

**WE'RE
GOING
PLACES.
ARE
YOU?**



Head of Operations and Onboard Experience GJNZ

Position Description

Team:	GJNZ Customer & Growth	Location:	Christchurch
Reports to:	GM Passenger		
Role Type:	Permanent		

About Us

KiwiRail's Role in Aotearoa, New Zealand

KiwiRail, a proud State-Owned Enterprise, delivers sustainable and inclusive growth for our customers, communities, and people.

For more than 150 years, rail in New Zealand has connected communities, delivered freight and passengers around the country, and showcased our spectacular scenery to the world. Our purpose—Hononga Whaikaha, Oranga mo Aotearoa (Stronger Connections, Better New Zealand)—speaks to connection with our customers and the future needs of their businesses, connection with the communities we serve and operate in, and connection with each other. KiwiRail is carrying this legacy into the future, delivering connected rail and shipping transport services that create economic, social, and environmental value for New Zealand and New Zealanders.

Our Workplace

At KiwiRail, our values define the behaviour we expect from everyone. We have a team of over 4500 people, and every connection we make with each other, our union partners, our customers and all our stakeholders must be of the highest standard.



Safety, health, and well-being are our number one priority, ensuring our people return home safe and healthy every day.

About the Role

Purpose of the role

KiwiRail is in a phase of significant transformation to modernise and grow our rail and Interislander ferry services in Aotearoa.

The Head of Operations and Onboard Experience GJNZ is accountable for the safe, reliable and commercially effective delivery of Great Journeys New Zealand services.

The role brings together fleet operations, crew leadership and the onboard guest experience so that operational decisions, asset readiness, service standards and customer outcomes are managed as one end-to-end service.

The role leads GJNZ operational planning and performance, fleet utilisation, rolling stock interfaces, disruption management, onboard crew capability, catering and retail delivery, and the systems and standards that support a premium passenger experience.

The role works closely with Rolling Stock Asset Integrity, Network Services, Property, Safety, Customer, Product, Sales and Marketing teams, union partners and third-party suppliers to deliver safe services, meet customer commitments and achieve financial targets.

While this role is primarily based on standard business hours, it operates within a seven-day passenger environment. The role may be required to provide leadership outside normal hours during disruptions, incidents or periods of significant operational demand.

This role sits on the Passenger Leadership team and is expected to contribute across the wider organisation.

Key Accountabilities

Within the area of responsibility, this role is required to:

Safety, regulatory and operational leadership

- Provide visible safety leadership and ensure GJNZ operations, crew activities, facilities, catering and onboard services comply with rail, food safety, health and safety, and other relevant regulatory requirements.
- Maintain effective operational controls, procedures, assurance and reporting.
- Ensure incidents, hazards, near misses and customer safety concerns are investigated and addressed.
- Ensure teams hold and maintain the competencies, qualifications and training required for their roles, with clear oversight of compliance and expiry requirements.
- Lead operational risk assessment and readiness for service changes, special events, projects, possessions and Block of Line activity.

Service operations and performance

- Lead the day-to-day operational performance of GJNZ services, with clear accountability for service delivery, operational readiness and coordination across the end-to-end passenger journey.
- Develop and implement operating plans, procedures and service standards that improve reliability, efficiency and customer outcomes.
- Monitor on-time performance, cancellations, capacity, service quality and operational costs.
- Ensure operational reporting is accurate, timely and supports effective decision-making.
- Optimise service capacity, fleet and people resources to meet demand and support revenue growth while maintaining safety and service standards.

- Provide regular operational and performance reporting to the General Manager Passenger, including risks, trends, priorities and corrective actions.

Fleet, assets and facilities

- Lead the operational interface with Rolling Stock Asset Integrity to ensure carriages and associated equipment are available, maintained and presented to the required standard.
- Oversee GJNZ rolling stock asset planning and lifecycle requirements, ensuring operational priorities are reflected in maintenance and investment plans.
- Maintain agreed carriage quality and presentation standards that support safe operations and a premium guest experience.
- Oversee GJNZ scenic facilities, platforms and operational property interfaces across GJNZ routes, working with the relevant asset and property owners.
- Manage third-party operational and service contracts, including performance, service quality, risk and value for money.

Crew leadership and capability

- Lead, coach and develop the operational and onboard leadership team, setting clear expectations and building a high-performing, inclusive and accountable culture.
- Maintain effective workforce and roster planning, including oversight of staffing levels, leave, fatigue, competencies and labour costs.
- Ensure crew leaders manage performance, development and employee matters consistently and in line with KiwiRail policies and employment obligations.
- Develop and maintain training for customer service, products, safety, conflict resolution, disruption response, food and beverage, and retail delivery.
- Build constructive relationships with union partners and represent GJNZ in relevant engagement forums and industrial processes.

