

THE OFFICE OF RAIL AND ROAD

237th BOARD MEETING

Tuesday 27 January 2026, 08:50 – 14:00

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

Non-executive members: Declan Collier (Chair), Xavier Brice, Ian Dobbs, Lindsey Fussell, Madeleine Hallward, Anne Heal, Ann Metherall, 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), Russell Grossman (Director of Communications), Liz Herridge (Chief Operating Officer), Graham Richards (Director, TfL Analysis), Liz Thornhill (General Counsel) Stephanie Tobyn (Director, Strategy, Policy and Reform).

Other ORR staff who attended are shown in the minutes.

Item 1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. The Deputy Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting due to an overrunning meeting of the Chair (who subsequently joined at the outset of item 4).

Item 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. The following declarations of interest were made:
 - a. Ann Metherall (AM) declared a non-financial professional interest in relation to item 5 due to her previous access to confidential information concerning Avanti (as a Partner at the solicitor firm that advised the company). In accordance with Annex B of the Board Rules of Procedure, she would not participate in discussion on this item.
 - b. Madeleine Hallward (MH) declared a relevant interest in relation to ORR's highways functions. Through her role as Strategic Advisor on Public Affairs at APCO she had consulted for DP World (which own and operates London Gateway, in the vicinity of the Lower Thames Crossing). There was currently no live interest, but this would be monitored where appropriate.

Item 3 APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

3. The minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2025 were approved.
4. A brief update was provided on actions arising and completed from previous meetings.

Item 4A INTRODUCTION: EXTERNAL GUEST

5. John Larkinson (JL) introduced the context, referring to developments on rail reform and other recent areas of engagement with the Minister.

Item 4B EXTERNAL GUEST: MINISTER FOR RAIL

6. The Chair welcomed the Minister for Rail, Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill CBE, to the Board (via MS Teams) and invited him to speak. Also present (via MS Teams) was Richard Goodman, Director General - Rail Reform and Strategy Group.
7. During the session, the Board discussed rail reform (including the ongoing programme of train operating companies entering public ownership and the stand-up of Great British Railways), the transformation of ORR, Temple Mills International Depot and the potential reinstatement of international services in Kent, incidents on HS1 and in the Channel Tunnel over 30/31 December 2025, and mainline railway overspeeding concerns, among other matters such as passengers and freight.
8. The Board also referred to welfare provision for railway workers, further to a recent focus by ORR, and agreed to write to the Minister on the subject **[Action 01/01]**.

Item 4C REFLECTION: EXTERNAL GUEST

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

Item 5 CHIEF INSPECTOR'S QUARTERLY REPORT

10. Richard Hines (RH) introduced the report, referring to discussions at the meeting of the Health and Safety Regulation Committee (HSRC) in December 2025, namely:
 - Publication of the Nuclear Regulatory Taskforce report in November 2025, where implications would be discussed at a future committee meeting;
 - The all-RSD colleague conference held in Birmingham in December 2025;
 - Offers to successful candidates following a trainee Inspector recruitment campaign, who would join in February 2026 and be supported by a dedicated training team;
 - Appointment of a new SCS Deputy Director in RSD with experience from industry; and
 - Updates on the derailment near Shap in November 2025, with the Board suggesting it would be useful to include further detail in the next report on Network Rail's capacity to undertake required works in response.
11. Oral update from RH covered:
 - The series of fatal train accidents in Spain (where the Board expressed its condolences), with any pertinent updates to be shared in future;

- The start of the Carmont Fatal Accident Inquiry in Aberdeen;
 - The latest position on the strategic mainline railway overspeed risk intervention, including responses from – and collaboration with – key stakeholders; and
 - Incidents on HS1 and in the Channel Tunnel over 30/31 December 2025, with industry-instructed independent investigation reports due by end-March.
12. Following questions from the Board, further discussion focussed on:
- Redact the following two bullet points as they relate to proposed or ongoing enforcement action:*
- [...];
 - [...];
 - Network Rail's national tactile paving installation programme, with an update to be provided in a future report;
 - Drivers behind 'train operations and failure' (FWI data), with further detail to be provided in the next quarterly report;
 - Accidental fatalities at level crossings over the previous two years; and
 - The potential transportation of Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) powered by Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) on Eurotunnel freight shuttles, with a future update suggested on risk handling (via the regular Channel Tunnel update to HSRC).

