

News story: Rail Review Chair says franchising cannot continue in its current form

- reform must put passengers at its heart
- ORR to look at compensation and accessibility
- review to make recommendations in the autumn

Keith Williams, independent chair of the first 'root and branch' [Rail Review](#) to be supported by government, will today (26 February 2019) announce that the rail franchising system cannot continue in the way it is now.

In the George Bradshaw Address, Keith Williams is expected to say:

I have heard a great deal about the franchising model...driving growth in passengers and benefits to services. But with this growth the needs of passengers have changed whilst many of the basic elements of our rail system have not kept pace.

Put bluntly, franchising cannot continue the way it is today. It is no longer delivering clear benefits for either taxpayers and farepayers.

I believe that for the railway to be successful it needs to put passengers at its heart.

We need to recognise that there is unlikely to be a 'one size fits all' solution which will work for every part of the country and all types of passenger.

The former British Airways chief executive and deputy chairman of John Lewis Partnership, will set out that the reason he took on the review was because he had a clear commitment from the government to deliver change:

This is the first full-blown rail review to be supported by government for some considerable time – with a very clear commitment from the Transport Secretary and from Bernadette Kelly, and the whole of the department's executive.

I see our role not just to tackle those recent problems that passengers have experienced but also to tackle the more fundamental underlying causes of those problems.

In his address, he will also say that the rail industry is adapting to a fast-changing world but unable to respond to consumer demand:

We are spending on the railway, in offering new services, purchasing new rolling stock, and renewing and enhancing the network. The May timetable change, for instance, was designed to offer thousands of new services, hundreds of new trains, and much improved critical infrastructure – but as a system we were unable to deliver on this investment. And the customer suffered.

Williams will summarise the progress made on the Rail Review as well as the next steps. He will say:

There's real hunger for change within the industry as well as outside. We will continue listening to what you have to say and learning from your insight and experience.

We need to do more on making it easier for customers to access the compensation they are entitled to and improving accessibility for all users, including disabled people.

I've asked the ORR to advise me on what more could be done by rail operators to improve this, and whether more regulatory powers are required to ensure it happens. They will report back within the timescale of the review recommending action to help transform compensation and accessibility across the network.

In the autumn we will bring everything together and alongside government, recommend change through a white paper. It will be the culmination of the biggest and widest review of the railway for generations.

- the Rail Review was established to recommend the most appropriate organisational and commercial frameworks to support the delivery of the government's vision for the railway
 - former British Airways chief executive Keith Williams leads the major review of the rail industry, supported by an expert challenge panel
 - the government will publish a white paper on the review's recommendations, with the implementation of reforms planned to start from 2020
 - the annual Bradshaw Address is named in honour of George Bradshaw (1800 to 1853), who developed the Bradshaw's Guide to the railways
 - the review's first evidence paper, The role of the railway in Great Britain, will be published at 7pm today (26 February 2019)
-

Press release: New ambassadors to champion green action

Leading environmentalists have today (26 February) pledged to champion and promote the Year of Green Action.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove has welcomed UN Patron of the Oceans and endurance swimmer [Lewis Pugh](#), environmentalist David de Rothschild and TV presenter Jan Leeming, who will all help to educate and inspire the next generation of environmental leaders.

They are among the first ambassadors to join the Year of Green Action, a year-long drive to connect more people with the environment and raise awareness about the simple steps everyone can take – in their home, garden, workplace or school – to make a difference to the natural world.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

The natural world is our greatest asset and we all have a responsibility and role to play in protecting it for generations to come.

These new ambassadors have shown tremendous passion in their drive for environmental protection and have been tenacious in their desire to raise awareness, from swimming the length of the English Channel to sailing a recyclable boat made from reclaimed plastic bottles.

I am delighted to have them on board to champion the Year of Green Action and inspire change.

The Year of Green Action is a year-long initiative to get more people from all backgrounds involved in projects to improve the environment.

It provides a focal point for organisations, individuals, communities and businesses to learn more about their environmental impact, take action to reduce it, and spread the word on environmental issues.

The newly-announced ambassadors are:

- UN Patron of the Seas Lewis Pugh, an ocean advocate and endurance swimmer;
- Adventurer and environmentalist David de Rothschild, who sailed across the Pacific Ocean in 2009 on a entirely recyclable boat made using 12,500 reclaimed plastic bottles;
- TV presenter and newsreader Jan Leeming, a keen supporter of environmental issues, who has also spent time working on cheetah conservation projects in South Africa;

- Ethical lifestyle blogger [Besma Whayeb](#);
- Sian Conway, Green & Eco Influencer of the Year 2018;
- Explorer, entomologist, zoologist and broadcaster George McGavin;
- Professor Tim Jackson, [Director of the Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity](#);
- Founded of [Earth Changers sustainable travel company](#) Vicky Smith;
- Blogger and social influencer Izzy McLeod; and
- Lucy Finlay MBE, Founder of [Social Enterprise Mark CIC](#).

