

CrossCountry Annual Business Plan

2024-25

crosscountry 

Contents



Page 3	Letter from the Interim Managing Directors
Page 4	Letter from the Financial Director
Page 5	Business Excellence
Page 6	Train Service Operations Plan
Page 9	Revenue Plan
Page 12	Customer Excellence
Page 13	Customer and Communities Plan
Page 16	Accessibility Plan
Page 19	People Excellence
Page 20	Leadership, Management and Resourcing Plan
Page 23	People Plan
Page 26	Sustainability and Society
Page 27	Collaboration Plan
Page 30	Environmental Sustainability Plan





Welcome

Managing Director Letter

We are pleased to share our Annual Business Plan for 2024-25. The plan has been developed in collaboration with the Department for Transport and Network Rail, and we would like to thank them for their support and input.

October 2023 saw the commencement of our National Rail Contract (NRC), which enables us to continue running our long-distance and inter-regional services across England, Scotland and Wales, providing around 30million journeys for business and leisure customers annually and connecting cities and towns across Great Britain for the next eight years.

The eight-year term gives us the platform to further invest in the business to improve the service we offer our customers. Alongside a comprehensive refurbishment of our Voyager and Turbostar trains, we are also increasing seat capacity with the phased introduction from June 2024 of an additional 12 Voyager trains to our fleet. The introduction of a new daily direct service between Cardiff and Edinburgh is one of the route extensions that will continue to strengthen connections across Great Britain.

We recognise and relish our crucial role in connecting people across the length and breadth of Great Britain and are committed to ensuring a bright and sustainable future for our railway and the people who do their utmost for customers. We will continue to support our colleagues with their careers through skills and training, invest in their physical and mental wellbeing and continue to promote a diverse and inclusive workplace culture.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our incredible front-line colleagues who bring these values to life and make this possible each and every day.



Scott Maynard
Interim
Managing Director



Welcome

Finance Director Letter

The 2024-25 Annual Business Plan lays the foundations for the delivery of the National Rail Contract, and how we will deliver improved outcomes for our customers and communities through an expanded service offering, while achieving excellent value for taxpayers' money.

The Covid pandemic changed the financial reality of the railway. Since 2019, the Government has subsidised the railway through periods of significantly decreased passenger demand. Our challenge is to manage our cost base as would be expected of a good and efficient operator and generate and manage increased customer demand. Reducing the net subsidy position is a key objective of this business plan and our responsibility to taxpayers.

The eight-year term of the NRC gives us the financial stability needed to develop our business and strengthen our revenue generation.

This business plan sets out how we will offer our customers increased flexibility before, during and after their journey, alongside additional capacity when it's needed to deliver the best possible service for our customers.



Harj Singh
Finance Director



CROSSCOUNTRY VALUES

Our core values will guide every decision we make and be visible in our actions every day.





Train Service Operations Plan

Plan overview

A timetable that delivers for our customers and communities, optimising fleet and train crew productivity and delivering reliable performance whilst remaining adaptable to changing needs.



Train Service Operations Plan

Key themes

- Train Service Development
- Train Service Delivery
- Rolling Stock

Initiative Summary

Our Train Service Operations plan outlines a substantial programme of change, culminating in the 2025 timetable changes. The introduction of 15 weekday services, 14 Saturday services and 12 Sunday services to the long-distance network will provide an extra 36,000 seats per week and will provide increased connectivity primarily on the Reading – Newcastle service group. It will also see the uplift of the journey frequency between Cambridge and Stansted Airport to an hourly service, providing vital rail to air links for customers in the East Midlands and East Anglia.

The introduction of an additional 12 Voyager trains gradually from June 2024 will provide the capacity to support these exciting changes to our timetable.

We are pleased to be able to operate Cardiff-Edinburgh services from December 2024, with a new and unique 'Three Nations' service offering for our customers, and we will continue to fully engage our cross-border colleagues and stakeholders to bring this new service to life.



Train Service Operations Plan

We will work with our industry partners to explore a number of exciting opportunities for timetable development changes that will bring an improved service offering to customers. These include continued development our own future regional timetable product, as well new initiatives with other operators across the geographical scope of our network.



Revenue Plan

Plan overview

Regaining people's trust in and advocacy for rail by creating new journey opportunities through strategic timetable changes, matching capacity with demand and designing our products and services around customer and community needs.





Revenue Plan

Key Themes

- Customer Demand
- Ancillary Revenue
- Marketing and Branding
- Ticketless Travel
- Fares and Ticketing

Initiatives summary

Our Revenue plan outlines how we can grow customer demand responsibly over the coming years. We recognise the importance of balancing capacity against any increases in demand, and our Revenue plan sits alongside our Train Service Operations plan.

