So, what do we mean by operations?

In the context of railway operations, "operations" is a broad term that encompasses the management and delivery of services, ensuring the smooth running of the railway system. It involves planning, engineering, maintenance, and the safe, efficient movement of trains. The operations department is responsible for the day-to-day running of the railway, ensuring compliance with safety regulations and operational standards.

This month, IRO has launched a new tool called the Operators Development (POD) tool. "POD" is an acronym that stands for Operators Development. This tool aims to help railway operators develop their skills and knowledge, ensuring they are equipped to run the railways effectively in the 21st century.

The POD tool is designed to be flexible and adaptable, allowing operators to tailor their learning and development activities to their specific needs. It covers a wide range of topics, including safety, customer service, and technology.

The POD tool is available online, and operators can access it via the IRO website. It includes interactive modules, quizzes, and other resources to help operators improve their skills and knowledge. Operators can also set personal development goals and track their progress over time.

The POD tool is intended to be used by all railway operators, from junior staff to senior managers. It is designed to be user-friendly and accessible, with clear guidance and support available for anyone who needs it.

The POD tool is just one of the many initiatives that IRO is undertaking to support the development of railway operators. We are committed to helping operators develop their skills and knowledge, ensuring they are able to run the railways effectively in the 21st century.

To find out more about the POD tool, visit the IRO website or contact the IRO team. We look forward to hearing from you and supporting you in your development journey.
Faster Rail
A Solution for Australia

Paul Sutherland FIRO, MCILT
Director Rail Operations and Maintenance, Network Rail Consulting, and IRO Australia & New Zealand Area Chair

Australia has seen a five-fold population growth in 100 years. It has a stable economy and three major eastern state capitals with networks around those states, but public transport, especially rail, outside of the metro areas is extremely limited. The Federal Government has established a Faster Rail Agency and state governments are looking at local Faster Rail Networks. High Speed Rail (HSR) and Faster Rail are terms used when discussing rail development but what do they mean?

There are four elements of Faster Rail.

Infrastructure improvement: Targeting infrastructure improvements by looking at the business case for investment will help identify which improvement will give the best output for the investment. The desired outputs are higher line speed and reduced journey time. Improvements could include easement of curves, improvement of turnouts, increased power supplied, strengthening of bridges and new signalling systems.

Improved rolling stock could include increased acceleration and deacceleration, reduced weight, more efficiency, bio-modal fuel options and increased crash worthiness. These elements aim to deliver improved sectional running times.

Re-casting timetables enables the trains to run as efficiently as the previously mentioned improvements allow, taking into consideration permanent speed restrictions, line speeds for new rolling stock, sectional running times and timetable construction. It is also important to review the maintenance plan with any major timetable rewrite. With a new timetable improved journey times can be achieved and possibly the first step to maximising benefit.

Marketing and branding are critical in rail to capture the public’s imagination and encourage them to travel by rail through better focus on train and service branding, train shape, train livery and interior styling.

Case Study
UK West Coast Mainline

The UK West Coast mainline has been updated four times since 1930s to reinvent itself and remain competitive. The route is an 800km line from London to Glasgow via major UK conurbations. The topography has great curvature and gradients which make it more difficult to stay competitive with the East Coast mainline and road travel.

1937 improvements consisted of infrastructure for higher line speeds, investment in new steam powered rolling stock, marketing and branding and a revised timetable. These improvements made the line competitive and relevant for the time.

By the early 1960s the new motorway system was completed, passenger levels were low, and the line was in a poor state of repair. The investment this time was in electrification and sustained 160km/h running. This was a success story and dubbed “the Sparks Effect”, which captured the public’s imagination with the modernism of the 1960’s set against the traditional steam railway. In the 1970s the small improvement was completion of the electrification to Glasgow, which was affordable at the time with a low level of investment. This was accompanied by a timetable rebuild, rebranding of the “Electric Scot” that allowed for sustained 160 km/h speeds and a more competitive journey on the north sections of the line.

The 1990s saw another small tweak in the arrival of push pull train sets and speeds increased to up to 175km/h with INTERCITY sector branding introduced for a new bold future.

A more significant and expensive change in 2008 introduced Pendolino Tilt Electric Transsets reaching speeds of up to 200km/h and a complete re-cast of the timetable with 20-minute frequency on the major inter-city services. These improvements along with others were transformational to the commuter and national travel from London Euston.

The Faster Rail principles for West Coast have been pushed to the limit of development and we now consider High Speed 2 to continue the cycle for the next 50/100 years. But the steps briefly outlined above have allowed the rail corridor to be competitive to different challenges over 75 years.

