



'Too many snouts in the trough'

Why Grant Shapps and the Rail
Bosses are the real enemies of
modernisation: the view from the
front line

RMT Report August 2022

Executive summary

- **82% of around 8,000 rail workers responding to an RMT survey said they agreed that the current structure of the railway, including fragmentation and the need to make profits, is a barrier to running the railway more efficiently and to future improvements and innovation. 58% strongly agreed.**

Among track and infrastructure maintenance workers:

- The competing interests of Train Operating Companies (TOCs) and Network Rail, in which TOCs have sought to run as many trains as possible, have compressed the time that maintenance workers can spend on the track ('Possessions'), leading to concerns about safety of the working teams and the standard of the work that's possible in the time they're given. A single, integrated railway would allow for the efficient planning of this work.
- The presence of TOCs skimming passenger fares to create profits is seen to deny the railway vital resources that could be reinvested in a coherent, integrated not-for-profit railway.
- The focus on cutting costs is seen to come before all other considerations and the language of efficiency is seen as a smokescreen.
- The reliance on contractors, again justified by the cost-cutting agenda, brings more inefficiency, waste and risk into network maintenance.
- The emphasis on multi-skilled teams was seen to involve loss of specialist knowledge and be driven primarily by the urge to cut maintenance spending.

Among signalling operations workers:

- Signalling operations workers are strongly supportive of new technology and accepting of the need for their role to evolve, but they suspect that Network Rail's drive to concentrate and close signalling is driven by a cost-cutting agenda and that insufficient attention is being paid to the costs of this process.
- The reduction in the number of signallers and the large control centres with extensive responsibilities are creating workload problems for signallers which are not being addressed because of the focus on costs.
- Signallers are also worried about the knock-on effects of Network Rail's cuts to maintenance on the lines and blockades they are responsible for.
- As with maintenance workers, the top-down railway that sees staff as a cost was seen to miss opportunities to draw on the skills and knowledge of the workforce.

Among station staff:

- There is a general concern that the companies' drive for profits sucks resources out of the railway and creates scarcity and pressures to make cuts.
- Station staff see the interests of passengers and the efficient running of passenger services constantly overridden by the competing interests of Train Operating Companies (TOCs).
- The complex mess of tickets, the difficulty passengers experience in travelling with different companies, the drive to run services on time to avoid fines for delays, which

leads to passengers missing connections, or the desire to cut services completely all hamper the creation of an efficient, modern railway and stem from the private, profit-motivated control of passenger operations.

- The pressure to cut costs is seen to obstruct genuine passenger-centred innovations.
- A railway integrated into one not-for-profit company would support the development of a passenger-centred, modern railway.

Among on-board staff:

- Many on-board staff believe that in the drive to cut costs and create more profit, the TOCs are sucking much-needed resources out of the railway and, in the process, degrading service quality.
- As with station staff, on-board staff see the interests of passengers being subordinated to the need to make a profit, with complex ticket structures that over-charge passengers, companies running short-formed trains, services cancelled to avoid fines, and a corrosive blame culture that permeates the system.
- On-board staff identify the leasing of rolling stock as a particularly scandalous drain on resources in the railway.
- As with other staff groups, on-board staff believe that a single, integrated railway, run not-for-profit would result in better passenger services and be more cost-effective with public investment.

Among fleet maintenance workers:

- Fleet maintenance workers are concerned that maintenance work is seen as a cost that can be cut in the drive to generate a profit.
- As with other staff groups, fleet maintenance workers see the fragmentation and competing interests of various companies on the railway as an impediment to effective collaboration and efficient working.

The government and rail industry weaponise modernisation

"Using the umbrella name of GBR and axing jobs and not changing anything is not modernisation."

"So many people involved with different interests, making money is the aim, with certain TOCs delighting in infrastructure issues to pick up compensation from Network Rail. So many managers involved it's laughable."

"We have upgraded operating systems, permanent ways and infrastructure such as signalling etc and continue to do so. The current railway setup with companies at different levels such as TOCs renting rolling stock is a way to have indirect subsidies at various levels, more shareholders at different troughs. This is the biggest barrier to investment and hence modernisation. "

The Secretary of State for Transport, Grant Shapps, aided by anonymous briefings from rail industry 'sources', has made 'modernisation' a centrepiece of his attack on railway staff and their union.

At times this has amounted to the government indulging in complete fiction. When the Chair of the Transport Select Committee Huw Merriman MP asked representatives of the Rail Delivery Group and Network Rail whether it was true that if a manager said hello to a rail worker during their break the clock had to be reset on their break, both answered that it was not. Mr Merriman, clearly embarrassed as he had used this story in a Sun article, said he believed the story came from 'someone in the government'.

Mr Shapps would have the public believe that he is responsible for bringing modern ETCS signalling systems to the East Coast Mainline, claiming that he is replacing 'Victorian signalling'. In the real world, outside Mr Shapps' lurid imagination, this project began more than 15 years ago with full RMT involvement, while the Victorian signals that he's heroically battling were replaced in the twentieth century, mostly before he was born.

Other times, Mr Shapps has shied away from pure fiction in favour of deeply inaccurate and misleading claims about Sunday working laws not having been updated since 1919. Other favourite canards include faux naive "You couldn't make it up" tales about maintenance teams being unable to work across borders.

All this propaganda is aimed at making a massive exercise in staff cost cutting appear as though it is an expression of the forces of modernisation.

The truth about modernisation

In truth, the establishment weaponising of 'modernisation' is simply a Beeching-style railway massacre aimed at fulfilling the aims of the McNulty Report. For the TOCs this is about

securing long-term profits for their management contracts by cutting staff costs. For Network Rail, the aim is to be seen to deliver cost-cutting that offsets the bloated cost to the Treasury of financing its bond debt whilst pandering to government prejudices about its supposed inefficiency. For the government it's about cutting the cost of the railway in ways that affect workers and not the swarm of parasitic private sector interests that feed off the system, turning tax revenue into dividends and interest payments.

But more than this, the truth is that this swarm of private interests is not only growing rich off the railways but constitutes the biggest real barrier to modernisation. Real modernisation is not this crude cuts agenda cloaked in a crusade against semi-imaginary archaic working practices. Real modernisation is investment in the continuous improvement of rail assets - including but not limited to staff – driven by the interests of passengers and the public.

The biggest barrier to *this* modernisation is the fragmentation of the railways and the subjugation of passenger operations, rolling stock ownership and swathes of track, infrastructure and fleet maintenance to the need to make a profit. This is what is blocking the creation of a modern railway that serves Britain's people and economy.

