



Department
for Transport



Great British Railways Chair appointment

Application Deadline: 5pm Thursday 19th March 2026

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Welcome Note from Heidi Alexander, Secretary of State for Transport

Dear Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chair of Great British Railways.

This is not just a job – it's a once in a generation leadership opportunity to transform Britain's railways into a world-class service that relentlessly puts passengers and customers first.

Great British Railways will be one of the UK Government's most significant public bodies with c. £20 billion expenditure and over 100,000 employees. It will also oversee one of the biggest retail operations in the UK, with annual ticketing turnover at a scale that demands sharp commercial acumen and an unwavering focus on customer experience.

As the inaugural Chair, you will lead a bold mission to reimagine how rail serves the nation, driving transformational and cultural change and commercial excellence across one of the UK's largest public bodies, whilst being responsible for the safety of the railway and everyone who interacts with it; staff, passengers and the public.

You will do this by shaping GBR's culture and strategy, managing and optimising infrastructure assets, being a powerful advocate for passengers and freight customers, and championing safety, reliability, and accessibility. You will ensure GBR delivers an excellent service for passengers – now and for generations to come, delivers value for the tax and fare payer, and unlocks economic growth and innovation.



We are seeking an excellent leader with deep strategic insight, strong governance experience, and a commitment to delivering for the public. This is a role for someone who can inspire confidence, navigate complexity, work closely and confidently with senior stakeholders in a complex and challenging landscape, and champion customers.

We very much welcome applications from proven leaders of all backgrounds - from both within and outside the rail sector. We are committed to diversity and believe our public appointments should reflect our customers - the travelling public - who come from all walks of life. We welcome fresh talent, and perspectives, to help us better understand the needs of the communities we serve. This includes people who never have applied for a public appointment – but could bring new ideas, insights, and energy.

If you share our ambition to build a world-class railway that is reliable, safe, sustainable, and responsive to the people it serves, I encourage you to apply. This is your chance to transform the future of one of our most important national assets.

Thank you once again for your interest. I wish you the very best in your application.

GatenbySanderson are happy to talk through the process and answer your questions.

Heidi Alexander
Secretary of State for Transport



About Great British Railways

Great British Railways (GBR) will be a new publicly owned company that will unite responsibility for providing safe and reliable passenger services with efficiently managing and optimising infrastructure as a critical UK asset.

GBR will provide a service that touches millions of lives daily. It will be charged with improving train performance, growing revenue, unlocking new house-building opportunities, and increasing the use of rail freight.

GBR will bring together track and train to deliver a railway that is:

- Reliable
- Affordable
- Efficient
- High quality
- Accessible
- Safe

At its heart, GBR is about transforming the passenger experience – making every journey seamless, safe, and satisfying. Being the inaugural Chair is your opportunity to lead that transformation.





Great British Railways Board

The Great British Railways Board will be key to improving the rail journeys of millions of people through taking a customer-first mindset and managing and optimising its infrastructure assets to improve the resilience and performance of the network. It will also steer cultural transformation across a workforce of over 100,000 people, integrating multiple organisations into one unified, customer-focused entity.

The Great British Railways Board will support the executive to oversee approx. £20 billion expenditure and drive a more financially sustainable railway which takes a whole system approach to market development, retailing, and revenue and efficiency.

This is a leadership challenge of national importance – requiring resilience, influence, and the ability to inspire confidence in a complex and challenging stakeholder environment. As the Great British rail network is devolved, the Board, led by the Chair, will need to take into account the views of the Scottish Government.

The role of the board in the initial stage will be focused on the smooth transition to GBR ahead of focusing on what needs to be delivered. It will require a balance between drawing on Network Rail and DfT Operator expertise and the additional skills and experience needed to ensure GBR can deliver on its priorities from Day 1.

This will be subject to change as GBR evolves over time and different skills become more relevant. The board will be the first line of assurance, supporting and challenging the executive, so that GBR is meeting its strategic priorities.

We would expect the Chair of Great British Railways to help shape the board.

About the role

Post	Chair
Reports to	Secretary of State
Duration	3 years, with the possibility of re-appointment
Remuneration	£200,000-300,000 per annum for a minimum of 2.5 days per week

Chair role

This is a high-profile, high-impact role for a leader who thrives on complexity and transformation. You will be the visible champion of GBR – in the media, in UK government, and across industry – driving a relentless focus on passengers and customers while safeguarding safety and operational integrity. You will provide external advice and expertise to inform the Minister’s decisions.

