FAQs – GBR operating model

Hosted on the Journey to GBR FAQ page: Frequently asked questions (FAQs)

What's the next stage of design?

Design leads have now been appointed and will work closely with colleagues across track and train to shape how each part of the organisation will operate. This includes each Network function, Division, and Business Unit.

It includes:

- The roles and skills needed within functions or areas.
- The systems and processes required to support delivery.
- Clear governance and decision-making structures.
- How and when any changes will be implemented.

A small central team will coordinate this activity, ensuring designs are aligned across the organisation so everything works together as one integrated system.

Will all Business Units look the same on Day One?

No. Business Units will be at different stages of maturity on Day One. This reflects differences in when operators move into public ownership, the number of operators being bought into each Business Unit and variations across Network Rail routes.

Some Business Units will be structured slightly differently to account for regional variations or devolved arrangements.

How are Business Units different from integrated railways?

Integrated railways are an important step towards GBR and are testing ways of working before GBR officially stands up. They are designed to give early benefits by bringing track and train closer together while we build the future organisation. They are developed as pilots on the basis of Integration Agreements between train operators and Network Rail routes rather than any changes to licences or statutory requirements.

They bring colleagues, systems and processes from Network Rail routes and train operators together under one leadership team, led by a single accountable leader – the Integrated Managing Director. Early evidence shows real benefits from this integration, with quicker decision making, new ways of working to minimise disruption to passengers, freight and opportunities for collaborative problem solving on issues with fleet and track to make sure passengers see improvements across the railway.

Integrated railways can only become Business Units once the Railways Bill is passed and appropriate consultation completed. This will allow the obligations on Network Rail, the Infrastructure Manager, and train operators, the Railway Undertaking, to be brought together giving Business Units end-to-end accountability for accountabilities that are currently split across track and train.

What's happening in the North?
The North is a unique railway environment with more operators, large passenger flows, critical cross-regional infrastructure developments and highly engaged stakeholders and partners.

We need a distinct approach for the North which builds on successes and existing integration to continue to deliver improvements for customers.
Northern collaboration will be strengthened by a new partnership. The partnership will focus on the shorter-term integration opportunities for the North to fast-track further improvements and the creation of a plan to align with GBR's objectives.
The new partnership will be chaired by an independent chair and bring together NR route directors, Operator MDs and the MD of the Transpennine Route Upgrade.
As a first step single points of contact representing the unified railway have been agreed with key stakeholders across the region.

How will GBR work in Scotland?
Scotland will be a single business unit and division under the GBR operating model. It will have the same accountabilities as set out for other GBR business units.

The way in which Scotland's Railway will be designed will be different, as it will take policy direction from the Scottish Government and Transport Scotland and align to the MoU that is being developed between the two Governments.

Transport Scotland will work with all partners of Scotland's Railway, and central GBR design teams in NR and DfT to finalise the approach .

What about services that run into Scotland?
The governance about how cross-border services interact and coordinate with Scotland's Railway will be developed in the next phase of design which will take into account interdependencies across different areas. This will also be aligned to developments in the MoU.

How will GBR work in Wales?
Devolved Nations – GBR in Wales

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the UK and Welsh Governments was signed on 26 March 2026, setting out how the future railway will work in Wales and Borders under GBR. The rail system in Wales is one of the most complex in the UK, with responsibilities shared across governments and organisations. The MoU helps bring greater clarity and alignment to support a more joined-up railway for customers and communities. A key feature of the MoU is the introduction of shared objectives. These are outcomes that both governments agree for the railway in Wales and Borders, which GBR and TfW will jointly deliver. This means both organisations will be working towards the same goals, rather than separate or competing priorities.

- GBR will include a Wales and Borders Business Unit (GBR Cymru a'r Gororau), whose purpose is to:
    - Focus specifically on the railway needs in Wales and Borders
    - Deliver infrastructure against Joint Objectives set by both governments

    - Be the main partner for TfW and Welsh Ministers

- To fit the devolved arrangements, the Wales and Borders unit will not formally integrate track and train and it will have different powers and delegations, however agreements have been made to make sure the railway will work better as one system.
- The Welsh and UK Governments will set Shared Objectives and TfW and GBR will work more closely through an alliance to develop joint business plans to meet these objectives. The organisations will also agree areas where they can work in a more integrated way to deliver a better experience for customers and stakeholders.

What's next?
From the MOU we know that GBR Cymru a'r Gororau will need different accountabilities and governance. These will be developed in the next phase of design. Once agreed, we will progress developments to support specific organisational design, such as roles and processes.

When GBR and the GBR Cymru a'r Gororau Business Unit is formally created, the joint alliance areas and shared business planning will be able to start delivering the two governments' shared objectives – for the benefit of all rail users in Wales and Borders.

Is this the same structure as we have already?
No – there are similarities to the current structure of Network Rail, reflecting the need in our railway for local delivery, with regional and national coordination and consistency to help the system work as a whole, however how GBR will operate is totally different.