Mr Shapps and his industry friends, far from being the champions of technology and improvement as they like to paint themselves, are actually forces of reaction: guardians of an outdated, outmoded and failed model of railway delivery.

In the second of our reports based on voices from the front line of the rail industry, RMT reveals what rail workers think about modernisation and the structure of their industry.

RMT's survey

RMT surveyed rail workers in a number of categories including fleet maintenance, track and infrastructure maintenance, on-board staff, station staff, signal workers and other staff. We asked them questions based on the rail industry's proposed cuts to track maintenance, ticket offices and jobs and its attempts to bring in new multi-functional roles and revive Driver Only Operation.

Workers were asked 'To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement: "The current structure of the railway, including fragmentation and the need to make profits, is a barrier to running the railway more efficiently and to future improvements and innovation". They were then asked to give examples explaining their reasons for answering.

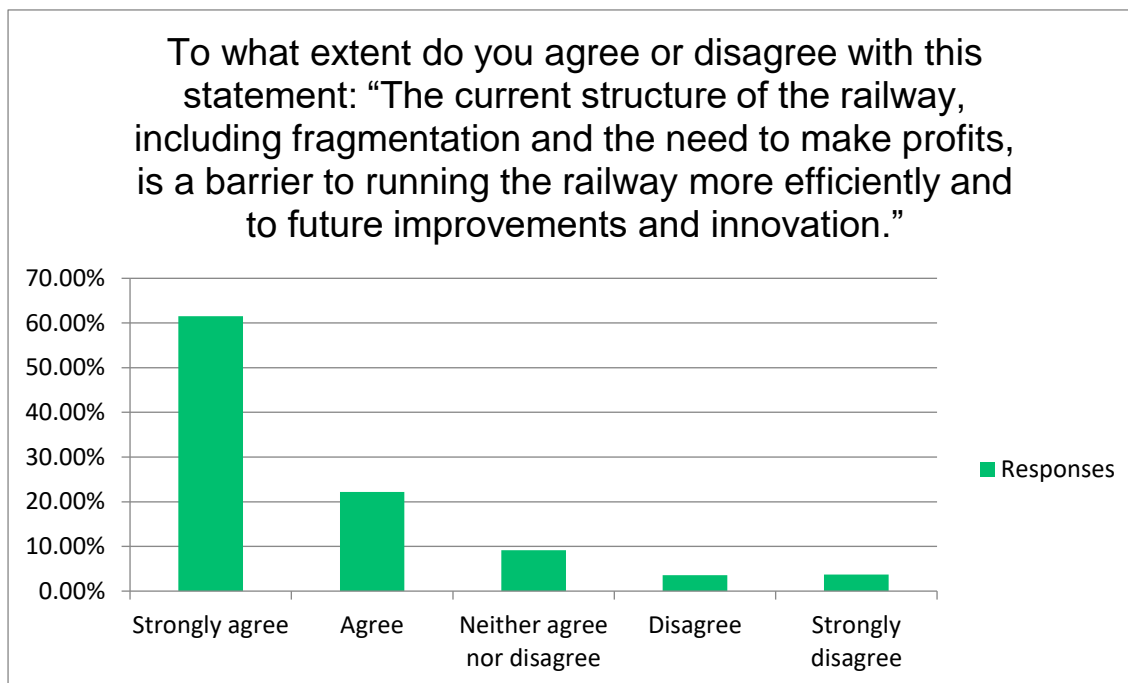
The union opened the survey of its members on 18 July. Within five days it had received more than 10,000 responses. Almost 8,000 answered the modernisation question in this report. Of these, **82% said they agreed that the current structure of the railway, including fragmentation and the need to make profits, is a barrier to running the railway more efficiently and to future improvements and innovation. 58% strongly agreed.**

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement: "The current structure of the railway, including fragmentation and the need to make profits, is a barrier to running the railway more efficiently and to future improvements and innovation."

Answer Choices	Signallers	Track and infrastructure maintenance	Station staff	On-board staff	Fleet maintenance	Other rail workers	TOTAL	
Strongly agree	837	1726	628	895	145	302	4533	59%
Agree	465	623	203	255	78	122	1746	23%
Neither agree nor disagree	126	256	165	144	37	78	806	10%
Disagree	63	99	63	71	9	27	332	4%
Strongly disagree	34	103	75	66	14	24	316	4%
TOTAL	1525	2807	1134	1431	283	553	7733	

In the rest of this report, you will hear the voices of the people who operate and maintain Britain's Railways.

Track and other infrastructure maintenance



To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement: “The current structure of the railway, including fragmentation and the need to make profits, is a barrier to running the railway more efficiently and to future improvements and innovation.”		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	61.49%	1726
Agree	22.19%	623
Neither agree nor disagree	9.12%	256
Disagree	3.53%	99
Strongly disagree	3.67%	103
	Answered	2807

83% of track and infrastructure workers agreed with the statement “The current structure of the railway, including fragmentation and the need to make profits, is a barrier to running the railway more efficiently and to future improvements and innovation,” with 61% strongly agreeing.

The competing interests of TOCs and Network Rail, in which TOCs have sought to run as many trains as possible, have compressed the time that maintenance workers can spend on the track (‘Possessions’), leading to concerns about safety of the working teams and the standard of the work that’s possible in the time

they're given. A single, integrated railway would allow for the efficient planning of this work.

"If proper, reliable and extended access was available to carry out proper and major maintenance then less faults/failures would occur at their peak values and could be controlled before failure point but current closing in on possession times and other Green zone access makes this more and more difficult all in order to run trains later on all lines when single line working could be used in places to increase access or times."

"The TOCs don't give us enough access to carry out work safely and to a good standard, this is worse since they got rid of lookout working."

"Currently feels impossible within maintenance to make any improvements or recommendation unless it directly impacts others (i.e., TOCs) and fits within their timescale or business remit. If we were able to be more dynamic within ourselves and working practices and times then we could be more productive especially with the transition to predominantly night-time access. Also, currently we are losing a lot of access and time to be properly productive in order to run better and later trains with no opportunity or breather to do major maintenance."

"KPIs lean towards running as many trains as possible for as many hours of the day as possible, including freight. There are shorter possessions putting pressure on maintenance teams to complete work in less time. Less time on track and more time spent waiting for track access, with a single shift's work being spread over several shifts."

"If we all came under one umbrella it would mean that we could work more closely and arrange more blockades and planned possessions so that the necessary work could be done in a safe manner."

