



Marylebone pays tribute

It was Chiltern driver Dave Newell who nailed it. Standing on the crowded platform, arms aloft, hi-vis flapping – he interrupted the crowd of bigwigs on the other side of the theatre rope, assembled on platform 1 at Marylebone on 30 August to unveil a statue in tribute to former Chiltern Managing Director Adrian Shooter.

'This man,' he bellowed, 'this man – is responsible for where we are today.'

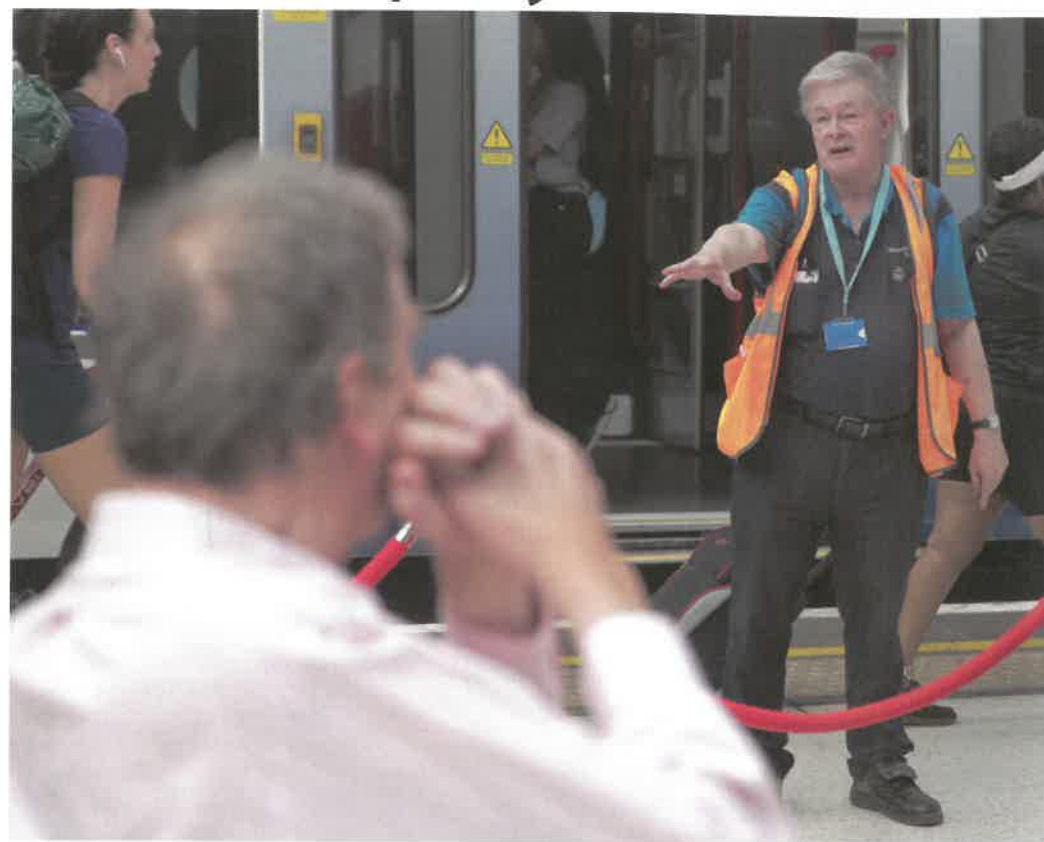
The gaffer, confined to a walking frame with its own seat on account of motor neurone disease, was clearly chuffed to bits. He returned the compliment in spades when he took to the microphone a few minutes later. 'All I have done' he insisted, 'is created a team of able people at all levels – and asked them to do their jobs.'

'I am accepting this statue on behalf of all the many railway men and women who worked with me.'

Even now, the man is irrepresible: he went on to recount that he was assembling a team to go and see the Truss administration to make clear that if you don't have the same people responsible for revenues as well as costs in the new structure, we're headed for trouble.

He should know. For Dave Newell's 'where we are today', of course, many miles away from where we were 25 years ago, thanks to a relentless focus on driving up revenues. It is a place where, today, High Wycombe alone takes more in ticket revenue than the whole of the Chiltern line in pre-privatisation days. Where Aylesbury gets a choice of routes to Marylebone throughout the day, rather than the sole option of the Met and just a handful of trains on the Princes Risborough branch at school entry and exit times. Where Oxford – and indeed Birmingham – gets a choice of operator to London, with all the possibilities for cheaper tickets and more conveniently located stations that that implies.

