

# Taking care of every journey

Govia Thameslink Railway  
Sustainability Report 2021



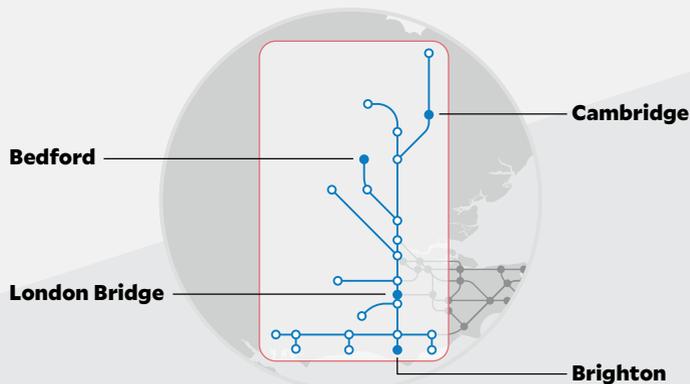
GTR



## Govia Thameslink Railway (GTR) operates Thameslink, Great Northern, Southern and Gatwick Express services.

The franchise was established to modernise the network and make it easier to use, improving the reliability of services and providing more capacity into and beyond London. GTR took over the services of both Thameslink and Great Northern in 2014. Southern and Gatwick Express brands joined the franchise in 2015.

Nearly one in five of all UK rail passengers are carried on a GTR service, with 3,600 services now running each day, making up more passenger journeys than any other rail franchise. The network itself covers major London terminals, such as London Victoria, London Bridge and London St Pancras, as well as extending the network as far north as King's Lynn and south to Brighton.



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Govia Thameslink Railway

## Find out more...

### Twitter:

- @TLRailUK
- @GNRailUK
- @GatwickExpress
- @SouthernRailUK

### Website:

- thameslinkrailway.com
- greatnorthernrail.com
- gatwickexpress.com
- southernrailway.com



## Our reporting structure

We are committed to putting our customers and communities at the heart of everything we do.

This report is split into five sections:

### Stronger communities

To increase positive and proactive engagement with the communities we serve

→ Read more on page 04

### Happier customers

To provide a safe, reliable service to our customers

→ Read more on page 09

### Cleaner environment

To look at the way in which we can reduce our impact on the environment

→ Read more on page 14

### Better teams

To constantly develop our people

→ Read more on page 20

### Safer working

To provide safe working environments for our people and our customers

→ Read more on page 24

## Chief Executive Officer's message



**"Being an inclusive employer not only means embracing our differences but also recognising what makes us similar and brings us together as a community."**

Patrick Verwer,  
Chief Executive Officer

The past year saw everyone at GTR come out of the pandemic and focus on finding a safe way to bring people back to together. Our brand promise "we're with you" carried us through the pandemic and continues to guide everyone at GTR, as we look for ways to adapt to the changing needs of our customers and communities.

We are now firmly on the path to recovery, and while I know it is going to take time, I am optimistic as I know that the strong relationships we have built with our stakeholders over the years, stand us in a good place to find solutions to our common challenges. This work is very much underway, and this report presents several initiatives we have jointly delivered, developed or improved through our engagement.

GTR's collaborative approach is central to everything we do and is the key enabler to helping our regions grow and prosper by attracting people back to our towns and cities and encouraging them to use trains and make sustainable choices.

We have continued to support the Government's COVID-19 response and worked to ensure that services continue to keep moving, as safely as possible. Many of our decisions were made using on-board data, risk assessments and insights from colleagues; enabling us to make informed decisions to strengthen services and promote less busy alternatives.

I was very proud when the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) recognised that our response to COVID-19 has been exemplary. This couldn't have been done without the hard work of our teams pulling together to implement and maintain rigorous procedures to keep our colleagues and customers safe.

Over the last 12 months we have continued to support colleagues and work with partners to raise awareness of issues such as mental health and suicide prevention, while providing signposting to support services and training. By expanding our resources to external partners, we hope to give many people the confidence to make an intervention if needed and potentially help save a life.

Our approach to using data and insights to inform decision making was also picked up by our customer experience and marketing teams. Feedback from our Customer Cabinets and Passenger Panel informed us of areas of concern for our passengers which we addressed in our reassurance campaign, launched in spring. Building confidence and welcoming back all members of our communities was an important focus for us this summer, and our partners were key to making this happen.

We worked with community partners to develop a station familiarisation programme and produced an Easy Travel Guide, written in plain English to make it accessible for individuals with

learning disabilities and autism. This helps them understand the steps we have taken to make our services safe for our passengers, and how they can keep themselves and others safe while on-board our services and at our stations. Both initiatives involved collaborating and seeking expert insights from knowledgeable partners to understand the needs of individuals. Our community rail partners have supported us with these projects to ensure we reach out to as many people as possible.

With many commuting and leisure travelling habits potentially changed forever, it is more important than ever to provide the best experience for our customers and make sure our services are welcoming and open to as many people as possible. We want people to choose to travel with us. My vision is that everybody should be able to travel independently and with confidence. We launched our Accessible Travel Policy earlier this year, setting out a series of commitments to make this vision a reality. These commitments included better accessibility training for our customer facing colleagues, reducing the time needed to book assistance and improved information provision. I'm really pleased that 100% of our customer facing colleagues have completed our enhanced accessibility training.

One of the key drivers of customer satisfaction is the overall station environment and facilities available for station users. This theme directed how our now completed multi-million station improvement funds should be spent. Over 1,000 station improvement and upgrade projects have been delivered, including decorating, community art and improved waiting areas. As a keen cyclist I'm particularly pleased we have more than 1,000 new cycling parking spaces, which is enough for every competitor in five Tours de France!

This funding also helped us create 90 landscaping projects including wildflower and bee gardens. These are just some initiatives we are implementing to make our stations more sustainable.

Through the development of our Climate Change Strategy we want to continually improve the positive impact we can have on the environment.

Rail is already one of the greenest forms of transport and by installing more EV charging points and cycle parking at our stations, we hope to encourage our customers to choose more sustainable and healthy modes of travel to and from our stations. To further reduce our impact on the environment we launched our Mobile Recycling Unit at Brighton over the summer, successfully moving our recycling rate from 30% to 95% during its first month of operation.

