

Vision for Stations

Nine principles for the future of Britain's stations



Foreword

Britain's railway has a pedigree and heritage it can be proud of. This is particularly the case for many of the nation's railway stations – the key 'touch point' between the railway and the community it serves.

We now have one of the most intensively used networks in Europe, with a record 1.6 billion passenger journeys made last year, the highest passenger satisfaction and best safety record of any major European railway. Stations have an important role to play in continuing this success for passengers and in supporting the sustainable development of the villages, towns and cities in which they sit.

The Rail Delivery Group (RDG) was established to offer a new way for the industry to work collaboratively, by bringing together Network Rail and passenger and freight operators. Key to the RDG's work is identifying and helping implement ways for the railway to become more cost efficient, thereby giving the Government options to hold down fares, reduce subsidy levels and increase investment. The RDG is also committed to bringing the industry together to deliver better services for passengers and other rail users.

A dedicated working group was set up by the RDG to look at how the industry should evolve its approach to the development and management of stations. A key output was to set out our thoughts for a future vision for stations that recognise they are more than just building assets or a place for people to access rail services. They have the potential to regenerate communities, support local identity and also be a test bed for new technologies to support and create an experience that attracts even more people to use Britain's railway.

The *Vision for Stations* is the next step in establishing a strategy for realising that vision. The RDG is committed to working with stakeholders both at a local and national level to develop local solutions and network approaches that will realise the vision for the benefit of Britain.



Jeremy Long

Chief Executive Officer of European Business,
MTR Corporation Limited and Chair of the RDG's
Station Strategy Group



Sheffield station

Introduction

Britain's stations: a national asset

Britain's railway stations are an important element of the nation's infrastructure and transport system. They represent an investment by taxpayers past and present and an important legacy to be nurtured and utilised. Railway stations offer the opportunity to contribute to the attractiveness of rail journeys and have the potential to support the development of ever more vibrant, growing and attractive local communities.

Working together to create better stations

As the rail industry's leadership group we are keen to establish a vision for Britain's stations that creates the context for conversations with local and national decision makers, with rail passengers and with neighbours of stations. In this document we set out our vision for Britain's stations and nine principles we think should shape the approach to their successful evolution.

Why have a vision for stations?

The rail industry and the communities it serves continue to see significant change and this is particularly the case at stations. There is a wide range of views on stations and we believe that a *Vision* has the opportunity to reaffirm and assure that the divergence of views are understood. In developing and implementing actions, these views will be assimilated resulting in a station estate that optimises each station in its local context and as part of a national transport network.

Given the scale and scope of the station estate the challenges are large and there is a need for long term thinking. Establishing a clear vision can provide a stable policy-base upon which to build long term strategies.

Many people and organisations have contributed to the revival of stations around the country. The *Vision* aims to empower and support communities, businesses and the rail industry to take this further by providing a guiding set of principles to support the evolution of Britain's stations.



Llanfair PG station

Overarching vision

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Our vision is for Britain's stations to be places which are inclusive and welcoming, and which encourage everyone to travel by rail.

This vision will be enabled by those working at the station, by the innovative use of technology, and by the involvement of the communities which stations serve.

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Context

Britain has in excess of 2,500 stations with over 2.5 billion rail journeys made each year. Stations provide access to rail travel for the majority of people living in Britain, with over 85% of the population living within five kilometres of a railway station.

They are an enduring feature of Britain's landscape with most stations built over 100 years ago. While many aspects of our national way of life are under threat (traditional high streets, post offices, cottage hospitals, local pubs and even churches), the rail network has remained largely unscathed since the 1970's and is now seeing sustained growth.

An increasingly mobile population will wish to travel more often and with greater ease, while expecting comfort and consistent service whenever they travel. Customers' needs for convenience and quality of service will continue to increase as their expectations of the experience will change. The UK's rail network is at the heart of meeting these aspirations which will support the sustainable and economic growth of the nation.

The importance of stations

It is in this context that there is a risk of our nation's stations not keeping pace with rapidly changing expectations and needs. Stations have the potential to materially contribute to the changing needs of communities and rail users. The *Vision* and its underlying principles aim to address this risk and place stations at the very heart of the railway network and local communities.

