Why are operations important?

Now more than ever professional operators are so important to the success of the industry.
Our Progress to Charter
Since its inception, IRO has structured itself and behaved as if it already was a Chartered organisation so that come the day we did petition the Privy Council, we would not need to interrupt our Quality processes and membership provision in an extraordinary way.

The Institution of Railway Operators... The Vision:
- Professional Operation
- Important?
- A Voice in the Review
- Why is Operations Important?
- IRO and The Williams Review
- Why Should I Be Interested?

Welcome/Contents

Welcome/Contents

Why is Operations Important?

IRO and The Williams Review

The Williams Review was established in September 2018 to recommend the most appropriate organisational and commercial frameworks to support the delivery of the government’s vision for the railway. It is looking at the commercial set up on the railway. It is looking at whether the current industry structure makes accountability clear to customers and funders. It aims to deliver a railway that is financially sustainable, provides good value for money and is flexible enough to take advantage of new opportunities and innovations. Finally it seeks to help improve industries in the industry and reduce disruption to customers.

The review will publish its findings in autumn 2019 and the government intends to respond to the recommendations from 2020. In the first six months of the review the team have seen 130 different interest groups. On 28th February members of the IRO Board met with members of the Williams Review to speak on behalf of railway operators. At that session we made three main points to the review team. Firstly that professional operators are critically important to delivering the sort of railways that customers want. Secondly that the IRO would like to help this review refine its thinking in the second half of the review. Finally we explained that the IRO could be in a good position to help the industry understand and respond to the final conclusions later in 2019.

Operators Are Important

The review is very clear that the industry must deliver for customers. We emphasised the point that operators are the section of the industry that is closest to customers. More so than any other part of the industry it is railway men and women on trains, at stations and in control centres that are in closest contact with the users of the railway. We have the greatest opportunity to understand what customers need and that should give our views extra weight. On the other hand the current railway structure does not serve the operating profession well. The commercial structure of the industry separates operational roles like controllers and train planners into separate organisations. That makes it hard to work efficiently, it makes it harder to understand the full context of the railway we work in and it can make it more difficult to gain a breadth of experience in an operational career. In fact the current industry structure is one reason why the IRO was created, to provide opportunities for operators to learn from one another and to develop their skills. The industry is fortunate that through the IRO education programme, through the structure for continuous professional development and through IRO’s involvement in apprenticeship programmes the IRO strengthens the competence of operators in all their core competency area when they can easily make it easier for them to deliver for customers.

Why Should I Be Interested?

The Williams Review will certainly affect the way the industry is structured and run over the next few years. The government says that it is determined to make the industry more responsive to customers and is determined to make changes in response to the Williams recommendations. If you work in the industry it is hard to see that this will not affect you. But as operators it is important that the review delivers for us: to make our roles easier so we can deliver better for the customers we see every day. The IRO is your route to get your voice heard as a person that makes the railway run. Please take the time to give us your views.

The top level of objectives are:
- Higher passenger satisfaction and greater public confidence through improved experience and value for money
- Improving long term affordability and value for the taxpayer
- Growing social, environmental and economic contributions to the country (including through promoting freight traffic)
- The aspects of the problem statement are:
  - The rail sector too often loses sight of its customers - both passengers and freight
  - Over recent years it has come to lack a single strategic direction
  - It has become fragmented and accountabilities are not always clear
  - The sector needs to be more productive and tackle its long-term costs
  - The sector is struggling to innovate and adapt

The review team believe that the following changes are needed to achieve the review objectives:
- Focus on users
- Accountability and leadership
- Decision-making at the right level
- Collaboration
- Long-term thinking and innovation
- Delivery capability, including change
- Workforce engagement and diversity

The review team are now asking for comments on their conclusions so far in a call for evidence. The report document can be found here: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/the-williams-rail-review

The IRO want to make sure that operators continue to be represented in this call for evidence and in the development of the final conclusions from the review. We would like to hear the views of IRO Members and Fellows on the interim conclusions and on the subsequent work of the review. If we understand your views we can make sure they are heard by the review team. You should already have received an email asking for your views. You can respond using the link in the email or by contacting us on Twitter @IRO_UK.

A Role in Responding to the Recommendations

When the Williams Review makes its final recommendations later this year the industry will need to absorb the recommendations and act on them.

In previous years IRO has organised cross industry events to help respond to the challenges of severe weather events and to support implementation of digital technology. As one of the largest professional bodies in the rail industry the IRO will be well placed to bring people together from different companies to learn about the review and plan a way forward. The review has already identified leadership as an important area for improvement. IRO will be able to work with senior industry leaders. But the area structure of the IRO means that we will be able to involve frontline members in this process too.

We have offered the IRO as facilitator as the industry understands the conclusions, works out the implications for the industry and plans a way forward.

We are now of a sufficient size to approach the Privy Council on this subject and in order to gain the most from this process we intend to begin this year on an informal basis. We did a large amount of the groundwork for this initiative in 2018 but since then have further strengthened our offering and would like that to reflect in our informal submission.

We will keep you posted about our progress - so far as the process itself will allow. Here is a reminder: In an earlier article to you about why we are seeking this and what it will give your professional organisation. If you do need to explain IRO’s ambitions to anyone you can refer to this with authority.

The Institution of Railway Operators is the only Professional Institution whose focus and specialism is railway operations. Its vision is to ‘Support improvement in quality of the railway operations workforce and help railway organisations succeed.’ In short, it seeks to raise the profile of rail organisations succeed.”

We believe the granting of a Royal Charter of Incorporation would:
- Underline the need for rail operators to be seen as professional practice for passenger, customer and public good
- Improve standards in all aspects of railway operations in measurable ways.
- Give credibility to the concept of structured CPD in the workforce.
- Support the promotion of railway operations as a respected and rewarding career.
- Provide a guarantee of the authoritative standing of the exportable knowledge of the Institution (itself a product of the national rail workforce) contributing to the national economy.

It does not seem logical or sensible that railway operations organisations are denied the opportunity of using such a trusted mechanism for assessing and promoting competency in their core competency area when they can easily do this with their support and e.g. HP or accountancy. We therefore intend to ask for the power to create a new Register of Chartered Railway Operators.

The benefits then being:
- The establishment of an approved inventory of Operators with standardised levels of proven knowledge, experience and commitment
- A focus on the profession to encourage more within the profession to know what excellence is and to strive for it
- Underpinning the national skill set with tools to progress career and professional development.
What is the Academy?

The Train Driver Academy has been devised, launched and funded by the rail industry to improve, standardise and formalise train driver training. It will make career paths and options clearer for train drivers through improvements to training and improve recruitment of drivers so our drivers better represent the communities they serve.

The Academy is a virtual network of training providers existing online to support the industry by increasing the throughput of trainees and improving the quality of training. It will also support the roll out of the Train Driver Level 3 apprenticeships.

The Train Driver Academy recruitment website has been designed to attract the best talent and a diversity plan will help the industry collaborate on national initiatives.

From April 2018 the Academy becomes a standalone organisation with a Board chaired by Katrina Denny, HR Director at East Midlands Trains. Support and delivery will be provided by a dedicated team at RDG led by Phil Barrett who has attested that, “the Train Driver Academy now has real momentum.”

The North East’s largest Training Driver Academy Conference on 21st May which will be attended by a cross section from the industry, further education establishments, students, and employers.

