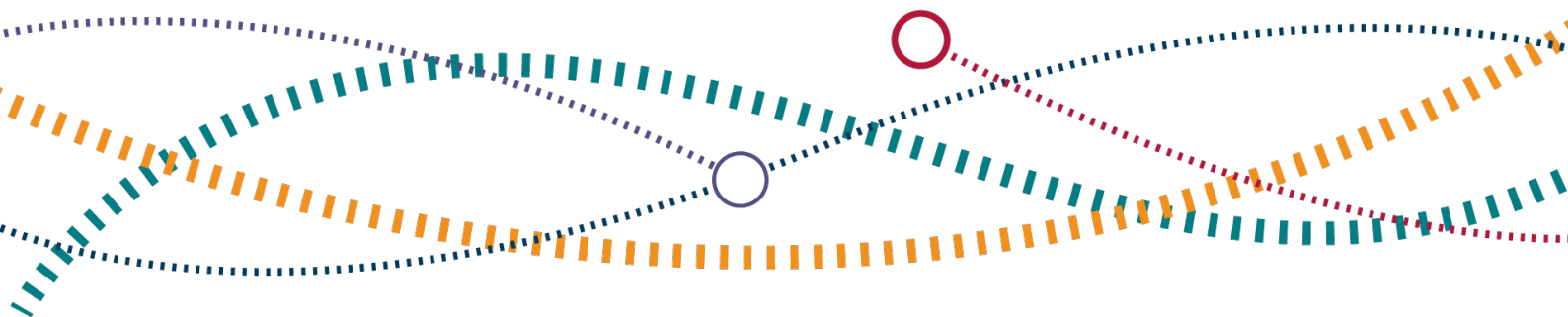




Access rights planning and use factsheet

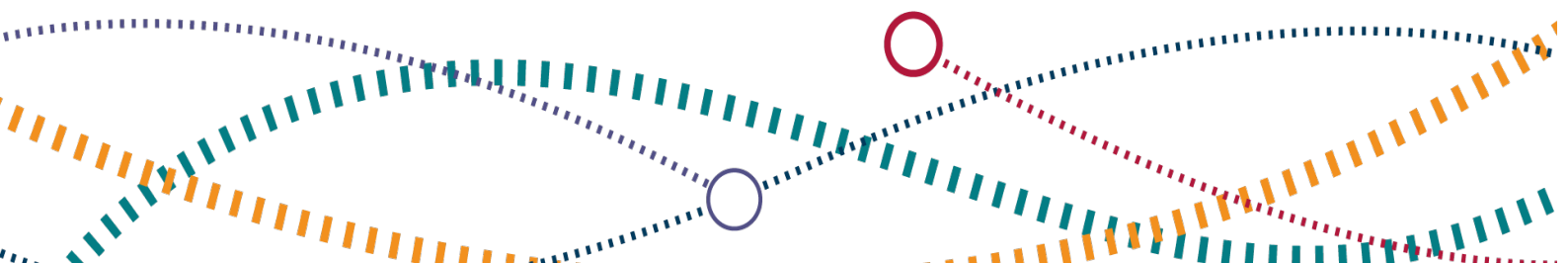
Principal Change Date (PCD) on 14 December 2025

27 February 2026



1. Key Messages

- Passenger train operators made 90 applications for capacity use (track access) for the December 2025 timetable change date (PCD 2025) to deliver improved or continued services. ORR assessed and approved these applications ahead of the timetable change to provide certainty to operators and passengers.
- Network Rail could not agree access for 46 (out of 90) **passenger** applications, containing 540 rights (approximating to train services). These 'disputed' requests for capacity were part of or related to the [competing applications process](#) and were submitted in 2024.
- The remaining 44 (out of 90) passenger applications were supported by Network Rail. 21 applications were submitted for access to the network after the point at which passengers should be able to buy tickets (less than 12 weeks before services start in the timetable, 'D12'). This risks services not having the rights to use the network so passengers cannot access those services.
- There was an increase in reliance on the ORR general approval provision to ensure some services could operate. This should be used to make small-scale changes, rather than changes at late notice. Operators making use of this provision were West Midlands Trains, Transport for Wales and TransPennine.
- As of 10 January 2026, passenger operators planned to use 88% of the total contracted rights (capacity) allocated in the period since the PCD 2025 timetable change.
- West Midlands Trains and Hull Trains continued to have lower rights usage (in terms of services planned and ran). We expect these operators to work with Network Rail to ensure their contracts accurately reflect the rights required.
- Two of the operators that had the highest planned rights usage changed. Previously the "top three" was Chiltern, Greater Anglia and c2c. It is now TransPennine, GTS (Elizabeth Line) and c2c. These operators should also work with Network Rail to ensure their contracts accurately reflect the rights required.
- Applications increased by operators to secure rights for services already running, remove unused rights and correct errors in contracts. This was especially prevalent for West Midlands Trains, TransPennine and Transport for Wales.