You will work with a vast array of stakeholders including Devolved Administrations and Mayoral Combined Authorities, ensuring a high-quality network and tailored public service is delivered for their area’s specific needs. You will champion freight to encourage more businesses and customers to move their products by rail on a reliable and punctual service. You will play a leading role in the UK Government’s growth objectives, ensuring connectivity across Britain as well as utilising railway land for the development of new homes and creating new job opportunities.

GBR design:

- Shape GBR’s design and culture to put users at the centre of every decision, including recruiting the GBR CEO and non-executive directors.
- Keep safety at the heart of GBR design.
- Working closely with the Network Rail and DfT Operator chairs, lead the integration of infrastructure, assets, and operations into a single, agile organisation.
- Drive transformation across a complex workforce and embed a culture of excellence and accountability.



Once GBR is stood up:

- Be the passionate advocate for passengers and customers, ensuring GBR delivers a retail and travel experience that rivals the best in the world.
- Be a visible leader of GBR from Day 1 (including in the media), leading the cultural change of bringing together multiple established organisations, championing GBR, and setting it up to transform the passenger experience of the railways.
- Provide oversight of performance and financial position.
- Improve customer satisfaction and increasing passenger usage.
- Champion innovation and commercial growth while maintaining world-leading safety standards.
- The Chair will be responsible for safety and sit on the safety committee.

You will assist the Chief Executive in taking forward the strategic direction of Great British Railways and provide expertise. You will be responsible for:

- Guiding, advising, and providing scrutiny on strategy, and supporting the CEO in delivering Great British Railway's strategic plan.
- Reporting to UK, Scottish, and Welsh Ministers.
- Setting the board agenda and chairing the board.
- Carrying out annual performance reviews of the non-executive directors.
- Acting as an ambassador for Great British Railways to promote its work.



Person specification

Essential criteria:

1. An unwavering customer-first mindset with the ability to instil a customer and public service focused approach across a large and complex consumer-facing business, which supports the delivery of wider UK government objectives.
2. Exceptional relationship-building and advocacy, with the ability to establish direction in a complex and challenging landscape.
3. Comprehensive experience of leading complex organisations and major programmes at board or equivalent level, including experience of building and leading a complex, diverse workforce and implementing transformational and cultural reform in sensitive contexts.
4. A strong understanding of the leadership necessary to ensure the safe operation of the business, and the ability to inspire a culture of shared responsibility for safety throughout the company.
5. Skilled at overseeing and improving large-scale assets or systems to ensure reliability, efficiency, and performance, with a demonstrable track record of improving user experience.
6. Commercially and financially astute, with a strong focus on value for money, a whole-system approach to market development, retailing and revenue, and efficiency.

Candidates' suitability for the role will be assessed against criteria 1- 6 above.

How to apply

Before you apply

You'll need to [create an account](#) on the UK Government's Public Appointments website or [sign into](#) your account.

How to apply

To apply, you must provide the following information by creating an account or signing in:

- equality information
- information relating to any outside interests or potential reputational issues

We will ask you to check and confirm your personal details to ensure your application is accurate.

You will also have the opportunity to make a reasonable adjustment request or apply under the disability confident scheme before you submit your application.

You must also apply through www.gatenbysanderson.com/job/GSe126714 by 5pm Thursday 19th March 2026:

Any applications submitted after the closing date, or that are missing any of the following documents, will not be accepted.

- A CV or equivalent biographical information (maximum two sides A4, minimum 12 font) setting out your career history and including details of any professional qualifications.
- Provide a summary of why you are interested in the role and how you meet the specification and essential criteria. This can be in a form that allows you most ably to present your interest and credentials, for example a short, bullet-point slide presentation, a short video (no more than 2 mins) or supporting letter (no more than two A4 pages, minimum 12 font). Make sure you refer to the contents of this document and provide specific examples.
- You will also be asked to provide diversity data, and to declare any potential conflicts of interest or reputational issues.

For a confidential conversation about this role, please contact our recruitment partners at GatenbySanderson:

Principal Researcher, Zoe Bennett
zoe.bennett@gatenbysanderson.com

Consultant, Olivia Robinson
olivia.robinson@gatenbysanderson.com

Partner, Julie Myers
julie.myers@gatenbysanderson.com



Indicative timetable

Please note that these dates are only indicative at this stage and could be subject to change.

