South East

The South East route delivers almost a third of the total passenger journeys across the network. Our infrastructure connects the capital and its southern and south-eastern suburbs with Kent, Surrey, Sussex and Channel Tunnel routes to Europe and we manage four of the busiest stations in the country – London Victoria, London Bridge, Charing Cross and Cannon Street. Commuters make up the largest proportion of our passengers, but we also carry leisure travellers to the south coast and run the line to and from Gatwick, the UK’s second busiest airport.

Key statistics

- **510m** passenger journeys each year
- **6,700** freight services in 2017/18
- **5,000** passenger trains every day
- **23%** freight growth since 2014
- **2,000** route miles
- **3,000** employees
- **23%** freight growth since 2014
- **372** stations
- **£903m** spent on renewals and enhancements in 2017/18

Key scorecard targets

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<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Target</th>
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<td>Scorecard Outturn</td>
<td>2017/18</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
<td>671%</td>
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<td>2016/17</td>
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<td>Safety</td>
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<td>2016/17</td>
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<td>Train Performance</td>
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<td>Locally Driven Customer Measures</td>
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This has been a truly transformational year for the South East route; the underlying performance of our assets and our people has improved dramatically and our customers are feeling the benefit – though it’s clear there is still much more we can do.

We continue to embed a strong safety culture, with improvement in the number of Close Calls raised and closed within 90 days. While our lost time injury frequency rate (LTIFR) has deteriorated this year, it improved in the second half of the year following the appointment of a Safety Transformation Director, with more mature improvement plans and stronger, more inclusive governance arrangements now in place to drive cultural change.
South East continued

Train performance has improved this year, driven largely by greater collaboration with our train operators – a great example of which is our new joint performance teams with GTR and Southeastern, who are setting the standard for joint working across the industry.

That said, performance remains among the lowest on the network and the year has not been without challenges, including adverse weather, a spike in trespass and suicides and major incidents such as the London Bridge terror attacks. The successful completion of our work around London Bridge as part of the Thameslink Programme, including the fantastic new concourse and extra platforms, means passengers are now beginning to feel the benefits.

Asset reliability remains high, though increasing congestion on the route means that any incident can cause disproportionate knock-on impacts for passengers. That is why we are focusing on further reducing our fault response times and investing in intelligent infrastructure such as remote condition monitoring.

Financial performance overall was positive, thanks largely to improved railway performance resulting in lower-than-forecast compensation payments to train operators. Looking to the future, we submitted robust, well-evidenced plans for the next control period following consultation with, and scrutiny by, a wide range of stakeholders in support of our vision for the South East route.

The improvements we have delivered this year underline that the team in place on South East are some of the most committed and talented people within Network Rail. We continue to invest in our people’s development and I am delighted that our new leadership programmes are already delivering benefits for hundreds of people across the route.

Activities in the year

The infrastructure upgrades successfully completed this year, primarily through the Thameslink Programme, have set the foundation for significant improvements for passengers. The iconic, new London Bridge station is now fully open to passengers and we have completed all track and signalling work in the surrounding area to enable service improvements in the future.

An additional platform at Redhill on the Brighton Main Line, commissioned in January, will support the new timetable and could allow an enhanced service on the North Downs line between Reading and Redhill in future, offering better connections to Gatwick Airport.

We have delivered major work as part of a £300m asset resilience programme, including a junction renewal at Earlswood, drainage improvements through Sevenoaks Tunnel and vegetation and trespass management along the busiest parts of our route – all designed to reduce delays and provide a better service for passengers.

Signalling work at Ashford International means the new Eurostar rolling stock will be able to continue serving the station, which is of huge economic importance to the whole of Kent. We have also made progress on power supply upgrades in Kent and Sussex to support longer and more frequent services.

The opening of a number of footbridges over the railway means we have been able to close some of our high-risk level crossings – such as Stone Crossing near Dartford and the last remaining footpath crossing over the four-track Brighton Main Line at Salfords.

In the year ahead

By far the most significant event of the new financial year is the May 2018 timetable change. It is clear that we in the rail industry have let passengers down in the way the new timetable has been planned and introduced; for that, I am very sorry.

Network Rail and GTR are working together on a recovery plan which will give passengers the reliability they expect and deserve. Once that stability has been achieved, our focus will turn to delivering the remainder of the capacity and connectivity benefits enabled by completion of the Thameslink Programme.

Elsewhere on the route, additional capacity will be provided through enhancements, such as power supply upgrades, which enable longer trains. Further stations will see step-free access enhancements being delivered, benefiting a wide range of passengers.

We will also complete our work as part of the £300m resilience programme, including two nine-day planned closures of the railway between Three Bridges and Brighton in October 2018 and February 2019 to enable major improvements to tracks, signalling and tunnel drainage and provide a more reliable service for passengers.

Efficiency case study: Improving safety at depots and sidings

A project to improve public and workforce safety at depots and sidings in Kent by installing and refurbishing walkways, handrails and other improvements has delivered efficiency savings of £3.7m against the budgeted estimate.

This was primarily achieved through the use of ‘structured continuous improvement’ tools taught on an in-house leadership programme. This included tendering and packaging delivery of similar works to eliminate waste, deliver appropriate site-by-site solutions rather than ‘one size fits all’ and avoiding scope changes by ensuring those working at depots and sidings were engaged from the start.

John Halsall,
Route managing director,
South East
27 June 2018