UN Patron of the Oceans Lewis Pugh said:

I have been swimming for 32 years and over that period of time, I've seen our oceans change completely. That's why I am delighted to support the Year of Green Action and help share the importance of protecting our oceans and tackling plastic pollution.

We need urgent action. Our greatest hope is that there are 66 million people in the United Kingdom. Any problem, however colossal, becomes manageable when divided by 66 million. If we all play our part, we can fix this.

The Environment Secretary has also called on businesses up and down the country to pledge support for the Year of Green Action, with representatives from some of the UK's biggest businesses attending a parliamentary reception this evening.

The Year of Green Action is a leading pledge from the government's 25 Year Environment Plan, an ambitious blueprint to improve the environment within a generation.

Since its [launch in January](#), the government has outlined ambitious plans to overhaul the waste system and transform household recycling, pledged support for charity [Step Up to Serve's #iwillfornature campaign](#), and set out plans to protect some of the country's rarest and most threatened fungi.

[News story: Kathryn Cearns OBE appointed as new Chair of the Office of Tax Simplification](#)

Kathryn will chair the OTS board and will lead the OTS as it shapes its strategy and priorities. Kathryn will direct engagement with HM Treasury, HMRC, ministers and Parliament.

Alongside the Tax Director, Bill Dodwell, she will provide independent advice to the Chancellor on simplifying the UK tax system for both businesses and individual taxpayers.

Kathryn joins the OTS with extensive senior level experience in both the public and private sectors, notably as Chair of the Financial Reporting Advisory Board to HM Treasury from 2010 to 2016 and Chair of ICAEW Financial Reporting Committee from 2008 to 2017.

Mel Stride, Financial Secretary to the Treasury, said:

We want to ensure our tax system is as simple as possible for everyone, and Kathryn Cearns will play a vital role in helping meet that commitment.

Her impressive track-record of leadership in the public and private sectors and strong vision made her the ideal candidate to steer the OTS through the next phase of its work.

I would like to thank Angela Knight for her contribution to the OTS over the past 3 years. She leaves having established the OTS as a permanent office, acting as an independent voice providing beneficial advice.

Kathryn Cearns, incoming OTS Chair, said:

I am delighted to have the opportunity to help to develop a tax system in the UK that is straightforward for taxpayers while remaining effective and fit for purpose for the 21st century.

OTS Tax Director, Bill Dodwell said:

I – and the OTS team – look forward to working with Kathryn as our new Chair. Improving the interactions of taxpayers with the tax system and aiding understanding of taxation remain very important goals.

Further information

The OTS was established in 2010 to provide advice to the Chancellor on simplifying the UK tax system and was made a permanent, independent office of HM Treasury in July 2015. It was put on a statutory footing in the Finance Act 2016.

Kathryn Cearns brings to the OTS a wide range of relevant leadership experience:

- non-executive director of Highways England and Chair of the Highways

England Audit and Risk Committee and member of the Group Audit and Risk Committee at the Department for Transport

- previously, Chair of the Financial Reporting Advisory Board to HM Treasury from 2010 to 2016
- formerly Chair of the ICAEW Financial Reporting Committee for 10 years up to the end of 2017
- other prior roles include a project director at the UK Accounting Standards Board (now the Financial Reporting Council), and the consultant accountant for Herbert Smith Freehills LLP and council member of the ICAEW
- Kathryn currently holds a number of non-executive, trustee and advisory appointments most notably as a member of the External Audit Committee for the International Monetary Fund, a non-executive director for the UK Supreme Court, a non-executive board member and member of the Audit Committee for Companies House, a non-executive director for The Property Ombudsman and as a trustee for Royal British Legion Industries

Although this appointment does not come under the remit of the Commissioner for Public Appointments, the recruitment process has been run in line with the Commissioner's Code of Practice.

The Treasury Select Committee can hold a hearing for the Chair of the OTS after the appointed is announced, but before it has been formalised. The hearing will be held on Tuesday 5th March 2019.

[News story: Taking on the best: Ministry of Defence Police show sporting prowess](#)

Constable Claire Stott-Barrett acquitted herself well in the competition last year to find Britain's strongest police officer and discovered that, for her, competitive powerlifting is her favoured sport. She said;

I made the leap and entered my first powerlifting competition, the PSUK Powerlifting Championships in Glasgow, where I turned up on my own, full of trepidation and nerves.