- ORR directed 27 [disputed freight applications](#), a total of **1014** individual rights (approximating to freight trains), ahead of the PCD 2025 timetable change. The ORR directions mostly increased the priority of freight capacity use, providing operators a greater level of assurance to plan their businesses after an extended period of uncertainty.
- Between May and December 2025 (SCD and PCD 2025), ORR approved the amendment of station and depot access agreements to enable nationalisation of First MTR South Western Trains Limited, First Trenitalia c2c Limited and Transport UK East Anglia Limited. This enabled the Secretary of State sponsored transfer scheme to proceed to timeline.
- The timetable monitoring production data published by ORR is useful for comparing when operators had access rights in place against when Network Rail offered the timetable to industry at D26 (26 weeks before the timetable change). The data from PCD 2025 will be on ORR's website on 27 February 2026 [here](#).

2. Context

Overview

The regulatory access dashboard provides management information on access rights planning and use. It includes:

- track access applications made by freight and passenger operators of rail services in Great Britain;
- the submission and approval timescales for passenger track applications against the timetable production milestones of the Network Code; and
- information on the use of access rights by passenger operators.

ORR approves or directs the granting of access rights and monitors the timing of Network Rail and train operators' applications. It is important to compare the time when an application is made against the Network Code timescales because:

- passengers can have greater confidence that timetabled services will run because they are supported by a contract;
- an operator has a contractual priority giving greater certainty its related services will run as planned in the timetable; and
- the greater certainty supports better operational planning for trains and crew.

Network Rail is responsible for producing the timetables for passenger and freight services to run. The main timetable changes are made twice a year, in May and December. New timetables must be published 12 weeks in advance; this milestone is referred to as D12.

Train operators must have contractual access rights to use the network to run their trains. They apply for these access rights to secure capacity and priority for inclusion in the timetable. The [Network Code](#) sets out the process and contractual timescales for producing the main timetable changes. These timescales underpin the [Network Rail licence](#) requirement to produce a timetable “not less than 12 weeks” before services run, and also enable train operators to meet [their commitment](#) to make tickets available for sale 12 weeks in advance of travel.

ORR is required to publish the information contained in access contracts on the [public register](#). This factsheet presentation of that data provides a holistic overview of the

contracted capacity across the network and how it is used in the timetable by passenger operators.

Access rights dashboard

Data tables and an interactive dashboard associated with this factsheet are published on the [ORR website](#). Key definitions are contained within a glossary on that same webpage.

Currently, the data focuses primarily on passenger train service data. The access rights and timetable data contained in the dashboard is provided by train operators and Network Rail. The time of submission to ORR and approval is ORR management information data.

All the access rights in this dashboard were approved by ORR for PCD 2025 (14 December). It is valid to compare access rights from PCD 2025 up to the Subsidiary Change Date (SCD) on 17 May 2026. However, the rights data is most accurate at the beginning of the timetable period because rights applications will be submitted and approved after 14 December, thereby updating rights held before SCD 2026.

Competing applications process

The [competing applications process](#) refers to a higher-than-usual number of interacting applications for capacity use through specific locations submitted in May 2024. Network Rail was not able to agree any these applications meaning ORR acted as the first instance decision maker, rather than reviewer of Network Rail decisions. We determined the 46 competing passenger applications (or applications that were related) totalling 540 rights (roughly equating to train services) to take effect from PCD 2025.

Network Rail began providing evidence and analysis on these competing applications from the end of March, but the last representations were not received until October, after the D12 date for PCD 2025. ORR was still able to direct nearly all of these applications and the decisions are published on [our website](#). This included the approval of a significant number of additional services, particularly on the East Coast Main Line (ECML), for public service and open access operators. This enabled the successful introduction of the ECML recast timetable in PCD 2025.

Network Rail has committed to return to approving network access where possible, and we have publicly written to industry to communicate this. However, we also noted that some of the supported applications we processed for PCD 2025 only supported rights for one timetable period, suggesting that a return to business as usual had not yet been properly implemented. We will continue to monitor this into the new year.

Congested infrastructure

Between SCD and PCD 2025, Network Rail declared Congested Infrastructure in five locations:

- two in North West & Central region for the Weaver Feeding Area and the Willenhall Feeding Area on 26 November; and

three for different areas of the ECML on 14 December.

Network Rail publishes all Declarations and Early Indicators of Congested Infrastructure on its website: [Information for operators - Network Rail](#).

As outlined in Network Rail's [Code of Practice](#) for the management of congested infrastructure, a declaration does not preclude any party from making an access application in that area, and any such application must still be considered and engaged with (and may be accommodated) by the infrastructure manager. However, it does permit Network Rail to set priority criteria for the allocation of any existing capacity. ORR will monitor capacity allocation on the affected parts of both the East and West Coast Main Lines over the PCD 2025 timetable period.