There is therefore an opportunity for Australia to use Faster Rail to make sure regional rail is competitive. There are currently various proposals in Australia, including in New South Wales for Newcastle, Wollongong and Canberra. Proposals in Queensland include a timetable review with passing loops to the Gold Coast and in Victoria, fast trains radiating from Melbourne are in the planning stage.

So Faster Rail does not have a speed banding or the kudos of High Speed, but it is affordable and can be tailored to the needs of a Region. With a rail strategy based around the core elements of Faster Rail we should see rail remain a competitive product for decades to come.
IRO welcomes new corporate member
Rail Operations Group

Rail Operations Group (ROG), a subsidiary of the Rail Operations (UK) Limited group of companies, is a leading provider of specialist train operating services to the UK rail industry. The company provides a comprehensive suite of innovative and sustainable rail solutions and supplies low carbon, efficient, bespoke solutions to complex, technically challenging train operations.

Faster Freight

Anyone stuck on a train behind a slower freight train will tell you of the frustration this can cause. Freight trains tend to travel more slowly than their passenger counterparts, working to rigid timetables and from time to time holding up the faster, passenger trains which share the same network. Karl and Dave have long believed that flexibility and high speeds can positively influence customers and have now decided to turn their vision into reality. In recent months, Freightliner has acquired a fleet of surplus passenger trains, stripped everything out (seats, toilet, luggage racks) and made numerous technical changes to turn them into high-speed ‘vans’ that can go anywhere and travel at speeds of up to 100 mph. It will create a totally new service aimed at companies like Amazon, DPD, FedEx and Hermes. From next month the company is introducing this new type of train operation primarily to serve the burgeoning world of e-commerce.

“Even before Covid, the UK online shopping delivery market was worth over £16 billion per year for the transport of light goods. Currently 99% of this goes by road and the remaining 1% by air, a huge opportunity for rail if we can get it right,” says Karl.

“We can do this because we have a holistic view of the industry,” says Dave. “A challenge in one part of the system can present a solution somewhere else.”

Witnessing the withdrawal from service of still useful, good quality passenger trains, Karl and Dave have a strategy to repurpose and reuse trains that were destined for scrap. And so, not only does Faster Freight bring an innovative, speedier more flexible way of transporting freight, it also improves network capacity and operational performance on the system. The team are convinced that it will also lead to a reduction in total number of commercial vehicles using the road and the associated carbon emissions they produce.

“It’s taken just two years to go from concept to delivery. All in all, more efficient, cleaner and greener,” says Karl proudly.

Greener fleet

Earlier this year the company signed a multimillion pound deal with Swiss company Stadler, to purchase a new fleet of 30 Tri-mode locomotives that will be built in Valencia, Spain.

“They are very hi-tech, very green, very versatile, and very powerful locomotives,” says Karl. From November 2022 when the first locomotives arrive, they will be available to service needs of the ten train operating markets and play a leading role in driving down carbon emissions for train operations in the UK.

“The new locomotives are extremely versatile and can be deployed to operate passenger trains, freight trains, infrastructure trains and other specialist services,” says Dave. “They will replace aging, fuel-guzzling, carbon-emitting options currently in use with something that is ‘state of the art’, giving our customers and the UK rail industry, a huge contribution in meeting our decarbonisation targets.”

When Karl and Dave started off as trainee train drivers 43 years ago, they never dreamt that all these years later that they would be leaders in their field. They feel privileged to have reached a place that allows for them to conceive innovative ideas unconstrained by hierarchy, delivering to the plan, and where it’s hard to “stick your head out above the parapet” and change things...

“We want to inspire younger members of the IRO, says Karl. “We’ve been in train operations for 43 years and worked our way up to become industry leaders with the self-belief that we can achieve anything we put our minds to, and our younger members can too.”

Freight partnerships - keeping haulage moving during lockdown

An established rail freight operator with 55 years’ experience in delivering rail freight solutions, Freightliner, has a track record in providing safe, reliable, and cost-effective rail freight partnerships. With an extensive network of rail terminals across the UK, Freightliner operates an average 400 bulk trains per week, transporting 31mn tonnes of bulk freight annually.

The company achieves this through its dedicated fleet of locomotives and highly trained, safety-focused teams which offer transport solutions in all the UK’s bulk haulage markets – cement, potash, aggregates, waste, petrochemicals, domestic intermodal, hazardous goods, industrial minerals, coal - with 99.9% reliability on all services.

Freightliner uses a sophisticated mix of land-based logistics solutions to ensure effective operations. Business continuity procedures ensure it has been able to continue operations as a critical infrastructure bulk freight supplier during the coronavirus crisis of the past year. Despite the challenges, which have seen a significant reduction in freight volumes across the UK, Freightliner has continued to haul much needed supplies and materials to keep the country running.