Onboard guest experience

- Set and maintain GJNZ onboard service standards, ensuring each guest interaction reflects the GJNZ brand and agreed customer experience.
- Use customer feedback, complaints, operational data and service observations to identify and deliver improvements across the passenger journey.
- Lead the response to escalated customer issues and ensure investigations and resolutions are timely, fair and used to improve service delivery.
- Work with Customer, Product, Sales and Marketing teams to introduce new products and experiences, with the operational systems, training and resources required for successful delivery.
- Ensure premium and standard service offerings are delivered consistently across GJNZ routes.

Food, beverage and onboard retail

- Lead the operational delivery of food, beverage and onboard retail services, ensuring quality, safety, availability and presentation standards are met.
- Translate the agreed customer and brand strategy into practical menus, product ranges, service processes, crew training and merchandising standards.
- Monitor sales, gross margin, inventory, wastage and supply performance, and take action to improve revenue and profitability.
- Maintain effective stock control, ordering and replenishment arrangements.
- Oversee relevant supplier relationships and contracts.
- Use customer insight and commercial performance to recommend changes to products, promotions and service concepts.

Disruption and service resilience

- Lead GJNZ disruption management and coordinate the operational response with Network Services, Rolling Stock Asset Integrity, Customer teams and other partners.
- Ensure disruption plans, escalation pathways, communications and decision authorities are clear, current and tested.
- Make timely decisions that protect people, minimise customer impact and support service recovery.
- Ensure lessons from incidents and disruptions are captured and applied.
- Support a coordinated response for shared passenger services where GJNZ operational responsibilities or resources are involved.

Commercial and financial management

- Own and manage the operating budget for the function, including crew costs, contracted services, catering, retail and other operational expenditure.
- Monitor financial performance and forecasts, explain material variances and implement actions to improve efficiency without compromising safety or customer experience.
- Identify and deliver revenue, yield and cost improvement opportunities across capacity, crewing, food and beverage, retail and service delivery.
- Ensure purchasing, refunds, variations and other financial decisions are made within delegated authority and supported by appropriate controls.

Continuous improvement and stakeholder leadership

- Build strong working relationships across GJNZ and the wider KiwiRail group so operational, asset, customer and commercial priorities are aligned.
- Use data, frontline insight, customer feedback and industry practice to improve processes, systems and service performance.
- Sponsor and lead operational improvement initiatives, ensuring changes are practical, well communicated and embedded in day-to-day work.
- Maintain constructive relationships with suppliers, tourism partners, transport agencies, regulators and other external stakeholders relevant to GJNZ operations.
- Lead the identification, prioritisation and implementation of agreed GJNZ Sustainability Action Plan initiatives, embedding practical sustainability improvements into fleet operations, onboard customer experience and ways of working, while monitoring progress and reporting on outcomes.

Key Challenges

- Balancing safe and reliable operations with premium guest experience and commercial expectations.
- Coordinating fleet, network, crew, supplier and customer dependencies across geographically dispersed services.
- Maintaining service resilience and clear decision-making in a seven-day operation affected by weather, network and asset disruptions.
- Increasing revenue and controlling costs while maintaining food, beverage, retail and service quality.
- Leading change and consistent performance in a highly regulated and unionised environment.

Key Relationships Here are the key relationships relevant to this role		Manage /Lead	Deliver to	Collaborate with	Advise or inform
Internal	General Manager Passenger and the GJNZ leadership team		✓	✓	✓
	GJNZ operational leaders, crew leaders and onboard teams	✓			
	Rolling Stock Asset Integrity		✓	✓	
	Senior management across SDO		✓	✓	
	Internal service providers		✓	✓	
	Network Services			✓	
	Customer Contact and Travel Centre			✓	
	Customer, Product, Sales and Marketing teams		✓	✓	
	Safety and regulatory teams		✓	✓	
	Finance and Procurement		✓		
	People team			✓	✓
	Property and asset management teams			✓	
	Digital and business improvement teams				
External	Union partners		✓	✓	✓
	Third-party suppliers and contractors		✓	✓	✓
	Tourism and commercial partners		✓	✓	✓
	Regulatory and safety authorities		✓	✓	
	Local and national transport agencies				✓
	Property and facilities partners			✓	✓