Stations are vital to our railways, providing the gateways and shop windows to the rail network. They provide both a functional and emotional role in rail journeys: a functional role in enabling passengers to access train services; and an emotional role setting the tone for the start and the end of the journey.

Experiences at stations affect the whole journey and how it is remembered by passengers. A positive experience irrespective of individual needs can do much to encourage greater rail travel. For this reason our *Vision for Stations* is that they will be both pleasant places to be, and efficient in enabling all passengers, whatever their needs, to have a comfortable, enjoyable and hassle-free journey.

Stations are a vital ingredient within the country's transport system and within local communities. They can be a major contributor to national and local economies.

Maximising their contribution

More than this, stations have a role beyond the rail network. Their buildings, operation, use and staff help underpin the social fabric of their local communities. Many of them can offer more to their communities, and the nation as a whole.

To fulfil these roles our stations will be managed in a dynamic and proactive manner which takes account of both the immediate needs of passengers along with the wider and longer term needs of local communities and the UK economy. In a period of great social, technological and economic upheaval it is not enough to act as we have done in the past – we must look to the future and ensure that stations are at the forefront of innovation and good practice.

The measure of success

There has been significant investment in stations but our *Vision for Stations* wants to build on this. Work is already underway to implement the principles set out in the *Vision*. But by 2030 the industry will have engrained the *Vision* principles into the day-to-day management of every station and in the long term planning of the network. The principles will be applied as a matter of course with the result that stations are better for customers, for staff, for train operators, for local communities and the country as a whole.

This will be a reality in all stations, each of which is recognisable, familiar and intuitive to its users, while also reflecting local character and needs. Stations will act as an efficient means of enabling people to travel by rail, but will do much more than this by helping to make rail an attractive option for all.

Our vision is that Britain's network of stations will, by 2030, be something the country can be proud of. We are setting out to more than satisfy requirements but rather to ensure that we take every opportunity to ensure that all stations serve their communities.

Metrics will be developed to monitor and benchmark stations and help drive improvements.



Liverpool South Parkway station

The Principles

The principles – Nine P's – described over the following pages are designed to underpin the overall *Vision for Stations* and illustrate how it will be achieved.

P1: Customer focussed

There has been significant investment in stations but our *Vision* aims to build on this.

P2: Intelligent use of technology

The latest information and ticketing technologies are fully utilised to support and enhance the experience at stations.

P3: Seamless journey experience

Ensure stations are fully integrated with rail services and onward travel modes (including walk, cycle, bus, car, tube, transit, metro, air, ferry or ship).

P4: Reflect local needs and opportunities

Tailor stations to reflect local needs and characteristics while still being part of a recognisable national network.

P5: Safe and secure environment

Ensure all stations and their localities are places where users can feel safe and secure.

P6: Entrepreneurial spirit

View stations as potential catalysts for innovation and entrepreneurship, and thereby enhancing the railway and local economies.

P7: Flexible and long-term stewardship

Plan and operate stations for the long term, with built in flexibility to adapt to change.

P8: Shared industry know-how

Share knowledge and experience of what works best at stations in meeting passengers' diverse needs in the most efficient and effective manner.

P9: Optimised network

Realise the full value of every station while minimising inefficiencies through investment and operation based on objective and informed decision making.



Glasgow Central station

P1

Customer focussed

Build an inclusive culture in which the needs of all customers are placed at the heart of every station

P1: Customer focussed

We recognise that customers are at the heart of everything we do and that we should understand how their needs vary depending on their journey, their personal circumstances and preferences.

Whilst acknowledging differences, stations should be:

- Inviting environments, which appear attractive, uncluttered and safe both on the approach to the station and once inside;
- Inclusive so that everyone can use them (including disabled people or those with heavy luggage), thereby going beyond the minimum standards set out in the Equality Act's public sector equality duty (2010);
- Informed so that travellers feel empowered by knowing their way round the station and when and where their train is going from;
- Intuitive so stations are easy to use, engaging people to use them, whether or not they are familiar with them.

