ORR Business Plan 2024-25

Better rail customer service

Accessibility to the rail network and services for all customers, and in particular customers with disabilities, will continue to be a priority area for ORR this year.

Our work will include scrutiny of the provision of assistance at stations managed by Network Rail, which accounts for over a third of the assistance booked by passengers, and of the reliability of lifts across the network, which are essential for passengers who need step-free access.



We will review station operators' processes for maintaining and operating Help Points, so that

passengers can be confident they can request the assistance they need at stations, and will consult on proposals to require operators to take passenger views into account when considering staffing changes that might affect the way disabled passengers are supported.

We will test operators against the commitments they made in their Accessible Travel Policies and plan to increase our impact by developing a new approach to benchmarking performance.

We will continue to hold operators to account for better quality passenger information so that journeys can be made with more confidence. We will monitor performance against the Customer Information Pledges, with a particular focus on how passengers are kept informed during unplanned disruption, including information on rail replacement services.

Last year, we commissioned a review with Transport Focus of the experience of passengers on stranded trains. We will work with industry to embed the learning and actions from this, to ensure that Network Rail and operators focus on the needs of passengers.

Building on our interventions last year, we will maintain our focus on the transparency of the fees charged by third party ticket retailers and will review the existing Retail Information Code of Practice, including its status and scope to support retailers in giving passengers a clear understanding of the service they can expect.

Having taken on sponsorship of the Rail Ombudsman from the Rail Delivery Group, we will continue to hold the service provider to account for effective delivery and meeting contractual requirements for planned changes and improvements. This includes ensuring delivery of the Ombudsman's accessibility road map so that all passengers who need to escalate unresolved complaints with the service are able to do so.

We continue to believe that on-rail competition through open access brings more choice and better services for passengers.

Access to the network and licensing of railway operators will remain a significant area of work. We will carry out our day-to-day role of reviewing and approving decisions taken between Network Rail and train operating companies about use of the network, providing independent resolution where they cannot agree.

We will publish our annual review of the Network Statements where all regulated infrastructure managers must describe their arrangements for granting access.

We continue to believe that on-rail competition through open access brings more choice and better services for passengers. Early in the year we will report and consult on a review of our decision-making framework for assessing the economic impact of new open access services, aiming to strengthen our decision-making and make the process more accessible to applicants.

We also expect to consider several open access proposals throughout the year. We will continue to work with Grand Union Trains as it prepares to implement new services between London and Wales and we are working closely with HS1 and Eurotunnel to improve the transparency of their arrangements for access to their networks, because we expect to deal with applications to run new international services through the Channel Tunnel.

High-performing and resilient timetables are an essential part of providing a good service to passengers and freight customers. We continue to support the ability of train operators and their customers to plan with certainty, therefore will ensure that Network Rail complies with established industry timescales in producing timetables by the end of 2024.

We will improve transparency around the industry's delivery in this area by publishing data on our website every six months, showing our and industry's compliance with key deadlines for decisions about the timetable and access to the network.

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