In addition to this, Network Rail published three Early Indicators of Congested Infrastructure in the same period: one in the Western region between Foxhall Junction and Wootton Bassett Junction on 22 October; and two in North West & Central region in the Crewe Feeder Area and Washwood Heath on 26 November. Unlike an official Declaration, an Early Indicator is non-binding and does not trigger any of the related requirements. ORR will be monitoring these Early Indicators for progress towards their becoming binding Declarations if appropriate and seeking more clarity from Network Rail on the next steps it intends to take.

Recent changes to train operators

The Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Act 2024 received Royal Assent in November 2024, allowing passenger train operators with contracts with the Department for Transport (DfT) to be brought into public ownership.

On 25 May 2025, [South Western Railway](#) became the first operator to transfer back into public ownership when its contract with DfT expired. DfT plans to return all passenger services operating under DfT contracts to public ownership by the end of 2027 and this will be done when each contract expires, as set out in their [press release](#).

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c2c was nationalised on 20 July 2025, followed by Greater Anglia on 12 October 2025 and West Midlands Trains on 1 February 2026.

The next operator due to transfer back into public ownership is Govia Thameslink Railway on 31 May 2026.

In addition to the above, the operator of the Elizabeth Line also changed on 25 May 2025, with GTS Rail Operations now operating these services. ORR approved and directed the novation of the contract from the former operator, MTR Corporation (Crossrail) Limited, to GTS.

Further information on individual operators, including route maps, can be found via the [Rail Delivery Group](#) website.

Further information

The access rights data dashboard will be updated in mid-2026 for the timetable commencing from SCD 2026.

For more information on dashboard terminology please view the [glossary](#).

For further information on the content of this factsheet or the regulatory access dashboard, please contact the Head of Passenger Track Access: track.access@orr.gov.uk.

3. Passenger applications for track access (capacity) from PCD 2025

Applications received

When Network Rail and operators finalise contracts, it indicates the level of industry preparedness and provides transparency of capacity use. This supports industry and passenger certainty over the length of the contracts.

Passenger train operators made or planned to make a total of 90 applications for the December 2025 timetable change (PCD 2025). 46 of these were submitted in May 2024 as unsupported by Network Rail so timeliness of submission is not a factor commented upon in this section. The remaining 44 were supported applications for additional or different capacity use (track access) which required ORR's specific approval ahead of the timetable change PCD 2025 (14 December 2025). Of these, seven were subsequently withdrawn, four before they had been submitted to ORR. [Data table 3](#) contains details on each supported application submitted for the PCD 2025 timetable change.

During the lead up to SCD 2025, several applications were submitted under Network Rail's [interim approach](#), for short-term, contingent rights for one timetable period only. This was because they included rights which were part of the unsupported applications submitted to ORR on or before 20 May 2024 as part of the [competing track access applications process](#). There were considerably fewer of these interim applications for PCD 2025 because ORR had reached decisions on most of the competing applications. However, there were some applications where Network Rail agreed with operators to prepare for the possibility that ORR would not be able to make determinations in time. Most of these were subsequently not required, and were withdrawn, which accounts for the figures previously stated.

The lateness of many applications and the uncertainty over some operators' requirements prior to the determination of the competing applications led to an increase in use of the general approval provision. The clearly-stated purpose of this provision is to implement small-scale changes which are of low risk and low impact to the parties to the access agreement and other potentially affected parties. ORR expects that this will be used to support industry efficiency in cases where greater regulatory oversight is not required, and where no other operator is likely to be affected and therefore need the opportunity to comment during an industry consultation. The general approval should not routinely be used to implement late-notice changes or for other last-minute purposes, as has been the case historically and in the lead-up to PCD 2025. Operators that notably used the general

approval for last-minute changes for PCD 2025 were West Midlands Trains, Transport for Wales and TransPennine.

Comparison to previous timetable changes

Table 1: ORR specific approval supported applications for SCD 2024 (June) through to the PCD 2025 by Network Code milestone* NB – four planned applications were withdrawn prior to submission and so do not have a submission date

Timetable period	After D12		Before D12		Before D26		Before D40		Total
SCD 2024	10	37%	17	63%	0	0%	0	0%	27
PCD 2024	26	65%	10	25%	2	5%	2	5%	40
SCD 2025	21	88%	0	0%	3	12%	0	0%	24
PCD 2025	21	53%	11	28%	2	5%	6	15%	40

*Percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number

The number of supported applications for PCD 2025 was comparable with PCD 2024. This reflects ORR reaching decisions on the competing applications, so Network Rail understood capacity use, as well as the operators and Network Rail recognising a shortfall in the rights required to operate their PCD 2025 timetables. This led to further supported applications being submitted for specific approval.

Up to SCD 2025, the figures show a marked increase in applications being submitted after D12, from 37% in SCD 2024 to 88% in SCD 2025. PCD 2025 was an improvement with 53% submitted after D12. The volume of applications and uncertainty on when some of the competing applications would be determined, will have prevented further improvement. However, we still expect operators and Network Rail to work to improve timeliness of applications for future timetable changes in order to provide industry and passengers greater certainty of services.