Within this general framework, differences should be accepted and celebrated. What customers need and expect is very different at a small commuter station compared with a town centre station used by leisure travellers, business travellers, tourists as well as commuters. So, the facilities available at each station should reflect the differing needs and desires of users.

While stations should reflect these differences, consistent design standards are important, so that good ideas and best practice are shared and there is some sense of familiarity in the station environment. Achieving the

correct balance between standardisation and customisation will be a key consideration for the evolution of our stations.

Cutting through this, it is vital that across all stations, up-to-date, reliable passenger information is provided, even though the way the information is delivered may vary. This is both more challenging and more important when there is service disruption, so consideration must be given to how to keep passengers informed at stations when things do go wrong.

Staff, whatever their role, play a vital part in providing a positive customer experience. Our vision is for staff to be orientated around making journeys easier and more enjoyable so that passengers want to travel by rail more. To enable this, the roles of some staff may need to evolve and become more flexible and multi-faceted.

Part of being customer focussed is about listening to customers and giving them a voice, and then also having procedures in place to enable their views to be acted upon. This is a practical way in which a customer focussed culture can make a noticeable difference on the ground. It also requires different organisations involved in delivering the service to work together for the benefit of customers.

At the same time, we need to be aware that customer needs are changing, and be able to keep one step ahead of these changes. These changes include an ageing (but more active older) population, changes in the technologies available to customers, and changes in expectations of customer service.

P2

Intelligent use of technology

The latest information and ticketing technologies are fully utilised to support and enhance the customer experience at stations

P2: Intelligent use of technology

Information and ticketing technologies are developing and improving all the time and where these offer benefits we must exploit them to the full. This does not mean deploying technology for its own sake, but does mean identifying how it can make using stations easier and more enjoyable and then deploying the technology to this end.

This may mean, for example:

- station staff being equipped with tools which make it easier for them to fulfil the role of an informed advisor and helper, particularly in times of disruption, so freeing them up to provide customer support;
- when staff are not available at the station, using technology to provide customers with information and reassurance;
- when services are disrupted, utilising a variety of information technologies to provide access to reliable real-time information;
- customers are given the choice of using their own mobile devices for their information needs;
- using information technology to help smooth the path through the end-to-end journey by helping with connections to and from the station;
- providing customers with options for added-value services, including WiFi;
- using technology to enable customers to provide instant feedback, such as reporting litter, graffiti or vandalism and to provide positive ideas for improvement;
- using social media as an effective two-way communications tool, particularly when there is a system failure or serious, sudden disruption;
- facilitating passenger-to-passenger communications so customers can share ideas and tips.

Whilst the most immediate use of technology is to keep customers informed, it could support the planning and management of stations. For example, metrics can be developed to track the condition, performance and use of each station, while also providing inputs to strategic decisions concerning the development of the stations network, including highlighting the potential need for additional capacity.

However, given the transient nature of technology, the way it is harnessed needs to be kept under review. Within our *Vision* stations should be at the leading edge of deploying effective technologies rather than simply following the latest trend.

Not all customers want to use technology all the time, so for example, traditional media will continue to play an essential role in providing customer information. This will include timetables, posters, and telephone helplines. Technology should be used to facilitate much valued personal contact at railway stations and not to replace it.

P3

Seamless journey experience

Ensure stations are fully integrated with rail services and onward travel modes (including walk, cycle, bus, car, tube, transit, metro, air, ferry or ship)

P3: Seamless journey experience

Integrating stations into the wider transport network is essential for easy-to-make journeys. This means a continual process of improving the connectivity of journeys to and from our stations, as well as the last (and first) few metres within the station itself. The ongoing nature of this task reflects the changes that can be expected around our stations to:

- walking facilities and wayfinding information
- cycle routes, cycle parking and cycle hire facilities
- bus services
- tram, tube and metro services
- roads and car parking facilities
- car clubs
- taxis and private hire operations.

When considering the overall journey there is a need to be supportive of local policies and ambitions. This can mean prioritising active and sustainable modes (walking, cycling, public transport). We recognise the value in making it easier and more pleasant for customers to walk to and from stations: this is good for the customer as it encourages active travel; good for the station as it reduces pressure on transport facilities such as car parking; and good for communities as it improves air quality.