We have supported several employability schemes to help individuals who are outside mainstream employment to improve their confidence and gain skills for their future careers, including Kickstart, Sector Based Academy Programmes and the Get into Railways programme with The Prince's Trust. Our apprenticeships cover a range of areas including customer service, engineering and train drivers, and we currently have over 160 individuals studying towards an apprenticeship.

Being an inclusive employer not only means embracing our differences but also recognising what makes us similar and brings us together as a community. The positive impact we have, and success of our business is strengthened by both our differences and unity. By bringing in talent through work experience programmes, apprenticeships and partnerships with organisations helping those from all walks of life, we enrich our workforce with diverse thought and life experience. We want to be challenged on the way we do things and help us overcome future obstacles facing our industry. With an aging workforce, digital revolution and a challenging economic climate, it is those voices that challenge the status quo that will help us overcome, adapt and even thrive in the future.

# Stronger communities

## We are stronger together

Positive mental wellbeing and looking after those more vulnerable in local communities are both integral to the railway. GTR was the first Train Operating Company (TOC) to create a dedicated Suicide Prevention Manager role, with a dedicated focus on proactively preventing and supporting individuals who need it.

The role focuses on ensuring our colleagues and passengers have the tools needed to support vulnerable people. In 2020 we created our Caring for the Vulnerable training modules with Suicide Prevention being the lead module, approximately 2,800 colleagues have completed the e-learning course. We are now working with Network Rail and other train companies to share our training module as an industry-wide tool.

2020-21 has been very challenging both mentally and physically for a lot of people and the work our team do have been more important than ever with the number of interventions doubling since 2019. The more people empowered with the knowledge to make safe intervention means more lives can be saved. With that approach in mind, stakeholders and community rail line officers were invited to complete the training.

*'The case studies and material were very useful and informative. The Dos and Don'ts list were very good, it changed the way I think about putting myself physically between a person and the track',*

Paul Bromley, Line Officer, Southeast Communities Rail Partnership



## Highlight

Working with partners at Brighton and Eastbourne more than 140 conversations took place

## Helping people re-build their lives

In October 2020 GTR was the first train company to sign the Rough Sleeping on Rail charter launched by Department for Transport, Network Rail and British Transport Police. The charter sets out the rail industries key commitments to helping support individuals and reduce the number of rough sleeping on the rail network. Key focus areas include empowering front-line colleagues with the knowledge and skills to help support individuals at stations and on-board trains, raising awareness of StreetLink – a reporting app that can connect individuals with outreach support, and helping shift perception of homelessness.



Steve White signing

This coincided with the launch of GTR's internal training module 'Handling Homelessness' to 3,500 front line colleagues. The e-learning modules is part of our Caring for the Vulnerable suite and our strategy to help those most at risk in our local communities.

95% of customer facing colleagues on Thameslink & Great Northern have completed the training to date. The training educates our colleagues on the many situations that can lead to people being on the streets, and how they can confidently and safely support individuals presenting as rough sleepers. It teaches them about StreetLink and how to use it to report sighting of individuals, so that the information can be shared with outreach support services.

The training will continue to be rolled out to GTR support teams and GTR is exploring working with local partners too.

## Helping upskill marginalised people

We have continued to further support young people into work by introducing skills-based training schemes. Projects have included supporting the Government's Kickstart program, working with East Sussex College to provide a skills-based training programme to young people across the region, and partnering with organisations such as Groundwork to provide upskilling opportunities on landscaping projects at stations. In November we launched our first **Sector-based Work Academy Programme** partnering with East Sussex College and Jobcentre Plus. Twelve individuals completed a month-long programme preparing them for employment, after being out of work for a long period of time or not in further training or education. The program developed essential employability skills and a qualification in Employability, a Level 2 certificate in Equality & Diversity, and a bespoke Southern Rail training certificate on managing customer relations.

**Two young people joined the GTR team shortly after the course finished.**

## Kickstarting employment for young people

We understand the vital need to increase the talent pool of young people in the industry, both to stabilise the future of rail and diversify the industry. The government's Kickstart scheme has enabled us to work with Jobcentre Plus offices and reach young people who have previously

been unemployed. In February we launched our East Coast Ambassador role, helping to support the East Coast upgrade programme. We offered 3 young people a 6-month paid placement which introduced them to the multiple roles available in the rail industry and offered the chance to complete Level 2 NVQ in customer service. **All three have now found permanent employment, with one of them working now working for GTR.**

Farida, East Coast Ambassador:

*"Being part of this team has been amazing. I really enjoyed being out supporting our customers from helping them with directions to just listening to how their day has gone. GTR have given me the opportunity to explore what I could do as a career in the future and this is so important after not being able to find work during COVID."*



Farida

The programme has been extended on the Southern network with six young people starting Customer Experience Ambassadors roles in July across Sussex. An additional two roles have been created, with the new Tourism & Event Research Assistant roles to help support tourism recovery in the region.

## Stronger communities continued

### Bike donations

Following the launch of our bike donation scheme last year, we have continued to work with charity partners across our network to donate abandoned bikes to be upcycled and reused, while providing upskilling opportunities. We donated a further 292 bikes to local partners and charities across Brighton, HMP Ford, West & East Sussex, Surrey and London. Once bikes have been repaired some organisations choose to resell them at accessible prices, generating over £14,000 of resale funds for charities.

Al Bailey from Cranks said:

“The donations really help keep organisations like us running and enable us to help as many people from different walks of life as possible.

We have already been busy repairing and stripping them for all the useful parts and they have gotten plenty of cyclists back on the road.”



Brighton bike hub



### Highlight

As part of our programme to deliver station improvements at 250 stations we partnered with environmental charity Groundwork to deliver many horticultural and landscaping projects. Part of this partnership involved working with Groundwork's Green Team initiative in the London area. Green team trainees are recruited through the government's Kickstart programme, providing work placements for previously unemployed 16-24 year olds. Four young recruits taking part undertook work at 18 stations across London, receiving 26 weeks of paid work experience and training, the chance to gain City & Guilds Horticulture and Employability qualifications, and practical job-hunting support.

Green fingered activities including landscape clearance, ground preparation and the creation of wild flower area to aid biodiversity and save water. The team received a visit at Alexandra Palace from Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris in June.