As well as providing additional capacity, we will be providing additional journey opportunities on services that have not recovered as strongly since the pandemic. This provides us with an excellent test bed to trial a range of new initiatives, such as reviewing our first class fares, joint ticketing opportunities with other operators and expanding the period of time customers can purchase tickets in advance, rewarding customers who can plan ahead.

We are providing greater flexibility during the journey, with an expanded suite of upgrade and train swap products, which will remove the hassle from short-notice journey changes. We are also exploring innovative intermodal transport and business travel opportunities through active collaboration both within and outside the rail industry.





Revenue Plan

While we are introducing new products that will enhance customers' rail experience, we also recognise the need to make rail fares simpler for customers. We are making great progress with our Advance Purchase ticketing restructure and are working with the industry on a fares simplification strategy.

In order to optimise our Marketing capabilities, we will be modernising our approach through system enhancements. Our current system has enabled us to communicate key messages to customers about engineering work, timetable changes and to deliver effective nationwide marketing campaigns. However, we believe that in order to keep pace with the modern rail customer (or potential customer) a more personal touch is needed. System improvements will enable us to tailor communications to customers' needs, with live seat availability and passenger loading information, best-value tickets, disruption information and journey management options such as alternate service and route suggestions.

It is both crucial for the long-term sustainability of the rail industry and for the consistency of the customer experience that we continually step up our response to ticketless travel and ticket fraud. To achieve this, we will be introducing a dedicated fraud team and introducing improved anti-fraud measures within our back office systems.





CROSSCOUNTRY VALUES

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We do the right thing



We care passionately



We make the difference



Customer and Communities Plan

Plan overview

We will use insight to continue to develop meaningful relationships with our customers and communities, bringing the human touch to every journey to provide memorable moments that attract people back to rail.

13



Customer and Communities Plan

Key themes

- Service Quality
- Customer Insight to Action
- Community Engagement
- Social Value

Initiative Summary

The Plan for Rail sets out the UK Government's goals for rail reform. The plan seeks to deliver a new deal for passengers, improving the service they receive and making rail more welcoming and accessible to those with additional travelling needs. To support the plan, we will be conducting a trial – the first of its kind within the industry – of an Accessible Customer Service (ACS) component. The ACS Regime will introduce a standardised and consistent framework to assess the quality of our service provision to customers with additional needs.

To address a key priority area for customers, we have launched a programme to refine how we use our train seating capacity in the short term through a range of internal workstreams, in tandem with the longer-term solution of our 2025 timetable changes which will provide an additional 36,000 seats per week across our intercity services. We will also be providing enhanced customer information with live seat availability and boarding information to enable customers to make informed decisions about their journey in advance.



Customer and Communities Plan

We are also refurbishing, expanding and optimising our fleet, introducing an additional twelve Voyager trains which will be refurbished for the first time in 20 years, improving the on-board environment. We will begin introducing the additional 60 carriages incrementally from June 2024 as they undergo the required technical and operational enhancements, with the refurbishment programme running until 2027. We will also be refurbishing our Turbostar fleet on our regional services, providing a refreshed look and feel to the trains.

We are changing how we manage our successful Customer and Communities Investment Fund (CCIF) to ensure we fund the projects that have the biggest positive societal impact. We will continue to make funding available for Community Rail Partnerships through our CRP Project Fund, while enabling other stakeholders to apply for funding through CCIF for schemes that align with our strategic objectives.

We will embed Social Value principles throughout our business, including in the projects we select and the suppliers we work with to optimise our contribution to the communities we serve, the natural environment and our employees. We will align our approach with the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) Social Value Framework and publish an annual Social Value Report detailing CrossCountry's Social Value Impacts.



Accessibility Plan

Plan overview

A genuinely accessible railway that removes barriers to travel at every stage of every customer's journey.





Accessibility Plan

Key themes

- Improving Customer Journeys
- Disability and Accessibility Awareness Training
- Improved Customer Information

Initiative Summary

The Rail Delivery Group (RDG) pilot, which used virtual reality (VR) to deliver empathy training for customer-facing staff, gave our staff the ability to interact in a different environment using virtual reality headsets, helping our staff understand the requirements of customers with additional needs. We will now explore and define our preferred approach to this training and undertake a feasibility study to deliver Special Needs training using VR, in line with our Diversity and Inclusion policy.