New Driver training

The Academy provides a new basic training programme, standardised and common across the industry. The training uses blended learning and is offered has already proven to be highly effective, with five women receiving promotions after attending the first programme.

Role Models

The Academy’s role models programme, launched in November 2018 for women aspiring to move into their first management or supervisory role. Applications for joining the first cohort were over-subscribed so an additional three role models will be added from Freight operators and On-Track companies.

The programme is highly practical and interactive covering a range of topics, including managing financial resources, team building, handling conflict and communication. It is set up as a reciprocal mentoring programme, it is set up as a two-way learning experience with the women benefiting from senior leaders sharing their advice and experience and senior leaders gaining insights into what these women may experience in a male-dominated industry and workplace.

The Step Up programme was designed and launched in November 2018 for women aspiring to move into their first management or supervisory role. Applications for joining the first cohort were over-subscribed so an additional three programmes are now being launched, providing more than 60 women with an opportunity to attend the development workshops. The learning offered has already proven to be highly effective, with five women receiving promotions after attending the first programme.

Training material is hosted on the Academy’s new Learning Management System which trainees access through mobile devices.

The changing face of the driver role

A key aim of the Academy is to increase diversity among train drivers so that our drivers better represent the communities they serve. Currently, the majority of Train Drivers are men with only 5% of drivers being female. Only 5.6% of drivers come from a BAME background and the Academy is focused on encouraging applicants from all backgrounds to apply for exciting careers in train driving.

A new website for the Academy www.traindriveracademy.co.uk provides all the information a potential applicant might need and includes stories and advice from over 20 role models all currently working as a part of the Train Driver job family. The website hosts information on the application and testing process with practice test papers available on the site as well as tips on how to prepare to sit them.

Role Models

I recently had the pleasure of ‘firing’ interviews with a diverse group of role models from a range of Train Operating Companies including South Eastern, LNER, Greater Anglia and YTR. All role models are a part of the Train Driver job family and their experiences of training for and doing the job are featured on the Driver Academy website to give potential applicants valuable insight into what they can expect if they become a Train Driver. New role models will be added from Freight operators and On-Track companies.

Our role models were extremely positive about the work of the Academy and pleased to tell people why they should choose Train Driving as a career.

Glorianna Johnson, a High Speed Driver South Eastern said, “I am an ordinary girl and I never thought I could do this job, but if me today sharing my experience motivates or secstices somebody to dream to become a Driver then I say just go for it!”

Jocia Thompson, a Driver Instructor from South Eastern said, “It’s great that we’ve been invited to share our stories. Anyone can become a train driver. If you put your mind to it anyone can do it but first I would say research the role and hopefully the website will help with that”

Gary Glibb from LNER said, “I have the best office view in the world with driving trains up and down the east coast. It’s great that I’ve had the opportunity to share what I love about my job with potential applicants”

Laura McDonald a Driver with Southern said, “One of my friends convinced me to apply for a role, I was actually a nurse at the time. It was the best thing I ever did”

Summary

Our people are the most valuable resource we have and train drivers are critical to the success of the industry. The Train Driver Academy is the industry working together to make a real difference to the number of trainees, skills development via use of the apprenticeship, and to increase diversity.

Having tied the Academy Recruitment & Diversity work stream since July, in collaboration with people from across the industry, I’ve been really impressed by the enthusiasm of the group and the ambition of the Academy to lead change across the industry.
We asked you for your views on “What would you like the Williams Rail Review to know?”

So what did you say?
Learning and Development Day

Following on from the success of last year’s event, the Institution once again held a corporate member Learning and Development and Organisational Development Mastermind event at the Wesley hotel in London.

The event took place on the 7th March and several TOCs and FOCs were in attendance to share best practice, experiences and to discuss the agenda for the day which included the following:

- Operations – Keeping pace with change
- Equality Diversity and Inclusion
- Succession Planning or Competency
- National Driver Standards Training
- Management Development – a holistic approach

This day proved to be a great success once again, and feedback indicated that the event found both the event and the networking opportunity to be useful.

Mark Bennett, National Driver Training & Development Manager for LNER was in attendance: “The event was a really good opportunity to meet other Learning & Development professionals from across the industry. Lots of time was available to discuss initiatives and hot topics. I was invited to speak about the Train Driver Academy as I lead up the Recruitment & Diversity part of the programme. It focuses on how we attract the best talent from all backgrounds into driver roles and gives the industry a brilliant platform to drive diversity.”

The Institution would like to thank all those who attended for their time and valuable contribution to the discussions. The group requested a similar event again in the future and those who are interested in attending should register their interest via iro@railwayoperators.co.uk.

Canadian Visit

Last November, the Institution was delighted to attend a two-day workshop with Canadian construction company Aecon, in Toronto.

Billions of Canadian Dollars have been invested in the expansion of rail in Ontario alone. Consequently, the country is looking to upskill their existing workforce population. The visit acted as a starting point for an exciting potential partnership which would see some of IRO’s learning provisions extended into Canada. Discussion took place at Aecon’s east Headquarters, with key Aecon figures extended into Canada. Discussion took place at Aecon’s east Headquarters, with key Aecon figures extended into Canada. Discussion took place at Aecon’s east Headquarters, with key Aecon figures extended into Canada. Discussion took place at Aecon’s east Headquarters, with key Aecon figures extended into Canada. Discussion took place at Aecon’s east Headquarters, with key Aecon figures extended into Canada. Discussion took place at Aecon’s east Headquarters, with key Aecon figures extended into Canada. Discussion took place at Aecon’s east Headquarters, with key Aecon figures extended into Canada. Discussion took place at Aecon’s east Headquarters, with key Aecon figures extended into Canada. Discussion took place at Aecon’s east Headquarters, with key Aecon figures extended into Canada.

During the two-day workshop many exciting ideas and opportunities were shared. These included the possibility of implementing a flying faculty module for the potential delivery of this programme. This would involve selected IRO tutors flying to Canada to teach the Canadian students in their own country. It was established that there would be a pressing need to capture tutorials online for any potential future deliveries. As the workshop progressed it was also concluded that a Canadian awarding body might be needed.

The Institution looks forward to seeing where this opportunity leads to in the future.

Notice of the Annual General Meeting of Institution of Railway Operators

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Institution of Railway Operators with company registration number 07655952 and whose registered address is Eight Floor, 6 New Street Square, London EC4A 3AQ.

When: Saturday 11th May 2019
Where: Wesley Hotel & Conference Venue, 81-103 Euston St, Kings Cross, London NW1 2EZ

As a member you don’t need to attend the AGM in person to have your say as you will be able to vote by post.

The AGM pack, including agenda and voting forms, are available for download, on our website at www.railwayoperators.co.uk.

Please notify IRO of your intention to attend by May 9th 2019.

IRO Welcomes Its 8000th Member

IRO membership continues to be a story of increasing growth as it carries on bucking the trend.*

More than ever our corporate member employees are taking up IRO membership, so that they can access the member benefits for free. Over the last ten months the IRO has welcomed in excess of 100 new members every month and the Institution has seen a 17% year on year growth since March 2018. As a result of this growth, the IRO was delighted to welcome its 8000th member in February this year.