And it's all because Adrian Shooter kept the faith. As one of his faithful former lieutenants, MTR's Steve Murphy, related, he refused to accept the advice of economists when he was putting together a bid for a management buyout in the mid-1990s. 'You've had your growth' they told him, pointing to the Total Route Modernisation of Chris Green's Network SouthEast over the previous few years, which saw ridership rise after introduction of Chiltern Turbos and colour light signals controlled



Honouring a legend of the line: Chiltern driver Dave Newell pauses on his way to the front end of the 11.40 to Oxford to pay tribute to the operator's founding MD Adrian Shooter, who looks on. For further reporting on the 30 August event, see page 16. Tony Miles

by a new Integrated Electronic Control Centre at Marylebone. 'You should expect 1%, maybe 2% a year from now on if you're lucky.'

The big man was having none of it. Build it and the passengers will come was his philosophy. And if Railtrack wouldn't do it, he would. He started off small, reinstating the down platform and the footbridge at Princes Risborough, but it wasn't long before his ambition knew no bounds. Evergreens 1, 2 and 3, a 100mph double-track railway from London to Birmingham. New stations at Warwick Parkway and Aylesbury Vale Parkway and a new depot at Wembley. A reinvigoration of the old London & North Western approach to Oxford, with two trains an hour from the varsity city and Bicester shopping village to Marylebone.

And the trains, oh the trains – first in penny numbers, but then in bolder fleets. It was Adrian Shooter that broke the notorious 1,064-day famine in rolling stock orders that took hold while the politicians indulged themselves in carving up our industry. It was fitting that one of them, former Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin (one of the good guys), should take a turn at the

microphone at the statue unveiling ceremony at Marylebone and thank the former Chiltern MD for saving Litchurch Lane, hard by his former Derbyshire Dales constituency. For those initial Clubmen were joined by more of the Turbostar family, helping to keep the Derby factory going till the Southern Region slam door replacement programme came to the rescue. To add to the festivities, that original famine-breaking unit, No 168001, was named *Adrian Shooter CBE* as part of the celebrations on the day of the statue unveiling.

Worthy of note, too, were the Mk 3s – hauled first by Class 67s, making way later for Class 68s. 'We're not having loco-hauled trains in Marylebone!' stormed Mr Shooter when the idea was first mooted. 'But boss, we need more capacity – and redundant Mk 3s is the way to get it quickly!' It was a mark of the flexibility of mind of the man that he was open to persuasion and the Mk 3s, with their pioneering plug doors, were duly introduced, first on the open access Shrewsbury service and later on the Great Western route to Birmingham, when the accountants twigged they could make more money running them

up and down to Moor Street than taking for ever creeping round the houses on the Grand Junction line to the wilds of Shropshire.

But you can have the best trainset in the world and yet it is of no use if you can't operate it properly. Here too, the man billed as 'the legend of Chiltern Railways' by the current MD Richard Allan, excelled – one reason being that you didn't want to end up on the other side of his beady gaze if the service fell apart. Drawing parallels between Adrian Shooter and legendary Derby County manager Brian Clough, a past Chiltern MD, Rob Brighthouse, mused: 'he was able to take mediocre players, such as Steve Murphy and myself, and turn us into a great team... we set the benchmark in terms of customer satisfaction.'

But it was Dave Newell who had the final say, as he edged his controller and ensured the wheels started turning on the Oxford service in platform 2 at 11.40.01, bang on time. What finer tribute could there be to a great railwayman, than to say that he made the trains run on time?

James Abbott
Consultant Editor

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PULLOUT MAP!**

West Midlands
rail network



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Cover: EMR's No 222013 at Duffield on 13 July 2022. Jamie Squibbs; insets TfL/Philip Sherratt

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41 FOR DETAILS

End of an era: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II passed away on 8 September. She travelled extensively on – and was extremely fond of – the Royal Train. On 27 June 2022 No 67007, in Platinum Jubilee livery, passes Lichfield Trent Valley with a Royal Train working from Scotland to its home at Wolverton. John Whitehouse

Dear Secretary of State

An open letter to the new Transport Secretary

While your new responsibilities encompass all forms of transport – roads, aviation, maritime and railways, you will have found that the latter has monopolised the contents of your new red box.

While we have no illusions about the influence of the trade and technical press on political policies and decisions, as *Modern Railways* celebrates its 60th anniversary, our collective experience over the decades may be of help.