Rail Minister *Chris Heaton-Harris*, said:

“It was fantastic to visit Alexandra Palace station and put in a shift alongside one of Groundwork's Green Teams as they brought new life to a station. As we build back better, we remain committed to improving stations, making our railways greener and providing new skills and jobs through the excellent Kickstart campaign.”

### Brightening up local communities

Our community rail partners have been key to helping involve local communities across our network from the start, in deciding how station improvement money can be best spent to benefit local people. In the last twelve months hundreds of improvement projects have been delivered that make our station's more welcoming places, celebrating local history and communities. Projects have also made our stations greener, more accessible or have upgraded station facilities for passengers.

We have installed over 200 pieces of community art at stations, great examples include St Neots, Burgess Hill, Eridge, Radlett.

### The value of community rail

We recognise the significant role community rail and station partners play in connecting rail to supporting and growing local communities. We have nine community rail lines and over 100 station partners across our network that already help us connect us to communities around us. Helping create opportunities to provide social connections and encourage people to travel to easily access outdoor spaces such as Cambridgeshire Fens and South Downs National Park to improve individual wellbeing.



Radlett artist

## Stronger communities continued



### Spotlight on... encouraging confidence

Working with Community Rail Partners we have continued to deliver existing and new initiatives that encourage as many people as possible to feel confident using rail. Following the easing of lockdown restrictions in spring we started to run Try-a-train sessions again, a long-term initiative that has been popular with community groups for many years. We also developed our station familiarisation initiative as part of our reassurance campaign. This was in recognition of those that used to travel frequently prior to COVID-19, may be feeling nervous about travelling again or previously attended a Try-a-train session.

The sessions feature a meet and greet by the station management team and give an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the station surroundings, additional tools to make travelling easier such as quieter train alerts, contactless travel (available at some locations) and ask any questions. Participants are asked to complete a short feedback form before and after the session, allowing us to understand the impact the session has on confidence levels in using rail again and plans to use rail again the future.

The concept was piloted with long-term community partners Aldingbourne Trust, County Care and Southeast Community Rail Partnership in the spring.

Feedback from the sessions showed:

- 100% increase in confidence using trains again after the session
- 94% planned to use rail for a day out over the summer

Roland Leask, The Aldingbourne Trust

**“Our members and volunteers appreciated the re-familiarisation course. It was a lovely welcome back to the railway and great to see familiar faces again. The sessions definitely gave our members more confidence to use the trains again and we’re very thankful to GTR for their support.”**

**“The session was pitched well, the information was clear and understandable. It is really important for people with extra needs that hard won independence isn’t taken away due to fear and mis-information”**

## Happier customers

### Happy customers

Our aim is to run a safe, reliable on-time train service that offers compelling and innovative initiatives reflecting the needs of our customers and communities. We have continued to support our passengers over the last 12 months, ensuring that key workers were still able to carry out their roles during periods of lockdown. We were ready to welcome our passengers back when restrictions began to ease in the summer months.

The last 12 months have seen us focus on delivering projects that will improve the customer experience when they travel with us. This is more important than ever when we are encouraging people to make sustainable travel choices and choose to travel by train rather than private vehicle.

### Ticketing – contactless travel experience

For many, COVID-19 has disrupted and challenged the way in which we work and spend our down time and this includes the way we travel. For some individuals this means no longer travelling as frequently and when returning to the office, they are considering the best value for money and best experience.

In response to this and to offer a more COVID-19 secure solution, we increased the number of contactless readers at stations, while encouraging customers to book online for bar code ticketing or to use The Key, our contactless smart travelcard. Using online ticketing allows customers to turn up and go at the station, rather than queueing at ticket offices. This is further supported by the expansion of contactless travel readers allowing customers travelling through the capital from Contactless PAYG stations, creating a seamless experience between transport options.

We have also supported the introduction of governments Flexi Season Ticket, giving users eight passes to use over 28 days between 2 destinations, and at peak time. To allow people to see if this is the best product for them we launched our season ticket calculator so customers could make the best value decision for them.

### Feedback from customers – we’re listening

COVID-19 impacted the way we gathered customer insight and feedback, with some tracking programmes such as the National Rail Passenger Survey stopped until further notice. Despite this, we have continued to engage with our Customer Cabinets and Access Advisory Panels and send regular surveys to our large online Passenger Panel. Face to face meetings were held virtually and we received positive feedback for this.

On average we received over 800 responses to our surveys providing us with an understanding of the concerns and needs of those travelling and not travelling. This insight informed decisions on how we needed to support people to encourage them back to rail and validate assumptions about customer travel behaviour. It also gave an opportunity to communicate how we were keeping people safe raising awareness of initiatives being delivered to improve customer experience.

In spring, feedback showed that customers were concerned about the risk of infection while travelling and about face coverings. This informed us of key information that we included in our reassurance campaign with the aim of increasing confidence levels.

We continued to take steps to keep our services clean during the pandemic, read more on page 10.

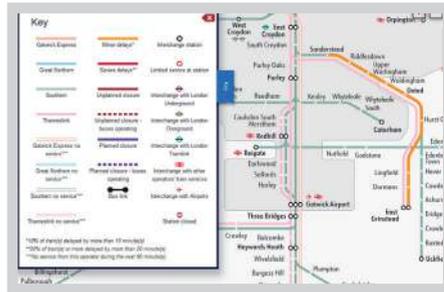
# Happier customers continued

Throughout the pandemic we have continued to work with industry partners including Network Rail and the Department for Transport to make sure we have full oversight of information and knowledge across the sector. With the change in travelling habits, it presented an opportunity for us to review and reset our understanding of our passengers. Through extensive research carried out through an online survey and insights provided by partner agencies, we have been able to update our understanding of why people chose to travel, what motivates them and how we could adapt how we communicate to address any concerns about travelling again.

## Reassuring our customers

Customer insights informed us that many were considering when to travel, with traditional peaks becoming less popular. In spring, we launched our quieter trains alerts, allowing customers to see when we expect trains to be quiet. If a train has a yellow warning triangle in journey planners such as National Rail Enquiries or our own travel apps, we expect it to be busy. This information is updated in journey planners regularly based on real-time passenger loading data.