New Board Member

Andrew Jones

Digital Initiation Director, Digital Railway Programme, Network Rail

A career railway employee Andrew joined the industry in 1981 and spent his early years in signaler and controller roles while moving through supervisory and management position. He was Area Operations Manager for routes into Liverpool and then on the WCML, Euston to Crewe. He had the accountability as the Professional Head of Operations for Railtrack and then as Head of Operations Competency he looked to drive the introduction of non-technical skills for frontline operators.

Since 2014 Andrew has been working on the delivery of new technology first within the National Operating Strategy Programme and now within the Digital Railway Programme. His team have recently delivered the traffic management systems now in use; and his mantra for successful delivery and achieving benefit from new technology is to strive to put the operator and their needs at the forefront of design.

Andrew says: “I am passionate about railway operations and absolutely believe we need to enhance the capability of operations and operators and professionalise the role and function. I believe the IRO approach and capability needs to be used and fully supported by the industry to drive operations and the rail industry forward to meet customer needs and I can’t wait to serve on the Board to help take everything forward.”
has been to remove plastic membership cards, which we are replacing on the membership app survey which will be sent to all members used in the app development. So please do give us your feedback as the project takes shape, we will be asking you what you would provide you with direct access to IRO services at your fingertips. membership card will become part of an IRO membership app which will be served on the Board since September 2017. The incoming Chair, Howard Smith, himself a Fellow of the IRO, has served on the Board in January 2013 and served two terms of three years, the most permitted by the IRO Members’ Agreement. Since taking over as Chair in November 2016, Alex has presided over a period of great growth in IRO including:

• Membership growing from 5,500 to 8,000.
• The commencement of the petition to the Privy Council to recognise IRO with a Royal Charter.
• The launch of several new levels of learning programme from level 3 Apprenticeships to a Masters programme.
• Increased engagement with members through higher attendance learning events and online forums.

Alex resigned at the IRO Board meeting on 26 February 2019 saying: “I have been proud to have led IRO through an important period of growth. The Board I leave behind will continue with its work very well. I am confident that under the leadership of Howard Smith, IRO will continue to meet the existing and emerging needs of the industry and look forward to leading continued growth during my period as Chair.”

All Change at the Top

The role of IRO Chair has transitioned from Alex Hynes, Managing Director of the ScotRail Alliance, to Howard Smith, Chief Operating Officer, Crossrail, Transport for London.

Alex, who is currently the Managing Director of ScotRail Alliance - a partnership between Abellio ScotRail and Network Rail Scotland - joined the IRO Board in January 2013 and served two terms of three years, the most permitted by the IRO Members’ Agreement. Since taking over as Chair in November 2016, Alex has presided over a period of great growth in IRO including:

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The incoming Chair, Howard Smith, himself a Fellow of the IRO, has served on the Board since September 2017.

Howard said: “The Board and team of IRO would like to thank Alex for his time with IRO. With such an engaged, professional membership and knowledge network, I am confident that IRO is well positioned to meet the existing and emerging needs of the industry and look forward to leading continued growth during my period as Chair.”
The result really is worth the effort

An open and insightful conversation with three of our recent graduates.

Our academic programme in Railway Operations Management is a key and in our aim to improve the technical and general skills, knowledge and competence of those engaged in the operation of the railways. On page 8 you can find a list of our latest graduates.

The programme is structured over three levels, Certificate, Diploma and Degree and all require hard work and dedication to achieve the desired result. This year, the Institutions Learning and Development Manager, Adam Fenton, caught up with three of our latest graduates to get some insight on their learning journey with the IRO, and find out what drew them to the programme.

First steps

We start with Mary Connolly. Mary works as a Station Manager for Irish Rail and began her Diploma studies with us in 2016; “I decided I wanted to undertake an academic qualification that was relevant to my career and would enable me to acquire new skills and knowledge. I received a lot of valuable information and guidance from colleagues who were previous graduates from the programme, and I was delighted when I was accepted on to the Diploma Course.”

Whilst pleased to have been accepted, Mary admitted she did not return to education without any hesitation, describing it as ‘big step’. “Initially I found it difficult to get back into the mindset of studying, researching and writing. He even got to grips with the technology for accessing course material and submitting assignments was daunting. However, I soon discovered that help and advice was readily available that helped me make the process as straightforward as possible.”

Mary’s fellow Graduate Adele Wheeler shared her initial hesitation, adding “I didn’t think I would ever be able to get a chance to study at this level with the commitments of my full-time job and my children - the programme and the way it is set up allowed me to do this.”

Adele works as Programme Support Manager for GWR and begin her certificate studies in 2016. By her own admission, she had some personal issues to overcome. “Within the first month of my studies I split up with my husband and I found myself working full time and looking after my children full time. As you can imagine this was a massive strain. To her credit, Adele didn’t let this stop her. At times it could be a bit of a struggle with my outside commitments but once I knuckled down, I found I could have a work/life balance.”

Time Management

Time management is a key part on any academic programme and Mary agreed that this was something she had to master as the course went on. Inevitably there were times when juggling commitments was difficult, so I had to remain positive, focus on what I hoped to achieve and avoid becoming a pro at procrastination.”

Karl Belcher works for Etihad Rail DB as a Railway Systems Telecoms Supervisor and graduated from the degree level last November. He too agreed that procrastination was an obstacle he had to overcome. “I was able to improve the issue by learning how not to procrastinate through listening to audio books and podcasts and tips from my mentor.” Karl is now one of several IRO graduates who have completed their studies whilst working internationally, proving location is no barrier to personal development. He discussed his initial attraction to the course. “I felt it was the right time to start developing my overall knowledge and understanding of how the railways work.”

Personal Development

Mary agreed the knowledge she had gained was crucial to her development. “On completion of the course I feel I had a better understanding of the Rail Industry as a whole and I had gained an insight into aspects of the Industry such as Engineering and Train Planning that I would not have had the opportunity to learn about in my current role.”

Once embarking on their studies, all three of our featured graduates found the challenge beneficial. Towards the end of their studies, students are required to complete a work-based project which also acts as an opportunity to consolidate all they have learnt during the programme. Karl in particular found his academic skills improved as the course went on “you learn and improve on much more than just understanding railway businesses, such as how to - Harvard reference, sourcing and academic writing methods.”

So, having been through the IRO’s academic programme, do our graduates have any advice for those looking to take the plunge?

“If I was to share a tip with future students I would say don’t ignore problems. If you are struggling to meet a deadline let your tutor know and, in my experience, they will help in any way they can to reach a resolution. Also don’t set unrealistic goals for yourself, there is nothing more disheartening than continually failing to meet your own targets.” says Mary.

Adele agrees sharing any problems is the best way to go, “If you are struggling for any reason or need further guidance on your assignments, never be afraid to contact your tutor – I found them all to be really helpful.”

Is it worth it?

“The result really is worth the effort.” Mary admits. “Looking back to when I first started this course the time has gone very quickly. I really enjoyed my time studying with the IRO and GCU and I met a lot of great people that I now consider not only colleagues but friends.”

Adele admitted that completion of the course left her feeling “Very proud,” adding “It was a great achievement, especially in 2 of the toughest years of my life.”

And how did Karl feel upon graduation? “Railway, happy and proud of myself for rising the challenge and achieving the goal.”

Maybe its time for you to take the risk and get the rewards. If you would like further information on the academic programme, contact Adam Fenton on learning@railwayoperators.co.uk.

