

SOUTHERN ANNOUNCEMENT – Q&A

Chris Gibb Appointment

1. What is Chris Gibb going to do? Why is it necessary to appoint him?

Chris Gibb will head a new project board to ensure an integrated approach between Network Rail and Southern, designed to improve services for the public. A passenger representative will also be included on this board to ensure commuters' views are heard.

The board will oversee the £20m fund and closer working between GTR and Network Rail to improve performance for Southern customers.

2. Who is paying for this post? Is this taxpayers' money?

This is paid for by GTR using funds they are permitted to spend, with the DfT's approval, to improve the franchise.

3. Who does he report to and how long is his contract?

He will report weekly to the SofS and Rail Minister on progress but will be working under the joint authority of Network Rail and GTR.

4. Does he have the power to hire and fire people?

No. This is about ensuring all possible steps are taken to improve performance of the Southern network. Recruitment is not part of Chris Gibb's remit.

5. Will his role have anything to do with negotiating with the unions?

No. Chris Gibb will be focussing on improving the working relationship between NR and Southern to cut delays and improve the passenger experience.

6. With this appointment DfT has finally taken direct action over Southern and GTR. Does this show DfT has been behind an agenda to push driver-operated trains all along, as claimed by some media?

No.

7. Is this all the action the Government is going to take over Southern/GTR failings? Aren't you avoiding responsibility for presiding over a failing public service and failing to taken the contract off GTR? How can this appointment address the wider issue of failings of this franchise?

We know passengers have had a poor service for too long, but the operator is doing everything possible in the face of some extremely difficult challenges, many beyond its control. GTR are a competent operator and are delivering a plan to tackle the several large-scale challenges faced on the network.

Simply changing the management will not help and could put at risk the progress being made already. Taking the franchise from GTR would also delay the improvements that the operator is bringing in, such as new, longer and more spacious trains on its routes. It would also create a period of uncertainty which would not be in passengers' best interests.

8. What about compensation for passengers as promised by the previous Prime Minister?

We are continuing to look carefully at the issue of compensation for Southern passengers.

9. How will this benefit passengers? What passengers want is a reliable service and not to feel ripped off – why aren't you focusing on that?

All of our efforts are focussed on giving passengers a reliable service. The project board will oversee the £20m fund and closer working between GTR and Network Rail to improve performance for Southern customers.

The £20m fund will tackle problems on the line placing more rapid response teams on the franchise, accelerating the replacement of worn track, and hiring extra staff at key stations including East Croydon and Gatwick to make sure trains get away on time.

The government is also clear that GTR and Network Rail must work together to resolve issues earlier and ensure a better service for passengers.

10. Has much has Southern being fined for its poor performance?

The operator is penalised for repeated poor performance of train services. Under this regime, just over £2m has been levied against GTR for cancellations and short-formations.

11. What has Southern/GTR paid out in compensation to passengers so far?

Southern has paid out £2,044,000 since April 2016 to passengers through 'delay repay' compensation.

Project Board

12. How will the project board work? What powers will it have?

The project board will be jointly 'owned' by NR and GTR. Chris Gibb is being tasked to find and enable short, medium and longer term changes to improve the performance of the railway. The short term changes may include practical solutions on the ground and the medium and longer term changes could look at improved ways of working within both organisations to provide what is best for the passenger at every level.

13. Has this been forced on GTR/NR? Were they aware of this prior to today's announcement?

The Secretary of State and Rail Minister have met regularly with both Network Rail and GTR since taking up their posts. Both organisations were fully consulted about these measures and are completely supportive of them. The project board will suggest how we achieve closer working and make things work better for the public.

14. What role will the passengers' representative have?

The representative will make sure that the passengers' perspective is taken in to account in all decision-making and improvements properly reflect passenger demands.

15. How will the passenger representative be chosen?

The passenger representative will be chosen after consultation with relevant line of route MPs. More details will follow in due course.

16. Is the project board permanent?

No. It is expected to present its findings later this year and changes that can be made will be implemented as soon as possible.

17. How will it work with NR/GTR?

NR/GTR already work closely together in many operational and strategic matters. This board will give focus and practical support to ensuring this relationship becomes even closer – including recommendations and implementation of changes if this is required. The board has the support of both NR and GTR at the highest levels, so will be able to implement recommendations swiftly.

18. Does this indicate a lack of faith in NR and GTR?

No. We want the Southern network to be run by a team of people who work together to make sure passengers get decent journeys and that problems are dealt with quickly. This review will suggest how we achieve closer working and make things work better for the public.

£20m NR fund

19. What will this £20m fund be used for?

The £20m fund will tackle problems on the line, including replacing worn track and hiring extra staff at key stations including East Croydon and Gatwick, to make sure trains get away on time.

The investment includes:

£2m investment in additional rapid response teams

These teams will be located close to known hotspots, reducing the time taken to fix things when needed

£0.8m investment in additional signal supervisors

Increase amount of expertise involved in making decisions about service regulation so that the best possible decisions are made to keep trains services flowing across the network

£0.4m investment to speed up identification of causes of delay

This will mean management action can be focused on where it is most needed

£1m investment to trial and test platform/dispatch staff infrastructure at key stations

This will help 'on-time' departure at East Croydon and Gatwick stations

£3.5m investment in tackling seasonal delays for vegetation management

Doubling the number of teams clearing vegetation at high risk locations will help 'on-time' delivery

£2m new track through old tunnels

Replacing worn track where delays often occur in critical tunnels on the route

£0.9m investment in a bridge strike prevention

Implement a series of measures to minimise impact of bridge strikes (flashing lights, signage)

£2.5m investment in accelerated track maintenance

This will allow NR to undertake the best preventative maintenance interventions.

£2m accelerated investment in new train crew accommodation at Victoria

Improve train crew turnaround time and right time despatch

£4.9m accelerated investment in Depot flow improvement

Right Time start up at Selhurst and Epsom Depots

20. Is this enough? What is the scale of the problems that need addressing?

This is a short –term initiative to address problems now. Longer term solutions are being worked on, and will benefit from the learning from the work carried out by this project board.

We believe the changes announced today will improve the performance of the Southern network and train services and restore passenger confidence.