What you will do to contribute

Health Safety and Wellbeing	Create a work environment where people speak up, risks are managed and safe behaviours are expected and reinforced. • Ensure incidents, hazards and wellbeing concerns are acted on promptly and learning is shared. • Ensure the function complies with all relevant statutory, regulatory and KiwiRail safety requirements. • Identify and assess workplace risks and ensure effective controls are implemented. • Provide visible leadership that supports the physical and mental wellbeing of team members.
Customer Focus	• Keep the passenger experience at the centre of operational decisions and service improvements. • Set clear customer service standards and ensure teams understand the required outcomes and measures. • Use customer insight, feedback and operational information to identify and implement improvements. • Ensure customer complaints and service failures are investigated and resolved appropriately. • Work collaboratively across GJNZ and KiwiRail to deliver consistent and high-quality passenger experiences.
High Performing Teams Skills	• Set clear expectations, coach leaders and address performance issues promptly and fairly. • Build capability, succession and engagement across geographically dispersed and rostered teams. • Ensure employees receive the training, development and support required to perform their roles safely and effectively. • Lead inclusively and work constructively with union partners and employee representatives. • Create opportunities for team members to contribute ideas and participate in service and operational improvements.
Commercial Acumen	• Develop and manage the operating budget for the function, ensuring resources are allocated effectively to support operational, customer and commercial objectives. • Monitor financial performance, forecasts and material variances, and take timely action to manage costs and improve performance. • Consider the financial and commercial implications of operational decisions, including impacts on revenue, service quality, asset utilisation and customer experience. • Identify opportunities to improve revenue, yield, productivity and cost efficiency across crewing, fleet utilisation, food and beverage, retail and service delivery. • Ensure procurement and purchasing decisions comply with KiwiRail policies, delegations and financial controls.

	• Manage supplier and contractor performance to achieve agreed service, quality, safety and value-for-money outcomes. • Ensure financial decisions support the wider objectives and overall financial position of GJNZ and KiwiRail.
Controls and Accountability	• Maintain effective operational, financial and people controls within the function. • Ensure decisions, records and reporting are accurate, timely and made within delegated authority. • Identify material risks early, escalate when required and follow through on agreed actions. • Maintain appropriate oversight of budgets, staffing, contracts, suppliers and operational performance. • Ensure policies, procedures and employment obligations are consistently followed.

Decision Making

The position is accountable for operational decisions relating to the safe, reliable and commercially effective delivery of GJNZ services. The role provides direction and advice to operational leaders, crew members and relevant stakeholders on day-to-day service delivery, fleet readiness and the onboard customer experience.

Key decision-making requirements include:

- Operational service delivery and resource allocation decisions.
- Fleet availability, utilisation and operational readiness decisions.
- Crew resourcing, rostering and capability decisions.
- Safety, operational risk and compliance decisions within delegated authority.
- Disruption response, service recovery and customer impact decisions.
- Supplier, contractor and service performance decisions.
- Food, beverage and onboard retail delivery decisions.
- Budget, cost management and commercial decisions within delegated authority.
- Escalation of significant safety, operational, financial or reputational risks to the General Manager Passenger.

Human Resources Delegations	Senior Leader
Direct reports	Example: 7-10 (total staff reporting, approx. 100)
Finance Delegations	Level 3: \$5,000 Operating Nil Capex
Budget (operating and capital)	Example: \$10 Million
Travel Delegations	Yes approves national travel
Statutory powers	Nil

Physical demands and the nature of work

This role combines administration-based work with regular travel to GJNZ operational locations and work in rail, station, depot and onboard environments. It requires:

- Prolonged sitting and computer use.
- Regular walking and standing when visiting operational sites or services.
- Carrying a laptop and work materials between locations.
- Occasional work outside standard hours in response to operational requirements, incidents or disruptions.
- Compliance with site access, personal protective equipment and other operational safety requirements.

Your role may include other tasks suited to your level, as your manager directs. This job description shows your current duties. We'll review and update it with you if your responsibilities change.

About you

Knowledge and experience

- Substantial operational leadership experience in passenger transport, tourism, hospitality or another complex service environment.
- Proven experience leading leaders and geographically dispersed, rostered or frontline teams, including coaching, performance and capability development.
- Strong safety leadership and experience operating in a regulated environment with formal operational controls and assurance requirements.
- Experience managing fleet, asset, maintenance or infrastructure interfaces and translating asset constraints into workable service plans.
- Commercial experience managing budgets, suppliers and contracts, and improving cost, revenue and service performance.
- Experience delivering premium customer experiences and using feedback and data to improve service standards.
- Experience leading operational disruptions, incidents or business continuity responses.
- Demonstrated ability to build effective relationships with union partners, employees, suppliers and senior stakeholders.
- Sound working knowledge of New Zealand employment, health and safety, and relevant operational regulatory obligations.

Ways of Working and Work-Related Qualities

- You are a visible and credible operational leader who remains calm and makes sound decisions under pressure.
- You have strong customer and commercial judgement and can balance service, safety and financial priorities.
- You communicate clearly and build trust across operational, corporate and union relationships.
- You are practical and organised, with strong follow-through and attention to operational detail.
- You are comfortable using performance data and digital tools to identify issues, set priorities and track improvements.
- You value diversity and contribute to an inclusive and collaborative workplace.
- You actively support continuous improvement and encourage others to identify better ways of working.

Other Requirements

- You have a current and valid New Zealand Driver Licence.
- You can pass regular drug and alcohol screenings.
- You can travel regularly across GJNZ routes.

- You can work outside standard hours when operationally required.

Qualifications

- You have a relevant tertiary qualification in operations, business, tourism, hospitality or a related field, or equivalent senior operational experience.

**CREATING
STRONGER
CONNECTIONS**