You face a number of problems. In current political discourse it is more usual to speak of 'issues' and 'challenges'. But while issues can be considered and challenges faced, problems have to be solved.

PROBLEM 1 – INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

This is a problem in two parts, reflecting the current separation between wheel and rail.

Network Rail, as an arm of government, is your direct responsibility. Here we have a further division, between the cost of living crisis and Network Rail's need to cut costs by modernising working practices.

First, you need to establish some clarity. What are the potential savings from the introduction of the more rational working practices by maintenance staff? Network Rail's day-to-day costs of running the railway are Operations and Maintenance. In round numbers the annual figures are £2.5 billion and £1.9 billion respectively.

Being able to link cost savings to the money they will make available for pay increases would enable a fresh start on wage negotiations. To date, in a fact-free environment, RMT General Secretary Mick Lynch has won the media battle for hearts and minds. Starting anew on the basis of costs and benefits would help regain lost ground.

Untangling modernisation savings from the cost of living crisis would also provide a way into a new round of negotiations.

When it comes to the pay disputes at the Train Operating Companies (TOCs), you have the unfortunate situation that the Treasury takes the revenue while your department is responsible for the costs.

Here, again, financial transparency is the way forward. Please drop the tired rhetoric of £16 billion having been spent to keep the railway running during the pandemic, with the implication that the railway workforce should be grateful to have a job. That funding was provided because the railway was, rightly, considered an essential service.

We note that your department has stopped publishing the payments to individual train operators under their various current contracts. This may be just laziness or an attempt to muddy the waters.

But, as passengers return, it is vital that the industry understands its finances, the current size of the revenue 'black hole' and its projected future reduction.

Contrasting drivers' pay with other service workers is not helpful. Nor is talk of legislation to force critical professions to work. Let alone the fatuity of bringing in agency workers as strike-breakers in a safety critical industry.

Pretending that wage negotiations with TOC staff are nothing to do with the Department fools no one. Transparency on subsidy, costs and revenue would provide the basis for a fresh start, this time with DfT's overt involvement. Your department is paying the piper.

In addition to transparency, clarity is essential in industrial relations. There is a widespread belief that one Government aim is to cut costs by closing all ticket offices. We find this hard to credit – major stations will surely need them, although we can accept there are locations where they are no longer viable. But what we need is clarity – and urgently.

PROBLEM 2 – IMPLEMENTING WILLIAMS-SHAPPS

Implementation of the Williams-Shapps Plan for the transition to



Great British Railways (GBR) lacks any clear sense of direction, with parallel teams at work in your Department and Network Rail. An entirely new railway is expected to emerge from Network Rail, with an entirely new customer-focused culture.

It seems illogical to be creating a new organisation without the involvement of those who will manage and operate it having a say in its structure. Think of a football club recruiting a new team and then looking around to appoint a new manager.

There are persistent suggestions that the Transport Bill may be deferred in favour of other legislation which is considered more important. This would provide an opportunity for a more considered approach.

We understand from your predecessor that recruitment of the GBR Chair had begun under the previous government. We would suggest you pause further work on the transition until you have set up a shadow GBR (sGBR) and appointed a Chair and Chief Executive. The Chair should, at the least, have transport on their CV. The Chief Executive must have operational railway experience. Let us know if you would like some suggestions.

Once in place, sGBR will need to recruit executive directors for the main railway functions, who will

guide the work of the Departmental and Network Rail teams.

We would suggest the Treasury's insistence on the involvement of the private sector in passenger train operations should be challenged vigorously. This will simply perpetuate the vertical separation of wheel and rail which has frustrated the operation of an economic railway since privatisation.

Fundamental to an efficient and economic railway is its management as an integrated national network. Trains form the interface between the railway and its customers, and this vital relationship should not be subcontracted.

While industrial relations are a factor, the reduction in services by Avanti West Coast and now TransPennine Express is primarily about the management of these businesses. On the one hand, your Department has an iron grip on TOC costs, with your staff effectively man-marking their counterparts in the TOCs. Yet, on the other, when it comes to service cuts and performance, the attitude is 'nothing to do with us, Guv'.

Even one of your own ministers has had to concede the unhappy contrast between the performance of LNER on the East Coast main line and Avanti on the West Coast. The key difference is that, under the Operator of Last Resort, LNER enjoys much less interference from your Department and can get on with the difficult task of running a service.

