade plan to deliver better journeys for passengers and make local economies stronger and fairer, now and for the future. These vital improvements are made possible because of a £2bn improvement in the railway’s finances since franchising was introduced. Nevertheless, we’ve been clear that the franchising system needs to evolve and we are looking forward to working with the new government to make this work for customers and taxpayers.

Closer industry collaboration

We are already working together to deliver a £50bn-plus Railway Upgrade Plan and there is a high level of appetite to coordinate and collaborate further for the benefit of passengers,

freight customers, our employees and the country. We support collaboration locally, through NR routes and operators, and with devolved assemblies, and coordination nationally, including through improved alignment of RDG and RSG as well as with government.

Investment

Government and the industry need to take a long-term, strategic view on investment to maintain and reinforce rail's success at delivering economic growth. Better links for passengers and rail freight are key to fostering opportunity across the country, particularly outside the South East. Digital Railway is a key way to achieve this growth at an affordable price. The industry and its funders should be wary of committing to specific projects before they are sufficiently developed so improvements can be delivered efficiently and effectively.

Industrial strategy

Our people are the foundation of a successful railway and securing the future of the industry's workforce is a priority of the Rail Delivery Group. We want to see a government plan which supports the industry, its supply chain, and manufacturing, to access the skills they need and to maximise the railway's role in boosting British exports and creating jobs for our country.

Promises on fares

Any commitment that effectively stops the railway from incrementally removing fares anomalies or responding to changing market conditions has the potential to be bad for passengers and for taxpayers.

Tackling rail's big challenges

Rail companies are working together, investing, competing and innovating to tackle the big challenges facing the railway so that the industry can continue to support stronger and fairer economies up and down the country. On the Southern network the operator has faced a cocktail of issues including decades of underinvestment in the railway, the huge upgrade to London Bridge station and trying to introduce new working practices. The train operator and Network Rail are working closely together to improve the service for passengers and to deliver for the local communities the route serves. Simple changes will not address the underlying challenges faced by whoever runs that part of the railway.

Policing the railway

It's crucial that passengers feel safe and secure when they are travelling and that the railway infrastructure itself is kept secure. Train companies believe that there must continue to be specialist policing for the railway.

Minimum service standards during industrial disputes

The railway is ever more important to Britain and ensuring a minimum level of service for passengers during industrial disputes is important for passengers, businesses and the

economy. Together, rail companies are investing billions of pounds so we can make sure that our generation and the generation to follow will benefit from the security of high skilled, well paid jobs and strong communities across the UK.