An example of this is the company’s work with Mendoza Rail Limited, focused solely on aggregates, which are essential for all construction projects. Throughout lockdown, they have continued to haul aggregates to terminals in London and the Southeast of England from quarries in Northern Somerset ensuring vital projects can continue in London and the South East.

Freightliner operates three trains a day on behalf of customer, SUEZ, moving around 1.500 tonnes of domestic waste from the streets of Manchester to the energy-from-waste (EfW) plant in Runcorn where it is recycled into high quality raw materials and renewable energy. Commenting on the work, Mike Nuttall, Communications and Partnership Manager at Recycling and Recovery UK said, “Everyone in the waste industry is working hard to make sure we can maintain essential services for residents across the country during these challenging circumstances. We rely on the Freightliner team every day to move tons of material from our waste handling and processing facilities across the region to the EfW plant in Runcorn, ensuring we are able to maintain the provision of key services.”

Follow us on LinkedIn and Twitter to join our growing online community of rail industry professionals. Find out about upcoming events, industry news and more.
Events/News/Membership

IRO members recognised in the New Year Honours

Two IRO members were recognised in the New Year’s Honours lists. Mark Hopwood FIRO, previously an IRO Board member, was awarded a CBE (Commander of the Order of the British Empire) and Robert Moore AIRO was awarded BEM (British Empire Medal).

CBE for Mark Hopwood FIRO

Mark Hopwood FIRO, and Managing Director at Great Western Railway (GWR) for more than a decade has been named a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) for his services to the railway industry.

Commenting on his award, Mark said: “This is an honour that reflects the efforts of thousands of railway colleagues I have worked with throughout my 31-year career. The railway plays a part in the daily lives of millions, and I am very proud and delighted that my small contribution has been recognised in this way.”

Howard Smith, IRO Chair said: “It’s really heartening to see these well-deserved awards to rail operators. Robert’s volunteering is impressive and I have known Mark for many years. His commitment to the industry and to the IRO has been outstanding. As an Institution we add our thanks and congratulations to both Mark and Robert.”

Annual Report: Our 2020 achievements and our direction for 2021

The 2020 IRO annual report has been published.

The year has brought its challenges for the IRO, as Howard Smith, FIRO Chair shares his thoughts. “For most of the reporting period, there has been an exceptional level of uncertainty affecting us all. Yet in the face of challenging conditions, IRO demonstrated its resilience and delivered a positive performance with the best result of its 23-year history.”

The annual report charts the success and challenges of 2020 as the IRO worked to ensure the best possible support for all its members. It also explains the plans for the year ahead, progressing work on the Rail Academy, the online game, the webinar resource library, mentoring and the app. The IRO continues to focus its efforts on continuing professional development and the promotion of the operations profession.

IRO app, launching to your smartphone

In case you haven’t heard, IRO members, our new app will be launching very soon. Check your email is up to date and your login details are correct and you will be ready to benefit from all the new features.

So what will it do, how will it work and who will it benefit?

The aim of the app is to enhance your membership experience by making everything more accessible, more easily. We asked the app development team to give us the lowdown on the new app which will be available free to download on Android and iOS.

Essentially, it will give access to IRO’s CPD (Professional CPD) tool so members can undertake CPD self-assessment on their mobile devices and receive instant recommendations. This should prove to be very useful when you are out and about and need quick answers to your own questions.

IRO events have always been popular with all of our members so the app will provide easy access to view and to book events - something we’re all looking forward to resuming when the lockdowns ease. You’ll also be able to use the app to scan event attendance and keep track of your favourite and attended events.

We know that members really value the wide range of IRO resources and videos specifically designed to enhance learning and build knowledge in specific topics, so these will be more easily accessed via the app and complemented by instant communication on items of interest directly from IRO.

To download IRO Members app, just visit your smartphone’s app store and search for “IRO Members App”! Once downloaded, you will need to input your IRO username and password to gain access. The IRO team can help you to remember your IRO username and password if you get stuck. Email us at membership@railwayoperators.co.uk

Coming to your smartphone soon...

Zoe wins gold!

Congratulations to IRO’s IT Manager Zoe Bull, who has won gold at the 2021 Tech Industry Degree Apprentice of the Year: Excellence in Business Awards. The citation for Zoe’s Special Achievement award recognises her, “passion and personal bravery to set up a new IT department for the IRO, with an inspirational journey for a busy working mum who had never previously considered undertaking a degree."