PROBLEM 3 – HS2

The current problems with West Coast services bring us to HS2. Construction of the new line is putting spades in the ground, with the potential for spectacular photo opportunities. While we would like you to stay at your desk resolving problems, a day out in hi-viz and hard hat would confirm the new Government's support for the project.

We haven't been as critical as many others of the Integrated Rail Plan, because although it has its faults we appreciate the investment it promises still amounts to a huge vote of support for our railway. We urge you not to down-dial on this at all. But there are issues to resolve. The IRP had a distinct lack of clarity around some elements – how the high-speed line will reach Leeds being one.

And more recently we have the cancellation of the Golborne link from HS2 to the West Coast main line. As Sir Peter Hendy hinted in the Union Connectivity Review, this could well be a smart decision – but only if there is a sensible alternative plan. Sir Peter

intimated that a route joining the West Coast main line south of Preston might deliver more benefits than the Golborne link, recommending that the Government should carry out a review of the options. Of course, given the tight fiscal environment, the temptation will be to ignore that recommendation – which would only go to confirm in the Scots' eyes the perfidy of Albion, the very hurt Sir Peter's review was set up to salve.

PROBLEM 4 – TRANSPORT IN LONDON

The to-and-fro over funding for Transport for London has been a constant throughout the pandemic. We warmly welcome the latest settlement, which provides a degree of reassurance.

Your predecessor seemed to enjoy the party political rivalry with the Labour Mayor of London rather too much, no doubt egged on by the previous Prime Minister, himself a former Mayor. We hope those days are in the past and you and the new Prime Minister will put aside such rivalry and work across political boundaries towards long-term solutions.

While there is clearly value in the Levelling Up agenda, it must not come at the expense of London and the South East. We would observe that, while rolling stock companies are sending mid-life electric trains on the main line for scrap, the London Underground's Bakerloo Line fleet is celebrating 50 years in service. There is no funded plan to replace these trains – meaning they could easily reach 60 years. Meanwhile, the Piccadilly Line is lucky enough to be getting new trains – but still there is no green light for the replacement signalling that would allow the operators to make the most of the new fleet.

The funding settlement protects those schemes in progress like the new Piccadilly fleet and the Four Lines Modernisation, but Whitehall must now swallow hard and reach agreement with City Hall on a sensible capital programme going forward. London remains the engine of the economy and a properly-funded transport system in the capital will help us to weather the storms ahead.

PROBLEM 5 – DECARBONISATION

First indications were that the new administration's approach to the decarbonisation agenda is alarmingly blasé: we fervently hope this fear proves unfounded. For the English railways, the Government would be

well advised to follow the lead of the Holyrood administration and take a step-by-step approach to achieving net zero, as at present there is only vague aspiration south of the border.

The industry itself has done much work in charting the way forward: the proposed decarbonisation agenda for the Western we reported on in the August issue (p60) is being replicated on other parts of the network. The Government should build on the IRP and commit to the practical steps required to implement net zero – which means more haste in getting the wires up.


In passing, we would note that we still have large numbers of diesel trains which are more than 30 years old which will need replacing soon. The decarbonisation agenda must address this too.

NO TIME TO WASTE

These are the top five concerns which need your immediate attention. Top of the issues that will have to be addressed this autumn is the Office of Rail and Road's Periodic Review of Network Rail's income for the next Control Period, which starts on 1 April 2024.

That may seem a long time away, but by the end of this year you and your Scottish counterpart are required under the 1995 Railways Act to tell ORR what you want the railway to provide (High Level Output Statements, or HLOS) and how much you are prepared to pay (Statement of Funds Available, the SoFA).

Given it is now more than 1,000 days since you published the Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline (RNEP) list of funded projects for the current Control Period, we suggest you cut your losses and focus on the next five years.

The HLOS is inextricably entwined with the Integrated Rail Plan, where you have the complication that Network Rail's enhancements are now funded by Government borrowing, which means the Treasury will be integral to the process. Our radical proposal is that you should not be constrained by the timetable for the Periodic Review process, a process developed for a long-gone railway with a private sector infrastructure owner. Instead, you should take the time necessary to get the HLOS and SoFA right for these uncertain times; Control Periods are an artificial construct imposed on the railway's investment cycle. Such flexibility and pragmatism are what we need. 

Yours in hope,
Modern Railways



Attracting political attention: Avanti West Coast Pendolino No 3901 15 calls at Stockport on 12 August 2022 with the 09.20 Euston to Manchester Piccadilly. Tom McAtee