Item 6 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Redact this report from the published version as time-sensitive and covering confidential issues.

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.

16. Feras Alshaker (FA) introduced the report, referring principally to the asset sustainability target (CSI) and that it was unlikely to be achieved. This would be monitored via the regulatory escalator.
17. Richard Coates (RC) provided further context and referred to the key messages and emerging issues, including national train performance, financial pressures on Network Rail, reductions to core renewals plans for CP7, and carbon reduction. Following ORR's enforcement intervention, train performance in the Wales and Western Region had improved. Early signs on

the performance in the Eastern region were positive following the December timetable change, but further analysis would be provided in the next quarter.

18. The Board further discussed asset management (with reference to structures in Northwest and Central region) and the risk to asset condition.
19. **The Board noted Network Rail's performance as of Period 9 2025-26.**

Item 8 NATIONAL HIGHWAYS PERFORMANCE

20. Feras Alshaker (FA) introduced the report, referring to discussions at the meeting of the Highways Committee in December 2025 and focussing on submission of RIS3 Efficiency Review advice to the Minister. Further oral update included that:
 - ORR would not continue the renewals delivery reporting to DfT, originally implemented at HMT's request, for RIS3. Enhanced reporting processes were now established as business-as-usual and provided sufficient visibility for all parties;
 - The update to the highways regulatory framework was not anticipated ahead of RIS3;
 - Items on the regulatory escalator were trending in a positive direction; and
 - Terms of reference had been published by DfT for the 'Independent review on the National Highways (NH) speeding enforcement issue', but ORR were not involved. A link would be circulated to the Board following the meeting.
21. Following questions from the Board, discussion focussed on:

Redact the following bullet point as it contains information otherwise thought to be sensitive:

 - [...];
 - Progress on autonomous vehicles (AV) going live on the strategic road network (SRN); and
 - The KPI relating to pavement condition, which was said to follow a similar pattern each year, and network availability.
22. The Board discussed – more broadly – the health of the supply chain for road and rail, reflecting on how relevant stakeholders might best be engaged and how this may be reported back to a future meeting. Links were drawn to ORR's role in long-term asset sustainability, as well as strategic considerations relating to growth and skills development.
23. **The Board noted the contents of the performance update.**

Item 9 QUARTERLY BUSINESS REVIEW 2025-26 – QUARTER 3

Lucy Doubleday (Associate Director – Finance and Governance) joined the meeting for item 9.

24. Liz Herridge (LH) introduced the report, referring to business plan commitments (noting where two targets had been missed) and workplace attendance data.
25. Lucy Doubleday (LD) provided further context, referring to the year-to-date underspend at the end of Quarter 3 and forecast to finish the end of year within target. The Board welcomed the active management of associated risks.
26. Following questions from the Board, discussion focussed on:
 - Request for additional CDEL from Treasury (due to changes in lease agreements this year);
 - The missed business plan commitment pertaining to train driver licensing; and
 - The Greening Government Commitment on domestic flights.
27. **The Board reviewed ORR's financial performance for Q3 and performance against its business plan.**

Item 10 UPDATE ON ORR REFORM ACTIVITIES AND NEXT STEPS

Scott Hamilton (Deputy Director, Regulatory Strategy & Reform) joined the meeting for item 10, via MS Teams.

28. Stephanie Tobyn (ST) introduced the report and set out the context ahead of the Board strategy day in February, supported by Scott Hamilton (SH). The Board welcomed the paper.
29. Reflection and feedback provided by the Board referred to:
 - Dimensions of change and how ORR arrived at the current state, including key event milestones, drivers of organisational design, and future choices;
 - Current and desired culture and values (with the recent people survey results in mind);
 - Draft ORR regulatory principles ('how we regulate') and system-wide interaction; and
 - Potential future ORR organisational models and structures, with particular consideration of non-GBR areas.
30. The Board encouraged prompt recruitment to roles required to support ORR's transformation.