Station information is equally important. Elements to consider include:

- wayfinding signs to and from the station
- clear signage to assist with interchanging between modes, for example for car parking, cycle parking, and bus stops
- local area maps at the station
- real time and timetable information for buses
- information available online and on customers' smart phones to help with travel to and from the station.

Partnerships are key to the delivery of an integrated end-to-end journey. It will be important for station operators to engage positively with relevant local authorities and transport operators, and where appropriate with local destinations such as tourist attractions. These partnerships will be valuable for integrated information, connected services, and multi-modal tickets or smart cards.

Our overall approach will be to take a holistic approach to the end-to-end journey with the station taking a central role, but within the context of the wider journey.

P4

Reflect local needs and opportunities

Tailor stations to reflect local needs and characteristics while still being part of a recognisable national network

P4: Reflect local needs and opportunities

Stations should not sit in isolation from their local communities and should reflect their needs and aspirations. Communities should have a real stake in their stations. This may mean, for example, using local suppliers and retailers where they can offer a high quality service which also adds local character and supports local enterprises.

Stations should be seen as community assets and not just part of the railway infrastructure.

In order to understand and involve local communities, a variety of organisations need to be engaged, such as:

- local planning and transport authorities
- local economic partnerships (LEPs)
- tourist boards
- local tourist attractions
- town centre managers
- schools, colleges
- major employers
- community groups
- local voluntary organisations
- local passenger groups.

Working with relevant interested parties each stations' role in the community can develop and evolve as a positive facilitator for change. In some cases this might involve a Community Rail Partnership or Adopt-a-Station scheme, or it might include jointly funded development projects. At many stations there is the opportunity to utilise spare capacity to provide valuable community services such as a grocery shop, library, drop-in health centre, nursery, bank, or Post Office.

In general, stations should be good neighbours who care about their local communities.

To achieve this, railway station staff should be further empowered. These are the people on the front line that know the local communities best and understand the limitations and potential of their stations. Station employees will also be encouraged to participate in and support community projects.

Nevertheless, while accommodating local needs, every station should remain a recognisable part of a national network, with national standards and shared best practice.

P5

Safe and secure environment

Ensure all stations and their localities are places where users can feel safe and secure

P5: Safe and secure environment

The most basic requirement of a station is that it is a safe and secure place to be, and this must be the case for all stations, irrespective of size and location.

Further, it is important that the public recognise this and that fear for personal safety and security of property is not a deterrent to using the railway. This should also extend to routes to and from the station, which means working with those responsible for the highways and footways around the station.

Satisfying the requirement for a safe and secure environment will vary at each station and will involve consideration of:

- employing best practice design principles to minimise slip, trip and fall risks, and help prevent crime against people and property at the station;
- staff awareness and training;
- lighting installation and maintenance;
- footpath maintenance;
- effective working with the British Transport Police and local police forces to reduce anti-social behaviour, crime, and terrorism threats;
- use of facilities such as CCTV and 'Help Points';
- effective crowd management at busy stations to maintain safety while speeding up boarding times;
- use of passenger information delivered through a variety of media to reduce the impact of planned or unplanned disruption;
- efficient and effective revenue collection and protection procedures;
- security measures employed at station car and cycle parks;
- cleaning regimes which ensure stations remain graffiti-free.

Station staff play a pivotal role in reassuring station users and helping them to feel secure, particularly if they are visible and approachable.

At unstaffed stations (or stations where staff are part-time) it is even more important that safety and security is designed-in, and that the station is maintained to the highest standard. Customers can be encouraged to help by reporting issues knowing that their report will be acted upon. Steps need to be taken to facilitate and encourage customer feedback and ensure an efficient train company response.

At both staffed and unstaffed stations safety and security can be enhanced in and around stations by working closely with local communities.

P6

Entrepreneurial spirit

View stations as potential catalysts for innovation and entrepreneurship, and thereby enhancing the railway and local economies

P6: Entrepreneurial spirit

Stations should be seen as focal points for forward thinking and the application of innovations. This will be achieved by engendering a positive, “can-do” spirit in which entrepreneurs flourish. It means being prepared to try different ideas and if necessary, learn from the experience in order to develop approaches which can be rolled out on a larger scale.