Our progressive 'Access for All' Maps initiative has already been a resounding success in Stockport, Macclesfield, Manchester Piccadilly and York. The maps provide comprehensive city guides to customers defined as having disabilities, with information on accessibility at places of interest, as well as guides and suitability on activities, events and attractions. We will work with our Accessibility Panel to identify potential locations for the initiative, working with the relevant industry partners to achieve consent and distribute and display Access for All maps at four new stations during the year.





Accessibility Plan

We will work with Accessibility Panel to help our on-board colleagues' knowledge of less visible disabilities and the assistance needed for these customers.

We will also implement a standard operating procedure for boarding and alighting electric wheelchairs and mobility scooters on our trains, as well as a pilot for introducing luggage tags for customers requiring assistance.





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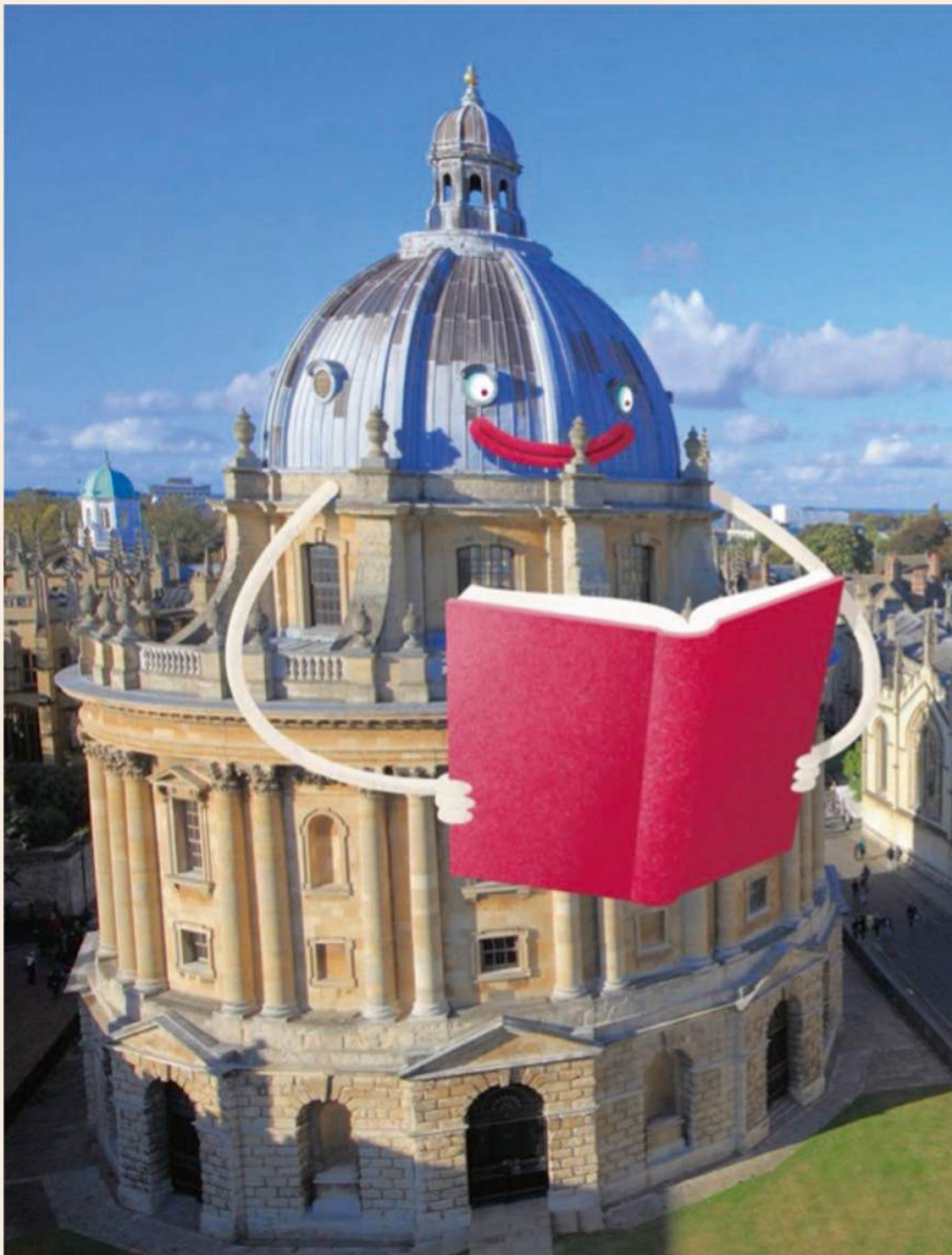
We do the right thing