We also launched our live route maps across our networks, giving our customers and colleagues real-time information in a visual format. This allows anyone to see at a glance how services are running and live departures. This is a great step forward and allows our colleagues to provide real-time updates for customers in an easy to use format. This initiative was tested for our Southern customers in 2020 and rolled out earlier this year across our network.



Live route map

This innovation has been an important step in keeping customers up to date on our services so they can make informed choices on how and when they travel.

Following the spring announcement of lockdown restrictions easing we developed a campaign with the aim of providing reassurance to our customers that it is safe to travel with us. Using insights from customer and stakeholder feedback, the campaign focused on topics we knew were important to passengers. Highlights included:

- Trains are cleaned and sanitised overnight
- We have over 100 extra cleaning staff
- There are over 1000 hand sanitiser points at stations
- Our modern trains are well ventilated
- You're expected to wear a face covering unless exempt
- We ran an awareness campaign about face mask exemptions
- You can search for quieter services to use
- There are digital ticketing options

We also worked with partners on initiatives to support our reassurance campaign, including working with key worker influencers and Luton Town Football Club Academy to share content on social channels beyond our traditional reach.



## Building confidence to travel again

As part of our reassurance we wanted to welcome back all members of our communities and worked with partners to develop initiatives that would, providing reassurance to as many people as possible. We worked with community partners to develop the station familiarisation program (read on page 8) and developed the Easy Travel Guide to imagery and easily digestible information to help customers with learning difficulties.

Autism Crawley and County Care collaborated with us to produce the Easy Travel Guide, which was created to inform our passengers how to travel safely in the current climate in an accessible and easy-to-read way. It is written in plain English and is accessible for individuals with learning disabilities and autism. The guide included what steps we had taken to make our services safe for our passengers, and how they can keep themselves and others safe while on-board our services and at our stations. This guide now forms part of our established support available and was shared with our accessibility and community partners.

# Happier customers continued

## Accessibility

Our aim is that everyone should be able to choose to travel independently and with confidence on our network, to support this earlier this year we launched our Accessible Travel Policy. With input from our Access Advisory Panel, stakeholders and colleagues, we outlined a series of commitments to make travelling by train easier for anyone who needs support.

- Better accessibility training – We launched enhanced accessibility training for our customer facing teams, the aim is for colleagues to provide even better customer service for disabled customers and others who need assistance when travelling. Colleagues find out how to support in the best way and what our legal obligations are when it comes to accessibility, equality and assistance. Classroom and practical training looking at the importance of good communication, raised awareness of everyday challenges disabled people experience and how to best guide a blind person. 100% of customer facing colleagues have completed the training and it has since been offered to support teams.
- Less time needed to book assistance – Passengers are always welcome to turn up at a station unannounced but, for added confidence, the notice they're asked to give to pre-book assistance was reduced from the day before (by 10pm), to six hours before travel from 1 April, and we want to reduce it further to two hours before travel in April 2022.
- Better 'Turn Up & Go' service for 41 smaller stations – New mobile support teams will reach 41 unstaffed or partly-staffed stations within 20 minutes to give assistance to passengers who need a ramp to board the train. Mobile support teams will be deployed in late 2021.

- Enhanced information – We have worked with National Rail Enquiries to provide up-to-date detailed information about the accessibility of every GTR station on its website and app, for example, Changing Places, – facilities that provide extra space to additional equipment or more room for individuals to use the toilets safely and comfortably. We have also updated our own internal directory app so colleagues have access to accurate information at all times.

- Website improvements – We reviewed how accessible our webpages are for people with visual impairments and made more than 80 improvements on the Great Northern, Southern, Thameslink and Gatwick Express websites. This approach is also used when our customer information and marketing teams are developing campaigns and social media.

Alongside improving our information channels, it's important we make changes to our station infrastructure to make it accessible and welcoming for everyone. Every five years the Access for All funding pot administered by Network Rail on behalf of the DfT funds major improvements at stations nationally, GTR has investment at 20 stations as of March 2021 secured with the support of stakeholders and community partners. Recently completed schemes include Coulsdon South and Selhurst. Coulsdon South now benefits from a new footbridge and lifts between the station platforms along with the installation of platform edge tactile paving and upgrades to the station power supply.



Yusuf Osman

In addition to AfA GTR has made changes funded from the Passenger Benefit Fund and annual Minor Works and Small Stations Improvements. Schemes include Accessible Toilets, Ramp access to station facilities, Refurbished Customer Information Points, CIS Introduction of Wide Aisle Gates, Wayfinding Signage and Tactile Surfaces, and Tactile Maps.

## Creating welcoming stations to welcome back passengers

We know from customer feedback that a welcoming station environment is a key driver in customer satisfaction, knowing that stations are well managed and maintained improves the overall feeling of confidence in travelling.

Following a significant consultation and shortlisting of projects, over £15 million has been invested and over 1,000 projects delivered, upgrading and improving our stations based on the needs of the local community and stakeholders.

The vast range of improvements are grouped under three main focus areas:

- Giving many stations a better ambience by redecorating, planting and installing artwork, often with substantial input from the local community; we've commissioned over 200 pieces of community art

- Making stations work better for passengers, improving comfort and safety with new waiting rooms and shelters, seating, lighting, information screens, defibrillators for public use, and accessibility schemes; we've installed nearly 3,000 new seats and over 100 information screens
- Making stations more environmentally friendly, with schemes such as electric vehicle charging points, secure facilities for cyclists, rainwater retention systems, and even bee gardens; we're providing around 1,300 new cycle parking spaces

We have also been able to have a positive impact on the lives of 19 young local people through our partnership with Groundwork East (read more on page 6), who have gained horticulture training and qualifications at 18 projects at London stations. Being able to provide opportunities that support young people gain new skills, while improving the customer experience is a key focus for GTR initiatives.

## Upgrading our on-board experience

It's not just our stations that are having an upgrade, our Electrostar train fleet on Southern, Gatwick Express and Great Northern are going through a £55m investment from the trains' owners Porterbrook to improve the on-board customer experience, the fleet's reliability and give them greater longevity. The upgrade, which was scoped through research by Transport Focus, includes new plug sockets, LED lighting and new media screens which will show real-time information. The majority of the fleet is 15-20 years old and is being upgraded to modernise the customer experience.

