

THE OFFICE OF RAIL AND ROAD

234th BOARD MEETING

Tuesday 23 September 2025, 09:00 – 14:05

At ORR, 25 Cabot Square, London, E14 4QZ

Non-executive members: Declan Collier (Chair), Xavier Brice, Ian Dobbs, Madeleine Hallward, Anne Heal, Justin McCracken, Daniel Ruiz, Catherine Waller.

Executive members: John Larkinson (Chief Executive), Richard Hines (Director of Railway Safety).

In attendance: Feras Alshaker (Director of Planning and Performance), Fiona Bywaters (Board Secretary), Will Godfrey (Director of Economics, Finance and Markets), Liz Herridge (Chief Operating Officer), Graham Richards (Director, TfL Analysis), Liz Thornhill (General Counsel), Stephanie Tobyn (Director, Strategy, Policy and Reform).

Observers: Jo Cliff and Janice Prentice (RedQuadrant).

Other ORR staff who attended are shown in the minutes.

Item 1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Russell Grossman (Director of Communications).

Item 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. There were no declarations of interest.

Item 3 APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

3. The minutes of the meeting held on 22 July 2025 were approved.
4. A brief update was provided on actions arising and completed from previous meetings. Action 07/01 had been completed since the circulation of the agenda and a briefing on access rights provided.

Item 4 CHIEF INSPECTOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT

5. Richard Hines (RH) introduced the report, referring to discussions at the meeting of the Health and Safety Regulation Committee (HSRC) the day prior, namely:
 - The invitation of external guests Mike Putnam (Acting Chair and Senior Independent Non-Executive Director, Network Rail) and Priti Patel (Chief Health, Safety and Wellbeing Officer – Network Rail);
 - Progress made regarding overspeeding risk, after raising concerns with Network Rail's Chief Engineer;

- Work with RSSB to influence post-incident reporting in regard to Signals Passed at Danger;
 - A proposed amendment to the Employment Rights Bill seeking to exempt heritage railways from a restriction in the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children Act 1920;
 - The launch of Trainee Inspector recruitment; and
 - Regulatory deliverables, with constructive challenge from the committee around data and KPIs which would be examined ahead of the next quarterly report (December).
6. Oral update from RH covered:
- A workshop with Trade Union representatives the day prior, engaging on health and safety matters relevant to rail reform;
 - The Coroner seeking to resume the inquest in relation to the death of two track workers (Margam), with a broad scope proposed which could include an examination of ORR's historical regulatory activities on the topic of track worker safety;
 - An upcoming Rail200 event on 28 September and the proposed operation of 'Locomotion 1', following an earlier letter from ORR to relevant dutyholders setting out statutory permissioning requirements and advice around health and safety risks;
 - That no judicial review had been received in relation to the decision not to grant an exemption from Regulation 5 of the Railway Safety Regulations 1999 to West Coast Railways. However, a new application had been received from a separate legal entity.
7. Following questions from the Board, further discussion focussed on:
- The Improvement Notices recently served to Leighton Buzzard heritage railways to take reasonable measures to ensure the safety of crossing users;
 - Level crossing risk, including relevant data and behavioural risk, as well as an upcoming inspection campaign; and
 - Progress by Network Rail in response to the intervention on structures and operational property structural assessments.
8. The Board welcomed the ongoing use of ORR's convening powers to progress industry matters.

Item 5 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

This report is redacted from the published version as time-sensitive and covering confidential issues.

9. [...]

Item 6 RAIL REFORM STOCKTAKE

Anna Rossington (Deputy Director , Regulatory Strategy & Reform) and Paddy Johnson (Head of Strategy & Policy Projects, via MS Teams) joined the meeting for item 6.

This report is redacted from the published version as disclosure is thought likely to prejudice the effective conduct of ORR's affairs because it relates to uncompleted policy development.

13. [...]

The Board adjourned for a short break.

Item 7 HOLDING TO ACCOUNT – QUARTERLY REPORT

Richard Coates (Deputy Director, Planning and Performance) joined the meeting for item 7.