Application timescales for PCD 2025

ORR ensured all the submitted supported applications requiring its specific approval were complete before the timetable started. However, 21 (53%) of the applications requiring ORR specific approval were submitted to ORR after the timetable publication deadline for passengers on 21 September 2025 (12 weeks in advance of 14 December).

Submitting applications for ORR to approve less than 12 weeks before the timetable starts, and services run, means that those services are at risk of not having contractual rights in

place. This could negatively impact on operator train or crew planning and on passengers who have bought tickets in advance, reducing confidence in the timetable. This continues a trend shown since ORR started publishing its monitoring information in PCD 2023. In part, this was because of delays in the determination of the competing applications process in May 2024, caused in turn by the late receipt of Network Rail's representations on those applications.

For supported applications for PCD 2025, no part of Network Rail submitted all its applications requiring specific approval before the 12-week milestone (D12).

- Eastern region submitted 10 applications for this timetable change. Of these, five were submitted after D12. The latest submissions for this region came from East Midlands Railway at just over four weeks before PCD 2025 and London Northeastern Railway (LNER) at just two weeks before. However, one LNER application was submitted prior to D40.
- Scotland's Railway had only two applications for PCD 2025, both of which were submitted after D12, eight weeks and three weeks before the change date itself. These were both for ScotRail.
- Southern region submitted seven applications for PCD 2025, with three of these submitted to ORR after D12. Two applications from Southeastern were submitted only a few days after the D12 date. This represents an improvement in performance from previous change dates, where most or all of Southern's applications were sent after D12. It is notable that both Arriva Rail London and Southeastern submitted applications for PCD 2025 prior to D40.
- Wales & Western region submitted six applications for PCD 2025, two of them after D12. The latest of these applications was submitted with four weeks to go until PCD 2025 by Transport for Wales (TfW). The remaining TfW and Great Western Railway applications were mostly submitted close to the 12-week mark. GTS Rail Operations (operator of the Elizabeth Line) was notable for being the only operator to have submitted an application prior to D40.
- North West & Central region submitted 13 applications for PCD 2025. Nine were submitted after D12. North West & Central had the largest number of very late applications, with one from TransPennine not being sent until under two weeks before PCD 2025 and others from West Midlands Trains and TransPennine being submitted within four weeks of the change date. It is notable that Northern submitted an application prior to D40.

- FNPO submitted two applications for PCD 2025, both from CrossCountry and both submitted after D12.

The [regulatory access dashboard](#) provides detail on submitted applications by Network Rail region and operators for users to analyse themselves.

Our monitoring has identified an increase in applications updating contracts to ensure rights are in place for services already running or for the removal of unused rights and as well as this, some applications corrected errors in contracts. This was especially prevalent in the cases of West Midlands Trains, TransPennine and Transport for Wales. Accurate management of contracts is important for the infrastructure manager and operators because it ensures transparency and accurate information on network use. This information can provide an insight into the amount of capacity used, or equally, potential capacity available for new services. It also underpins contractual arrangements on performance incentives to ensure that Network Rail and operators are financially accountable where performance dips.

4. Use of passenger access rights

Overview

Comparing the approved (and published) access rights by ORR with the planned timetable and the services which actually operated allows ORR, Network Rail, funders, industry and passengers to understand the use of the railway network.

We have compared the contracted access rights for each passenger operator by service group (how an operator groups different train services to related destinations) to the published timetable. This data, for planned timetables and services which actually operated, provide metrics on contractual compliance as well as the use of allocated capacity on the network. These metrics and usage data can be analysed through the online [regulatory access dashboard](#).

Following the [ORR determination on a Regulation 32 appeal](#) by Virgin Management Limited in July 2025, the affected passenger operators should now have carried out full reviews of the rights within their contracts and should be in a position to explain any discrepancies. We expect Network Rail to share information on the outputs from its planned Rights Review Meetings transparently on its website so that industry has visibility of this.

We also continue to engage Network Rail on the recommendation made in the determination that Network Rail review its internal guidance, published guidance and published templates to align with Part J of the Network Code. The recommendation also states that Network Rail should work with industry to ensure its guidance and templates are fit for purpose, that processes are clear and explicit, it ensures network capacity is used and allocated efficiently and that unused capacity is relinquished in an open, transparent and non-discriminatory manner.

At publication of this factsheet, our dashboard contains data for this timetable change from 14 December 2025 up to and including 10 January 2026.

- During this period, operators planned to use 88% of the access rights held in their contracts for the timetable which operates until SCD 2026.
- During the same period, 83% of the access rights held by operators resulted in services in operation for passengers.