The presence of TOCs skimming passenger fares to create profits is seen to deny the railway vital resources that could be reinvested in a coherent, integrated not-for-profit railway:

"The profits are going to shareholders and company pots. Those profits could be used to improve the network in many ways, and still fund a high maintenance schedule. But as it stands it's maintenance or profits"

"The TOCs are taking much needed monies out of the industry that could be used to re invest."

"If the railway was run `Not for Profits` similar to the BR days all extra money accrued could be spent on training, more apprentices, new depots, electric vehicles. This would also improve morale immensely."

The focus on cutting costs is seen to come before all other considerations and the language of efficiency is seen as a smokescreen:

"The government focus is only on cost savings. Everything after that is used to fit their narrative of cutting costs in a guise of inefficiency. There are indeed many things that should and need to change in working practices, but any discussions are already predetermined to meet an agenda and staff are not listened to or respected."

"Any changes to the way things operate is designed to increase profit or save money. The 3 most important elements of a rail service are safety, punctuality and affordability. Cutting maintenance jeopardises safety and punctuality. The drive to increase shareholder profits with nothing invested back into the industry only increases prices. These will ultimately put the public off rail travel which will have terrible effects."

The reliance on contractors, again justified by the cost-cutting agenda, brings more inefficiency, waste and risk into network maintenance:

"Regional managers are competing to make the most cutbacks. Handing money to the TOCs and contractors instead of investing the money back into the network and into the ideas from our own staff."

"We need to bring things in house, e.g possession management as we are paying contractors extortionate amounts when we have our own staff with the competencies. We also need to fill squads as mine in particular is running with 4 vacancies and have 4 core contractors in every shift. Why can't we fill the vacancies? If there was more flexibility this would provide a safer and more effective railway in maintenance and operationally for passengers."

"It seems there's little cohesion between different factions of the railway including maintenance and contractors."

"Bringing engineering works in house to Network Rail will enhance skills and engineering capabilities of the already hired employees."

"I work or get sent to areas within my department's patch to clear high level faults yet we usually find out that the faults have already been cleared by Overhead Conditions Renewals (OCR) or third party contractors. This means your essentially paying for the work to be completed twice. This is due to third party contractors failing to close down faults on our patch or failing to inform of faults that have been rectified."

"We are spending too much money hiring in contractors to carry out work. We want to work smart and invest in new technologies along with training our staff to maintain these."

The emphasis on multi-skilled teams was seen to involve loss of specialist knowledge and be driven primarily by the urge to cut maintenance spending:

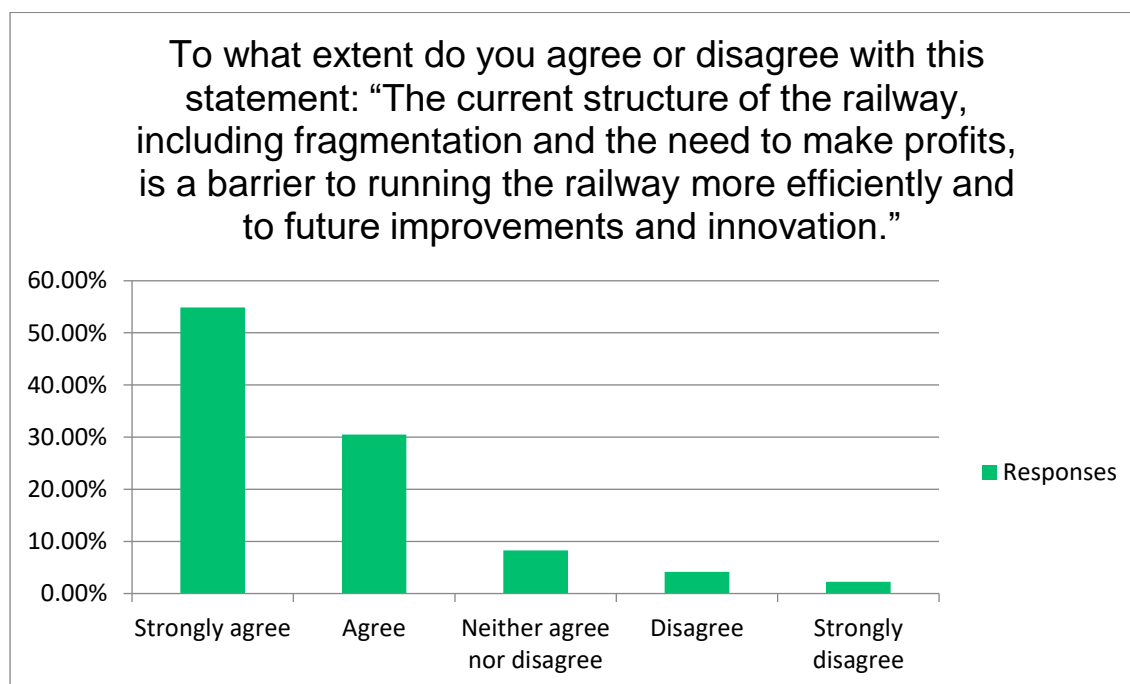
"The maintenance changes that are being suggested (joint discipline teams) have already been attempted and failed."

"It will lead to teams not staffed with competent, certificated members as they are made up of different disciplines. There will be increased work-loads due to cuts in staffing numbers."

"Cross discipline is a joke. It's no good having a jack-of-all-trades. Better to have people specialise in specific roles. Exactly like the building trade, sparks, carpenters, brickies."

"The best people to give ideas about improving the job are the ones who do it and nobody asks us."

Signalling operations



To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement: "The current structure of the railway, including fragmentation and the need to make profits, is a barrier to running the railway more efficiently and to future improvements and innovation".		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	54.89%	837
Agree	30.49%	465
Neither agree nor disagree	8.26%	126
Disagree	4.13%	63
Strongly disagree	2.23%	34
	Answered	1525

More than 85% of signallers agreed that the current structure of the railway, including fragmentation and the need to make profits, was a barrier to running the railway more efficiently and to future improvements and innovation.

Signalling operations workers are strongly supportive of new technology and accepting of the need for their role to evolve, but they suspect that Network Rail's drive to concentrate and close signalling is driven by a cost-cutting agenda and that insufficient attention is being paid to the costs of this process.

"I fully support technology as long as it doesn't compromise safety. Job cuts on the operations side which I believe is in their plans will compromise safety, last time the

maintenance side was "modernised" it eventually led to Potters Bar. If they are successful incidents like that are more likely to occur again unfortunately."

