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Dear Brian

West Coast Main Line Capacity

Thank you for your letter of 19th December 2012.

The response to your requests for further work is set out below.

General Background

We have created a West Coast Event Steering Group (ESG) in order to consider aspirations from all Timetable Participants and funders for utilisation of the available capacity on the West Coast Main Line. This group's work is expected to be substantially complete in early 2014.

In addition, a North of England Industry Plan Group (IPG) is iterating infrastructure design for components of the Northern Hub, North West Electrification and Trans-Pennine Electrification programmes with their associated indicative train service outputs. Its work is expected to be substantially complete by early 2014.

The deadlines requested for Stage 3 of the work requested by ORR don't fit neatly with the timelines for the WCML ESG, the North of England Industry Planning Group (IPG) and North of England ESG. However, we understand the decisions that ORR is required to make in more pressing timeframes and we are aiming to provide as much granularity as possible to assist you in that decision making. This letter explains more about how we intend to do so.



West Coast ESG

Outline timescales for comprehensive consideration of all the issues for the West Coast ESG were prepared and presented for discussion at the first meeting of the West Coast ESG on 4th February 2013. The geographical scope has still to be determined. This work also includes a requirement for a fair degree of 'back to basics' work including a review of existing Timetable Planning Rules (TPRs) and Sectional Running Times (SRTs). The timeline is intended to be as follows:

- Definition of scope (geography and disciplines) agreed at February meeting.
- Definition of outputs February 2013 – May 2013.
- Option selection March 2013 – February 2014.
- Single option development March 2014 – December 2014.

Network Rail fully expects this work to be complex and the timeline reflects this. The initial timeline shows that this work, to be properly undertaken, is expected to take close to 24 months. There may be some opportunity to complete this earlier but this is fully dependant on the number and complexity of aspirations and issues raised by Timetable Participants through the ESG process.

The proposals of the franchise owner, Alliance and others that are declared through the ESG will be fully considered, together with the impact of the proposed services on operability, maintainability, performance and safety, and the link to other projects. The capacity, cost and performance trade-off will also be considered, so that a fully informed industry capacity solution is proposed.

North of England IPG

It is important to note that 'Indicative Train Service Specifications' for both the December 2016 & December 2018 Timetables have been developed and agreed by the Network Rail led Industry Planning Group (IPG). These define sample outputs that the government is funding. They have been used as the base to develop draft strategies for rolling stock, depots and traincrew, together with various sample options for a timetable, etc. These will need to be modelled to assess that the proposed use of capacity delivers robust performance and will then be used to define the possible infrastructure configuration states needed to deliver it. There is still much uncertainty over what that final infrastructure will look like, and the ITSSs associated with each configuration state. (Note: Timetable Participants (including Alliance Rail) and the DfT are members of the IPG).

The North of England IPG is not likely to agree the final infrastructure configuration state for the Manchester Area until some point in early 2014. This requires the Northern Hub outputs that funders are paying for and the benefits arising from North West and Trans-Pennine Electrification to be fully understood. This will be followed

by delivery of a North of England ESG. This means that there are a significant number of unknowns in the Manchester Area. We don't expect these issues to be fully understood by the time that the Stage 3 work is complete and therefore have had to make some assumptions in our work.

The December 2016 Timetable is a stepping stone towards the December 2018 Timetable, which is expected to incorporate the full Northern Hub outputs.

In the context of the background outlined above, the response to the specifics of what is required at each stage is detailed below.

Stage 1

The final version of the West Coast Main Line (WCML) Capacity Report was issued on 20th December 2012, following clarification of a number of arising issues. This concluded that Network Rail do not intend to sell further access rights for high speed, long distance passenger services on the south end of the WCML for the December 2013 Timetable. We believe that this piece of work is now complete.

Stage 2

We commenced dialogue with Timetable Participants during the Autumn of 2012, as input to advance timetabling work to develop the detailed timetable changes necessary to deliver the proposed aspiration for an enhanced TPE service for the May 2014 Timetable. This work has now been put on hold, to enable us to first deliver your request for an assessment of the application for additional / amended services on the Trans-Pennine route.

We intend to undertake a high-level timetable assessment of the application from TPE for additional / amended services on the Trans-Pennine route for the May 2014 Timetable. We intend to use the same methodology adopted for the recent West Coast Main Line Capacity Report. This will determine whether the proposed additional Trans-Pennine hourly service each way on the route between Liverpool – Newcastle-upon-Tyne via Manchester Victoria, Huddersfield, Leeds and York could be accommodated, and identify the impact on other operators.

Our analysis will also assess the impact of the proposed services on operability, maintainability, performance and safety, together with the link to other projects.

We will work with the ORR colleagues and relevant Timetable Participants to agree a remit for the work and expect to provide a completed draft report to you by 31st May 2013, with a final report following by 21st June 2013.

Once the work is completed, we would welcome an early decision from the ORR on the sale of access rights to allow us to re-commence our original piece of detailed advance timetable work with Timetable Participants.

Stage 3

The ESG is the industry's accepted and agreed mechanism for delivering significant timetable change and we believe that the competing demands of the Alliance Rail and franchised services should be considered by the WCML and North of England ESGs. The Stage 3 work request potentially puts us into the position where we're recommending the allocation of access in advance of having a full understanding of what we've got to sell and may pre-empt the expected timescales for output from the ESGs and from the North of England IPG. Because of this disconnection of timeframes for the delivery of outputs, we don't support the development of the Alliance Rail aspirations in isolation.

However, we recognise that the ORR wishes to reach a decision in time to allow Alliance Rail to procure rolling stock should the decision be positive. ORR has asked Network Rail to report on the capacity and performance impacts of the applications by September 2013. To support you in this decision making we will provide a commentary on the capacity and performance impacts of the applications in the context of the uncertainty over the timetable structure and outputs on the affected routes.

This will include:

- A high level capacity analysis exercise which will identify the quantum of capacity that exists on the WCML and Trans-Pennine routes, and show what spare capacity exists on each.
- Analysis that will take into account known capacity enhancement schemes to be delivered during Control Period 5 on both the West Coast Main Line and Trans-Pennine Routes. Our report will describe the new or changed infrastructure capability and the additional capacity that each of these schemes is expected to deliver, both incrementally and collectively.
- A choice of high-level indicative timetable specifications, which describe the quantum train service that could operate given the known performance characteristics of the assumed rolling stock.

This report will also consider:

- The known implications of the applications from Alliance Rail and on behalf of the Inter City West Coast franchisee on the West Coast Main Line, both

against each other and in terms of their individual impact on capacity and performance.

- The known implications of the applications from Alliance Rail and TPE across the Pennines, both against each other and in terms of their individual impact on capacity and performance. This will include a high level review of aspirations against proposed sample outputs from North of England Programmes and identification of the remaining uncertainties.

Network Rail intends to submit a draft report to the ORR no later than Friday 30th August 2013 and a final report by Friday 20th September 2013.

Further Report

Once the outputs from the WCML ESG, the North of England IPG and North of England ESG are known, Network Rail intends to provide a more detailed and conclusive assessment to the ORR.

I hope that this approach clarifies what Network Rail will be able to provide and that this information will enable ORR to make the decisions required regarding the Alliance Rail proposals in the timeframes laid down.

Please do let me know if there is any further support we can provide.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Neagle
Interim Head of Operational Planning, Network Rail