After starting as a membership administrator with IRO in 2016, Zoe soon became the go-to person for all IT issues and advice. IRO spotted and nurtured Zoe’s talent. She has now 3 years into her (BSc Digital and Technology Solutions Degree Apprenticeship) with Manchester Metropolitan University alongside her IT Manager role with IRO, and loving it. The degree involves a study leave of one day per week at Uni as well as her day job.

“I love that I am getting proper hands-on experience that complements my studies. I’ve been involved in some brilliant IRO projects - everything from providing specific support to all areas of the business to introducing cloud computing and new security and cyber security measures for the whole organisation,” says Zoe.

It is a credit to Zoe’s IT leadership that when lockdown came last year, IRO staff were able to switch to working from home securely and safely online with minimal effort and little interruption to services. And all this is achieved in addition to her most important job as mum to two young children.

“I thought that I’d missed out on my chance of higher education and the opportunities that it brings. Even when things seem very full on, I love the challenges” concludes Zoe.

Thanks to Mark Langman & Stuart Landridge

We would like to thank Mark Langman FIRO, Managing Director Wales & Western Network Rail and Stewart Langridge AIRO for their support and help as voluntary IRO Board members.

Mark joined the Board in 2019 and has been a great asset to us all during this recent period of change and development as we’ve adapted to many aspects of the business to address restrictions and new ways of working brought about by Covid-19.

Stewart’s six-year tenure on the Board and has seen the Institution through a period of rapid development and change, including the introduction of new areas of business and two business plans. We have new apprenticeship and end point assessment provisions in place, as well as the academic programme restructure, the master’s level qualification development and a substantial increase in membership. Stewart has been an integral figure in our forward planning.

We hope to be able to meet up the not-too-distant future to say thank you properly for all the hard work that you’ve both contributed to the IRO.

Rail Business Awards 2021

The Rail Business Awards celebrate achievements in the UK rail industry across technical projects, safety, marketing, and customer service.

Plus, the success of individuals and teams who make such a difference to our fantastic industry. This year, the 23rd Rail Business Awards were held online between 22nd and 23th February and IRO was pleased to sponsor the Operators Awards, which recognises excellence in passenger and freight operations.

Follow us on LinkedIn and Twitter to join our growing online community of rail industry professionals. Find out about upcoming events, industry news and more.

#IRO_UK Search Institutions of Railway Operators

04 Issue 47 | April 2021
Gamification comes to IRO

Our innovative, bespoke game will give members an alternative, interactive and fun way to learn about the many facets of rail operations.

Once in the game, members progress through different stages, developing further knowledge of rail operations as they do so. The content allows the player to experience and learn about the day-to-day tasks of an operator behind the scenes and to consider the differing perspectives of other job roles across different areas of rail. Along the way the player picks up new skills and learns how to navigate different situations by making decisions based on the interactions with other characters and information on hand.

The game begins in the planning department of a TOC where the player is guided through the basic anatomy of timetables and rosters until they save the day and complete their tasks! The Control Room beckons after that.

The content was developed on Rail Academy, our new digital learning platform. As an IRO member you will be able to access the game using your system login.

To learn more about Rail Academy, please visit www.railacademy.com or visit the website www.railwayoperators.co.uk/irotv-home/

Webinar archive now available on IRO TV

Since the IRO Area Councils had to suspend their usual programme of events early last year, IRO, in conjunction with the Area Councils has live-streamed more than 25 presentations from industry professionals covering a wide range of railway operations topics.

IfO has recorded these valuable insights and they are now available for as long as you like to view at their leisure on IRO TV.

The webinars have had over 3,000 views so far, and we are hoping that they will continue long past lockdown even when we can meet face-to-face as travelling can make a welcome return.

Each webinar focuses on new, hot topics in the rail industry. The feedback has been incredibly positive and the benefit of being a corporate member, we are able to gain an insight into what is going on in other parts of the country and wider railway operations community. Members from as far afield as Australia and California have tuned in and recordings from the Australia/New Zealand Area Council are also available to all members.

Want more information about the game?
The game will launch in April 2021, please visit www.railacademy.com for more information.

Train driver was a second career and most were not familiar with the IRO's activities to complement specific aspects of learning for each apprentice. This is a great new addition to the apprenticeship experience.

Rail Academy a customised, cost effective learning experience

Rail Academy is a new online training platform launched last year, to provide solutions for railway operators to progress their training and professional development.

The platform can also act as an extension of the company by offering a combination of IRO’s expertise creating training materials mixed with brand insights and tools allowing companies to track progress and fully manage their employees’ training.

Here’s what Anika Sherifield, Talent Manager at Freightliner Group has to say: ‘Freightliner Limited is a large freight rail operating organisation. As a large employer we have been delivering bespoke train driver training to our own employees for 14 years.