"I work in a control centre/ROC, so I already work in an ultra-modern arena. I'm also open to more modern means of working. So as long as modernisation isn't about making cuts, I'm all for it."

"Empower Network Rail to spend the required money to modernise the planning systems, rostering systems. Just cutting money out of the system will never solve anything."

The reduction in the number of signallers and the large control centres with extensive responsibilities are creating workload problems for signallers which are not being addressed because of the focus on costs:

"Heavy focus on reducing the number of signallers, whilst increasing the areas they have to manage doesn't correspond to the need for the railway to be maintained and improved whilst allowing signallers the time and ability to help provide safe working for trackside staff. Also the technologies being used to modernise Automatic Route Setting (ARS) etc aren't good enough to deliver often because they are bastardised down to a 'budget cost'."

"Signalling is the heart of safety on the railway we get told about managing fatigue and how important we are yet we run short staffed with little or no breaks in high grade locations and inquisition about any delays."

"The signalling grades have modernised and taken on extra work with the exceptionally large amounts of Line Blocks, which has brought increasingly high levels of risk to the grade."

"Less staff, more hours and a higher workload will impact on performance and safety. More likely to make mistakes and sickness will increase due to burnout."

"We are already running trains on workstations too large for a single person to work. We are using ARS system to run the trains but when an incident happens this is more of a problem."

"User worked crossings have been identified by the Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB) as the number one risk to the railway yet Network Rail continue to close manned locations and move more crossings onto workstations and panels, increasing workload and chance of error."

"Modern signalling will always need motivated and professional staff to keep the industry moving and safe, low paid "operatives" will be a massive step backwards."

Signallers are also worried about the knock-on effects of Network Rail's cuts to maintenance on the lines and blockades they are responsible for:

"I am not overly concerned about plans to modernise signalling - but the proposed losses to maintenance staff in both Permanent Way (PWay) and Signalling and Telecommunications (S&T) is a concern as this could very well impact on signallers' workload due to failures and degraded working, and also in the possibility of more reliance on contractors who are not familiar with areas they work in."

"I understand why it's frustrating having 3 teams arrive to a fault or failure, but I want the best staff to fix it, and until it's known what the problem is that's how it goes. An analogy I use with friends is I want to be operated on by the best surgeons, not one surgeon who can do the whole body at once, but until we find the issue I'll need 3 surgeons to come look at me."

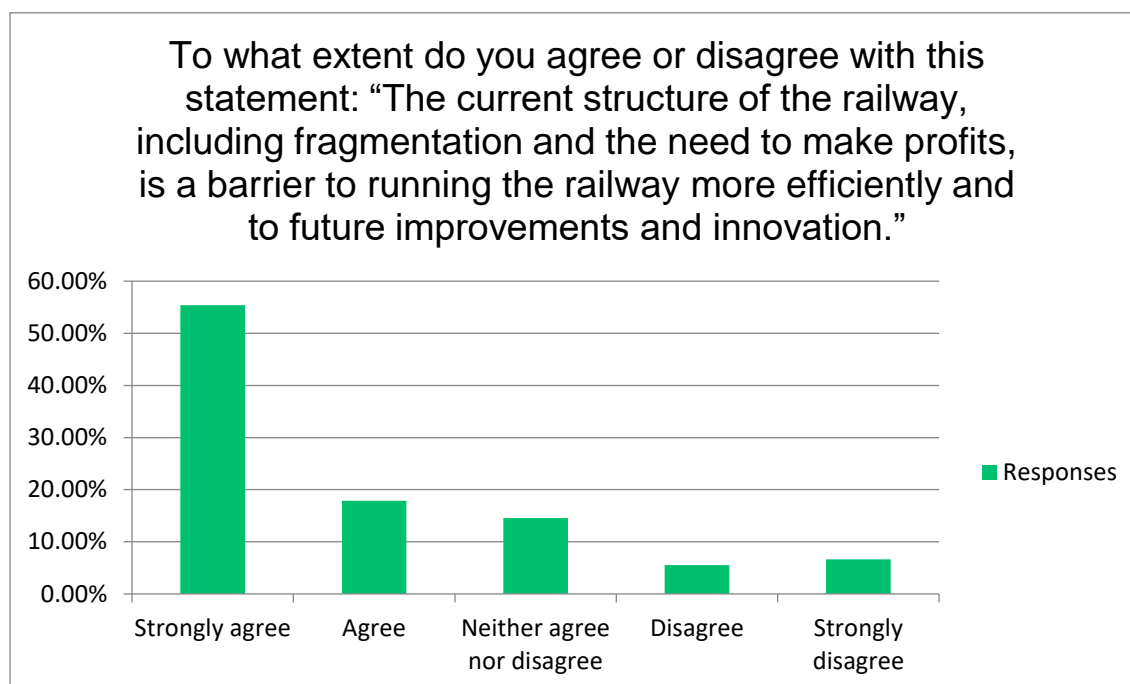
"Better technology can help us perform in our jobs. Already I see maintenance staff being able to pre-empt failures due to remote monitoring technology. However, cuts to maintenance staff threaten this. What good is it having a sensor to advise points need urgent maintenance if there is no one to come and carry out that work?"

"Network Rail are undermining safety by cutting corners off additional protection for line blockages, to hit targets set by the ORR but they're actually making engineering work less safe!"

As with maintenance workers, the top-down railway that sees staff as a cost was seen to miss opportunities to draw on the skills and knowledge of the workforce:

"Staff are often willing to provide practical experience input at the design stage of projects but are always told they are only looking to their own interests when their suggestions are not in line with the designers who have never done the job."

Station staff



To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement: "The current structure of the railway, including fragmentation and the need to make profits, is a barrier to running the railway more efficiently and to future improvements and innovation."		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	55.38%	628
Agree	17.90%	203
Neither agree nor disagree	14.55%	165
Disagree	5.56%	63
Strongly disagree	6.61%	75
	Answered	1134

More than 73% of station staff agreed that the current structure of the railway was a barrier to running it efficiently and making improvements.

Among station staff, who are largely employees of the Train Operating Companies, there is a general concern that the companies' drive for profits sucks resources out of the railway and creates scarcity and pressures to make cuts:

"The individual TOCs are laughing, especially when they are on management contracts when it's actually the taxpayer paying for what is actually a national railway into the pockets of private companies. If you just look at most station staff conditions that they have to work in it's disgusting and hasn't been maintained or updated in over 20 years. When the railway was nationalised it was run into the

ground and no modernisation was made but with private companies making millions from stations that are undermanned, where staff are under paid and treated like a piece of dirt doesn't make sense."