The upgrade work is being carried out at Selhurst Depot by our engineers, as part of a working partnership between ourselves, Porterbrook and Alstom. We have installed a dedicated platform structure at the depot which has helped us achieve our goal of delivering one train a week.

# Cleaner environment

Rail is already one of the cleanest forms of transport compared to most road and air transport, but there is much more we can do to be part of the solution to climate change and reduce our environmental impact. Working with partners, passengers and our supply chain we can make further changes to make a positive difference. See Our Climate Change Strategy which lists our focus areas and key activities.

Our railway occupies large tracts of land and we are also developing plans to improve how we look after nature on our estate, which will bring the additional benefits of reducing carbon emissions and improving our customer experience. Aiming to decrease our footprint, we have worked with Go-Ahead Group on changing our contractor procurement processes to ensure that environmental considerations are a larger factor in selection.

## Our climate change strategy

GTR are proud to be playing an important role in the Go-Ahead Group's strategy to reduce carbon emissions and remain focused on ensuring environmentally-friendly ways of working. In July 2021, the Go-Ahead Group released a Climate Change Strategy [https://www.go-ahead.com/sustainability/climate-change], detailing how the Group as a whole is reducing our impact on the climate and also how we are managing the impact of climate change on our operations. As a public transport company we have an exciting opportunity to help the transport sector decarbonise; a full bus can take on an est. 75 cars off the road and so modal shift is critical to decarbonise the transport sector.

Our Group Climate Change Strategy addresses 5 priority areas:

- 1 Climate change adaptation: identify how climate change is affecting us and plan how we are managing those impacts and opportunities
- 2 Decarbonisation: of our premises, ancillary fleet and train fleet. Our Group target is to reduce our carbon footprint by 75% by 2035 and achieve Net Zero Carbon by 2045
- 3 Air quality: we have a series of ambitious reduction targets for carbon monoxide (17%), hydrocarbons (49%), nitrogen oxide (63%) and particulate matter (50%) by 2025

- 4 Water, including our use, leaks and sourcing. As a Group we are aiming to reduce water use by 25% by 2025
- 5 Waste, including recycling and waste to landfill. As a Group we are aiming to increase recycling rates to 60% by 2025

At GTR, our aim is to deliver continuous improvement through reducing our consumption of critical energy and water resources, more effectively managing the waste that we and our passengers produce and making it more accessible for our passengers to make green end-to-end travel choices through facilities at station and integration with other forms of public transport. Our plans support the government's climate change strategy and will be adapted accordingly in line with new research and events.

Our strategy highlights include:

- 1 Climate change adaptation: identify how climate change is and will affect our business and plan how to better manage those impacts and opportunities
- 2 Decarbonisation: develop a long-term plan towards total decarbonisation of our premises, ancillary fleet, and train fleet by 2050

- 3 Air quality: assess feasibility of options reduce air quality emissions from existing diesel-powered rolling stock fleets, as well as work with industry partners to baseline air quality data at stations and develop improvement plans aligned to the agreed industry-wide approach and/or policy
- 4 Water: manage consumption, identify and respond to leaks, and assess options for water efficiency initiatives
- 5 Waste: set annual targets for reduction in amount of waste generated, zero waste to landfill, and recycling

### Case study

Aiming to deliver the highest recycling rate of any station on the rail network, we managed to increase Brighton station's recycling rates to 95% from an average of less than 30% over the last year, through a new Mobile Segregation Unit (MSU) installed at Brighton station.

Currently 12% of the total waste collected across GTR's 800-mile network comes from Brighton. Prior to the pandemic, in an average year the station produced 650 tonnes of rubbish.

The new unit segregates, washes, compacts, bales, weighs and electronically tags all waste from Brighton station, as well as all Southern and Thameslink trains running to and from the city, in partnership with innovative sustainability start-up, The Green Block.

Since installation in August the MSU has already prevented over 32 tonnes of waste going to incineration and improved the recycling rate to approximately 92%. If rates remain at the same level, the initiative will recycle nearly 400 tonnes between now and September 2022.



# Our climate strategy



## Climate change adaptation

1. Identify risks and vulnerabilities
2. Quantify costs and source funding
3. Identify risks to properties
4. Work with suppliers to identify and reduce exposure and vulnerabilities
5. Develop business cases for adaptation measures
6. Work with partners

### We are:

- Developing a comprehensive climate change risk register and are currently working with Network Rail and colleagues across the industry on quantifying those risks, using historical information and climate change forecasting
- Part of a joint working group with industry partners across the Network Rail Southern region and have identified an internal team to lead on this work
- Undertaking a complete review of all property and stations to assess the risk from severe weather events, including any risk to access to those properties and stations

### Group targets:

1. Risk assessment, mitigation plan, and measures embedded by 2023
2. Identify mitigation activities for critical suppliers by 2022
3. Identify local extreme weather predictions, develop premise safeguarding plan, assess high-risk areas, and embed actions and reviews by 2022



## Mitigation: waste

1. Improve waste management contracts
2. Increase recycling rates
3. Behaviour change programmes for customers and colleagues
4. Reduce waste in supply chain and operational activities

### We are:

- Running a 12-month trial project to assess new and innovative means of increasing recycling at Brighton station with further expansion being considered
- Working with our current waste management contractor to improve real-time data
- Undertaking a full review of all waste streams within GTR to ensure that waste managed outside of central contracts is accurately identified and reported
- Producing a quarterly print report by user to encourage behaviour change to reduce printing requirements

### Group target:

1. By 2025, increase waste recycling rate to 60%



## Mitigation: decarbonisation

1. Rail fleet decarbonisation
2. Ancillary fleet decarbonisation
3. Decarbonisation of properties
4. Develop net/carbon zero commitment

### We are:

- Supporting Network Rail with their planning to introduce electrification or provision of alternative non-diesel fleet on the Uckfield and Marshlink lines
- Investigating new technology such as battery and/or battery hybrid fleet
- Implementing timetable changes and changes to formations of diesel trains on the Marshlink line and will work to identify opportunities to improve energy efficiency within the timetable
- Delivering a trial of solar power generation at Streatham Hill depot, working in partnership with the Energy Garden charity
- Considering further opportunities to fit renewable power generation on our premises
- Developing a programme for the extension of LED lighting and automatic light controls
- Undertaking a full review of the ancillary vehicles that we operate to determine the requirements of the vehicle, current ownership arrangements and supporting infrastructure available. Following that we will develop a plan for transition to electric or hybrid models as current leases expire