Student Survey

At the beginning of the year the Institution’s Learning and Development Team contacted graduates and current students of the academic programme in Railway Operations Management.

The purpose of the communication was to ask our alumni to get involved in the IRO’s strategic review of its courses and its overall purpose.

The task was to complete a survey on several topics, which ranged from:

• Academic Support
• Organisation and Management
• Learning Resources
• Personal Development
• Overall satisfaction with the course
• The teaching on the course
• Assessment and Feedback
• Career Development

Graduate and student feedback was extremely positive, with the vast majority aggreasing that they were satisfied with the quality of the course, the support they had received, and the positive impact the course had on their confidence, communication skills and their ability to tackle unfamiliar problems. Students also welcomed and welcomed the recent introduction of the IRO’s mid module webinars on the academic programme.

The Institution received responses from students past and present covering all three levels of the academic programme. Student and graduate feedback is invaluable to the IRO in its continuous pursuit to cater to the learning needs of those working in all areas of Railway Operations.

We would like to thank all those who took the time to share their thoughts with us. The information will be used during the mandatory programme review process with our academic partner, Glasgow Caledonian University.

Ops Handbook

The photo offers a rare sighting of this pre-production volume taking itself off for a final proof read before being available to us once again.

Those of you waiting eagerly for the latest edition of the Ops Handbook will no doubt be pleased to see evidence of its progress towards the printers.

With updated, fresh content and a chapter structure which uses the twelve categories of Professional Operations knowledge, the book is an essential read.

Adele Wheeler
Programme Support Manager
GWR

Karl Belcher
MROI
Railway Systems Telecoms Supervisor,
Etihad Rail DB

Mary Connolly
AIRO
Station Manager
Irish Rail
November 2018 Graduates celebrate their success

The Institution is thrilled to present the latest graduates of our academic programme in Railway Operations Management, delivered in partnership with Glasgow Caledonian University.

On 28th November 2018, graduates gathered at the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall to celebrate their well-deserved recognition. Family and friends were in attendance to share the excitement and achievements of their loved ones.

Professor Pamela Gillespie CBE, the university’s Principal and Vice-Chancellor was on hand to congratulate each of our students individually as they collected their award parchments. The ceremony was preceded by a celebratory reception which took place in Glasgow the evening before. This gave our students the opportunity to celebrate their achievement with family, friends as well as both IRO and GCU staff.

Applications are now open for the Railway Operations Management programme to begin later this year. Please contact learning@railwayoperators.co.uk if you would like further information.

The Institution would like to congratulate the following graduates:

Daniel Cashon (Keolis),
Ian Cotton (Great Western Railway)
Rebecca Eden (Great Western Railway)
Jake Lewis Falcon (Great Western Railway)
Lewis George Crossrail
Bradley Gould (Great Western Railway)
Andrew Green (Great Western Railway)
David Just (Irish Rail)
Leo Bryce Martin (Great Western Railway)
Eugenia Miller (Network Rail)
Jordan Michael Rigby (Great Western Railway)
Xavier Sinclair (Great Western Railway)
James Alexander Stevenson (ScotRail)
Samuel Topwell (Great Western Railway)
Aaron Paul Wasingham (Great Western Railway)
Adela Ramona Louise Wheeler (Great Western Railway)
Chloe White (Great Western Railway)
Daniel Whitford (Great Western Railway)
Diploma of Higher Education
in Railway Operations Management;
Derek Halnan ARO (Irish Rail)
Rachael Blackman Shotton ARO (Maersky Rail)
Eughan Brennan ARO (Irish Rail)

Lauran Challa ARO (South Western Railway)
Leanne Parm Chandria ARO (WSP)
Mark Charr ARO (STR)
Mary Connolly ARO (Irish Rail)
Don Doyle ARO (Irish Rail)
Samantha Evans ARO (West Midlands Trains)
David William George ARO (Chiltern Railway)
Samuel James Hancock ARO (South Eastern Railway)
Adam Kocog ARO (Irish Rail)
Kevin John Langleby ARO (Weta Rail)
James Luke ARO (South Western Railway)
Peter Makosch ARO (East Midlands Trains)
William Malone ARO (Irish Rail)
Stewart Marshall ARO (ScotRail)
Rosaland McGuire ARO (ScotRail)
Sinead Study ARO (Irish Rail)
Patrick Shrawn ARO (Irish Rail)
John Shipston ARO (South Western Railway)
Karl Sutton ARO (Irish Rail)
Bacheller of Science
in Railway Operations Management;
Karl Bechler ARO (Irish Rail)
Lauren Challa ARO (South Western Railway)
Leanne Parm Chandria ARO (WSP)
Mark Charr ARO (STR)
Mary Connolly ARO (Irish Rail)
Don Doyle ARO (Irish Rail)
Samantha Evans ARO (West Midlands Trains)
David William George ARO (Chiltern Railway)
Samuel James Hancock ARO (South Eastern Railway)

Graham Colin Caskie MRO (Great Western Railway)
Andrew Gray MRO (Transport for London)
Joseph Markus Rose Finlay MRO (Department for Transport)
Brian Gould MRO (Irish Rail)
Carlyn Glean MRO (Network Rail)
Matthew Guttridge MRO (Amvia)
Andrew Harper MRO (Transport Scotland)
Sara Kettlewell MRO (JNERT)
David Kippax FIRO (Network Rail)
Isabell MacGregor Curtis MRO (Irish Rail)
Barry McClaughlin MRO (Network Rail)
Hannah Martin MRO (MTR Crossrail)
Jon Morgan MRO (Great Western Railway)
Paul David O’Brien MRO (ScotRail)
David Pender MRO (Irish Rail)
Aas Simon MIRO (Network Rail)
Lauren Smith MRO (Network Rail)
Paul John Standford MRO (Network Rail)
Wayne Geoffrey Underwood MRO (Network Rail)
Neil Simon Weatherill MIRO (Transport for London)
Brian James Winnett MRO (London Underground)
David Woolandtjie MIRO (GTR)

IRO Masters Programme Launched

The Institution is thrilled to present the latest graduates of our academic programme in Railway Operations Management, delivered in partnership with Glasgow Caledonian University.

In January, the Institution welcomed its first cohort of students onto our brand-new MBA programme. Officially titled ‘Applied Professional Practice MBA Degree apprenticeship’, this programme has been contextualised for rail through two 15 credit IRO pathway modules that focus on Railway Systems Integration and Comparative Railway Operations. In addition, any students on the rail pathway will also be required to complete a 60 credit applied MBA rail project. We are pleased to be delivering this programme with our academic partner, Glasgow Caledonian University.

The demand for an IRO MBA has been high for some time, and this offering runs through the Apprenticeship standard system which allows those residing in England to claim their fees back. This programme is structured into eight taught 15 credit modules plus a 60 credit MBA project. The programme is two years in duration and is taught over 6 academic trimesters, with the final two trimesters dedicated solely to the applied project module. The delivery format follows a similar pattern for each trimester. This involves a week of classroom-based delivery at the university’s London campus, followed by eleven weeks of work based, distance learning facilitated through the university’s learning platform, GCU Learn.

Tony Badger is one of 15 students who formed part of our pilot group that began their MBA studies in January. Tony works as Senior Operations Expert for Saudi Arabian Railways and gave us an insight into his experience on the course so far: “Doing it with the IRO has given me the confidence to do it. I am towards the end of the first module now, yes, I’ve found it tough, yet enjoyable. If you’re thinking of doing it, do it! I did and I don’t regret it.”