We recognised that for many of our trainees, becoming a train driver was a second career and most were not familiar with the industry. Along with wanting to raise the profile of the IRO internally and the benefit of being a corporate member, we recently started to incorporate the ‘Introduction to Rail’ course to our newest cohort of learners. Feedback has been incredibly positive that the concepts and content were relevant and that the training was clear and understandable. The virtual tools provided were particularly useful and the pace of the training activities was just about right. We look forward to working with the IRO in the future to support our employees with their professional development in their rail careers’.

Find out more about Rail Academy

To learn more about how Rail Academy can help your organisation, please visit www.railacademy.com or go to www.railwayoperators.co.uk for more information.

Memberhips/Apprenticeships

Apprenticeship Class of 2019

Ever wondered what an IRO structured training programme could do for your organisation? For Network Rail’s 2019 General Management Graduate Scheme members the results are in and looking extremely good. Given that most recruits had never worked in the rail industry prior to starting, the year-long scheme aims to provide them with the knowledge, skills, and behaviours required for effectively operating in today’s rail industry.

It starts with a complete overview of the rail industry and goes on to expose learners to the full range disciplines and routes across the business. Along the way there are various work placements to supplement learning on the job as the apprentices acquire off key topics such as safety, quality, customer service and management and develop the skills and behaviours required to focus their careers.

It goes without saying that as they roll off the scheme, apprentices have acquired a great network of contacts with each other and across the business.

When the company surveyed the group in November 2020 at the end of what has been one of the most challenging years ever for Network Rail, 60% of the cohort had secured a permanent role or a good quality secondment that was likely to result in a permanent job offer in their chosen career path. A further 27% of the group were retained on placements that had been extended to allow for continued support to the business.

"This is so good to know", says Tina Morris IRO’s Apprenticeship Training and Learning Manager. "Despite the challenges of the pandemic and all that has entailed, our programmes clearly are delivering impressive results."

The IRO exists to improve the quality of railway operations. As a leading supplier of specialist and management training for the rail industry, the organisation is dedicated to ensuring all students enrolled on learning programmes can achieve of their best.

As an IRO learner, all apprentices can expect the highest level of support in all aspects of their personal and professional development throughout their studies; IRO’s holistic approach to apprenticeship learning includes not only teaching, personalised coaching, workbooks, and assessments, it also record e-portfolios, learning journals and off the job development time which is now supported by the new ‘Make Your Mark’ personal journal. IRO launched during Apprenticeship Week in February to elaborate on positive reaction across the industry.

The start of the point the journal recognises that now apprentices have already worked hard to establish a successful career or have been successful in securing a great start to their career by being selected by their employer to join a graduate training programme. This means that they have already developed a valuable set of knowledge, skills and behaviours even before they start their apprenticeship. The initial sections of the journal are designed to help the individual document and take stock of their personal and professional development to date, including favourite activities and achievements both inside and outside of work. The learner is then invited to reflect on these milestones and understand how they will relate to future career development.

The second part of the journal is designed to help the apprentice build a great CV, developing the self-awareness and self-knowledge they need to perform well at interviews. But it doesn’t stop there. The learner is taken on a journey to explore and define what is next and work out what they want to do and be known for, making sure that they receive recognition for the right things as they continue to develop.

One of the most valued elements of the programme is the relationship between each apprentice and their coach who is there to help and support them throughout their learning journey. ‘Make Your Mark’ now enhances this further in the range of templates and exercises it provides to support learning during and beyond the apprenticeship. The materials can be used in any order, and apprentices will be able to identify which elements will be most value. The coach can recommend specific templates and exercises and new ‘Make Your Mark’ activities to complement specific aspects of learning for each apprentice. This is a great new addition to the apprenticeship experience.

Make your Mark, new learner-centred record of achievement

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For further information on apprenticeships, please email Tina Morris at knowledge@railwayoperators.co.uk

Follow us on LinkedIn and Twitter to join our growing online community of rail industry professionals. Find out about upcoming events, industry news and more.

Institution of Railway Operators

Please email Tina Morris at knowledge@railwayoperators.co.uk for more information.
Graduation 2020

IRO is delighted to congratulate the latest cohort of graduates of our Railway Operations Management academic programme, delivered in partnership with Glasgow Caledonian University. This time due to the pandemic, we weren’t able to hold the usual public ceremonies where groups come together to celebrate their successes in person.

Jordan Bingham works as Customer Information Manager and recently completed the Certificate level of the programme. Whilst admitting it was disappointing not to have the opportunity to attend the graduation ceremony, Jordan still had positive reflections of his learning journey.