### Group targets:

1. Net zero business by 2045
2. Zero-emission bus fleet in the UK by 2035
3. Non-diesel rail fleet by 2035
4. By 2035 reduce carbon emissions by 75%



## Mitigation: air quality

1. Air quality plans will be introduced between 2022 and 2030 as part of the industry's programme of air quality testing
2. GTR's active and sustainable travel programme seeks to identify ways to encourage our customers to use healthy and/or sustainable modes of transport to and from stations
3. Trial 'no idling zones' at selected stations to encourage vehicle users to switch off their engines when not actively driving

### We are:

- Introducing air quality plans in accordance with industry policy
- Developing partnerships with two county councils to develop ten active and sustainable station travel plans, alongside developing a programme with employees and suppliers to encourage active and sustainable travel

### Group targets:

By 2025, reduce:

1. Carbon monoxide (CO) by 17%
2. Hydrocarbons (HC) by 49%
3. Nitrogen oxides (NOx) by 63%
4. Particulate matter (PM) by 55%



## Mitigation: water

1. Address leaks better
2. Reduce third party use of our water
3. Reduce water use
4. Improve water sourcing

### We are:

- Installing water data loggers on the remaining supplies across GTR to ensure rapid identification and rectification of leaks
- Developing a programme for a water harvesting trial to take place at an engineering depot

### Group target:

1. By 2025, reduce water use by 25%

# Summary

## Adaptation

The UK climate is changing and having an impact on rail operations during periods of extreme weather, this includes cases of landslips and flooding.

We have developed a comprehensive climate change risk register that identifies how climate change will impact our business, considering passenger services, premises, and supply chains. We have identified these vulnerabilities and are now quantifying the risks to adapt our business to mitigate the risks, whilst exploiting opportunities that may emerge.

The most immediate short-term risk significant is the increased frequency of flooding affecting services and facilities, with the most significant long-term risk identified as the Health and Safety implications of extreme heat on colleagues and passengers.

## Decarbonisation

We are committed to total decarbonisation by 2050 in line with the rest of the UK rail industry.

Our significant energy consumption comes from traction electricity, which accounts for 86% of total energy use. Diesel traction counts for a further 6%, as does non-traction electricity, with gas accounting for 2% of consumption.

Our route to decarbonisation includes the increase in renewable energy sources, coupled with supporting Network Rail with their programme of electrification of the Uckfield and Marshlink line. Whilst we know this is a long-term aspiration, we recognise there are other actions we can take such as feasibility studies of introducing battery powered fleet vehicles, trial of 'green diesel', and potentially introducing new and more energy efficient trains.

For non-traction energy we have already signed up to a green electricity tariff and will be undertaking audits to understand where efficiencies across our sites can be found. Whilst our gas use is small, we will remove gas supplies where feasible and develop an action plan for replacing gas boilers with air/ground source heat pumps as they become life expired.

## Air quality

Our main direct impacts to air quality are from our diesel fleet of Class 171 trains that run across the Uckfield and Marshlink lines and indirectly through passenger travel to and from stations

DfT/RSSB has established an industry group to evaluate air quality at stations and developed a programme of air quality testing at 100 stations across the UK, five of which are operated by us. It is proposed that air quality plans will be introduced at stations between 2022 and 2030.

## Water

In 2020/21 we consumed 328,723 m<sup>3</sup> water, through GTR activities, tenancies and 3rd party use. We will be improving the leak management process and will be installing data loggers to help us understand where and how water is being used.

## Waste

Our recycling rate pre-pandemic was 32% with zero waste sent to landfill. As part of the new rail contract, we will be agreeing an ambitious recycling target, endorsed by RSSB.

## Better teams

Our people represent our organisation and should mirror the diverse communities our network serves. Our team of over 7,500 colleagues have continued to support fellow key workers to keep the country moving during the last 18 months. In recent months as restrictions have eased, our teams have been there to support each other and welcome our customers back.

We have continued to challenge ourselves and create an environment that welcomes open dialogue and expression for all colleagues. Our Race Equality Network, was launched in early 2021 with a clear focus on colleague mental health and creating a culture of Allyship. To encourage colleagues to build relationships based on trust, consistency and accountability with marginalised individuals and/or groups of people, through greater culture understanding, awareness, and representation

GTR's Race Equality Network Co-Chair Tina Owusu said:

**“Allyship has never been more important. It doesn't mean putting yourself at the centre of the story, instead, allies listen, read, reflect, and think about what in the system needs fixing, or which conversations need to be had. Ultimately this helps to cultivate a more inclusive culture.”**

As well as creating sustainable support networks, we have launched a new data HR data app to gather and analyse diversity data that has never been captured before. This is to improve our understanding of our organisation and make informed decisions in the future. We have begun to work towards the National Equality Standard (NES), the gold standard in D&I Accreditation, facilitated by Ernst & Young. This rigorous process will sense check and help refine our business approach against best practice.

Equipping our teams with the knowledge and confidence to carry out their job to the best of their abilities continues to be our approach to training, this includes the development of our new D&I e-learning to establish a consistent level of knowledge through education.

We have continued to increase the number of online training courses for colleagues this year via our online training hub. The online training hub has recently been expanded to all colleagues. The creation of shorter condensed e-learning training modules has allowed more colleagues to access a wider variety of training than ever before.

### Developing future talent

**Apprenticeships** are crucial in supporting our continued programme of work to create a diverse and inclusive business. A main focus in the last 18 months has been to increase the gender split of our train driver workforce, an historically male dominated role, successfully doubling the number of female train driver applicants from 413 in 2019, to 825 in 2020. This was due to a number of factors including dedicated recruitment and marketing campaigns in publications and online media. Using people case studies, we have been able to bring to life the opportunities GTR has to offer and thus expand our reach by securing media coverage in top tier national and regional media.

Like many initiatives in the last 18 months we took our annual work experience online and hosted our first virtual week-long session. This meant that we could offer it out to more young people and spend time with more departments across the business. This year we welcomed 32 young people and they spent time with five departments. Applicants came through a variety of channels including with a partnership with Applicants came through a variety of channels including with a partnership with AFBE-UK (Association for Black & Minority Ethnic Engineers) to give opportunities to schools with young people from more marginalised backgrounds in communities across our network.