But I needn't have worried, I discovered powerlifting is a community, total strangers screaming your name and encouragement when you are on the lifting platform, everyone, even your competitors wanting you to succeed. I am a novice, but found that everyone was friendly, helpful and supportive.

At the presentation dinner after the PSUK event, Mikey Yule, British Paralympic Powerlifter, gave the address and handed out the awards. Claire won her weight category and achieved the British Championships qualification requirement.

I entered the Scottish Championships, which helped give me more competition experience and was delighted to improve on all my lifts and increase my previous total score, achieving second place in my weight category. My overall total lifted at both competitions has resulted in qualification for the British National Full Power Championships held in July 2019 in Edinburgh

I also contacted the World Drug Free Powerlifting Federation and my application to enter the European Full Power Championships, held in April 2019 in Suffolk, has been accepted. All the powerlifting competitions I enter are sanctioned by the British Drug Free Powerlifting Association or the World Drug Free Powerlifting Association.

Silver for Simon Photo: Cwm Calon Photography, all rights reserved.

Police Sergeant Simon Amery took part in the British indoor rowing championships in December 2018 at the Lea Valley Velodrome, entering the over 50 lightweight category which is for competitors under 75kg.

He said: > I'm pleased to say that I gained a silver medal in the 2 kilometre race with a time of 6 mins 42 seconds. Last year I competed in the lower age category and came fifth, so I was pleased to have moved up. > > The event is open to all ages and people regardless of whether they row on the water or just in the gym. Simon commented: 'It has proved to be an excellent motivator for maintaining my fitness for my anticipated return to the Operational Support Unit from the Force Control and Information Room.

Victory celebration Photo: Cwm Calon Photography, all rights reserved.

Constables Sophie Dowson, Lucy Mercer, Meghan Mason, all based at Aldermaston or Burghfield, were selected for the British Police Women's Rugby team for a recent match against the Royal Navy's women's team.

Sophie explained how the match progressed: > After attending training selection throughout the day, we were then selected in starting positions to represent BPWR. Whilst the Navy put up a resilient effort throughout the game, the Police dominated in the scrums – from where Lucy Mercer scored 2 tries. > > We went into the second half 19-0 up, and managed to pull away, playing intelligent rugby and finishing the game 41-0. As always it is an absolute honour to represent Britain and our force in a sport that we love, and the message it sends to empowering females within sport is a message that we are all fully behind. > > We are currently awaiting selection for the International Policing Tournament, which this year is to be held in Hong Kong in September.

[News story: Government to consult on ban on 10-year-old tyres to boost road safety](#)

The government will consult on options to ban older tyres from use on buses, coaches, heavy goods vehicles and mini-buses to help keep road users safe.

The Department for Transport has today (26 February 2019) announced that it will consult on legislation to make it illegal for these vehicles to run with a tyre aged 10 years or over.

This follows a research project, launched by the government last year, to look at whether the age of a tyre has a direct impact on its safety.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

Keeping people safe on our roads is our priority, and we have been working hard to understand the link between tyre age and road safety.

Emerging evidence and leading expert testimony shows us that we need to ban tyres over the age of 10 years from larger vehicles based upon the 'precautionary principle' – a move that will make our roads safer for everyone.

It follows the ['Tyred' campaign](#), led by Frances Molloy, whose 18-year-old son Michael was among 3 people killed in a coach crash on the A3 in 2012. The collision was caused by the failure of a 19-year-old tyre on the front axle of the coach.

Roads Minister Jesse Norman said:

I want to pay tribute to Frances Molloy and the Tyred campaign for their brilliant campaign to ban older tyres on buses and coaches.

I believe the changes we are consulting on will save lives. And I hope it will be welcomed by everyone who shares a commitment to making our roads safer, for the benefit of all.

The move follows a series of measures on tyre safety put in place by the government.

In 2013, the DfT issued guidance advising bus operators against fitting older

tyres to the front axles of their vehicles.

This has been reinforced through inspections by the Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency. Since June 2017, they have inspected 136,263 buses and coaches and have found 0.06% to breach the guidance.

Then in November last year (2018), the [DVSA guidance on maintaining roadworthiness](#) was updated to say that tyres of 10 years of age or older should not be used on the front axles of heavy goods vehicles as well as buses and coaches.

In addition, the government commissioned world-leading research in 2018 to establish the effect age has on the integrity of road vehicle tyres.

As part of this research, the UK's Transport Research Laboratory has worked with a leading laboratory in the United States to carry out testing and analysis. The outcome of this research will be published later in the spring.

*[Dft}: Department for Transport