We care passionately



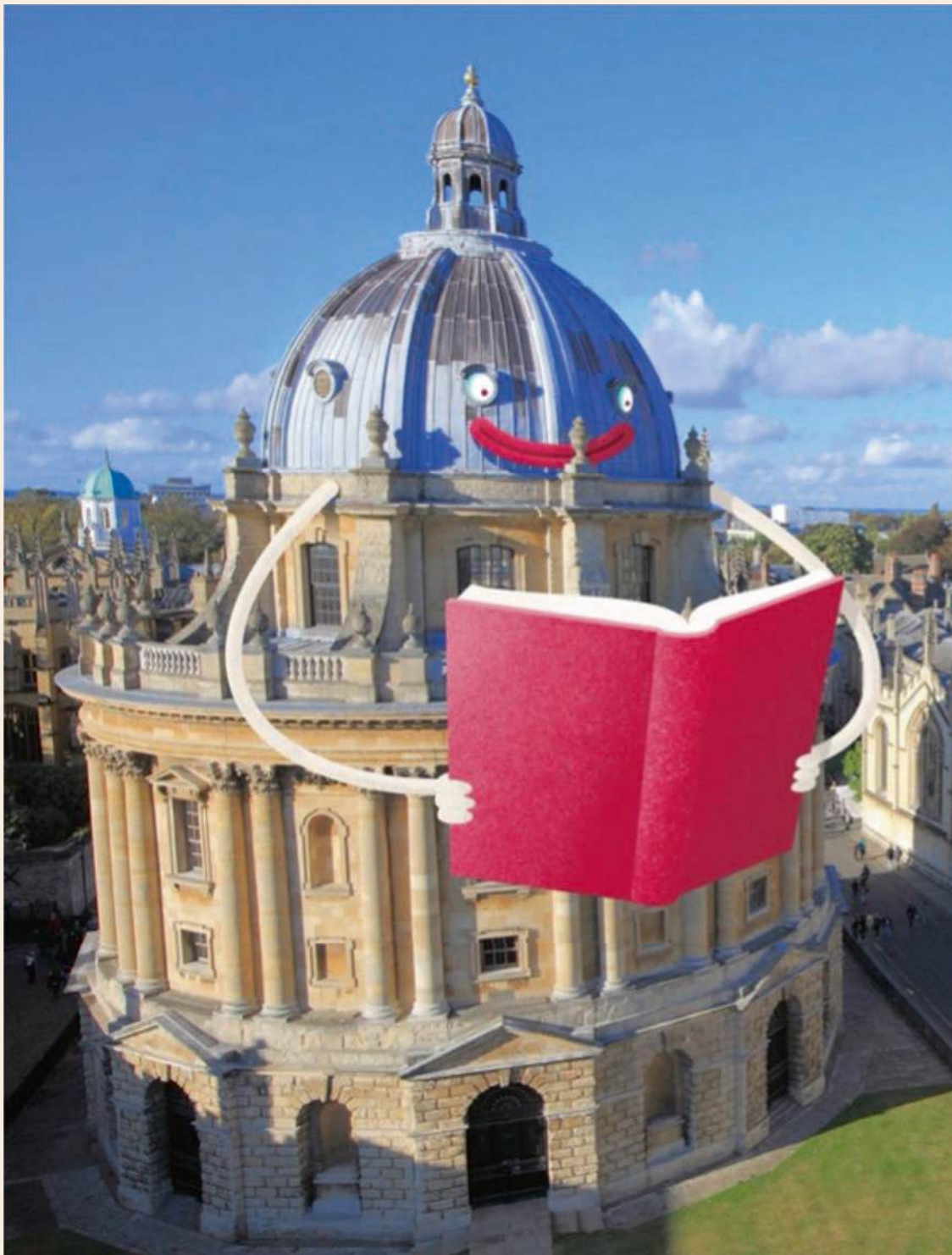
We make the difference



Leadership, Management and Resourcing Plan

Plan Overview

Strong and capable leadership delivering safe, efficient and sustainable change, focused on embedding a transparent, dynamic and customer-centric company culture.



