

18 July 2023

By email

Dear Colleague

Transition arrangements for the ORR-sponsored Rail Ombudsman scheme

The [May 2021 Plan for Rail](#) committed the ORR to taking on sponsorship of the Rail Ombudsman from the Rail Delivery Group (“RDG”). In 2022 ORR undertook a public consultation on a new [Ombudsman Operating Model](#) and a statutory consultation on changes regarding licence holders’ membership of the relevant [Alternative Dispute Resolution \(ADR\) scheme](#). We concluded a tender process in May 2023 which resulted in the appointment of Dispute Resolution Ombudsman (“DRO”) as the provider of the new ORR-sponsored Rail Ombudsman scheme. DRO, as you will be aware, is the provider of current the RDG-sponsored scheme. The purpose of this letter is to notify you of the next steps in this process.

The ORR-sponsored Rail Ombudsman scheme will commence passenger-facing operations from **26 November 2023**. This aligns with the expiry of the RDG-sponsored scheme on 25 November 2023. The ORR scheme will begin shadowing the RDG scheme and concluding final testing from 17 November 2023 to ensure a smooth and seamless transition.

Alongside this letter, we have issued a **Notice of modification** to notify relevant ORR licence holders of the change to their licence requiring them to transition to the ORR-sponsored Rail Ombudsman scheme. The licence change will take effect from **20 September 2023**. **Annex 1** of this letter sets out the key stages of the transition process, which you will be required to participate in to comply with this new licence obligation.

DRO will assume control of the charging and invoicing of scheme members for their membership fees. More detail on the charging methodology and how this will be administered will be set out in the upcoming DRO consultation on the new Scheme Member Agreement. You should note, however, that the first invoice will be issued on **25 September 2023** and is payable to DRO within 30 days of receipt.

Yours sincerely,



Scott Hamilton

Annex 1 – Rail Ombudsman transition activities, actions and timelines

Dates	Activities / actions
Weeks commencing 17 July – 7 August 2023	Consultation on the (i) Scheme Member Agreement and the (ii) Rail ADR Service Rules and Eligibility Criteria , and (iii) Compensation Framework . DRO will email these out to members, inviting them to review and comment as required.
31 August – 15 September 2023	The final Scheme Member Agreement will be issued for signature. Signed copies must be returned to DRO no later than 15 September 2023.
20 September 2023	ORR licence condition requiring membership of the ORR-sponsored Rail Ombudsman scheme takes effect.
25 September 2023	First invoice issued by DRO to members for annual Rail Ombudsman membership fees, payable within 30 days of receipt.
October- November 2023 (specific dates tbc)	Rail Ombudsman to offer (refresher) training to members on how to access and use the Case Management System, if required.
17 November 2023	ORR-sponsored Rail Ombudsman scheme concludes final testing and begins shadowing RDG scheme.
25 November 2023	RDG-sponsored Rail Ombudsman scheme expires.
26 November 2023	ORR-sponsored Rail Ombudsman scheme begins formally operating and opens to passengers. All passenger contact channels will remain unchanged and unaffected throughout.