



60 Seconds with David Watkin

Hi Dave, please tell us a bit about your role and what you're working on?

I'm Commercial Director of Arriva UK Trains (AUKT), coordinating the commercial activity of all 5 train companies and delivering the commercial elements of AUKT's corporate strategy. My current areas of focus are fares reform; the drive towards digital and smart retailing & ticketing; leveraging AUKT's size and scale to add value to our businesses by working more closely together; and supporting AUKT's future growth agenda.

What are your key priorities for the next 3 months?

Smart ticketing is a key priority, completing the delivery of this ambitious programme through our TOCs and building awareness and take-up by our customers. Fares reform is also a key priority where together (through RDG) we need to map out the next steps for this ambitious, transformational programme and start to make it real for stakeholders and customers alike.

What will be the biggest challenge your project will face in the next 3 months and how do you plan to work through this?

Customer awareness, trial and take-up of smart products is our biggest challenge for the STNR programme. For a variety of reasons smart has not achieved widespread penetration across National Rail thus far, and persuading customers to switch is a challenge. We are working closely with industry partners on a programme of customer communications, staff engagement and defaulting to smart where we can to rapidly accelerate take-up. We mustn't however forget that as smart ticketing scales up, our systems and processes can cope so that customers are not put off by glitches as we move forward.

As a customer, what would be the one piece of innovation you'd like to see in the rail industry and why?

Fares reform. If we pull it off, it will be one of the most innovative, bold, transformational customer-facing programmes the rail industry has ever delivered. Dissatisfaction with fares is at the heart of customer and stakeholder distrust of the railway and we simply have to get it right.