Leadership, Management and Resourcing Plan

Core themes

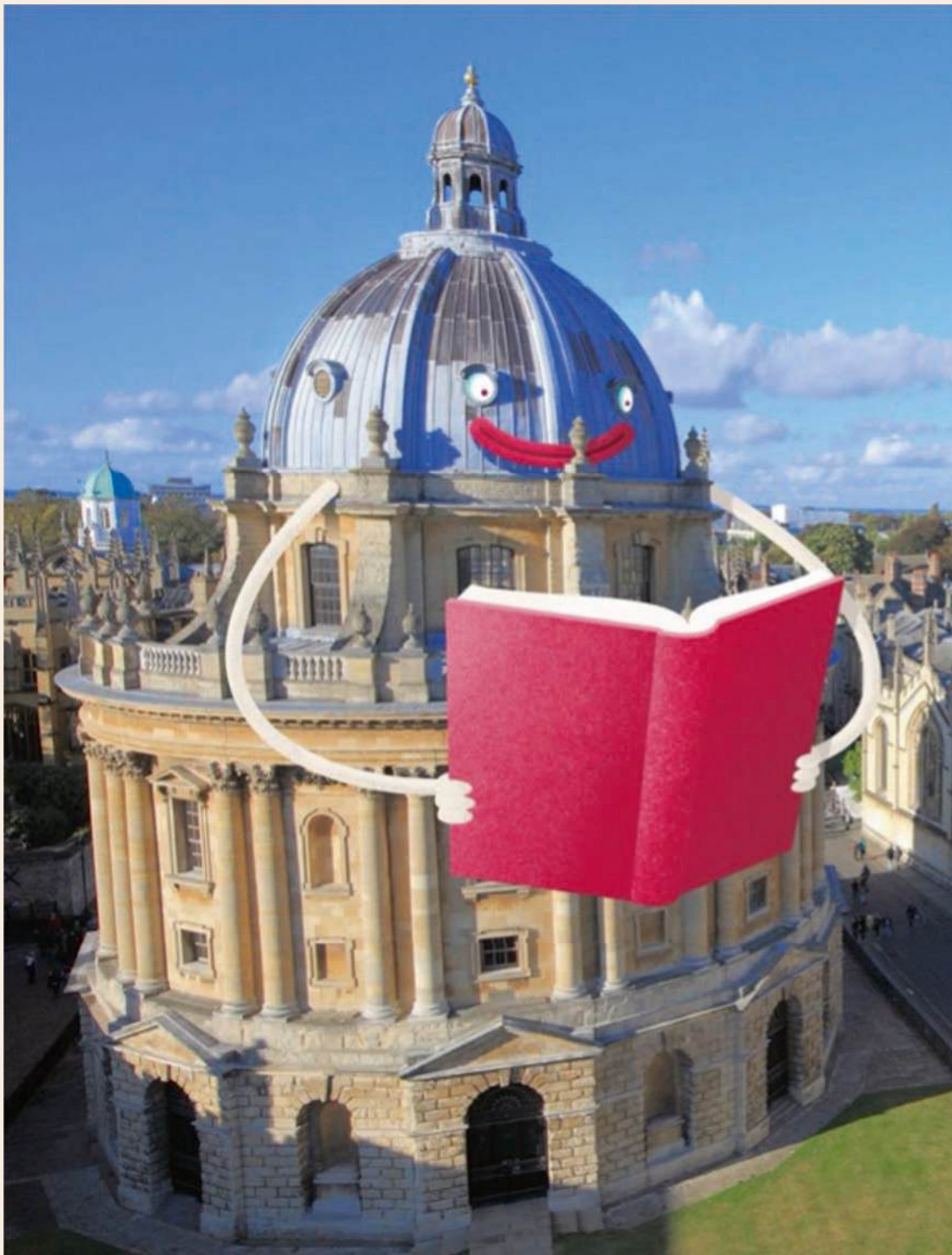
- Safety and Security
- Culture
- Business Plan Delivery
- Data Transparency

Summary of Initiatives

Through our Leadership, Management and Resourcing plan we will continue to maintain our excellent safety and security standards, with ongoing commitments to safeguarding, suicide prevention and passenger and employee safety. We will continue to work with industry partners such as the British Transport Police to combat instances of sexual violence and County Lines trafficking on the rail network.

Our Culture Change and Working Practices plan will see us further our focus on employee wellbeing, as well as supporting employee learning and management development through a new e-learning platform. The plan will provide us with more agility to enact our 'You Said, We Did' campaign arising from our Employee Engagement Surveys, as well as furthering our commitment to Diversity and Inclusion through the attainment of Disability Confidence and Leader Led accreditations and continued promotion of Women in Rail.

We will continue to develop how we use our data to make agile and effective decisions now and inform future projects.



Leadership, Management and Resourcing Plan

We will continue to support the expansion of the Rail Data Marketplace, which will see rail data shared more transparently to facilitate collaboration and create opportunities for new and innovative products that will support the railway. We will work with Network Rail to simplify and improve the data sharing processes around the exchange of claims.

It is crucial that we continuously evolve our cyber security effectiveness to meet the rising sophistication of cyber-attacks to keep our customers and employees safe. We will align approaches with the National Cyber Security Council and the National Security Centre to conduct a holistic review of our cyber security effectiveness. We will further our commitment to information security by introducing an Employee Relations Case Management System.