“The modules (covered by the programme) provided learning opportunities in a wide range of areas such as Personal Professional Development and Railway Management Skills. Background to Railway Operations, Basics of Railway Operations and Communication. It was a great way to meet other Railway Professionals from other Train Operating Companies and discuss our experiences.”

I would highly recommend the academic programme to a colleague.”

Degree graduates George Moore works as Track Planner and agreed that for him the programme was “a fantastic way to delve into the depths of the nuances of railway operations.”

We wish all our graduates across all three levels the best of luck in the future and look forward to continuing to engage with them as members of the institution.

Warmest congratulations to all of our Class of 2020 graduates:

Certificate of Higher Education in Railway Operations Management:
- Abdullah Al-Jawari (Saudi Arabia Railway)
- Roberta Megan Ashton (London North Eastern Railway)
- Morgan Bacon (Network Rail)*
- Taran Jack Beest (Greater Anglia)
- Jordan Bingham (Abellio ScotRail)
- Turky Binawadid (Saudi Arabia Railway)
- Abdulkareem Zaid Bin Khattab (Saudi Arabia Railway)
- David Bowdoin (Network Rail)*
- Harshil Blat (Network Rail)
- Stuart Burchett (Network Rail)
- Steven Butt (Great Western Railway)*
- Yee Kay Ivy Yeung (Network Rail)
- Charlotte Wheaton (Great Western Railway)*
- Steven Shinde (Great Western Railway)
- Abigail Pearson (Network Rail)
- Maria Ana Palma (Great Western Railway)*
- Alexander Nicol (Network Rail)
- Joshua Leonard Murray (Network Rail)
- Lee McDonald (Great Western Railway)*
- Alexander Hunt (Great Western Railway)*
- Elspeth Hinds (Network Rail)
- Maneet Hayer (Network Rail)
- Chad Hannon (Network Rail)
- Ben Alexander Hall (Network Rail)*
- Luke Gregory (Network Rail)
- Seersha Halder (Network Rail)
- Emma Hales (Great Western Railway)
- Ben Alexander Hall (Network Rail)*
- Chad Hannon (Network Rail)
- Maneet Hayer (Network Rail)
- Elizabeth Hind (Network Rail)*
- Megan Hassan (Network Rail)
- Daniel Hughes (Network Rail)
- Alexander Hunt (Great Western Railway)
- Adelaide Jennings (Network Rail)*
- Matthew Jones (Network Rail)*
- Alex Kain (Network Rail)
- Alexandra Kirby (Network Rail)
- Charlie Large (Great Western Railway)
- Hannah Lawrence (Network Rail)
- Alexander Lee (Great Western Railway)**
- Lee McDonald (Network Rail)
- Sophie Mhitarian (Network Rail)
- Katie Louise Murray (Network Rail)
- Joshua Leonard Murray (Network Rail)*
- Alexander Nicoli (Network Rail)**
- James Owen (Network Rail)*
- Maria Ana Palma (Great Western Railway)/Abigail Pearson (Network Rail)*
- Kancha Racholly (Network Rail)**
- Edward Robinson (Network Rail)
- Haider Saead (Network Rail)
- Mark Salisbury (Great Western Railway)
- Steven Shinde (Great Western Railway)
- Jennifer Katharina Schmitz (Crossrail)
- Shaun Toffoletti (Great Western Railway)
- Matthew Walker (Network Rail)
- Oliver Walsom-Pridmore (Network Rail)
- Charlotte Wheeldon (Great Western Railway)**
- Jamie Williams (Great Western Railway)*
- Hannah Winter (Network Rail)
- Yee Kay Ivy Yeung (Network Rail)
- Joanna Dobell (Network Rail)
- Samarth Manishkumar Desai (Network Rail)
- Oliver Simon Freddie Clamp (Network Rail)
- Steven Butt (Great Western Railway)*
- Charlotte Wheaton (Great Western Railway)*
- Steven Shinde (Great Western Railway)
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- Jamie Williams (Great Western Railway)*
- Hannah Winter (Network Rail)
- Yee Kay Ivy Yeung (Network Rail)

New IRO Learning and Development Forum promoting industry collaboration

In recent months, IRO has invited key Learning and Development (L&D) contacts across the industry to join our Track and Train Learning and Development Forum.

The main purpose for the forum is primarily to:
- Promote recognised standards and educational qualifications across the rail industry
- Align, create and leverage synergies across all commonalities - TOC, FOC and NR
- Address the gaps in the educational standards for the entire rail industry
- Support employees and L&D managers to improve competence and generate recognition for qualifications.

We’ve now held two forum meetings and initial discussions have included how we can get to a standardised approach for all training, the value of a multi-company approach to technical training and the importance of career pathways for all those either working in or looking to enter the industry.