Interested? If you would like to find out further information, or discuss submitting an application, please contact the Institutions’ Learning and Development Manager Adam Fenton on learning@railwayoperators.co.uk.
Tutor Development Day

On Saturday 9th February, IRO staff and tutors gathered at the Wesley Hotel in London for our annual tutor development day.

The IRO’s academic programme in Railway Operations Management is currently going through a review with our academic partner, Glasgow Caledonian University. This process is required to take place every 4-5 years, and this formed a key part of our discussion during the day.

The IRO tutor team continues to grow and further tutors have been recruited in 2019. All our tutors are handpicked industry experts who between them have a wealth of knowledge in all areas of Railway Operations. The purpose of the day was to give tutors the opportunity to network, share best practice as well as debate ideas for further improving the quality and appeal of the IRO’s academic offering.

The day was led by IRO CEO Fiona Tordoff. The agenda for the day included a refresh session on plagiarism-checker Turnitin, an update on the academic programme, a tutorial on how to create great online content as well as a discussion around the problems currently facing the Railway Industry. Tutors were also given an update on the academic programme. This included a look at student numbers, the impact of the recently introduced apprenticeship levy, our 2018 graduation and the introduction of our master’s programme with QOU.

The excitement of this recently introduced masters level programme was shared amongst all those in attendance.

Tutors from all three levels of the programme were in attendance and worked both individually and in groups to make some excellent contributions throughout the day. Our tutor team are a key part of the academic programme, and the IRO would like to extend their thanks to all those who attended this development day and contributed their ideas throughout.

IRO Learning Opportunities

Looking for your next development opportunity? We might have what you need. The IRO’s learning provision is evolving and might just provide your next CPD opportunity.

Academic Programme

The institution offers qualifications in Railway Operations Management at Certificate, Diploma and Degree level. Delivered in partnership with Glasgow Caledonian University, our academic programme is rigorously tested and subject to continual improvement. Through blended learning you will be tutored by leading industry professionals and academics. You will also be challenged to gain new knowledge, adding value to your business. Each course within this academic programme allows students to gain an understanding of the wider industry and how their role fits within it.

The next intake will begin their studies in October and the application is recommended if you wish to secure your place with the next cohort. If you wish further information please contact Adam Fenton on learning@railwayoperators.co.uk

Short Courses

Introduction to Rail

This introductory course is ideal for those who are new to the industry or more experienced members from support functions within rail organisations. Regularly delivered at the National Training Academy for Rail (NTAR), the taught version of this course is delivered by capable and knowledgeable facilitators. Topics covered during the day include First Principles, Planning and Delivery and Development of the Railways.

The next scheduled deliveries of this course are 23rd May, 22nd August and the 7th November.

Opotational Planning Masterclass

Re-launched earlier this year to great success, this classroom-based course is designed for those who are relatively new to the subject as well as those who wish to further their career development and expertise in this field by setting their knowledge in a wider context. The updated programme covered an introduction to timetabling, the network, the railway as a system, and the consequent need for planning. The course was delivered by Luke Gardener, Permanent Timetable Manager for TransPennine Express, and Edmund Waddelove, Scheme Sponsor at Network Rail.

This course will now move to a bi-annual delivery, with the next course scheduled to take place during the 8-10 November. If you would like to secure a place on any of our short courses or would like further information, please contact Aisha Mazhar on develop@railwayoperators.co.uk

Apprenticeships

IRO are the training provider for the following two management apprenticeships: level 3 Team Leader/Supervisor, and level 5 Operations/Departmental Manager. In addition to the management training, we contextualise for rail by offering rail workshops by industry professionals across the broad spectrum of operations.

The programmes are delivered through blended learning with a mix of taught workshops, webinars and online resources. In addition, you will develop an e-Portfolio to demonstrate your new knowledge, skills and workplace behaviours. You will have regular reviews with your line manager and an IRO reviewer to allow you to demonstrate your progress and ask for opportunities for further development activities. Current employers have rapidly noticed the added value to their business as apprentices arrived with their new skills during the 20% of time given for off-the-job learning development.

As apprenticeships are funded through the government apprenticeship levy and require you to be given time for off-the-job learning, they can only be started with agreement from your employer and your line manager. Several new cohorts are starting during 2019, in several locations, contact your Learning & Development team to find out if there is a group you could join. If you would like further information about IRO apprenticeships please contact Tina Morris on knowledge@railwayoperators.co.uk

Ops Planning Course

The Institutions’ popular ‘Operational Planning in the Railway Business’ short course was relaunched in Birmingham earlier this year to great reviews.

From the 25-27th January, students and trainers gathered at ‘The Studio’ in Birmingham for the weekend course. This classroom-based course is designed for those who are new to the subject as well as those who wish to further their career development and expertise in this field by setting their knowledge in a wider context. The updated programme covered an introduction to timetabling, the network, the railway as a system, and the consequent need for planning. The course was delivered by Luke Gardener, Permanent Timetable Manager for TransPennine Express, and Edmund Waddelove, Scheme Sponsor at Network Rail.

The course received positive feedback from those in attendance. Ananya Sethumadhavan works as a Planning and Performance Manager for Serco Middle East and travelled thousands of miles to be in attendance. She commented; “I recently attended the IRO Operations Planning Course delivered by the experts in the field. The course was an eye-opener for me and drastically changed the way I used to think about timetabling. In Dubai Metro and Tram, the timetables are fairly straightforward and implementing a change is relatively a simple process. To understand that there could be many stakeholders involved and the timetables and operations planning could actually impact many many people was nothing short of a surprise for me. It was also amazing to meet individuals working in different roles connected to the same domain. We shared a lot of experiences and different perspectives and this helped us in appreciating each others insights whether it be a Train Driver, a Performance Analyst, a consultant or a Network Planner.”

This course will now move to a bi-annual delivery, with the next course scheduled to take place during the 8-10 November. If you would like to secure a place on any of our short courses or would like further information, please contact Aisha Mazhar on develop@railwayoperators.co.uk or knowledge@railwayoperators.co.uk.

www.railwayoperators.co.uk
Events

Celebrating excellence at the 21st Annual Rail Business Awards

RBA Awards

The UK rail industry came together to celebrate its successes over the past year at the 21st Rail Business Awards, which took place at the Hilton Park Lane Hotel in London on 21 February 2019.

The IRO is delighted to sponsor the RBA Young Professional of the Year award, which celebrates the most outstanding young manager working within the rail industry, in any department. In terms of the numbers of entries this is among the most hotly contested categories and as all entries have to be put forward by their employers, to be nominated is a great achievement. Many congratulations to all those nominated for this award, especially to the finalists:

- Adam Taylor, GBRailheight
- David Carsell, RSS Infrastructure
- Kelby Bissell, McKinley Support Services (Infrastructure)
- Rebecca Meggs, McKinley Support Services (Infrastructure)
- Ryan Coulson, Founway
- Stephen Head, South Western Railway

Fiona Tordoff IRO, CEO was delighted to present to the award to Stephen Head of South Western Railway who was named Young Professional of the Year. The judges recognised Stephen’s willingness to go ‘above and beyond’ whilst demonstrating an eagle-eyed attention to detail, a calm approach in high pressure situations and an approachability to employees at every level of South Western Railway.