People Plan

Plan Overview

A high-performing business powered by a skilled, engaged and diverse workforce within an inclusive environment where colleagues can bring their full selves to work and have their perspective valued.





People Plan

Key Themes

- Diversity and Inclusion
- Recruitment and Retention
- Colleague Wellbeing and Attendance
- Talent and Development
- Operational Resilience

Summary of Initiatives

Employee Engagement is at the heart of our People Plan. Our plans for 2024-25 include introducing a more dynamic approach to acting upon employee feedback, enhancing our internal communications capabilities, and consulting with colleagues as part of our much-anticipated uniform refresh project.

We will continue to embed the Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) agenda into CrossCountry through our D&I Strategy, with recruitment being a key focus for 2024-25.

Future recruitment will focus on increasing applications from under-represented groups and reducing the gender pay gap.

To enhance our Employee Value Proposition and promote diversity, we will revise our recruitment and advertising approach to encourage applications from a wider range of candidates. We will improve the candidate experience by introducing enhanced applicant tracking, making all recruitment processes including interview questions and job adverts more inclusive, and ensure continued focus on Equal Opportunities monitoring.





People Plan

We will affirm our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion by achieving Disability Confidence Accreditation and Leader Led L3 Accreditation and continue to promote and support schemes such as Andy's Man Club and Women in Rail.

We will continue to deploy talent development processes throughout the business, including progression opportunities and succession planning. We will continue to build on our Investors in People Gold Standard accreditation, offering Apprenticeships, Maths and English qualifications and other bespoke development opportunities to staff as appropriate. Our primary area of focus in 2024-25 will be strengthening the development pipeline from school leavers and graduates in order to bring the best young talent into the rail industry. Our Early Careers Strategy will see us revising our graduate programme to offer more flexible rotational schemes while providing opportunities for specialist placements. We will work with local education institutions to promote the value of a career in rail through our school leavers apprenticeship scheme.

Our support for the Prince's Trust continues, and this year we will maximise the social value delivered through these schemes by partnering with other operators in the West Midlands to deliver vocational skills training and work experience courses.





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We make the difference



Collaboration Plan

Plan overview

A collaborative culture across every level of CrossCountry, creating value for our communities, reduces duplication, explores new ways of working and unlocks commercial opportunities.



Collaboration Plan

Key Themes

- A One Railway Approach
- Stakeholder Relationships

Initiative Summary

Collaboration with Network Rail and the Department for Transport has been essential in the design and development of our future timetable initiatives and will be equally important in their implementation. Our future timetables will unlock new and exciting journey opportunities for customers. In 2025, we will introduce an additional 36,000 seats per week by adding 15 weekday services, 14 Saturday services and 12 Sunday services to the long-distance network and will see us strengthen intermodal journey opportunities between Cambridge and Stansted Airport through a re-introduction of an hourly service.

We will begin operating direct Cardiff-Edinburgh services for the first time from December 2024, with a new and unique 'Three Nations' service offering for our customers, and we will continue to fully engage our cross-border colleagues and stakeholders to bring this new service to life.



Collaboration Plan

We will work with our industry partners to explore a number of exciting opportunities for timetable development changes that will bring an improved service offering to customers. These include continued development our own future regional timetable, as well new initiatives with other operators across the geographical scope of our network.

Further to this, we will continue our excellent work to establish joint bus plans during major engineering works during 2024-25. This will provide a unified, seamless journey experience while reducing the overall cost and carbon emissions of rail replacement operations.

We will work with the DfT, Network Rail, Office of Rail and Road and rolling stock companies to plan for the European Train Control System programme to enable digital signalling and continue to collaborate with industry stakeholders in the delivery of other major infrastructure projects during the year.

We will apply internationally recognised best practice across our collaborative operating model through adopting the principles of ISO44001 with the Department for Transport CrossCountry Market Team, establishing a joint relationship management plan that will set out how over the coming years we will continue to work collaboratively to achieve our joint vision for CrossCountry.



Environmental Sustainability Plan

Plan overview

Safeguarding a sustainable future for our industry, customers and communities through decarbonisation, waste and energy reduction and biodiversity, with an activated workforce championing the Green Agenda.