"TOCs say that safety and customer services are more important than ever, yet management spend the majority of their time in finding ways to make cuts and hide the impact the cuts will make to customers and frontline colleagues."

"The amount of money that has gone out of the railway in the last 26 years as profits to shareholders could have already provided new rolling stock in some areas such as Southeastern that are still using outdated rolling stock from the 1990's. On Southeastern many services are running with no toilets and air conditioning, stations are not being maintained and outdated signalling equipment not replaced."

"With the network split into 25 different operating companies, multiple Rolling Stock companies, Network Rail, etc millions of pounds are wasted each year on servicing contracts, lawyers fees, etc. In addition, economies of scale have been lost because each company is responsible for their own procurement and can't help out other companies if they've got an overstock of something the other company needs."

"Profits should be reinvested in the industry not transferred abroad to subsidise foreign operators. Govia can fiddle £25 million and still keep contracts to run TOCs. Railways are a service that can meet green objectives and ought not to be run for profit."

"There is only one reason they are hiding behind modernisation and that's to cut staff and maximise profits for shareholders only."

Station staff see the interests of passengers and the efficient running of passenger services constantly overridden by the competing interests of train operating companies.

The complex mess of tickets, the difficulty passengers experience in travelling with different companies, the drive to run services on time to avoid fines for delays, which leads to passengers missing connections, or the desire to cut services completely all hamper the creation of an efficient, modern railway and stem from the private, profit-motivated control of passenger operations:

"Customers suffer because of fragmentation. If they buy a certain ticket without knowing due to not having detailed ticket knowledge, and their train is cancelled, they then have to wait an hour or more to get on the same TOC, when there could be 10 trains before then for the same price but with different TOCs! It's ridiculous."

"I often feel that the service we offer is impacted by the company's need to profit. Platform and train crew are put under pressure to run a service on time and during delays services are terminated in stations where there is no onward connection so the return service will run on time. Not enough revenue protection staff and so blatant fare evasion is the norm. Guards told not to delay the train for this issue and no back up from BTP/ or any Police if they kick off on the train. No timetables or leaflets produced by companies anymore to save money."

"The railway now puts profits above standards of service. This is clear when we have disruption. The companies are happy to cancel trains if the blame can be placed on

the infrastructure thus such cancellation costs can be placed on Network Rail. If trains are running late they will terminate a service at an earlier station en-route and turn it back sometimes as empty stock to avoid fines. This is not serving the travelling public just the company purse strings. I'm sure the public would rather have a late running train than no train at all."

"It's all about money now, not customer service or care. Passengers at our station are always getting over charged or their oyster card going wrong."

"Every day of the week the fragmentation creates problems for the customer and staff. Nobody willing to take responsibility which means problems to get solved and staff don't feel confident to help further with other companies' customers."

"At my station there are 4 Operating Companies, who do not work together in helping the passengers, for example in the ticket office we can't give refunds to a ticket that was sold at a station 15 mins away as it's a different company."

"There is a huge amount of duplication of effort in the current system. Different companies have different pricing models which are inconsistent both in pricing levels and conditions such as restrictions (i.e. one company will have morning and peak restrictions, but another may just have morning restrictions for the same journey and the actual hours the restrictions are in force vary also)."

"Passengers need staff to assist them with a myriad of problems while travelling from A to B. Some have problems understanding modern technology and need to be assisted and many disabled and elderly passengers need assistance with luggage, getting on and off trains, or something as simple as help with buying a ticket. How is it possible without sufficient staff on stations to facilitate these services?"

"The levels of duplication across the different TOCs is a total waste of money. TOCs employ teams of people to 'pin the tail on the donkey' over delay minutes."

"With so many different departments and companies involved it's 'always someone else's fault.' Things take ages to approve, and nothing is done quickly. Ticket machines at London Bridge for example are not selling the right tickets and it won't be fixed for 2 years due to a dispute between Southeastern and Southern/Govia. Absolute bollocks."

"Connecting trains run by differing train operators are not held in times of service disruption. Train companies increasingly sell tickets which are only valid for travel on their own services, often making passengers have to pay again if trains are delayed. There are over 20 sets of very highly paid managers and boards of directors on the nation's railway system. There should only be one. This is a colossal waste of passenger's money."

"As long as this model of running the railway exists, it will always be about profits and the travelling public will always come second."

The pressure to cut costs is seen to obstruct genuine passenger-centred innovations:

"Rather than staffing stations and making sure we're properly innovating, the words 'headcount' and 'budget' are used to prevent most innovative ideas and to help with improvements to the customer experience."

"The way forward is communication with passengers, this cannot be delivered if stations are 'modernised' by closing ticket offices."

"Money isn't invested into the future of the railway. We are running ancient class 150/158/166 Diesel Multiple Units (DMUs) as well as High Speed Train (HST)/Castle sets. Rollins Stock Company (ROSCO) provision means that we are lumped with Intercity Express Trains (IETs) configured in such a way that they're unfit for long distance and leisure travel. If Great Western Railway (GWR) were able to pick their own rolling stock they'd be able to better provide for customers."

"The new contracts being issued to TOCs offer no incentive to TOCs to develop and improve the network and services, only to operate with minimal cost to maximise the profits from management fees."

"Companies are more interested in profit than investing in new/better/more reliable trains. Or making ticket prices cheaper for passengers as they are really high and expensive."

A railway integrated into one not-for-profit company would support the development of a passenger-centred, modern railway:

"Reinvestment as opposed to any profits seeping from companies would drive innovation. Look at LNER no privately run version of this successfully returned a profit. Under the operator of last resort (publicly owned) it has been returning profits to the Exchequer."

"I started with British Rail and it wasn't perfect but we all worked together."

