



RMT National Policy Department briefing – McNulty attack on staffing

19 May 2011

The McNulty review *Realising the Potential of GB Rail; Report of the Rail Value for Money Study* was published on 19th May 2011.

The Study claims that staff costs are a major cost element in the industry (£4bn per year). It goes on to claim that working practices and agreements in the industry are outdated and that salary levels have increased faster than average earnings in the economy as a whole.

The Study also states that the industry is heavily unionised, and states that this “creates a heavily structured environment for making progress on people issues”.

Almost every grade is attacked in the report.

On-Train Staff

In relation to On-Train staff, the Study states that:

“Driver Only Operation (DOO) is a safe method of operation and improves performance, with fewer human interactions involved in the door opening, door closing and dispatch procedure.

The Study recommends that the default position for all services on the GB rail network should be DOO, with a second member of traincrew only being provided where there is a commercial, technical or other imperative”.

Ticket Offices

The Study recommends changes to ticket office opening hours and staffing, but acknowledges that there will be a number of preconditions, including:

- the installation of modern and easy-to-use ticket vending machines (TVMs);
- the provision of simple internet portals for on-line purchases;
- establishing additional retailing locations;
- the extension of print-at-home and mobile ticketing; and
- amendment or removal by the DfT of contractual obligations, via the Ticketing and Settlement Agreement, relating to ticket office opening hours”.

Note: The Ticketing & Settlement Agreement (Schedule 17) is the mechanism used by your Union to challenge closures to ticket offices or a reduction in their opening hours.

Station Staffing

“TOCs should review station staffing as a matter of priority”.

Salaries and terms of employment

“The expectation that salaries, at all levels of the railway industry, will increase ahead of inflation has to end. Indeed, with many passengers and taxpayers having their salaries frozen at present, even

the granting of inflation-level increases must be questioned. This principle applies as much to the leaders of the industry as it does to the workforce.

The overall trend to reduce continually the length of the working day and the working week is unsustainable, and the industry needs to negotiate changes to terms of employment that currently limit flexibility and productivity.

A starting point would be to review the salaries and employment terms for new entrants to the industry”.

Network Rail operations

“Network Rail is implementing a new operating strategy that deploys modern signalling and control technology. It could accelerate investment and incorporate a greater part of the existing signalling into new operating centres than currently planned, but will need to balance the availability of capital with the staff and cost savings”.

Network Rail maintenance

“The company intends to extend its programme of modernisation of maintenance by deploying high-output machinery, automating track inspection and using components that require less maintenance. Each of these initiatives should reduce staff costs”.

Pensions

“Other industries have sought to contain pension costs and have made significant changes to pension schemes. The cost of rail industry pension contributions by employers and employees will need to be addressed over the longer term”.

Training and people development

“A fundamental review of training techniques and the time needed to train specific work groups could have some financial benefit, but the true benefit of effective training is a better-equipped, more flexible and productive workforce. Current trends in training point towards college-based training for key industry skills, resulting in the award of a competence licence. This would increase the mobility of staff and encourage competition in training provision”.

Flexible employment and equal opportunities

“The industry employs a workforce which is predominantly full time, even though the peaks and troughs of much railway activity would be attractive to part-time employees. The Study recommends that the industry’s employers should continue to encourage a more flexible and diverse workforce and, in particular, provide opportunities for more women to be part of the industry”.