Environmental Sustainability Plan

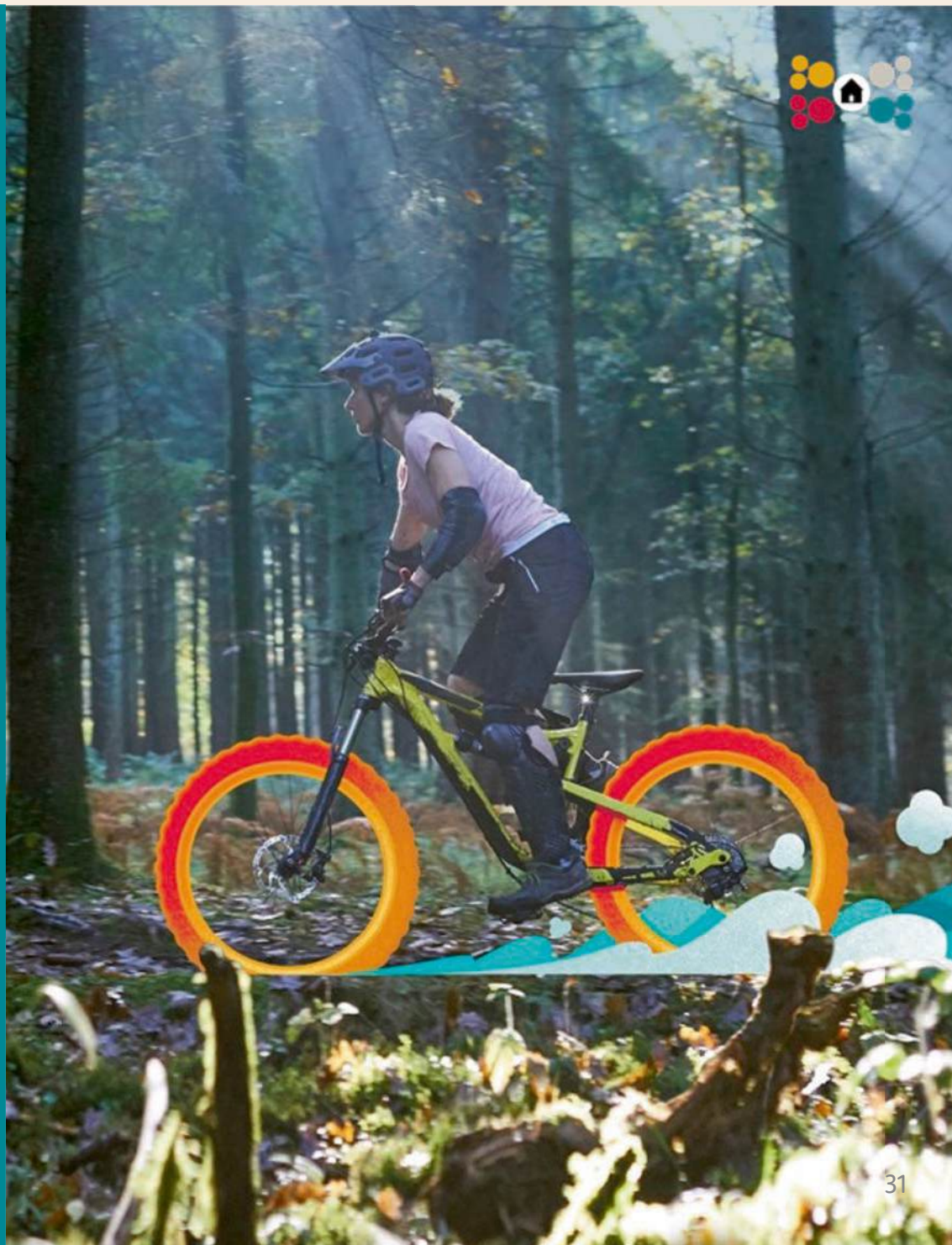
Key Themes

- Net Zero Carbon
- Clean Air
- A Quieter Railway
- A Railway for Nature
- Zero Waste
- Protect and Conserve Water

Initiative Summary

Our current fleet of Class 170 Turbostars and Class 220/1 Voyagers is exclusively diesel-fuelled. We intend to align with the UK government's commitment to cease diesel-only operation by 2040 and the Scottish Government's 2035 deadline.

In this year's business plan, we will continue to deliver carbon reductions as well as researching innovative alternative fuels and hybridisation approaches to reduce diesel reliance. We have recently completed trials on modified units for fuel tank weight reduction, heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems and Intelligent Engine Stop Start, 'IESS+' which has potential to reduce engine usage enroute without affecting performance, as well as 'Depot Mode' which has potential to reduce the need for full engine usage whilst units are in maintenance locations.