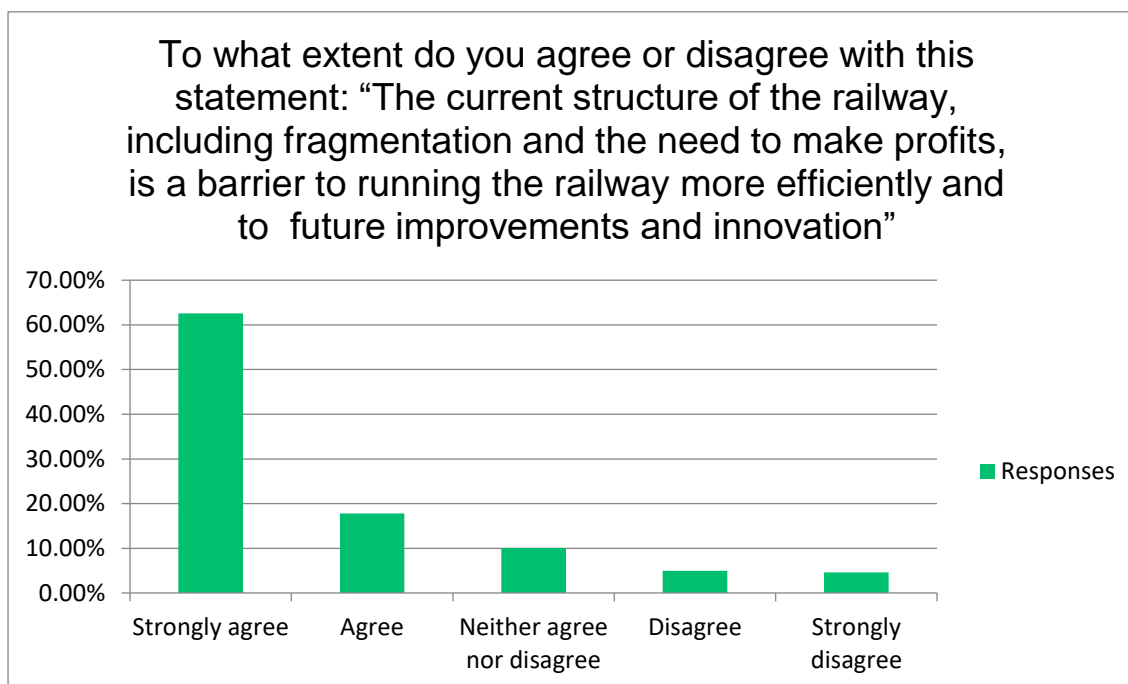
"Profits should be put into improvements not shareholders"

"Should all be one company, so there's no blaming others for when things go wrong, no more 'not my problem as it don't benefit my company revenue' no more shareholders taking thousands that could be used to improve customers experience instead of lining their pockets."

"The amount of money wasted on internal payments between Network Rail and TOCs is just plain stupid and rolling stock companies are just ripping money out of the industry. Railways should be for the public and profits should be used for future improvements, line reopening etc."

"To nationalise and then invest any profit back into the railway for further improvement, is surely more beneficial than those profits going overseas to state owned rail companies."

On-board staff



To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement: “The current structure of the railway, including fragmentation and the need to make profits, is a barrier to running the railway more efficiently and to future improvements and innovation”		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	62.54%	895
Agree	17.82%	255
Neither agree nor disagree	10.06%	144
Disagree	4.96%	71
Strongly disagree	4.61%	66
	Answered	1431

More than 80% of on-board staff agreed that the current structure of the railway, with its fragmentation and profit motive represents a barrier to efficiency, innovation and improvement.

Many on-board staff believe that in the drive to cut costs and create more profit, the TOCs are sucking much-needed resources out of the railway and, in the process, degrading service quality:

“The industry does not run in the interest of passengers, it's a natural monopoly and racket that is exploited by massive corporations running TOCs and ROSCOs.”

"Most TOCs seem to be focused on providing investors and shareholders with a massive return for their investment , we should be returning this money back into investment of the railway , keeping ticket prices down , investment in new rolling stock etc."

"Since privatisation it has always been the same thing, the money hasn't gone back into the railway, it's gone into profits and shareholders and CEO wages etc."

"A fragmented railway prevents us from working as one, together. Each TOC works to their own agenda, making their profits for directors and shareholders, as opposed to ploughing profits back into the industry."

"Over the past few years I have had occasions where I have come to a train in the morning and it has been unfit for public use due to it not being cleaned. This was because the company thought it could save money and increase profits by making cleaning staff redundant. It only caused the passengers discomfort having to get on a train on Monday morning that hadn't been cleaned all weekend with beer bottles etc rolling around to full cancellation of services. This is just one of many incidences of cuts not being in the interest of passengers safety and well-being."

"Staff are being punished for not scanning tickets or getting assaulted for challenging all tickets and not really being allowed to use discretion. All so that more profits can go to shareholders."

"Less staff, booking offices closed can only make the railway a more difficult place for passengers. People need reassuring whilst travelling."

"Corners are already being cut to get rolling stock so called serviceable, i.e. [TOC NAME] will purposely ignore out of use disabled toilets to run a train on time. Little things like this are already making the whole customer experience worse and in some cases embarrassing and even dangerous to customers, profit should not be at the forefront of a country's safe railway."

"Under private operators any improvements will be made only where profits are achieved in return, with little or no incentive to provide improvements which are otherwise needed with no lead to profit. Under private operators Funding to British Transport Police (BTP) is minimised as detracts from the profit."

"Taking away the guard, shutting down ticket offices, overall staff reduction is just taking the industry back in time and will result in more incidents and a worse experience for anyone who uses the railway."

As with station staff, on-board staff see the interests of passengers being subordinated to the need to make a profit, with complex ticket structures that over-charge passengers, companies running short-formed trains, services cancelled to avoid fines, and a corrosive blame culture that permeates the system:

"There is no collaboration or effective communication between TOCs, and this just leads to more confusion, dissatisfaction and additional costs to passengers who do not understand the complexity of the railway industry!"

"Train companies are more than willing to run short formation trains and without air con during high temperatures instead of maintaining traction and fixing faults correctly so they can maintain a profit for their self."

"Rail travel should be simple for passengers to understand but the current choice of cheap tickets, multiple TOCs chasing the same buck leaves elderly, tourists and rerouted or delayed passengers confused, and on many occasions out of pocket. Meanwhile, the lack of investment going back into the railway is an obvious concern."

"TOCs are making service cuts all the time, running reduced carriages in service forcing the travelling public into rammed carriages. Toilets are not cleaned or emptied regularly, trains are not cleaned properly and it seems that this is all done to benefit the shareholder's pockets only whilst they cut back on services and carriages. It is a railway for profit reasons only and not for the travelling public's benefits. Year-on-year tickets are increased to boost yearly profits."

"Profits are being taken away from railways instead of being invested in railways. Complicated ticketing structure causes on board issues and confusion for customers, and not everyone able to use ticket machines - some people need reassurance from train crew."

"With a fractured infrastructure, customers do not have a consistency with on board welfare and it makes it complicated with regards delays compensation etc. When a customer wishes to catch a train they don't look to see the TOC it's a train that they are about and that it's safe and convenient."