Tim McCarthy, GTR’s People Development Manager has been impressed with the format of the meetings. “I have personally found the forum very useful. I can share some of our challenges and then seek suggestions from like-minded individuals. There’s also plenty of inspiration from others who have been creative or innovative in their way of working. I have really enjoyed and taken a lot away from these events. They really have helped me to think through, plan and design my L&D strategy. I would encourage anyone with an interest in this area to join the forum. One thing’s for sure, the IRO team will give you a great welcome and an abundance of support.”

Other forum members have appreciated the opportunities to engage with fellow L&D professionals across the industry. “It’s great to be part of a forum where my input could have a positive impact across operations as an industry,” said Marie Orchard a Programme Manager with Network Rail. “Alex Leonard, Talent Management Executive for Irish Rail admitted that the forum has been a useful platform to share best practice across the industry, allowing the members to, “outline their needs, gain new perspectives, and generate new ideas.”

Moving forward, we’ll be holding 3-4 meetings a year. If you believe you or a member of your team would benefit from being part of the forum, please contact learning@railwayoperators.co.uk.

New course catalogue out now...

IRO’s 2021 course brochure is now available. In it you find everything you need to know about our learning opportunities, courses and qualifications, which have been created specifically to respond to the needs of our industry.

Within the detail of the brochure, you will find further details on:
- IRO’s Railway Operations Management academic programmes
- Level 3, 4 and 5 apprenticeships
- Student testimonials
- Details of the new IRO Rail Academy
- Free Learning
- Mentoring
- IRO area councils
- Fees and Funding options

Get in touch with our team with any questions or queries you have and we’ll be very happy to help.

Download the Course Brochure: Visit https://iroam.com/resources to get yours.
The state of the industry

Passenger journeys, Great Britain, 2018-19 Q1 to 2020-21 Q3

Source: ORR Railway Usage 2020-2021
Quarter 3, Published March 11, 2021

Against a backdrop of shrinking passenger journeys we asked our IRO area reps to share some of their experiences of the last year.

How have safety logistics impacted your work environment?

CM: I struggled for several months. The loss of face-to-face contact with colleagues and the lack of meetings which I thought could have been constructive and which I found it hard to maintain on the phone.

GC: From a mindset point of view, we needed to look at all interactions between staff and how best to reduce those contacts especially amongst front line staff. These (measures) have all proven to be challenges but we have adapted, and we are learning how to work in the “New Normal”.

How are you managing with changing passenger numbers and patterns?

CM: It has been difficult and going from a position of encouraging travel on public transport to actively dissuading those people now, is a very strange place to be in. In 2019 we carried 50.1 million passengers. In 2020 that is a very strange place to be in. In 2019 we were able to secure funding from the National Emergency Measures Agreement (EMA) in England.

GC: So ongoing work as part of the National Railway Upgrade Plan which includes the Sheffield Nunnery junction renewal and facilitating the introduction of modern comfortable trains will be important for the region, as will the huge redesign of the vital hub at Leeds station to provide new capacity and better services for one of the UK’s most important cities.

What is the overall mood of the industry in your region at present?

GC: There is an overall mood of optimism that we have started to turn a corner.

CM: When I speak to friends and colleagues in the industry, they’re eager to see passengers return as soon as they’re able to do so and are anxious to do their bit to help that happen.

JB: We have seen a huge drop in passenger numbers... Our teams across Scotland’s Railway have revised the timetable on several occasions to consider the changing restrictions as the pandemic has progressed. The company has been careful to roll out enhancements to current measures to ensure that touch points on trains, stations and offices are Covid-safe and are now part of LNER’s everyday ways of working. So ongoing work as part of the National Railway Upgrade Plan which includes the Sheffield Nunnery junction renewal and facilitating the introduction of modern comfortable trains will be important for the region, as will the huge redesign of the vital hub at Leeds station to provide new capacity and better services for one of the UK’s most important cities.

Under his leadership Matt wants to help and support teams by giving them confidence to make decisions and work in a different way because accountability will be at local level including with track staff who do day-to-day jobs. He was appointed in the role of Managing Director and admin staff. By making the new Route Directors responsible for operating the route it is hoped they will be more responsive to local needs: a more joined up railway bringing modern comfortable trains to the biggest cities. A new management team is also in place to oversee: the day-to-day operations, track repairs and maintenance, blockades, train and track closer together, putting passengers first as they do return. The East Coast main line has been well supported as passengers return to travel.

IRO Online events round-up

North East Area: Adrian Calfrey

The impact of coronavirus on passengers and colleagues on the railway

David Home, Managing Director for LNER

The global impact of coronavirus has been huge. Over 74 million people have contracted the virus against a background of collapsing stock markets and struggling economies. For railways there has been an unprecedented decline in passenger journeys.