Rail Industry Collaboration at the Big Bang Fair

The Big Bang Fair is the largest celebration of science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) for young people in the UK and the biggest event in the 2019 Big Bang calendar was held at the NEC in Birmingham over four days in March.

The event inspired, engaged and informed over 80,000 people, including more than 62,000 young people, 4,500+ teachers and almost 8,000 parents. At the Big Bang Fair, the young visitors were able to get hands-on with STEM in all its glory and in numerous, interactive ways.

Following on from the success of the rail industry collaboration in 2018, this year’s event saw rail industry collaboration with Network Rail and fellow rail industry organisations partnering to deliver a shared stand representing the rail industry as a whole:

- IRO
- National Training Academy for Rail
- Rail Delivery Group
- Amey
- London North Eastern Railway

With the theme of Innovation and Sustainability, the concept of this year’s stand was to inspire young visitors to get them involved and taking them on a journey by showcasing the work which the rail industry is already doing, and the skills used to deliver a sustainable railway.

This year’s Network Rail stand design was a stylised interpretation of a train platform, with an inclusive and flexible space, where a variety of activities and partner-led experiences were able to occur simultaneously. There were over 50 volunteers on the stand delivering the activities and having career conversations to inspire, excite and help reveal more about the world of rail to the young visitors, teachers and parents.

Network Rail stood offered various activities on the day. This included a sustainability garden, where children could plant trees and interactive games around innovation and sustainability, reinforcing this year’s theme. An immersive 3D experience room and train driver simulator enabled visitors to gain virtual reality experiences which were focused around the railway industry. People like me’ was another activity run where kids took online quizzes on tablets to find out about possible career paths which they could take within the railway industry and were given information booklets on the careers which they were matched with. This was a great way to open their eyes to the various and extensive careers which are available in the Railway Industry.

Additionally, on the stand were pocket sized coding robots following the railway lines designed by the children and the University of Birmingham were showcasing their hydrogen train. The IRO ran two extremely popular activities, the first being an on-the-day Railway Quiz. Centred around the innovation and sustainability theme, the quiz was played around the Network Rail, HS2 and Atkins rail stands located throughout the exhibition hall; this activity allowed the visitors to take a journey and travel around to the different railway stands.

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This second ‘Design a Station’ activity was a take-away project to completed at school or home. This encouraged the young designers to think about the passenger’s and end journey and station experiences. The objective of this joint collaboration is to promote the rail industry to young people and showcases the exciting and rewarding opportunities that exist in the sector. With the Big Bang Fair reaching many young people, teachers and parents the aim is to change any preconceived views of the rail sector and showcase the opportunities available.

With coordination from the Routes into Rail Board and support from Network Rail and NSAR this event helps deliver part of the Rail Sector Skills Delivery Plan, which is promoting the message that a career in the rail industry is exciting, challenging and rewarding, with many opportunities for bright and able people.
After a brief welcome from CEO, Fiona Tordoff, the new Chair Howard Smith, Chief Operating Officer of Crossrail TfL continued IRO’s quirky tradition of speaking before the lunch.

Having been in the industry as an operator for over 30 years, Howard took selected scenes from his career (“Balham to Belgium to Bank”) and the wider industry it intersected to illustrate how features of rail in UK changed against the backdrop of macro economics and changing management practices over those years. In summary he explained “We’ve moved rapidly from an Operations led railway to something more diverse, more exciting, less predictable, more fragmented and in which it is harder, without Institutions like IRO to build pan-industry knowledge and careers.” Speaking of some shortcomings evident in the often funny vignettes, Howard reflected that “it reinforces the need for and the essence of the IRO itself, raising the profile for railway operations management and promoting the highest standards for the benefit of all.”

Welcoming the orientation of the Williams review towards structures supporting performance improvement, Howard Smith referred to the success of the Olympics as an exercise which “had transferable lessons of what could be achieved with something close to a guiding mind (Peter Hendy specifically and the Olympic Transport Board in general) and a culture of decisiveness and clarity as to the objectives.”

At a packed out venue in London on Friday 5th April, IRO members and guests arrived at the Brewery to connect with new and familiar faces from the operations profession.

William Barker Ltd table at the IRO Members Lunch with VIP guest Gordon Pake (third from left), himself a founder of the IRO which approaches its 21st birthday next year.

The WSP table at IRO’s Members Lunch

Extracts of Howard Smith’s speech:

“I hope I’ve said enough to reinforce the truth that railways vary enormously in size, technical advancement, context and institutional structure but there is most definitely a common thread running through them which represents the core of the operations profession.

There is still strong national and international characteristics: global manufacturers of trains and signalling but a relationship with historic, nationally differentiated infrastructure and the different purposes railways fulfil means that lessons need to be read in context.

China has amazing high speed lines with Metro but it is only now developing its first urban trains. India is adapting what is historically the world’s most expensive system by adding metros. Rail is having a renaissance in Africa with high speed from Tangiers to Casablanca and in the Gulf.

This is an area where Europe leads in many ways technically and organisationally and the UK system, by many measures, is one of Europe’s most successful – hard as it is to see it that way.

As I and others have said elsewhere, the causes of the current issues are arguably hard weed to privatise, a system based on the marginal pricing of revenue risk to reverse long term decline would always result in a very full railway that needed significant investment and a change in capacity. But that very investment is then much more difficult in a system of multiple stakeholders and multiple quasi legal rights.

In the context of continued growth there is a vital and obvious need to maintain and build the cadre of professional operators who can take railways forward in the UK independent of any structural issues.

We need the IRO and its members to keep contributing to the operational knowledge and learning and allow the current generation to move perhaps towards genteel retirement safe in the knowledge there are people with the same whole industry perspective to replace them. This is something the IRO is uniquely well placed to do.
Golden Whistle Awards 2019

South East Area

Rail industry colleagues gathered in London on 25th January to celebrate operational excellence at the 2019 Golden Whistle Awards.

Designed to promote excellence and celebrate the best of railway operations, these awards are run by the Fourth Friday Club in association with Modern Railways and in conjunction with the IRO. Now in its 10th year, these awards recognise the work of the best performing passenger and freight operators and Network Rail Routes, highlighting the importance of railway operations and recognising those individuals and teams who are striving to deliver the best of railway operations.

The IRO SE area council analysed the vast amount of industry data, ranking statistics to reflect the size of each reporting company and the importance of each section of the data. An audience of nearly 300 professionals from across the industry attended this event at the Marriott on Grosvenor Square which was hosted by Dick Fearn, formerly CEO, Irish Rail and Fellow of the IRO. This year’s keynote speaker was Dyson Crook, CEO of HS1 Ltd, while earlier in the day a morning conference on operating issues was opened by Network Rail Chief Executive Andrew Haines.

The Central Importance of the Operating Function

Andrew Haines delivered an inspiring speech on this topic and how to deliver a better service for passengers and freight by improving the everyday running of the railway.

Highlighting that providing excellent service relies on more than just infrastructure, Andrew noted how important operations are for providing this. The rail network is an interconnected system, which must operate with efficiency and expertise to provide the service required by the 4.8 million people who travel on the network every day.