"You only have to look at the amount of cancellations across the rail network. The squeeze on staff and the loss of good will has a massive impact."

"The train service is not run to the betterment of the passenger. It is unashamedly run for operator profits. For example, if a delay can be attributed to Network Rail, TOCs run a service late all day to benefit from the compensation."

"Everything is fragmented and when something goes wrong it's all about who is to blame and get fined. Not about what we can do to prevent this again. All about blame."

"Trains are run to minimise cost on delay fines. It is apparent who is paying the fine by the priority or lack thereof, given to delayed services. They are not run in the interest of passengers and their connections."

"The railway has become a blame game with one company spending time and money chasing another for delay attribution etc. The money could be better spent and invested on the actual trains and staff."

"Any service enhancing feedback is knocked back. We have services that have such narrow change times or the passenger is waiting an hour for the next service. We have constant delays due to track issues where it isn't being reinvested to improve the rail."

The new management contracts, in which private companies no longer carry the 'risk' of variable passenger revenue, are seen to present new barriers to an efficient and passenger-centred service:

"Already the companies are cancelling trains in the thousands, without a care, because they don't have any financial cost to it. Delay-repay and refunds are covered by the taxpayers without the financial hit to the companies. The drive to run trains has almost disappeared. Every train that is cancelled costs the taxpayers thousands. This money is lost and there's no money for improvements. Companies are fleecing the current system, they don't care about the taxpayers covering the costs. It's just being pillaged by the companies at the taxpayers' and customer's expense."

On-Board staff identify the leasing of rolling stock as a particularly scandalous drain on resources in the railway:

"The money that's wasted on rolling stock leasing is disgraceful especially when you see the state of the trains passengers have to sit in."

"Rolling stock owned by ROSCO's has been paid for in leasing fees 100s of times over. It's just filling the pockets of the shareholders of the leasing companies."

"As for the ROSCOs these are the biggest drain on money out of the railway going and should immediately be taken out of existence. When you explain to passengers that all the rolling stock is "borrowed" off only 3 companies the look of disbelief on their faces is going to stay with me. It's an absolutely ludicrous way to run a railway or any business for that matter."

"By working as a whole, or at the very least having the one split between passenger and freight services, it would mean that for example, rolling stock procurement would be more efficient and cheaper due to larger purchasing powers, negating the need for the ROSCOs and saving those charges also."

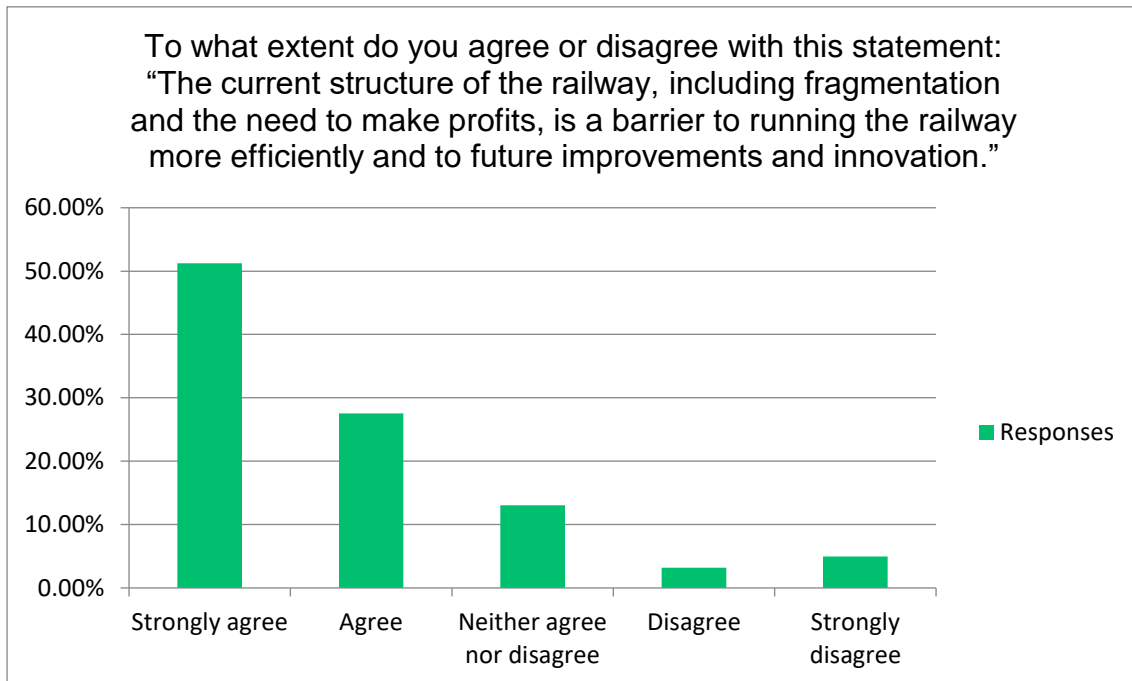
As with other staff groups, on-board staff believe that a single, integrated railway, run not-for-profit would result in better passenger services and be more cost-effective with public investment:

"Efficiency, improvements and use of innovation should always be done with the service users' needs and requirements prioritised, and this can't be achieved when a for-profit organisation is at the helm because priority will always be high yields."

"The railway is an integral part of British infrastructure. The ability to quickly, reliably and easily travel to the majority of Britain by rail is essential to a great many for work and leisure. A focus on profits, competing companies and fragmented service has driven prices to rates unaffordable for many, leaves some routes short of rolling stock and others short of staff where a cohesive, single operator would be able to more effectively transfer both stock and staff to fill any gaps in service. This would also allow for a more streamlined, cost effective and efficient pay and management structure."

"In BR's day trains would wait if it was the last connection and police would come to trains if we had any trouble. We had better support in those days."

Fleet maintenance



To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement: “The current structure of the railway, including fragmentation and the need to make profits, is a barrier to running the railway more efficiently and to future improvements and innovation”.		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	51.24%	145
Agree	27.56%	78
Neither agree nor disagree	13.07%	37
Disagree	3.18%	9
Strongly disagree	4.95%	14
	Answered	283

78% of fleet maintenance workers agreed that the current structure of the railway, with its fragmentation and profit motive, represents a barrier to efficiency, innovation and improvement.

Fleet maintenance workers are concerned that maintenance work is seen as a cost that can be cut in the drive to generate a profit:

“Maintenance is being treated as a fly in the ointment of fast cash and profiteering.”

“The company is focusing on making profit not maintaining trains. We are constantly taking components from long term stopped units as the stores have no stock of components.”