This year we celebrated our overall apprenticeship scheme receiving the official stamp approval by successfully passing its **Ofsted New provider Monitoring Visit**. Inspectors found the scheme delivered a “thoughtfully structured” curriculum and sets ambitious standards for its new recruits.

Ofsted highlighted our safety-first culture and looking after apprentices' wellbeing and safety, especially considering the shift in learning patterns caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our apprenticeships are not just aimed at school leavers but are open to individuals of all ages, our most recent figures demonstrate that over 69% of our current apprentices are over 30. To celebrate this year's National Apprenticeship Week in February we highlighted a group of apprentices who are debunking the traditional apprenticeship stereotypes. Amongst this special set of employees is one of the oldest apprentices in the UK, Bob Bryce, 76.

Bob tells his story:

**“I joined the railway in 1999. I'm a passenger host and team leader based at Luton station, and I'm doing a Level 3 Supervisor apprenticeship so that I can improve my skills even further. It's the best job I've ever had, which is why I want to keep working as long as possible. It's a job for life and I'm grateful for the opportunity to learn new things at my age. I would encourage anyone in later life to consider an apprenticeship.**

Our most recent train driver recruitment campaign saw successful applicants entered to complete the first national train driver level 3 apprenticeship qualification.



Bob Bryce

## Wellbeing of our staff

The wellbeing of our colleagues continues to be a priority particularly after another challenging 12 months of the pandemic and recovery. Our health and wellbeing programme has been recognised by RSSB as industry leading and won Large Employer Thriving at Work at this year's Inside Out awards. We aim to promote positive mental and physical health for all colleagues and have initiatives to cater for everyone.

To mark a summer of wellbeing we launched our Moovd app competition 'Move 4 your mood', encouraging colleagues to log as many minutes of activity as possible over six weeks. Over 66,300 minutes were logged, activities included regular exercise as well as household activities like mowing the lawn or cycling to work for the first time. We have continued to offer health on track days, seeing a reduction in diabetes referrals year on year.

We continue to host Health and Wellbeing Brunch sessions, an initiative started last year. These sessions focus on a range of themes such as Wellbeing beyond COVID-19, Keeping Ourselves Well and our mental health support team at CareFirst have also hosted sessions.

This gave colleagues a chance to have time focused on their wellbeing as part of their workday. Average attendances are in excess of 150 colleagues. We take part in Wellbeing Live's annual conference and all colleagues have free attendance.

We have used our learnings to contribute to RSSB's industry mental health charter.



Bronagh

## Mental health support

When incidents occur on the railway it is our duty to support both our customers, communities and colleagues. Annually we have held local R U OK days in October at Stevenage station, offering colleagues & the public a physical presence signposting to support services from the Samaritans and local mental health charities.

This year we have transitioned R U OK Days into Days of Action, taking place once a month at stations on Thameslink. These days provide support to colleagues and members of the public at the station and surrounding areas (businesses, cafes, pubs etc) through wellness and mental health signposting, providing of a friendly ear, in a safe area with trained mental health first aiders or Samaritans for people in crisis.

Every year our employees carry out lifesaving interventions. These employees (or as we like to call them, Lifesavers) perform an important role, making a difference to a person at a very vulnerable time in their life. We show our appreciation for colleagues going this extra mile by recognising them with Life Saver Awards – 365 lifesavers to date, this allows us to say thank you and listening to their often-inspiring stories. Our Suicide Prevention program is a key part of our Safer Working – read more on page 4.



# Safer working

The safety of our passengers and colleagues is paramount to our business and we focus on both physical and mental wellbeing. Many colleagues continued to work at stations and depots to keep key workers moving, however from spring onwards we began to welcome people back and ensure that they felt confident that it was safe to do so.

## Safety culture

We have used the last 12 months as an opportunity to reset and refocus on everyday actions that can make each day safer. This included looking at our overall culture, how incidents are reported and ensuring everyone is accountable for the safety of the workplace.

We sought feedback on our overall safety culture from colleagues and were pleased to see a 14% increase in colleagues that believe safety is a priority for GTR.

We developed additional e-learning modules – Zero Harm Everyday Action to support the core safety and health learning objectives and a safety basics package that includes everything from Manual Handling to Using an AED (Defibrillator).

We launched our new Zero Harm reporting app to all colleagues, where they can report accidents, assaults, operational incidents, lifesaving interventions and near misses. Since launch, near miss reporting has increased by 40%, and on-the-day reporting has improved.

There has been a significant improvement linked to the introduction of the Zero Harm Manager's app in ensuring managers are visible across the network, having safety conversations and undertaking Zero Harm tours. Since the re-launch of safety tours last August, more than 700 Zero Harm tours have been completed to date by senior managers at stations and depots across the network. The overall number of workforce injuries has reduced by 32% since pre-COVID levels, we believe this is due to a renewed focus on day to day safety.



**Award**

## Awarded a Gold RoSPA Award

for our health and safety achievements and progress with Zero Harm

## Life saving interventions

Lifesaving interventions have increased year-on-year since, doubling since 2019. Periodically we host sessions at stations for colleagues and the local community to offer support and signpost to further help. (Read more page 23). To mark World Suicide Prevention Day, we offered our Caring for the Vulnerable – Suicide Prevention Training e-learning course out to stakeholders and Community Rail Partners. By sharing knowledge and best practice, we hope more people who feel confident in intervening means another life could be saved. Over 40% of our colleagues have completed the life saving training.

## Keeping everyone safe

We have continued to support the Government's COVID-19 response and ensured that services continue to keep moving and as safely as possible. We set up a COVID-19 safety validation group to oversee and be accountable for ensuring the business' responses kept everyone safe while running an operationally safe service. The implementation of the social distancing policy as well as a potential significant reduction in staff, due to COVID-19 meant that contingency plans had to be put in place and all decisions were led by risk assessments and an understanding of all possible outcomes. We carried out audits at more than 500 stations, 20 train crew depots and over 600 train rides by GTR service quality auditors who found a consistently high level of compliance of staff wearing their face covering correctly, clear social distancing requirements and colleagues having the equipment they required.