Andrew shared his passion of what the railways can do for the economy and by putting operations at the heart of the railway, people and goods can be moved effectively for the economy of the country. Recognising that the 40% growth in the last 10 years, including more services on the network, longer trains and stretched dwell times, has made the railway harder to operate and with a railway this busy and congested, every second really counts.

Operating the railway is a core activity and it’s Andrew’s fundamental premise that the skills of operations have been neglected in an organisation focused on project delivery and it is his vision to have a railway that has world-class engineering, world-class project delivery and world-class operations. We need to develop whole system knowledge and expertise, with people equipped to work well together to deliver the best possible service for passenger and freight customers.

A full copy of Andrew Haines’ speech is available on the Network Rail Website www.networkrail.co.uk/who-we-are/publications-resources/speeches/ or can be accessed via the IRO LinkedIn page www.linkedin.com and search for Institution of Railway Operators.

The IRO would like to congratulate all of those who were nominated and win, with the Golden Whistles awarded for best performance and the Silver awarded for most improved. A list of all the winners can be seen on this IRO website www.railwayoperators.co.uk/about/iro-news

Welcoming a New Train Operator - How it Works

Midlands Area

W L Mahoney

A presentation on MTR Crossrail operations

On 12th March 19 members of the Midlands Area were treated to a presentation by Chris Fuoco, Head of Operational Delivery, Western Business Route, Network Rail. Chris has a wealth of experience in signalling, operations and asset management in the Western Division and was well qualified to deliver this interesting presentation.

He gave a background to the MTR Crossrail Corporation. Crossrail is a £14.8 billion project running 60 miles from Reading in the West to Shenfield and Abbeywood in the East. It is expected to increase Central London passengers by 10%. Typical of the improvements is that the journey time from London Heathrow Airport to Liverpool Street has been cut from 65 to 34 minutes.

In May 2018 they were running 4 trains per hour using Class 345 units some of which are still on test. The 345 units can be configured in 7 car and 9 car trains all of which are owned by TFL. They are all on a 30 year maintenance contract.

However, the project has been delayed even though the infrastructure is ready and it looks as if the system may not be fully operational until the end of the year.

ETCS Signalling has been installed on the Heathrow Spur and the OLE is all 25kV, AWS/TIMS is fitted on all signals underground in the 42km of new tunnels specially bored for this contract. All underground stations have platform screen doors and “moving wall displays” that are capable of being altered to give any current information required to passengers.

MTR’s operating regime means that cleanliness and inspections are paramount. Their collaboration with all the stakeholders including Network Rail is very good. Trains must maintain a gap of 3 minutes and the PPM targets are 95% but they are aiming for 100%. During times of disruption MTR aim to return to normal running within 10mins of the incident end, Chris believes that their focus on performance has improved other TOC/FOC services between Slough and Paddington. On the day of this presentation MTR were achieving 100% PPM but due to an OLE fault outside Paddington Station this fell slightly, high PPM is certainly the norm. Because of their general relentless focus on finding solutions to any problems that arise, MTR have been able to deploy resources to remedy the situation by offering assistance to the other operators, and working in a collaborative manner.

Improvements are many including “land sheriffs” who travel on every train from start of service to finish of service. The result has been that there is minimal fare evasion and virtually no anti-social behaviour. Station dwell time reductions also help.

The Class 345’s are “intelligent” units, only opening specific doors on the curved platforms at Paddington which helps reduce safety incidents.

There is plenty of collaboration between mobile operations managers/mobile incident units & emergency response units. Traffic management is under continuous development. Two new work stations are going into Thames Valley Signalling Centre to cover this section of the network.

Now that MTR have been operating successfully on the route for over 12 months, we have seen how the service has since been managed and how some of the challenges faced by the Network Rail Operations team were overcome.

The presentation was followed by a lively question and answer session. We are grateful to Chris for giving us an insight into some of the preparations that were required to make sure that the Operational Railway was ready for MTR trains. Our thanks go to him and to Cross Country Trains for hosting the event.

Keep up to date with all the latest news from IRO

Follow us on Twitter and LinkedIn to discover more about IRO, latest news and events happening near you

Follow us on... Search ‘Institution of Railway Operators’ Tweet us at... www.twitter.com/IRO_UK

More details of area events are listed on the website at www.railwayoperators.co.uk/whats-on/
Smart Ticketing

North East Area

The IRO North-East area welcomed Stephen Bond, Head of Future Retailing for Northern to give a talk on the introduction of Smart Ticketing on to the Northern network.

In partnership with Transport for the North, TransPennine Express and Northern, smartcards will be rolled out across the North during 2019. Saying goodbye to paper tickets will give passengers a faster and easier way to buy and renew tickets at their convenience in the biggest overhaul of ticketing since the introduction of paper tickets in 1830.

The event started with a brief overview of the history of ticketing on the railway, from introducing the initial paper tickets in 1830 to the revolutionary contactless payments introduced by TfL, on the London Underground. Stephen spoke passionately about how Smart Ticketing will enhance the customer experience, and ease of access to tickets on the go.

The project will be rolled out in three phases, Smartcard on Rail which will see passengers given the opportunity to purchase their product using a pre-authorised smart card, which will be their ticket to travel.

Phase two will be the move across to seamless integrated travel, with algorithms able to work out the cheapest possible product for the customer.

Phase three will be the introduction of personalised account based travel, and integrated travel between several methods of transport such as bus and train.

Stephen is working closely with Transport for The North, seconded two days a week to this governing body to ensure the transition from paper tickets to the railway, from introducing the initial paper tickets in 1830 to the revolutionary contactless payments introduced by TfL, on the London Underground. Stephen spoke passionately about how Smart Ticketing will enhance the customer experience, and ease of access to tickets on the go.

The current proposal for a full multimodal rollout is 2021 where the full benefits of Smart Ticketing will be available for passengers, including improved access to Delay Repay with the aspiration of this being fully automated.

Once the rollout is complete it will give train operators the ability to offer a selective suite of products for each customer based on their previous journeys. It will also influence day-to-day operational decisions, particularly during disruption as real-time passenger loadings will be available to control teams.

Stephen then ended the presentation with an opportunity for questions, of which there were many covering subjects such as fare evasion, the ability to offer concessionary travel through Smart Ticketing and how this technology would work on long distance routes such as the East Coast Mainline.

We would like to thank Stephen for taking his time to give a very detailed insight into the introduction of Smart Ticketing.

Electrification - An Overview

North West & North Wales

Thomas Cox AIRO

In February, 25 North West & Wales Area members attended Tatton House, Crewe to hear a presentation entitled Electrification - An Overview. The speaker was Andrew Welch (Distribution Manager, Network Rail), who is responsible for the provision and management of power via the Overhead Line Equipment, on the northern section of the West Coast Main Line.

Andrew’s talk described the means by which the power is brought to the railway infrastructure, and he then proceeded to illustrate, in detail, the equipment and processes that allow the efficient running of trains, whilst maintaining a safe and reliable power supply. By means of photographs and diagrams, attendees were able to understand the factors, which are fundamental to running a High-Speed, electrified railway.

In addition to Andrew’s informative talk, members then received a further presentation from Area Chairman, and Virgin Train Driver, Chris Madsen.

Again, using photographs and diagrams, Chris gave a Driver’s view of how the power received by the Train is utilised, not only for propulsion, but for on-board utilities, like air-conditioning, lighting, refrigeration and cooking.

