

John Larkinson
Chief Executive



Chris Burchell
Chair, Rail Delivery Group

15 November 2019

Dear Chris,

Passenger Information Improvement Plan

Over recent years, the industry has delivered improvements to passenger information, for example connecting station information screens to Darwin to ensure screens, websites and mobile phones show the same information. And train operators have delivered further improvements on their routes, including as part of commitments in new franchise agreements.

However, information provision, particularly during rail disruption, remains a major challenge. Given this, we commissioned research by Winder Phillips Associates on the provision of information to passengers, including during disruption. This research has been informed by industry case studies and we want to thank the industry for its constructive input to this. The findings from this research is attached.

While recognising progress to date, the research report shows that there is no single, transparent industry strategy designed to deliver improvements in passenger information. There is also no current¹ agreed understanding of what good passenger information looks like, or customisation for the needs of different customer groups.

The purpose of this letter is to ask that Network Rail, train and station operators, work together under the governance structure of the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) Board to:

- publish a **Passenger Information Improvement Plan** that sets out how the industry partners will make tangible and enduring network wide improvements to the provision of passenger information, including during disruption; and
- revise and re-issue the Improvement Plan and report publicly on delivery against it **annually**.

¹ The most recent Good Practice Guide was written in 2015, the Approved Code of Practice in 2016.

Background – the importance of passenger information

The findings of the ORR Inquiry into the 2018 timetable disruption highlighted significant concerns regarding the quality of information provided to passengers to enable them to plan and make their journeys with a reasonable degree of assurance.

Large-scale events such as recent disruption caused by the hot weather in July and the electricity power outage in August have again demonstrated weaknesses in how the industry manages passenger information.

The latest results of the Transport Focus bi-annual National Rail Passenger Survey showed that 46% of passengers are satisfied with the usefulness of information provided during a delay, a position largely unchanged since 2014. Passengers' views in the industry's own survey indicate that only a third of disrupted passengers feel that the train operator keeps them well informed during the disruption.

Driving improvements in passenger information

Detailed findings are set out in the research report (and summarised in the attached Annex) from which we have identified the following seven overarching themes that an Improvement Plan should cover.

- i) **Strategy and delivery** - A single, transparent industry strategy to support delivery of the Improvement Plan, alongside strong leadership committed to ensuring tangible and enduring network wide improvement and an innovative approach to addressing barriers that hamper progress.
- ii) **Communication processes** - Industry processes that deliver appropriate, accurate and timely provision of consistent and useful information across multiple communication channels (for passengers and staff), recognising the need for simple language and adapting to the needs of differing customer groups and in a variety of circumstances.
- iii) **People** – Well trained customer-focused staff with clear accountabilities and responsibilities between and within organisations, and a defined line of sight between key roles and the delivery of positive outcomes for all passengers, particularly during disruption.
- iv) **Technology and innovation** - Identification, prioritisation and delivery of cross-industry IT enhancements and innovative approaches to specifically support the provision of good information to passengers and staff.
- v) **Monitoring and reporting** - Delivery of continuous improvement through structured assessment – including use of the Passenger Information



Measure² (PIM) described in section 9 of the report - with independent monitoring and reporting of core data to ORR to demonstrate progress against clear goals.

- vi) **Funding** - Clarity over funding to deliver improvement, including consideration of more innovative funding streams where financial constraints may hamper progress in current arrangements.
- vii) **Governance** - Enduring industry governance and leadership where cross-industry and cross-sector learning and comparison can occur ensuring clear principles and useable processes are developed, applied consistently and kept relevant as good practice evolves.

Next steps

It was helpful to meet with the RDG Board last week and to discuss the research and next steps. Thank you for the engagement in the work so far and the positive response at the Board. A follow up meeting has been arranged and we have asked Winder Phillips Associates to continue their involvement in this area and to work with you on behalf of ORR to support the industry in the development of the Improvement Plan and use of the Passenger Information Measure (PIM).

The Improvement Plan should set out as a minimum how it intends to deliver tangible and enduring improvements in passenger information in each of the seven key themes we have identified in this document so that passengers will see continuous measurable improvement in the delivery of passenger information.

We will review the Improvement Plan, and future progress against it, and consider what, if any, further regulatory intervention may be necessary in accordance with the requirements of Condition 4 (Information for Passengers) in the Passenger Train Licence and Station Licences.

I would be grateful to receive a response to this letter no later than **13 January 2020**. We would then agree a date with you for submission of the Improvement Plan.

² Referred to in the research report as the Maturity Model.



We intend to publish this letter, the Winder Phillips research and your response on our website after purdah has ended.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Larkinson'.

John Larkinson
Chief Executive

cc.

Andrew Haines, Deputy Chair of Rail Delivery Group Board & CEO Network Rail
Paul Plummer, Chief Executive of the Rail Delivery Group
TOC Managing Directors

Annex: Winder Phillips research findings

This research put the needs of different passenger groups ‘front and centre’, identifying good practice and potential shortfalls in information delivery. Included within it were case studies with four train operators including within each one engagement with Network Rail routes and an examination of information at Network Rail managed stations, and a comparison with the aviation and bus/coach sectors. We are grateful for the open and positive approach adopted by all those who participated in this work.

The key findings of the research are that:

- There is no explicit **strategic imperative** relevant to the provision of ‘customer centric’ passenger information that can be used and referred to by the industry as a high level direction on what the industry must aim to achieve and deliver;
- There is no clear **industry strategy** for passenger information provision;
- The day to day **accountability** for the delivery of passenger information does not sit well in current train operator and Network Rail organisation structures;
- There is no agreed definition of **what good looks like** in respect of the factors and components required to deliver good passenger information under all circumstances;
- There is the need to **map the entire information process** and supporting arrangements so that the importance of individual elements and their inter-dependencies and inter-relationships are understood;
- There is a need for greater understanding of **different customer types** and how this can shape the type of information that is needed;
- The provision of high quality information is heavily dependent on **suitable, properly trained and competent staff**; and

The industry needs to establish a **meaningful way of measuring** passenger information, which is then backed-up by an **independent assessment and review process**.