The Board adjourned for lunch.

Item 11 ANNUAL STRATEGIC RISKS

Paddy Johnson (Head of Strategy & Policy Projects) joined the meeting for item 11, via MS Teams.

31. Liz Thornhill (LT) introduced the report, supported by Paddy Johnson (PJ), which had last been considered by the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting of October 2025. Reference was made to the horizon scanning

exercise, as well as refreshing the presentation of the register in future iterations.

32. The Board agreed a refresh was timely and that whilst the content was considered generally sound, cumulative additions had made it dense. The strategic nature of risks four (AI technologies) and six (Court or Coroner decision) was queried, whilst it was said that the wording of risk 8 (cyber-attack or digital systems failure) should be revisited.
33. It was suggested that going forward, strategic risks may be considered on a biannual basis at Board. The Board particularly welcomed the horizon scanning exercise undertaken and included in the papers.

Item 12 REFRESHER: LICENCE ENFORCEMENT DECISION-MAKING

Siân Jefferies (Senior Legal Adviser) joined the meeting for item 12.

34. Liz Thornhill (LT) introduced the report, supported by Siân Jefferies (SJ). The purpose of the session was to provide an overview of ORR's Economic Enforcement Policy and Penalties Statement. This included how the policy would be applied, processes and matters for the Board to consider when making decisions relating to licence breaches and enforcement action, the range of options open to the Board, and statutory legal processes.
35. Following the presentation, the Board briefly discussed stakeholder understanding of the enforcement regime, where requirements were statutory or founded in policy, and means of appeal.

Item 13 REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

36. MH reported on the meeting of the Highways Committee held on 15 December 2025 (with relevance to item 7 on this agenda). The Committee had discussed, among other matters:
 - The technical fault in National Highways' variable-speed enforcement cameras;
 - Reflections on the joint board meeting between ORR and National Highways in November 2025;
 - An overview of the Lower Thames Crossing project; and
 - Emerging key messages for the annual assessment of safety on the Strategic Road Network.
37. AM reported on the meeting of the Health and Safety Regulation Committee held on 15 December 2025 (with relevance to item 5 on this agenda). The Committee had discussed, among other matters:
 - The external guest, Mark Phillips – Chief Executive, RSSB, as well as future guests scheduled in the forward programme;
 - An update on RSD's regulatory excellence programme, some aspects of which would be considered by the People Committee; and
 - Outcomes from the 2025 risk profiling exercise.

38. Anne Heal reported on the meetings of the People Committee held on 16 December 2025 (informal) and 26 January 2026. The Committee had discussed, among other matters:
- Succession planning in relation to both SCS and delegated grades;
 - The Quarter 3 people pack and employee relations dashboard;
 - Results of the 2025 people survey, noting the level of responses relating to 'prefer not to say' and an intended engagement shift from 'broadcast to dialogue';
 - Findings of the TIDE report (D&I benchmark) where ORR had achieved 'silver status'; and
 - Chief Executive recruitment, following the announcement of John Larkinson's resignation.
39. Daniel Ruiz reported on the meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 26 January 2026 – attended by a new NAO representative. The Committee had discussed, among other matters:
- The internal audit progress report, including statutory permissioning (partial assurance) and IT follow-up (good progress);
 - The corporate risk register – quarter 3 (included below the line on this agenda), including risks relating to transformation and corporate health and safety;
 - A deepdive into the impact of digital systems failure on the railways (strategic risk 8); and
 - The timeline of the annual report and accounts, which would be influenced by NAO capacity to complete associated work.

Item 14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

40. The Board noted the dates of the next meetings and items below the line, namely: the Board forward programme, committee minutes approved since the last meeting and the Quarter 3 Risk Report (presented to Audit and Risk Committee).
41. The Chair referred to the upcoming staff conference (10 February) and board strategy day (23 February). It was also noted that the draft independent board effectiveness review had been received, with the final report expected at the Board's next meeting.

Item 15 REFLECTION ON THE MEETING

42. Following the departure of the Executive in attendance, the Non-Executive Board Members then evaluated the effectiveness of the meeting.

Meeting end: 2.05pm
Approved: 24 February 2026