Andrew and Chris, between them, conducted an extensive and informative Q&A Session, during which they were able to answer the many questions from those in attendance. Tom Cox, Area Secretary, thanked them both for their contribution to a very interesting and enjoyable evening, whilst also acknowledging Virgin Trains’ role in providing an ideal venue.

Women in Rail - Collaboration with Scotland Group

Scotland

Pauline Hamilton

IRO Scottish Council and the Scottish Branch of Women in Rail ran a very successful joint event where we learned the aims and benefits of being members of both organisations.

Attendance from a wide variety of guests from within the wider rail industry, not just TOCs and NR but also including many of the contractors to the industry. Guest speaker Kirsty Devlin - RailStaff Awards Winner for Project Manager of the Year talked about her career and some of the fascinating projects in which she has been involved - the most recent of which was the introduction of the class 365 “Happy” trains. Lorraine Brown, of Network Rail and Women in Rail delivered the presentation for WIR and Pauline Hamilton of ScotRail delivered the session on the IRO. All in all a successful joint event with lots of exposure to potential new members and plenty of networking opportunities. We look forward to similar joint ventures in the future.
Drax Power Station visit

North East Area
Paul Snowden

The world needs electricity. But how many of us really know how it’s generated? On 06 February, thirty one delegates from the North East Area enjoyed a visit to Drax Power Station near Selby, to find out.

Drax supplies 8% of the country’s electricity needs, including 15% of its renewable power. To do this, Drax operates on a massive scale, with six boilers, each as high as a 15-storey office block, a main chimney taller than the London Eye, and over 1,800 miles of steel tubing, enough to stretch from John O’Groats to Land’s End and back again. On our tour of Drax we were able to see it all first-hand.

Naturally the visit was tailored to fit with our area of professional interest in rail.

We were welcomed by our expert guides, who started off with a safety briefing and interactive session in the visitor centre, which took in the history of the largest power station in the UK, and explained the electricity generation process.

Drax is upgrading to the latest biomass technology, using compressed wood pellets instead of coal, which cuts the carbon footprint by 80%. The product is made from what is effectively waste from the timber industry in the USA and Canada, and transported by ship to four UK ports, from where it is brought to Drax by rail in specially adapted wagons.

We were then taken on a tour of the site, including:

- where the biomass and coal trains are unloaded, while the trains continue to run at 0.38 mph;
- where the biomass fuel is stored, in four huge domes, each holding up to 85,000 tonnes;
- the Materials Handling Control, which controls all rail movements, train unloading, fuel storage and transfer of fuel to the boilers;
- the Turbine Hall. Here the fuel is pulsed to the consistency of talcum powder, then blown into the burners in the boilers, which superheat steam to 568 °C. This then drives the turbines in the six huge generators. Electricity is generated at 23,500 volts at a frequency of 50 kHz, and then stepped up to 400,000 volts for the National Grid.

We owe a big thank you to our hosts at Drax for looking after us so well, and those attending agreed that this was a most informative and enjoyable day out.
Virgin Simulator Visit

North West & North Wales

Thomas Cox ARIO

In March, North West & Wales Area members visited the Virgin Trains Simulator, in Tatton House, Crewe. Their Area Chairman, Chris Mackenzie, is a Driver Training Manager at this location, and in that capacity, he hosted the evening. 16 attendees were able to spend time in the Simulator, as well as visiting a ‘real driving cab’.

Each member was able to visit and operate the Simulator, directed remotely by Chris from his neighbouring Workstation. Whilst in the Simulator, they were able to experience a variety of simulated driving conditions, and ‘events’, which gave a good insight into the training and standards required for efficient driving. The equipment is able to mimic, very realistically, all conditions likely to be met by Drivers, including weather, line blockages, mechanical failures, and other hazards.

The attendees were also able to gain a sense of a ‘real driving cab’ environment, by visiting the two vehicles, Coaches C and K formerly part of Pendolino Train Set 390033 “City of Glasgow”, which are permanently stabled at Tatton House. Following the Grayrigg derailment in 2007, that whole set was subsequently withdrawn from service and these vehicles are utilised in the training of train-crew and platform staff. Whilst aboard Coach K, our members received further guidance and insight in respect of Train Driving from Gordon Sellar. Gordon, who is the IRO Scottish Area Vice-Chair, is also a Driver for Virgin trains, based at Polmadie, and had very kindly joined our party for the evening, lending valuable assistance.

Chris and Gordon, between them, were able to answer the many questions from those attending, and it was generally agreed that the evening had been very interesting and informative. Our thanks go to Chris, Gordon and Virgin Trains for hosting such an enjoyable event.

Area Councils at the Annual Members’ Lunch

Midlands Area Council Members and Guests

North West and Wales Area Council Members and Guests

Scottish Area Council Members and Guests

North East Area Council Members and Guests
What’s happening in your area

Valuable opportunities for members to learn and share knowledge.
Your local IRO area runs events all year round. These are opportunities to see how others work, broaden your experience and add to your professional development.

Scottish Area:
Please check the IRO website www.railwayoperators.co.uk/whats-on/ to find out about events happening in the Scottish area

North West & North Wales Area:
Thursday 16th May 2019
Event: Alstom, Longsight
Type: Site visit
Location: Manchester

Late June 2019
Event: Metrolink, Manchester
Type: Presentation and site visit
Location: Manchester

Saturday 13th July 2019
Event: Family Fun Day - East Lancs. Railway
Type: Social day out
Location: Bury

Tuesday 30th July 2019
Event: NW & Wales Area 2019 Annual General Meeting
Type: Meeting
Location: Chester

North East Area:
Wednesday 29th May 2019
Event: Hitachi visit
Type: Site visit
Location: Newton Aycliffe

June 2019 (Sunday)
Event: Family Day Elsecar Heritage Centre
Type: Social day out
Location: Barnsley

Tuesday 16th July 2019
Event: IPONE Area Summer Social
Type: Social event
Location: York

July 2019
Event: Wabtec (Doncaster) visit
Type: Site visit
Location: Doncaster

Midlands Area:
Tuesday 7th May 2019
Event: Tram Desk Top Simulator
Type: Site visit
Location: Wednesbury Tram Depot

Saturday 15th June 2019
Event: Family Day Out - Gloucestershire and Warwickshire Railway
Type: Social day out
Location: Cheltenham

Tuesday 10th September 2019
Event: Inside Ambergate Junction Project
Type: Presentation
Location: Venue TBC

Irish Area:
Please check the IRO website www.railwayoperators.co.uk/whats-on/ to find out about events happening in the Irish area

South West & South Wales Area:
Saturday 18th May 2019
Event: Saloon Trip on West Somerset Railway
Type: Social day out
Location: Bishops Lydeard

South East Area:
Please check the IRO website www.railwayoperators.co.uk/whats-on/ to find out about events happening in the South East area

Please check the IRO website www.railwayoperators.co.uk/whats-on/ to find out about events happening in the Scottish area

Please check the IRO website www.railwayoperators.co.uk/whats-on/ to find out about events happening in the Irish area

Please check the IRO website www.railwayoperators.co.uk/whats-on/ to find out about events happening in the South East area

Follow us on Twitter and LinkedIn to discover more about future Area and IRO events that are happening near you.

More details of area events are listed on the website at www.railwayoperators.co.uk/whats-on/