The dashboard reflects the rights that were in place as of 14 December 2025. If contracts have been updated since then, these edits will not be reflected within the dashboard. The

data used for services planned and ran is based on Network Rail data from the timetable agreed at 22:00 the night before services run, which therefore includes Short Term Planning services.

The use of access rights in the timetable can be reduced by various factors including: whether Network Rail could accommodate the rights in the timetable; engineering works by Network Rail (particularly over Christmas 2025); industrial action; funder decisions on service provision; and train operator service decisions (particularly relevant for supporting the introduction of the new East Coast timetable for PCD 2025). These factors mean it is most useful to compare operators in similar geographical areas and/or time periods which are not affected by industrial action/engineering work to understand these factors.

It is important to remember that access rights grant the right to a slot in the timetable, not a specific time slot. Also, some operators may hold contingent rights which receive lower priority when Network Rail produces the timetable and are therefore more likely to not be accommodated when there are conflicts.

The contracted access rights in place from PCD 2025 onwards are appropriate for comparison against the planned 2025/6 working timetable (the period from 14 December 2025 to 15 May 2026). Timetable data for this factsheet is available up to 10 January 2026.

Accuracy adjustments

Most access rights are represented in the timetable by one train service. The following operators have train services which correspond to more than one access right: CrossCountry, Caledonian Sleeper, Scotrail, LNER and Transport for Wales. For these services we have adjusted the number of rights held to accurately reflect their use in the planned timetable and the services which operated. For example, one CrossCountry service has seven access rights, so for an accurate reflection of rights usage we mapped this service to one access right. The other adjustments are contained in Annex A below.

The accuracy adjustments mean that only the level of contingent rights, engineering access, industrial action or non-use of rights should impact on the rights usage reported. The ORR-approved access rights held by each operator are available to download via the data tables on our [dashboard webpage](#).

Rights usage

This timetable period has seen a shift in the operators that had the highest planned rights usage from those with the same in the SCD 2025 timetable period. The previous “top

three” was Chiltern, Greater Anglia and c2c, and it is now TransPennine, GTS (Elizabeth Line) and c2c. Although we might expect factors which influence the use of access to have a disproportionate impact on operators with a smaller number of rights, this is not reflected by the fact that TransPennine has the highest planned rights usage, since it also has a large number of rights compared with Chiltern and c2c.

West Midlands Trains, Hull Trains and Caledonian Sleeper were the three operators with the lowest planned usage of rights in the PCD 2025 timetable data. During SCD 2025, the position was very similar but with Transport for Wales having the third-lowest planned usage rather than Caledonian Sleeper. Where operators are consistently running significantly fewer services than the rights that they hold, we expect Network Rail to work with them to ensure contracts reflect an efficient use of capacity. Network Rail and operators can use a Part J notice or a supplemental agreement to amend their capacity use.

The majority of operators (17 out of 23) planned to use a lower percentage of rights in the PCD 2025 timetable change, when compared with SCD 2025. The remaining six saw an increase in the planned rights in this timetable period. In SCD 2025, 15 operators planned to increase the percentage of rights used, two saw no change and six planned a decrease.

There was a significant difference in planned rights usage from the last timetable period to this one for some operators, with Lumo, Caledonian Sleeper and Southeastern all showing a marked decrease and GTS, TransPennine and LNER showing a large increase from planned usage in SCD 2025.

Some operators, along with Network Rail, have an inadequate understanding of their contracted capacity use, shown by services not being reflected in their contracts correctly. Inaccurate and unclear supplemental agreements from operators for PCD 2025 required, in some cases, corrections with further applications. The most serious cases of this were by West Midlands Trains, Transport for Wales and TransPennine.

The data presented suggests only TransPennine ran more services than it holds in contractual rights (107%). However, this is not the case when the data is examined on a service group level. This shows the importance of industry understanding how it uses the rights in the timetable. To encourage operator transparency and improvement in information across the industry, we selected a three-week period (21 December 2025-10 January 2026) to analyse. The two sections below provide more detail on this.

Operators with more than 110% of planned or ran services against rights

Between the specified dates some service groups for the following operators show that they either planned to run or ran more (or both) than 110% of services for which they hold

the rights: Arriva Rail London; Chiltern; Govia Thameslink Railway; Greater Anglia; Great Western Railway; Merseyrail; Northern Trains; Southeastern; South Western Railway; TransPennine; and Transport for Wales.

In some instances, such as with Arriva Rail London, Govia Thameslink, Great Western Railway, TransPennine and Southeastern, these anomalies relate to disruption caused by engineering work and bus services being used where blockades were in place on the route. This can result in one train being recorded as two services because it is operated in two parts, despite its only having one right. Northern Trains also cited significant disruption as part of the Transpennine Route Upgrade as a factor during the specified time period. Additionally, engineering works and route closures caused Chiltern to have to reroute some of its services, which caused these to appear to be using more rights than it held.

