

# Rail Delivery Group



## 60 Seconds with Suzanne Donnelly, Programme Director for the GBRTT Passenger Revenue and Marketing workstream

Hi Suzanne, please tell us a bit about your role and the work you do?

I am the Programme Director for the GBRTT Passenger Revenue and Marketing (PRM) workstream and am also part of the wider GBRTT leadership transition team that is developing the proposition for Great British Railways. I am on secondment to this team from LNER where I am the Commercial Director and I now work full time on revenue recovery activities. Readers of Smart News will be familiar with my team by our previous name - the Rail Revenue Recovery Group (RRRG) and we have now been transitioned into GBRTT's PRM workstream following the virtual stand up of GBRTT the week of the 25th October.

The PRM workstream is made up of a cross section of people with commercial expertise from, different owning groups, train companies, Network Rail, RDG and other industries and we provide the DfT with commercial support and advice around business planning cycles and cross-industry initiatives. In the last six months, working collaboratively across the industry, we have successfully launched two key initiatives – a National Marketing campaign “Let’s Get Back on Track” and a ticketing policy “Book with Confidence” that have both been well received and translated back into people buying tickets and boosting revenue.

Our work is to continue to develop bold network wide growth strategies with the rest of the industry that will make it easy for customers to choose the train. Our revenue analysis and demand forecasting play a critical role in enabling other parts of the Industry to make the strategic case for change in areas such as fares, ticketing, retail, and strategic national marketing. In summary I bring a commercial mindset covering a broad ranging remit that supports recovery and the development of a railway to meet our customers’ needs so they can travel their way.

### What do you see as the key benefits of smart ticketing for rail customers?

This is a really important benefit as it can help remove some of the complexities and barriers that aggravate existing customers and put new customers off choosing rail. The ‘Plan for Rail’ states that the confusing mass of tickets needs to be simplified and smart ticketing can help achieve this ambition and bring rail into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The government has committed significant investment in the Spending Review to retail and ticketing that will enable rail to rapidly catch up with how other sectors work. We want our rail customers to be able to buy tickets just as easily as we do today for flights, the theatre and cinema, etc – which will help to influence behaviours when picking modes of travel, in favour of rail. We need to improve the customer travel experience and make buying a ticket simple, quick and convenient so people find it easy to choose rail – but also so we improve the trust our customers have in the service we are providing. Smart ticketing delivers significant benefits to the customer and supports revenue recovery. It will also aid modal shift so we can choose the greenest form of public transport and reduce our carbon footprint – a benefit very much in our minds with Cop26 taking place in Glasgow. Lastly smart ticketing will bring cost benefits that will drive further improvements to our services to customers.

### What do you see as the biggest challenge to realising these benefits?

The Industry is facing three key challenges:

- How to keep plans aligned?
- How to ensure a consistent experience for our customers?
- How to deliver change at pace?

The biggest challenge to achieving the benefits of smart ticketing is execution to deliver an improved customer experience. The customer has long demanded from us a better experience and the industry has known the principles of what is required but change has not happened working to one agenda. GBRTT can bring a whole industry approach to this. It will require pace and collaboration to test and learn to deliver our ambitious goals through a joined-up plan. We need to deliver at scale so that customers can start to see and feel those benefits. As a first step it was great to see the Spending Review investment into modernisation confirmed two weeks ago.

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

There’s no silver bullet that will fix everything and we are going to need to look at different solutions to address customers frustrations with different aspects of rail travel. Smart ticketing does offer ways to improve the customer experience, but we need to do more to understand our customers better and tailor our services to their needs so we make life easy on rail and bring back the joy of travelling by train. Fundamentally, this means completely reorientating the service we provide around the customer, and a key part of this is designing systems and services to best meet their needs, not ours. This approach of putting the passenger first is at the heart of the culture and spirit of the new GBRTT organisation.