20. Feras Alshaker (FA) introduced the report, referring to performance variations across the network and most notably, in Eastern region (which was, at present, conducting its own review into its performance). Due to mitigating factors, it was not felt to be appropriate to launch formal action at this time.
21. Richard Coates (RC) provided further context and referred to a review of performance in the Wales and Western region over the past 12 months. Further detail on this would be provided in the next quarterly report.
22. The Board further discussed the data on effective renewals volumes, expressing concern that Network Rail had changed its methodology for calculating such volumes without ORR agreement. Network Rail acknowledged that the management of change process had not been followed, with the matter escalated via a letter to the company.
23. **The Board noted Network Rail's performance as of Period 4 2025-26.**

Item 8 NATIONAL HIGHWAYS PERFORMANCE

24. Feras Alshaker (FA) introduced the report, referring to discussions at the meeting of the Highways Committee the day prior, namely:
 - National Highways' progress in implementing its improvement plan, further to the 2024 investigation;
 - Personnel changes within the Department for Transport, at Director level, during a period of development of RIS3;
 - Impact on resources of an increase in requests for information;
 - The Environmental Audit Committee meeting on 'National Highways and environmental sustainability'; and

The following bullet point is redacted from the published version as information which is otherwise thought to be potentially sensitive:

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25. Following questions from the Board, discussion focussed on:

- The improved relationship with National Highways and the balance of administrative burden; and
 - New items on the regulatory escalator.
26. The Board requested that further explanation be provided around the key performance indicator on corporate carbon. **[Action 09/01]**
27. It was confirmed that further discussion would take place on the funding of RIS3 with the Highways Committee in correspondence (due to the shortened timelines), with an update in the next Board report.
28. **The Board noted the contents of the performance update.**

Item 9 UPDATE ON THE ROLE OF ORR IN TfL'S FUNDING FRAMEWORK

29. Graham Richards (GR) introduced the report, and provided an oral update on workshops that had taken place the week prior. It was anticipated that a request would be made to conduct work between January-March 2025, providing assurances on TfL's baseline trajectories.
30. The Board welcomed the clarity of the report and the work undertaken in securing this new role for ORR, as an objective and neutral regulator. The work was also viewed as significant in the context of devolution and rail reform, with potential for further development of a monitoring role.
31. **The Board noted the contents of the report on the role of ORR in TfL's funding framework.**

Item 10 ACCESSIBLE TRAVEL POLICY (ATP) GUIDANCE REDRESS

Sarah Robinson (Senior Manager, Consumer Policy & Compliance) and Fotini Androulakaki (Senior Legal Adviser) joined the meeting for item 10.

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32. [...]

Item 11A INTRODUCTION: EXTERNAL GUEST

36. John Larkinson introduced the context, referring to the briefing slides on rail freight and reform contained within the agenda.

The Board adjourned for lunch.

Item 11B EXTERNAL GUEST: MAGGIE SIMPSON OBE (DIRECTOR, RAIL FREIGHT GROUP)

37. The Chair welcomed Maggie Simpson OBE to the Board and invited her to provide an overview of the rail freight industry and market, particularly in the context of rail reform.

38. During the session, the Board discussed, among other items, key bottlenecks in the network for rail freight, financial challenges, sector performance and growth, the development of new markets, rail reform, and ORR's access functions.

Item 11C REFLECTION: EXTERNAL GUEST

39. The Board briefly reflected on the guest's contributions.

Item 12 REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

40. Madeleine Hallward reported on the meeting of the Highways Committee held on 22 September 2025. The Committee had discussed, among other matters:

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 - Personnel changes at DfT director level and the importance of maintaining a focus on the RIS process (with an associated action to invite the new Director General for Roads to committee, once appointed);
 - National Highways' progress implementing its improvement plan and coming back into compliance post-2024 investigation;
 - Items added to the regulatory escalator and the evidencing of decisions by National Highways; and
 - A summary of the tripartite relationship review outcomes
41. Justin McCracken reported on the meeting of the Health and Safety Regulation Committee held on 22 September 2025. The Committee had discussed, among other matters:
- External guests Mike Putnam (Acting Chair and Senior Independent Non-Executive Director, Network Rail) and Priti Patel (Chief Health, Safety and Wellbeing Officer – Network Rail);
 - Safety enforcement decision-making and Board engagement. A committee recommendation to amend board procedure rule 55 would be presented to the Board as a reserved matter for decision;
 - Lessons learned and progress on an action plan of previous investigations;
 - The biannual Channel Tunnel health and safety performance update (which had also been circulated to the Board), where concerns around project and risk management had been raised.

Item 13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

42. The Chair expressed his thanks to Justin McCracken for his extended service to the Board, noting it was his final meeting as a Non-Executive Director. Anne Heal would take up the role of Deputy Chair.

43. The Board noted the dates of the next meetings and items below the line, namely: the Board forward programme and committee minutes approved since the last meeting.
44. The Chair provided a brief update regarding ongoing NED recruitment and a recent meeting with the DfT Permanent Secretary.

Item 14 REFLECTION ON THE MEETING

45. Following the departure of the Executive in attendance, the Non-Executive Board Members then evaluated the effectiveness of the meeting.
46. The Chair informed the Non-Executive Directors that the next regional visit of the Board (in November) would take place in Leeds.

Meeting end: 2.15pm
Approved: 21 October 2025