Some other anomalies relate to the way the rights are represented in the contracts when compared with how they are categorised in train service codes, for instance in the cases of South Western Railway, Southeastern, Transport for Wales and Merseyrail. These types of anomalies may not necessarily mean they actually ran more services than they held rights for.

There appear to be some errors with the way both Avanti West Coast's and Greater Anglia's train codes have been recorded in the timetable data, which has led to some anomalies in its usage figures. We have raised this with the operators separately.

Great Western Railway stated that for special events, sometimes additional trains are planned to convey the load, and these operate under the template Relief Trains clause in the track access contract.

Operators with less than 60% of planned or ran services against rights

Between the specified dates, some service groups for the following operators also show that they either planned to run or ran (or both) less than 60 % of services for which they hold the rights: Arriva Rail London; Caledonian Sleeper; Chiltern; CrossCountry; Grand Central; Greater Anglia; Govia Thameslink Railway; Great Western Railway; Hull Trains; LNER; Lumo; Merseyrail; Northern Trains; ScotRail; Southeastern; South Western Railway; Transport for Wales; and West Midlands Trains.

We sought clarity from these operators on the reasons for low rights usage in some service groups. For many, this was due to engineering works and specific route upgrades, station closures, restrictions of use and blockades, infrastructure failure, or adverse weather conditions. One or more of these factors affected the rights usage for Arriva Rail London,

Caledonian Sleeper, Chiltern, CrossCountry, LNER, Lumo, Govia Thameslink, Grand Central, Greater Anglia, Great Western Railway, Merseyrail, Northern Trains, ScotRail, Southeastern, South Western Railway, and Hull Trains.

Caledonian Sleeper highlighted the fact that, as the number of rights in its contract is small to start with, a relatively small number of cancellations subsequently has a large impact on the perceived rights usage.

West Midlands Trains stated that it is currently re-evaluating the rights in its contract to better align them with the actual timetable, which should result in an improvement in its figures going forward. However, engineering works were a significant factor in its low rights usage over this period also.

Great Western Railway stated that there are errors in its contract and those of other operators from the time rights for services were removed due to Covid-19 and which have not been reintroduced since. This is being remedied in an exercise currently being undertaken with Network Rail.

The time period chosen for analysis also included the Christmas and New Year periods, when most operators run a reduced or no service and engineering works are often carried out, leading to a reduction in rights being used or able to be operated. This was the explanation for many of the operators identified in this analysis.

Figure 1: Planned services as a percentage of rights used: 14 December 2025 to 10 January 2026.

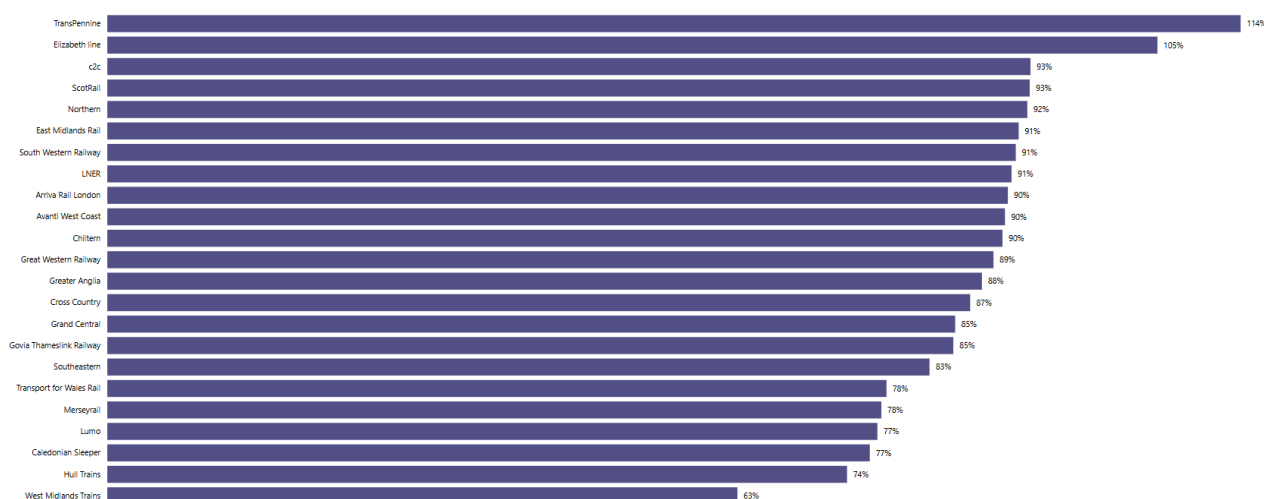
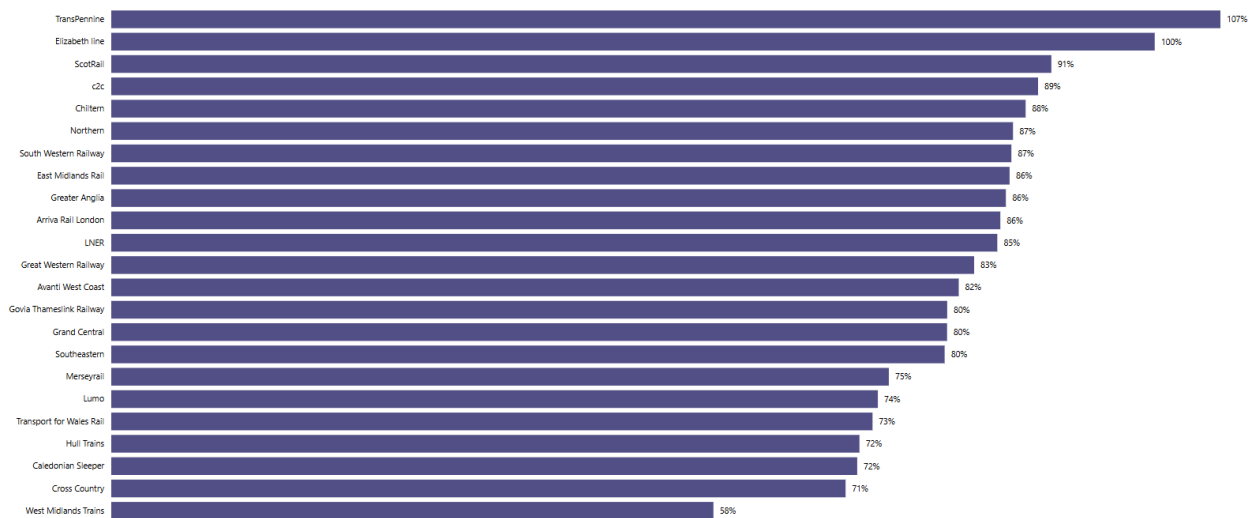