This mindset is important because of the rapidly changing and developing future and the imperative to avoid being stuck in the past. Some of the uncertainties and opportunities are around:

- shopping patterns and expectations for an attractive retail environment as an antidote to the virtual world of internet shopping;
- the trend for more transient ‘pop-up’ retail outlets which are ideal for smaller community-based or start-up retailers;
- changes in retail logistics, with stations being increasingly used as places customers can pick up deliveries;
- changes in payment methods with a move away from cash and physical tickets to the use of cards and chips of varying types, including the use of contactless bank cards, mobile phones, and smart cards;
- the availability and use of data such as that from people using their smart phones for on-line searching and purchasing;
- intelligent CCTV;
- wearable technology and technology implants.

We therefore need to maintain an up-to-date awareness of emerging trends.

To support this, contractual mechanisms which facilitate partnership working must be established. This includes developing relationships with private sector developers which can benefit station users, local communities and the private developer.

This change in mindset cannot happen overnight, so pilot projects across a range of circumstances to develop our approach and demonstrate its value would be an appropriate way forward in the short term.

Within the context of a rapidly changing world we believe it is worth celebrating the heritage inherent in many of our stations, and recognising that this can provide a catalyst to innovative thinking. The opportunity here is to combine the best of the historic character of a station with the benefits which the latest technology can afford.



Leeds station's re-purposed Western concourse

P7

Flexible and long-term stewardship

Plan and operate stations for the long term, with built in flexibility to adapt to change

P7: Flexible and long-term stewardship

Many stations are over a hundred years old and we expect that stations will be standing for generations to come. There are two clear implications for this:

1. Stations must be managed as sustainable, long-term assets.
2. Flexibility has to be built in so we can respond rapidly and efficiently to changes and the unexpected.

Stations need to be managed in a manner which ensures their long-term economic, environmental and social sustainability. Staff responsible for stations should see themselves as custodians of a precious resource. This approach should be backed up by contractual frameworks consistent with this *Vision*.

Station managers should:

- optimise the use and management of space to derive additional revenue or reduce costs;
- develop station masterplans to help ensure that the station remains in-tune with wider developments in the area it serves;
- prioritise investment for best return without ignoring benefits of maintaining or increasing the characteristics of a single integrated network;

- look to attract third party funding for enhancing the station alongside new development;
- adopt a flexible approach to asset management to allow for patronage growth, effective crowd management and community usage;
- deploy technologies which have positive long term environmental benefits such as measures to save water, reduce waste, increase recycling, reduce energy use, and generate clean energy;
- utilise data and agreed industry metrics to respond quickly to changing conditions, pre-empting issues where at all possible;
- remain aware of climate change and be prepared for its consequences.

Part of good stewardship for individual stations means being aware of the bigger picture and the interactions between stations. Longer term strategies for stations serving the same geographic market will be important, and these will be helpful for assessing future needs and supporting funding bids.

In 2030 we expect railway stations to be in better shape and better adapted to their surroundings than today. We anticipate that this will be reflected in customer feedback.

P8

Shared industry know-how

Share knowledge and experience of what works best at stations in meeting passengers' diverse needs in the most efficient and effective manner

P8: Shared industry know-how

There has been a great deal of investment in recent years. Maximising the value of this by learning the lessons and applying them across the network must be a priority.

Some practical ways this ambition can be achieved include:

- sharing ideas, experiences and lessons learned using case studies, with good practice incentivised;
- development of clear and coherent design guidelines based on good practice;
- sharing of customer feedback and research;
- establishing a network of individuals who can ensure knowledge is spread;
- bringing in ideas from other countries and other industries;
- establish a shared understanding of "what good looks like" in regard to station design and management;
- develop standard modular components and designs (capable of tailoring) to minimise cost without compromising quality.