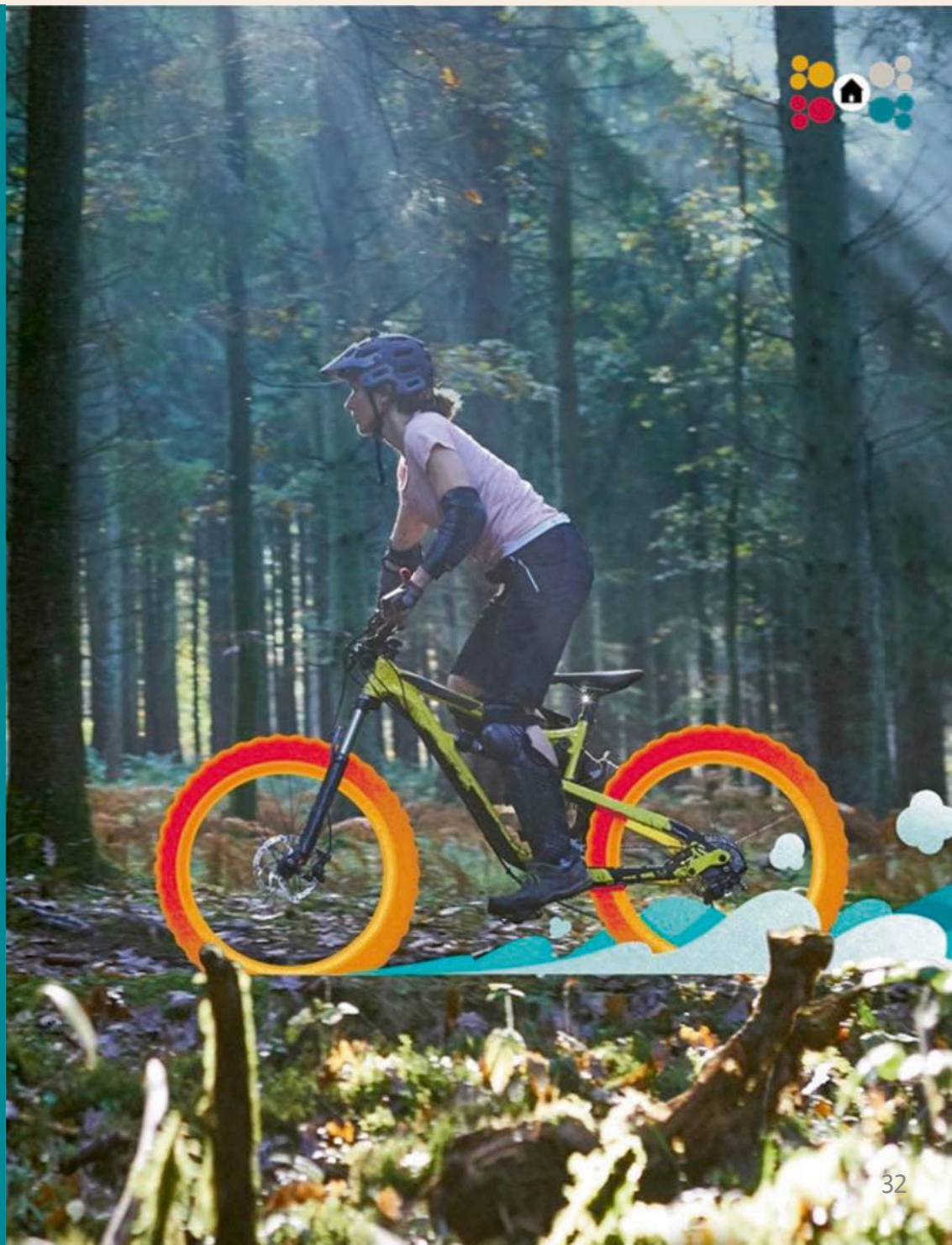


Environmental Sustainability Plan

We'll also explore solutions to reduce engine idling, including using electric shore power with Class 170 units and other initiatives for positive environmental impacts. We will provide annual reports on our progress for each of these initiatives and work with the Secretary of State to implement agreed steps.

We are working to improve the quality of our data so that we can map our decarbonisation trajectory more accurately. Mapping the environmental impact of business changes will be especially critical in our Sustainable Properties initiative in which we will be working with industry partners to reduce our emissions at our leased staff accommodation locations. Over the next two years, we will be conducting comprehensive surveys of each of our premises and identifying, developing and delivering short and longer term improvements to the energy efficiency of the building.

We are looking forward to working with Network Rail to reduce the net impact of our operations on biodiversity across the nation. We will use their excellent work in mapping the biodiversity impact of all UK rail operations, attribute an overall impact to CrossCountry, and identify opportunities to offset our impact in our four regions. We will then deliver biodiversity projects in each region, ensuring that we are making the largest possible positive impact on each of the areas most affected by the railway.





Thank You

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