Figure 2: Services ran as a percentage of rights used: 14 December 2025 to 10 January 2026.



Uses for the data

The reasons listed above will impact the percentage of services ran. However, this data set is also useful to compare against the planned use of rights to assess factors which materialised after the planned timetable was established.

Together, the two data comparisons should support operators in identifying the impact of different factors on capacity use. It should also provide a starting point for discussion between infrastructure manager and operator on unused access or better use of capacity. Where an operator does not intend to use access rights in the future it could be a potential opportunity for other operators to use capacity differently. It is important that operators ensure that all their current operations have the correct contractual framework in place to provide transparency to realise these opportunities.

5. Other work areas

Freight

ORR directed 27 [disputed freight applications](#), a total of **1014** individual rights, ahead of the timetable change date on PCD 2025, which allowed operators to plan their businesses with a reasonable level of assurance after an extended period of uncertainty. This was part of the unprecedented competing applications process, which involved 82 applications from passenger and freight operators across the entire rail network.

In doing so, we considered industry growth and overall network performance. 67% of these rights directions converted contingent rights to a firm status and we directed new to rail business on the ECML. Most of these applications were from the bigger operators such as DB Cargo, GB Railfreight and Freightliner. We also received applications from smaller operators such as Devon and Cornwall Railway and Varamis, ensuring that fair access to the network is available to all access beneficiaries.

We are pleased to note that the freight industry makes good use of Part J of the Network Code for the relinquishment and transfer of rights between operators as contracts change between operators, sometime at short notice. This is done transparently and requires very little regulatory oversight.

During this timetable period we approved track access extensions to almost all freight operators, providing comfort to industry for long-term planning and investment in a transitional industry environment.

Whether large-scale construction, minerals or niche operations, UK Rail freight typically replaces between **45** ([London short-hall services by DCRail](#)) and **129** ([Freightliner's jumbo services](#)) **lorry trips per train**, demonstrating freight's significant environmental and economic benefits.

Following the end of the competing applications process we continue to work with Network Rail and freight operators to ensure the contractual position is accurate in comparison to the operational timetable as Train Operator Variation Requests (TOVRs) are converted to firm rights. This process will be managed by the submission of supplemental agreements under Section 22 of the Railways Act and will help prepare the ground for the transition of Network Rail to Great British Railways (GBR), as capacity commitments will be factored into new timetable development and financial settlements on mileage will be accurate.

Stations and Depots

ORR's role under the Railways Act 1993 is to regulate access to stations and light maintenance depots by approving access agreements and any amendments to them. Depending on their nature, some new agreements and amendments may be automatically approved under a [general approval](#). Any amendment, or purported amendment of an access agreement shall be void unless approved by the ORR.

ORR has approved or directed (as appropriate) 244 amendments to Station or Depot Access Agreements between SCD and PCD 2025. 119 of these required ORR's specific approval and/or direction.

In addition to amendments to existing agreements, 44 new agreements were submitted to ORR. 39 of these were processed under the general approval, and five required ORR's direction.