"Focusing on profits encourages corners to be cut to save costs. For example, not fixing a set with 'smaller' issues which may save a few hundred pounds. When something goes horrendously wrong due to said 'small' issue, will the TOCs, Network Rail, and the government even own up to the fact they're cutting corners and putting people's lives at risk?"

"If profits are diverted to shareholders then this is money which is diverted away from budgets. Some of this will be safety critical."

"Cutting people will not only slow down the work being done but will place huge pressure on that one individual to do a two-man job which can cause delays and potentially catastrophic mistakes. It would make the railways more inefficient and open to more accidents and will endanger the lives of the workforce."

"Trains go past my depot every day bursting at the seams, but there is less expenditure on depot facilities and equipment. Someone's taking the money and it's not me."

As with other staff groups, fleet maintenance workers see the fragmentation and competing interests of various companies on the railway as an impediment to effective collaboration and efficient working:

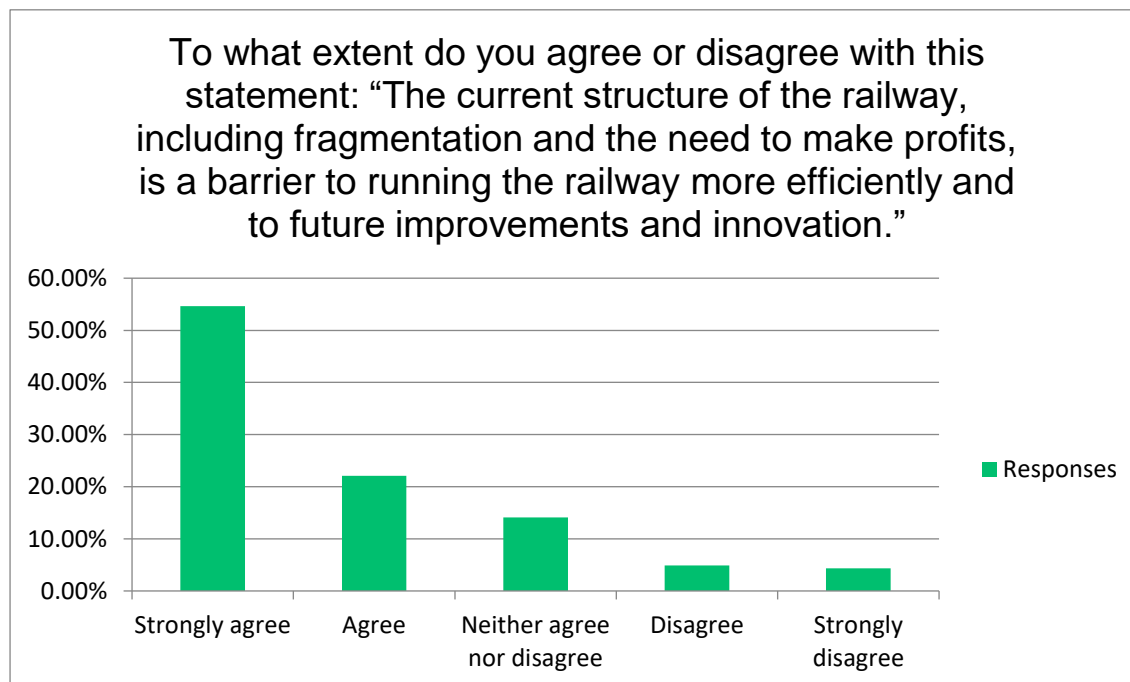
"The railways are going backwards. Every aspect of the railway should be working together to give the best service. When there are TOCs and then Network Rail all arguing whose fault it is in order to forgo paying fines then it's not in the passenger's best interest. Suppliers also have a monopoly when it comes to selling spares for ridiculous prices."

"Everything is about claiming money from other companies, shifting the blame and never working together. Common sense solutions often prohibited due to worrying over company liability."

"Multiple TOCs, separate track and infrastructure maintenance, outsourced contracts, external contractors all fighting against each other to allocate blame to avoid fines. All contribute to an extremely fragmented industry governed by profits and dividends rather than being efficiency and safety led."

"Train operators run too many different kinds of rolling stock, making maintenance service and repairs difficult due to poorly structured support."

Other railway staff



To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement: “The current structure of the railway, including fragmentation and the need to make profits, is a barrier to running the railway more efficiently and to future improvements and innovation”.		
Answer Choices	Responses	
Strongly agree	54.61%	302
Agree	22.06%	122
Neither agree nor disagree	14.10%	78
Disagree	4.88%	27
Strongly disagree	4.34%	24
	Answered	553

76% of other railway workers agreed that the current structure of the railway, including fragmentation and the need to make profits, is a barrier to running the railway more efficiently and to future improvements and innovation:

“Many parts of the UK network is still outdated and using the old system. Reducing maintenance staff would result in more frequent defects and faults. I have seen an increase in rail traffic which has resulted in lesser availability to plan in line blocks during the day and pushed to night working.”

"A fragmented railway, in which profit is put before reliability and passenger experience, has been tried and shown to fail. Public transport is a public service and should be run as such, without profit being creamed off by the ROSCOs and TOCs. One example is the travesty of delay attribution. A whole team of people spend their working days passing the buck back and forth."

"Use the profits to reinvest in the railway. Stations and stock are dated and modernisation is needed for passengers and staff. More safety checks are needed throughout the railway the state of some of the track throughout the network is alarming and it is just a matter of time before disaster strikes."

"Unit couplings and differing new poorly designed trains by TOCs and leasing companies makes it harder to run a robust service. Because we have so many non-standard sets, it makes it impossible to cascade or divert rolling stock for better use or events."

"Hitachi and Siemens run the railway not Network Rail, nor will Great British Railways. The railway is run for the benefit of private companies dodging delay attribution, therefore claiming money from the taxpayer, rather than the benefit of taxpayers and fare payers. I've seen the set up under GBR and this will not change the profiteering of private companies. In fact it will divert even more financial risk from them."

"Fragmentation can cause logistical issues which reduce efficiency. Also large profits are being removed by shareholders when they could be reinvested in modernising the railway. They are happy to make huge profits from an archaic system and don't want to modernise the agreements that enable those profits. They just want to 'modernise' the workers conditions, so they get more from them."

"We have upgraded operating systems, permanent ways and infrastructure such as signalling etc and continue to do so. The current railway setup with companies at different levels such as TOCs renting rolling stock is a way to have indirect subsidies at various levels, more shareholders at different troughs. This is the biggest barrier to investment and hence modernisation."