In moving towards a more dynamic, customer focussed approach to managing stations, sharing ideas and lessons will become increasingly important as a means of quickly spreading good practice and reducing wasted effort. An advantage we have is that by and large, stations complement each other and rarely compete. This means that sharing knowledge concerning stations benefits everyone.

To this end, agreed station performance metrics will be a valuable tool in benchmarking stations and identifying stations in similar circumstances which are achieving different levels of performance. In this way, it should be possible to identify high performing stations which may have lessons for other, similar stations.

One valuable approach to advancing and sharing industry knowhow will be to develop a small number of concept stations. These will provide a forum for testing more innovative solutions to the challenges faced by stations in different situations, such as small unstaffed stations, stations used heavily by tourists or passengers with heavy luggage, or stations designed to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

P9

Optimised network

Realise the full value of every station while minimising inefficiencies through investment and operation based on objective and informed decision making

P9: Optimised network

Britain's network of stations has developed on an incremental basis over the last century and a half and has not always kept pace with changing circumstances. The consequence is that some stations have not fulfilled their full potential, while others have failed to adapt to changing customer needs.

Our *Vision* is to exploit every station's full potential while at the same time removing inefficiencies. The starting point for this is to understand the unmet potential of our stations, including the potential for utilising or operating stations in innovative ways, and not just as the means for passengers to access the rail network.



Lewes station

The starting point is to ask questions such as:

- how well does a station perform (in terms of usage) relative to similar stations?
- could more people be attracted to this station if it looked more welcoming?
- would more people use it if it was easier to get to?
- how does the retail offer compare with what customers might want at a station like this?
- is there potential for local enterprises (commercial or social) to increase station patronage?
- are there any significant developments in the area which may have a major impact on future usage?
- is there an unmet need for a station where one does not currently exist?
- what role could the station perform for the community alongside its role as a gateway to the railway network?
- what role does the station play in the wider rail network?
- how and where can staff be best deployed across the network to maximise their value?

Principle 9

The emphasis of this process is identifying opportunities to increase the revenue generated at each station, then to explore how this potential can be realised. In a few exceptional cases it may be that a station is unsustainable and that even after examining all the possibilities for community involvement the best option is to close the station and redistribute resources elsewhere. Our vision is that decisions over the composition of the network are informed by comprehensive and objective evidence, with due consideration given to passengers, local communities, rail operations, taxpayers, and in the light of long term plans for the network.

A key tenet of the optimised network principle is that decisions are based on potential rather than current actual demand. In this way we will avoid the catch-22 situation where a station is under-used because it is not being properly looked after, but further resources aren't allocated to it because it is under-used. This approach also opens the way to considering possible new stations, not forgetting that examining the case for a new station will involve examining the effect on other stations serving the same geographic market.

This reflects the importance of the network of stations, and considering how the potential of the whole network can be increased, as well as that of individual stations.



Doleham station



St Helens Central station



The *Vision* was formally launched at Stations Summit II following a year-long process of engagement and consultation.

The *Vision* was developed by the RDG's Station Strategy Group whose current members are:

Chair: Dominic Booth (Abellio)
RDG Lead: Jonathan Chatfield
Norrie Courts (Network Rail)
David Biggs (Network Rail)
Richard Kirkman (Network Rail)
Gareth Rees (First Group)
Ian Bullock (Arriva)
Jeremy Long (MTR)
Mark Rose (Department for Transport)
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Elizabeth de Jong (RDG)
Ruud Haket (Keolis)
Ryan Flaherty (Serco)
Jonny Wiseman (Stagecoach)
Simone Bailey (Abellio)
Stuart Parker (National Express)
Alex Foulds (Go-Ahead)

The Group was supported by Steer Davies Gleave in the development of the *Vision*.

Rail Delivery Group

The Rail Delivery Group (RDG) was set up in 2011 to provide leadership to Britain's rail industry, bringing together the owners of Britain's passenger train operating companies, freight operators and Network Rail.

Its mission is to promote greater co-operation between these groups through leadership in the industry and by working together with Government, the supply chain and stakeholders.

The RDG is committed to the long-term health of the railway as well as the need to see improvement in the shorter term. It does this by developing strategies for the industry to put into practice and by proposing solutions for policy makers to implement.

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