GBR's operating model has customer and commercial drivers at its heart, and these are embedded throughout the organisation in the accountabilities at every level of the organisation. This greater emphasis on decisions being agile to customers' needs is reflected in placing greater accountability for local outcomes and strategy within Business Units - those who serve the customer day to day.

The structure removes the fragmented system we currently operate in by bringing track and train together at every level and creating clear points of accountability for local areas.

Other

Is this British Rail 2.0?
No, GBR is not about going back to the past. It's about creating a modern, integrated railway that brings track and train together to improve reliability and deliver a better experience for passengers and colleagues, while building on what already works well.

Who can I speak to if I have questions about GBR in general?
Send any questions you have on GBR to JourneytoGBR@networkrail.co.uk. Alternatively, take a look on the Journey to GBR site FAQ page.

Jobs / ways of working

Will my job / team / location change?
GBR design and development is now being undertaken across all our organisations as we transition into GBR. The majority of decisions are still being developed as we progress the design. Information will be shared in a planned and transparent way, with appropriate consultation where required.

What does this mean for my terms and conditions?
We are now developing detailed design, the Railways Bill still progressing in Parliament and many decisions on how GBR will be developed still to be taken.

It's too early to confirm specific terms and conditions while organisational design is still being worked through. Information will be shared in a planned and transparent way, with appropriate consultation where required.

Will all colleagues working for GBR get free train travel?
The Employee Value Proposition (including travel) will form part of the GBR design process. The design of the employee value proposition will establish monetary and non-monetary principles to attract and retain talent, with particular focus on areas currently underrepresented in the sector.

We are currently in the early stages of GBR design, with the Bill still progressing in Parliament and many decisions on how GBR will be developed still to be taken. Appropriate consultation will take place.

Will there be any redundancies? Where there are duplicated roles, is the industry looking to restructure, change/evolve roles and streamline?
The structure of the railways needs to change to enable us all to work together to deliver better for customers. It's why we are bringing track and train together and re-designing how we work is at the forefront of all the decisions for GBR's design and development. The nature of the transformation required means there are likely to be changes to some job roles and some responsibilities, as well as some new opportunities.

The future organisational structure of GBR is still being developed and when we know more information will be shared in a planned and transparent way, with appropriate consultation where required.

Will there be a voluntary redundancy scheme?
Work is still under way to design the future GBR organisation and how it will operate. As decisions are made, we'll share information in a planned and transparent way, including consultation with colleagues and trade unions where required.

When will our HR teams integrate and who do I go to for HR related queries?
Change is happening at a different pace at different levels of the industry and in different teams, you should continue to use your usual HR channels unless told otherwise. As the future organisation takes shape, we'll prove clear guidance.

What are the timescales associated with integration and transition to GBR?
Across the industry we are already seeing track and train teams come together more informally at a local and national level as we look to deliver benefits for customers as early as possible and prepare for GBR.

Change is happening at a different pace at different levels of the industry and in different teams. We'll continue to share updates as plans develop as well as involve as many people as possible in shaping the change.

Will there be opportunities for cross-organisational secondments or career development across track and train ahead of GBR?
Yes – creating GBR will bring big changes and new opportunities. Right now, the rail industry is

made up of more than 17 different organisations, including Network Rail, the Rail Delivery Group, DfT Operator, parts of the Department for Transport, and 14 separate Train Operating Companies. We're currently working on the design of GBR, including how roles and teams will be structured. We'll share more details later this year. In the meantime, there are great ways to build your experience:

RITE (Rail Industry Talent Exchange) – This scheme makes it easy to take secondments in other parts of the industry. Just visit the website, log your interest, and we'll help match you to opportunities.

So, if you're thinking about your next step, speak to your manager or HR, use Empowering Talent, or check out RITE. There's lots you can do now to get ready for the future.

Have you agreed these changes with my union?
Trades Unions are a key part of this process and as details develop and we look to introduce changes, we'll engage and consult unions in line with our established processes.

Has anyone been consulted on practical implications and risks?
Work is still ongoing to design the future organisation, including understanding and mitigating and practical implications or risks. This process includes input from across industry and there will be formal consultation with colleagues and trade unions as proposals develop. As part of the design process we will be doing a comprehensive change impact assessment and equality impact assessment based on the detailed design outputs.

Before we establish GBR we will need to complete a rigorous safety validation process.

Who is taking decisions?
Until a permanent CEO for GBR is appointed, the CEOs of Network Rail and DFTO are making decisions on the development of GBR alongside Richard Goodman, who is Senior Responsible Officer for Rail Reform at the Department of Transport. They are working closely together to ensure GBR is aligned with wider outcomes set for the rail reform agenda.

What is the role of a division? Isn't it just a repurposing of NR's regions?
Divisions are inherently different from the current NR regions in that they will have responsibility for bringing together commercial and customer expertise in addition to the infrastructure expertise which regions currently contain.

While they will carry out some of the same functions as NR regions, they will be responsible for supporting and enabling business unit outcomes through coordination and efficiencies of scale, not through strategic direction. Divisions enable us to solve complex problems or deliver work that spans multiple Business Units, reducing duplication of effort – while improving integration.