We used technology to help inform and make decisions about train services, by launching the Social Distancing Power App. Staff were able to report overcrowding and difficulties to maintain social distancing and the intelligence was used to strengthen services where possible and promote less busy services.



Marking Suicide Prevention Day with Stephen McPartland MP

Minister for Mental Health, Suicide Prevention and Patient Safety, Nadine Dorries, welcomes the training. She said:

*“Preventing suicide is possible with the right support at the right time for those experiencing a suicidal crisis. This training makes a real difference by helping staff identify vulnerable people at train stations so they can intervene when support is needed. I would encourage everyone who can to take part in suicide prevention awareness training and play a role in supporting those around you.”*

**Highlight**

Our response to COVID-19 was recognised by the ORR as exemplary



## Spotlight on...One of our youngest life savers – Sigi Gordon

19 year old Sigi Gordon, a customer service assistant for Thameslink, has already been faced with making life saving decisions in his role. I was going about my usual duties with a colleague when we spotted a young person standing beyond the yellow safety line. We thought it might have been someone with their headphones in, perhaps not concentrating – which can often be the case – and so headed straight over to get them to take a few steps back.

“We eventually got him behind the yellow line, which was a good job as a train pulled in soon after. I didn’t feel confident walking away from the individual as there was something about his behaviour that didn’t seem quite right.

“I approached him and asked if he was okay and he simply replied ‘no.’ I was a bit thrown by this and immediately thought back to our training to ensure I was doing the right thing.

“He said he was 15 years old; this really hit home as he was only a few years younger than me. He told me that he had just gone back to school after the lockdown and that he couldn’t cope with the pressure of exams. It also sounded like he was having issues with his friends and that things had got on top of him.

“It was really sad to see how low he was; it goes to show that we all deal with things in different ways.

It’s worrying to think about how many other people his age were feeling the same concerns. I’m glad that I was able to step in and help that day but it’s something that will always stay with me.”



## Key data: Govia Thameslink Railway

	2021	2020	2019
<b>Better teams</b>			
Average number of employees	7,567	7,394	7,220
Average length of service in years/months	14.2	10.11	10.11
Employee engagement (%)	64	82	64
Turnover (%)	4.4	5.6	6
Absenteeism (%)	7.3	6.6	4.1
Training spend per employee (£)	383.21	571.61	754
Female employees (%)	19.3	18.2	17
Ethnic minority employees (%)	20.6	19.7	18.3
<b>Happier customers</b>			
UK customer satisfaction (%)	n/a*	81	78
UK Rail punctuality PPM (%)	89.7	84.8	87.2
<b>Stronger communities</b>			
Total contributions (£)	478,418	467,479	412,344
Community spend per employee (£)	63.22	63.41	57.11
Individuals/beneficiaries directly reached	1,076	2,561	1,134
Stakeholder events (number)	351	169	239
Leverage – total spend on payroll giving (£)	31,456	26,078	22,976
<b>Safer working</b>			
UK RIDDOR accidents per 100 employees	0.5	0.29	0.11
UK rail SPADS per million miles	0.87	1.2	1.11
Reported crimes	2,552	5,361	5,462
UK trains certified accessible (RVAR) (%)	43	42	43
UK trains certified accessible (PRM-TS) (%)	57	58	49
UK rail accessible managed train stations (%)	23	61	59

	2021	2020	2019
<b>Cleaner environment</b>			
CO <sub>2</sub> total from all scope 1 & 2 sources (tonnes)	183,818.2	220,563	236,414
Carbon emissions per vehicle mile (all energy) (kg)	0.6	0.64	0.74
Total waste generated (tonnage)	3,275.4	5,356.6	6,633.6
Waste – landfill diversion rate (%)	97.16	98	97.83
Recycling rate (%)	35.8	35.7	31
Amount of water consumed (m <sup>3</sup> )	320,662	383,616	380,987
Confirmed water losses (m <sup>3</sup> )	33,219	n/a	n/a
% of electric train fleet with on-train metering installed	958	979	979
Average fleet diesel efficiency (MPG)	6.4	5.332	4.592
Rail EC4T efficiency (miles/kWh)	0.41	0.414	0.393
Adaptation: yearly target completion: 2020/21 risk register & mitigation plans for top risks (Y/N)	Y**	n/a	n/a

Note: For our Climate Change strategy, new metrics have been introduced and reporting on these will start from 2020-21 which is why there are some indicators in 2019/20 without data. Air quality is also a key focus of our strategy but this is reported in Group annual ESG reporting. Further verified energy & environmental data can be found in the annual Group ESG report.

\*Results from Transport Focus independent customer survey. Due to the impact of COVID-19, surveys were paused for this year.

\*\*Risk Register is complete, now working on mitigation plans

**Key**

**RIDDOR – Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations at workplaces**  
**DDA – Disability Discrimination Act**



For information on the full Group data, please visit our corporate website: [go-ahead.com](http://go-ahead.com)

**More information**

You can find out more about GTR by visiting our websites:

[gatwickexpress.com](http://gatwickexpress.com)

[greatnorthernrail.com](http://greatnorthernrail.com)

[thameslinkrailway.com](http://thameslinkrailway.com)

[southernrailway.com](http://southernrailway.com)

More information on how Go-Ahead Group manages sustainability can be found by visiting:

[go-ahead.com/sustainability](http://go-ahead.com/sustainability)

If you have any comments, views or ideas on how we might improve, or have any thoughts on other issues that we should address in this report, please write to:

Katherine Cox, Corporate Social Responsibility Manager  
GTR 2nd Floor Monument Place  
London  
EC3R 8AT

E: [community@gtrailway.com](mailto:community@gtrailway.com)

**Summary Verification Statement  
from Bureau Veritas UK Ltd**

Bureau Veritas UK Limited (Bureau Veritas) has provided verification for The Go-Ahead Group plc (Go-Ahead) over selected sustainability indicators contained within the Group Sustainability Report. The information and data reviewed in this verification process covered the period 28th June 2020 to 3rd July 2021.

The full verification statement including Bureau Veritas' verification opinion, methodology, recommendations and a statement of independence and impartiality will be released alongside the Group Sustainability Report and can be found on the Go-Ahead Group website:

[www.go-ahead.com](http://www.go-ahead.com)



Bureau Veritas UK Ltd  
November 2021