If you are unable to meet these timeframes, please advise in your application. We will try and offer as much flexibility as we can, but it may not be possible to offer alternative dates for interviews. Please ensure you quote the job title and reference number in your e-mail.

Action	Date
Campaign launches	Monday 26 January 2026
Campaign closes	5pm Thursday 19th March 2026
Shortlist meeting	Tuesday 24 th March 2026
Final panel interviews	Tuesday 21 st & Thursday 23 rd April 2026
Appointment confirmed	May 2026



Selection process

This role is being competed in accordance with the Governance Code on Public Appointments (October 2025), which sets out the regulatory framework for public appointments processes. The Code is based on three core principles – merit, openness, and fairness.

GatenbySanderson will acknowledge your application and keep you updated on the progress of the competition.

The panel for this appointment competition will be Chaired by Jo Shanmugalingam, DfT Permanent Secretary, and will include a Senior Independent Panel Member.

Advisory Assessment Panels (AAP) are chosen by ministers to assist them in their decision-making. These include a departmental official and an independent member. AAP's perform a number of functions, including agreeing an assessment strategy with ministers, undertaking sifting, carrying out interviews in line with the advertised criteria and deciding objectively who meets the published selection criteria for the role before recommending to ministers which candidates they find appointable. It is then for the minister to decide who to appoint to the role.

The process may include a longlist meeting where the AAP will assess each application against the essential criteria and decide who to invite for a virtual preliminary interview with GatenbySanderson.

At the shortlist meeting, the AAP will assess each application against the essential criteria and decide which candidates to seek Ministers' agreement to invite for interview.

Interviews are expected to take place in central London and to last for between 45 and 60 minutes. Further details about the format will be provided to you in advance.

The decision to appoint to this role rests with the Secretary of State. Appointable candidates may be invited to meet with the Secretary of State, or another Department for Transport Minister, before they make a final decision.

Please note: expenses incurred by candidates during the recruitment process will not be reimbursed except in exceptional circumstances and only when agreed in advance with GatenbySanderson.

You can expect the recruitment process to take approximately 6 months, however, applicants will be kept informed of progress.

Additional information

Appointment term

Your appointment as Chair of Great British Railways will be made by the Secretary of State. The appointment will be for a term of 3 years, with the possibility of re-appointment.

It should be noted that this post is a public appointment; Chairs/ Non-Executive Board Members are neither employees of the Crown nor the Department for Transport. Such appointments are not normally subject to the provisions of employment law.

Appointments may be ended prior to the conclusion of the period of appointment.

Time commitment

The anticipated time commitment is a minimum of 2.5 days per week.

Remuneration

- £200,000-£300,000 per annum for a minimum of 2.5 days per week.
- Remuneration is taxable through payroll, but the appointment is not pensionable.
- Members can claim reimbursement for reasonable travel and subsistence costs necessarily incurred.
- Applicants should note that the successful candidate cannot be remunerated for this role if they are being paid for an existing full-time role from the public purse.

Location

Great British Railways will be a national organisation with its headquarters in Derby. There is an expectation the role will have a national presence across Great Britain and will involve regular travel.

Availability

The successful candidate is expected to commence the role as soon as the successful candidate is able to, subject to the successful completion of pre-appointment checks and security clearance.



Security clearance

The successful candidate will be required to have or be willing to obtain security clearance to Security Check (SC). Pre-appointment checks will also be undertaken on immigration and criminal convictions. It usually takes between 4-6 weeks to obtain the security clearance. The role will be offered on a conditional basis until the successful candidate has passed all checks.

Equal opportunities monitoring

We believe that by being a diverse and inclusive workplace, where everyone is valued, we are more motivated, higher performing, and more committed to our team. We welcome all applicants, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, social background, religious beliefs, ethnicity, or age.

As part of the application process, we ask candidates to complete equal opportunities monitoring information in the application portal. This will help us to monitor selection decisions to assess whether equality of opportunity is being achieved. This part of the form will be treated as confidential and used for statistical purposes only. The form will not be treated as part of your application.

Disability confident

The Department for Transport values and promotes diversity and is committed to equality of opportunity for all and to the appointment of disabled people. As part of the Disability Confident Scheme, we guarantee an interview to anyone with a disability whose application meets the essential criteria for the post. 'Best meet' is defined as providing/demonstrating strong examples of all essential criteria.

