

Recruitment specialist calls on Rail Review to incorporate skills gap in reforms

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Samuel Knight International, the global rail and energy recruitment specialist, has urged the Independent Chair of the Rail Review not to overlook the skills gap when developing a potential new body to run the UK's train network.

In an announcement made yesterday, Keith Williams revealed possible plans to shake up the current franchise system to drive 'revolution' in rail. Mr Williams also suggested passengers would be at the heart of his proposed reforms, with greater customer service, simpler fares, better communication and easier-to-access compensation suggested as part of his plans.

However, while these improvements are likely to be welcomed by passengers, Samuel Knight International has urged the Chair of the Review to ensure that talent shortages across the sector are also factored in to any proposed reforms.

Dave Allen, Associate Director for Rail at Samuel Knight International, commented:

"While there's undoubtedly a need to drive innovation – or revolution as Mr Williams called it – across rail for the benefit of passengers, it's a concern that the latest announcement overlooked the staffing challenges facing the sector. The experience people have with rail isn't just defined by ticket offices or train timetables. Without the general logistics of rail maintenance and development, it is almost impossible to improve passenger views on train travel.

"The biggest concern at the moment is that while there's certainly an abundance of projects such as HS2 in the pipeline, the historical resources challenges remain. What we'd like to see is the potential new rail body incorporate the need to attract more people into a career in the sector and invest in the development of skills, without which there simply wouldn't be a rail network."

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