In the first quarter of 2019-20, over 74 million journeys were taken on the GB rail network. Just a year later this figure had plummeted to just over 35 million. The session unpacked how this dramatic change has impacted LNER and its plan to build back better, once life begins to return to normal.

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**What’s happening in your Area & Online?**

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.

The IRO Area Councils across the UK, Ireland and Australia have been working on the programme of online events for the coming months. Keep an eye out in your inbox and also on the IRO website for further information www.railwayoperators.co.uk/whats-on/

**Presentations coming up:**

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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>5th May</td>
<td>RISIB Role in Operations: Chris Fithradinghe</td>
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<tr>
<td>11th May</td>
<td>East Coast Upgrades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28th May</td>
<td>Operations in a Post-Covid World: Andrew Haines</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd June</td>
<td>View on Operations: David Franks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th July</td>
<td>Importance of Ride Quality in Operations: Nial Holohan</td>
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</tbody>
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"""I really enjoy being able to attend so many events, now they are online. I live in the Highlands of Scotland, so I am unable to attend many events in person.""

— Kenny Barclay

‘Driver Team Manager Inverness, ScotRail’

"Finding the IRO and the incredibly vast information here has helped me to never stop learning and question why we do the things we do. Thank you for sharing your knowledge.""

— José Del-Prado

‘Director of Compliance and Assurance Manager, Elizabeth Line, TfL’

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

Please check the IRO website www.railwayoperators.co.uk/areas/northwest/ to find out about events happening in the North West area.

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

Please check the IRO website www.railwayoperators.co.uk/areas/australia/ to find out about events happening in the Australia & New Zealand area.

Please check the IRO website www.railwayoperators.co.uk/areas/midlands/ to find out about events happening in the Midlands area.

Please check the IRO website www.railwayoperators.co.uk/areas/northeast/ to find out about events happening in the North East area.

Please check the IRO website www.railwayoperators.co.uk/areas/southwest/ to find out about events happening in the South West area.

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

**Directory/Dates for your Diary/Events**

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**North East Area: Dave Court**

**Operating the Royal Train by Geoff Griffths, retired Royal Train Manager**

Geoff Griffths’ railway career began as a CO1 at Derby Locomotive Works. From there he worked his way up through various supervisory and management roles to being appointed Royal Train Manager (RTM) in 2004 by the Royal Director of Travel at Buckingham Palace. Geoff held the role until his retirement in 2011.

The Royal Train (RT) transports senior members of the British royal family and associated staff of the Royal Household around the railway network and is formed from a dedicated set of vehicles that provide for sleeping, dining, and lounge carriages. During his time as RTM, Geoff was responsible for making all arrangements for the operation of the Royal Train, overseeing all travel arrangements for the Royal Household on ordinary rail services and maintaining the Royal Train budget.

It was Geoff’s job to cost every journey undertaken by the Royal Train which needed to account for storage and security of the Royal Train at Wolverton, cost of maintenance of the coaches, maintenance, manpower costs and track access charges etc. Members were interested to discover that the budget for each proposed journey was personally vetted by Her Majesty the Queen before the final go-ahead when Geoff was then able to co-ordinate the entire operation.

Queen Victoria was the first British monarch to travel by train, in June 1842 on the Great Western Railway (GWR), which ran the line between London Paddington and Windsor for Windsor Castle. The train transported the queen from Slough to London Paddington and was hauled by a locomotive driven by Daniel Gooch assisted by Isambard Kingdom Brunel. For the journey, the queen used a royal saloon which had been constructed by the GWR two years earlier. Geoff described some of the steam locomotives that had hauled the RT over the last century, through to the present RT vehicles. Members enjoyed a virtual tour of the RT with Geoff sharing special details of staff who accompany the train, anecdotes of specific carriages allocated to Royal family members and details of the provisions for the RT which are provided by Rail Gourmet.

Occasionally the royal family used scheduled passenger services in which case the first-class section of a vehicle would be reserved for the royal party. Interestingly, tickets for these journeys were always booked in advance with the Duke of Edinburgh apparently making full use of his Senior Citizens’ Railcard!

Geoff shared some impressive personal facts and figures from his seven years as RTM. He planned 105 RT journeys and visited Buckingham Palace on 32 occasions and thoroughly enjoyed every minute of his time in the role including the occasional ‘major tribulation’. He ended by paying tribute to the staff, from all departments, who made the running of the Royal Train possible. Feedback from members on the day was hugely positive and in case you missed it, a recording of Geoff’s session is available through the IRO website.