The Stations and Depots team has supported operators and DfT to ensure that existing access agreements for access to stations and depots were amended to allow for capture in a Secretary of State sponsored transfer scheme. The operators nationalised between SCD 2025 and PCD 2025 included First MTR South Western Trains Limited, First Trenitalia c2c Limited and Transport UK East Anglia Limited.

In total, 41 amendments relating to these operators required ORR's approval to specifically remove terms that would cause the agreements to lapse at the end of the franchise. Where operators have opted not to amend their existing agreements, six new agreements were approved by ORR, each of which was directly related to the mobilisation of the DFTO operators who replaced the former franchises.

Licensing

ORR continues to issue licences to operators of mainline trains Railways (Licensing of Railway Undertakings) Regulations 2005 ("the 2005 Regulations") and operators of other railway assets under Section 6 of the Railways Act 1993. Licences help ensure operators are 'fit and proper' to run a railway - applicants must satisfy requirements as to good repute, professional safety competence, financial fitness and insurance cover for civil liabilities. ORR has also continued to issue licence exemptions where we consider, in light of our duties, that an operator does not need to participate in standard industry arrangements.

Between SCD 2025 and PCD 2025, ORR issued four [operator licences](#) to GTS Rail Operations Limited (Railway Undertaking Passenger licence and Statement of National

Regulatory Provisions, non-passenger and station licence) for operation of the Elizabeth Line, Locomotive Services (TOC) Limited (Railway Undertaking Freight licence and Statement of National Regulatory Provisions), DB Cargo (UK) Ltd (Railway Undertaking Passenger (Charter) licence and Statement of National Regulatory Provisions) and First Rail Stirling Limited (non-passenger licence) to support driver training in advance of commencing passenger services in 2026.

ORR has also supported the transfer of Train Operating Companies into public ownership by ensuring the conditions within licences originally issued to DfT Operator Limited in 2020 have been met in advance of the transfers taking place. These were South Western Railway Limited on 25 May 2025, c2c Railway Limited on 20 July, GA Trains Limited on 12 October 2025 and WM Trains Limited on 1 February 2026. ORR will continue to support future transfers to ensure services run by DfT Operator Limited continue to be licensed appropriately.

Annex A: Data sources and methodology

Data sources

Data sources include applications submitted by train operators and Network Rail to ORR; performance data supplied solely by Network Rail and data collated by ORR.

As part of track access applications Network Rail and operators submit documentation that ORR Access Executives process through the lifecycle of a case. This forms our casework data.

We have collated data from Schedule 5 of the Track Access Contract between an operator and Network Rail. This schedule sets out the firm and contingent access rights agreed between the parties. We have collated this onto a workbook and displayed the day and service group to determine how many trains have access rights on the network.

We receive data from Network Rail on how many services were planned to run in the timetable and how many services did run. We have compared the service group data to our Schedule 5 access rights data. We work with stakeholders across industry to quality assure this data.

Methodology

Most track access rights held in contracts across industry correspond to one train service, known as a head code in the timetable. This underpins the methodology we have used to create our planned use and actual use reporting within our regulatory information tool. There are a small number of operators where this is not the case and there are multiple access rights all tied to a single head code. In some cases, these head codes have an access right for different portions of the journey. Currently we are unable to compare multiple rights on head codes to actual train running data.

In order to present a more accurate reflection of how these operators are exercising their contracted access rights we have accounted for this in the data that feeds our model. We have done this by subtracting the excess rights and matching the rights figure to the head code figure. GTS (The Elizabeth Line) has multiple rights both Peak and Off-Peak. To reflect the service and usage, these have been combined.

The data refers to the working timetable period of 14 December 2025 to 16 May 2026 (inclusive).

Table 2: Adjustments made to base rights data, by service group, where required for comparison against planned and ran data.

Operator	Service Group	Base			Adjusted			Revised Total
		Weekday	Saturday	Sunday	Weekday	Saturday	Sunday	
Cross Country	EH01	343	333	253	125	115	95	335
Caledonian Sleeper	ES01	10	3	7	7	2	6	15
Scotrail	HA01	347	343	127	338	333	126	797
Scotrail	HA02	299	306	150	298	305	149	752
Scotrail	HA03	71	68	20	70	67	20	157
Scotrail	HA04	124	112	45	117	105	45	257
Scotrail	HA06	414	397	216	412	395	216	1023
Scotrail	HA07	191	191	78	190	190	76	456
LNER	HB02	104	99	85	81	68	53	202

Annex B: Related information

Data tables

[Table 1: Number of track access rights, by operator and flow in each service code, for weekdays and weekends Great Britain, biannual data, December 2025](#)

[Table 2: Total number of track access rights in each service code, by operator, Great Britain, biannual data, December 2025](#)

[Table 3: Passenger track access applications, Great Britain, December 2025 timetable](#)

Other related documents

[Dashboard glossary](#)

[Network Code - Network Rail](#)

[ORR track access guidance](#)

[ORR guidance on access to regulated networks](#)



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