

Forums

RAILWAY STUDY FORUM

The evolving railway

This year's lecture in memory of Vernon Murphy was given to the Forum by Sir Peter Hendy CBE, Chairman, Network Rail.

He began by explaining that when the Greater London Council was abolished in 1985, London Transport was renationalised. Subsequent lack of economic and strategic leadership in London led in 1999 to the creation of the Greater London Authority, giving the Mayor strategic responsibility for economic and spatial development. Critically, Transport for London (TfL) is responsible to a politician with wider responsibilities. Underneath the London Plan sits the Mayor's transport strategy, and the first one was nearly all delivered. Then comes TfL's 10-year business plan. TfL has been a success for London, and has now been followed by and other regional bodies, including Transport for the North and Transport Scotland.

The nation's railway must be able to fulfil its everyday task of moving people, but over recent years performance has gone downhill; the May 2018 timetable change was a particular disaster. In the 1970s and 1980s there was no cash and no government appetite for improvements, but managers used their ingenuity to keep the railway going. The 1990s saw privatisation, innovation and expansion. Accidents like the Potters Bar derailment led to safety improvements, which have worked, but also to centralisation of decision-making on assets and a further concentration on engineering.

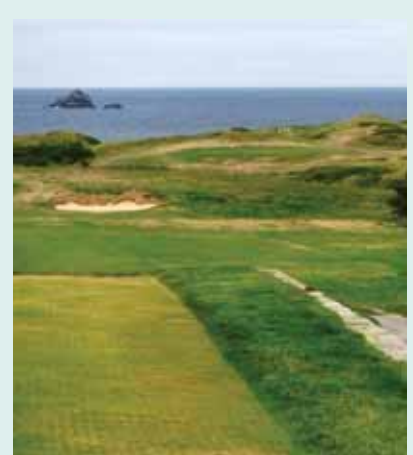
The growing system now has less resilience, due to more and longer trains, extended station dwell times, tighter turnaround

times, and the ever present pressure to do more with less. It thus takes longer to recover when things do go wrong, and there has been an erosion of operational skills.

With urban railways, as with Crossrail and Thameslink, there is a need to adopt the philosophy of the urban metro, with similar operating strategies. Trains do not wait any longer than their scheduled dwell time; there is another one behind. This metro-style running needs the right operational skills to ensure it is successful. Above all, there is a need to restore pride in running a quality operation for customers. Training and leadership skills are key.

The winding up of the Strategic Rail Authority and the effective renationalisation of Network Rail have both left the Secretary of State for Transport responsible for making detailed railway decisions. The catastrophe of the May 2018 timetable has persuaded the Secretary of State and the Department for Transport that they should not be responsible for such detail, but railway managers should. Keith Williams, former Chief Executive, British Airways, and a former TfL board member, has been commissioned by the Secretary of State to review the entire organisation of the railway in the UK, and his report is expected in autumn 2019, to be followed by a white paper. The aim is a better railway for customers, and a new organisational landscape is likely; but will there be sufficient legislative time for the Williams recommendations to pass into law, given that being taken up by Brexit?

This year's lecture in memory of Vernon Murphy was given to the Forum by Sir Peter Hendy CBE (pictured)



View from the first tee at Trevose Golf & Country Club

GOLF SOCIETY

Team Match vs National Liberal Golf Circle, Gerrards Cross

Following the success of last year's tour, we have decided to return to Trevose in Cornwall. We will be staying right in the heart of this golfing region at the excellent facilities that Trevose Golf & Country Club has to offer. Trevose is a five-minute taxi ride from the town of Padstow which, besides its famous Rick Stein restaurants, is a charming Cornish working fishing port with a wide selection of good bars and other eateries.

We will be playing Trevose on Saturday 7th September, where The European Legends Links Championship will be held this year, and is in England's Top 100 golf courses. On Sunday 8th we play the delightful course of Perranporth and on the final day, 9th, we will be at Bude & North Cornwall Golf Club, which is the right side of home.

This is a great opportunity to stay and play quality venues – including a Gala Dinner on Saturday after the golf – and we are grateful to our sponsors for helping us to do so at reasonable cost.

Over the years, our annual tour has delivered immense fun, wonderful camaraderie and memorable golf courses. We expect 2019 to be no different.

If you would like to join us, go to the Matches & Meeting page of the Golf Society website: www.ciltgolf.co.uk

Or email the event organiser John Winter: john.winter@redacre.co