In order to guarantee an interview to all disabled candidates ([as defined by the Equality Act 2010](#)) who satisfy all the essential criteria for the role and wish to be considered under the Disability Confident Scheme, we need candidates to declare a disability and that they wish to be considered under the scheme.

What do we mean by a disability?

To be eligible for consideration under the Scheme, you must be considered disabled under the Equality Act 2010. This means that you must have or have had in the last 12 months, a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial long-term adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. This includes those whose disability has lasted, or is likely to last, for 12 months, or if the disability or condition is likely to progress or recur.

You do not have to be registered as a disabled person to apply under this scheme.

Nationality

This is a non-reserved post and therefore open to UK Nationals, British Nationals Overseas, British Protected Persons, Commonwealth Citizens, EEA Nationals and certain non-EEA family members and Swiss Nationals under the Swiss EU Agreement. There must be no employment restriction or time limit on your permitted stay in the UK. You will not be asked to produce evidence to confirm your eligibility at the application stage, but you will be required to do so should you be invited to the final panel interview.

Standards in public life

You will be expected to demonstrate high standards of corporate and personal conduct. All successful candidates will be asked to subscribe to the Review Body's "Codes of Practice". Candidates will be expected to abide by the "Seven Principles of Public Life" set out by the Committee on Standards in Public Life in Annex A.

Disqualification for appointment

There are circumstances in which an individual will not be considered for appointment. They include:

- people who have received a prison sentence or suspended sentence of three months or more in the last five years.
- people who are the subject of a bankruptcy restrictions order or interim order.
- in certain circumstances, those who have had an earlier term of appointment terminated.
- anyone who is under a disqualification order under the Company Directors Disqualification Act 1986.
- anyone who has been removed from trusteeship of a charity; and
- Roles listed under the [House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975](#) or the Devolved Administrations equivalent.

Registration of interests

The purpose of these provisions is to avoid any danger of Board members being influenced, or appearing to be influenced, by their private interests in the exercise of their public duties.

Public appointments require the highest standards of propriety, involving impartiality, integrity, and objectivity, in relation to the stewardship of public funds and the oversight and management of all related activities. This means that any private, voluntary, charitable, or political interest which might be material and relevant to the work of the body concerned should be declared. It is important, therefore, that you consider your circumstances when applying for a public appointment and identify any potential conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived.

There is a requirement to declare any actual or potential conflict of interest you may have in being appointed to the board upon applying. Any actual or perceived conflicts of interest will be fully explored by the panel at interview stage.

Political activity

Members will need to show political impartiality during their time on the board and must declare any party-political activity they undertake in the period of their appointment. Details of the successful candidate's declared political activity must be published by appointing departments when the appointments are publicised.

Your political activity will be kept separate from your application and will only be seen by the panel prior to interview – the panel may at that stage explore with candidates any potential for conflict of interest. It is appreciated that political activities may have given you relevant skills, including experience gained from committee work, collective decision making, resolving conflict and public speaking. If, therefore, you have had such experience and you consider it relevant to your application for this post, you may if you choose include it separately in the main body of your application.

Due diligence

Due diligence will be carried out as part of the application process. As well as checks made regarding the above, searches will be carried out via internet search engines and any public social media accounts. It will be seen by the panel prior to interview – the panel may at that stage explore with candidates any findings.

Data protection

GatenbySanderson takes your privacy seriously and maintain an Information Security Management System and Privacy Information Management System to fulfil our obligations defined by the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018) and the UK GDPR. Our [privacy statement](#) sets out how we will handle your personal data securely and in accordance with your rights.

Complaints

If you are not completely satisfied with the way your application is handled at any stage of the competition, please raise any complaint in the first instance with:

Via email: dftpublicappointments@dft.gov.uk

We will reply to your complaint within 20 days.

If you remain unsatisfied, please [contact the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments](#). The Commissioner can only investigate complaints relating to regulated Public Appointments.

Annex A Seven Principles of Public Life

The principles of public life apply to anyone who works as a public officeholder. This includes all those who are elected or appointed to public office, nationally and locally, and all people appointed to work in the civil service, local government, the police, courts and probation services, NDPBs, and in the health, education, social and care services. All public officeholders are both servants of the public and stewards of public resources. The principles also have application to all those in other sectors delivering public services.

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the public interest clearly demands.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.



 **Great British Railways**

One railway, owned by you.