ORR Business Plan 2025 to 2026

A safer railway

Our important health and safety regulatory role for Britain's railways remains unchanged at a time of transformation in the industry. Our essential day-to-day responsibilities, proactive interventions, and role in driving continuous improvement to safeguard passengers, the public, and workers continue.

We will work in a collaborative way with industry, providing advice and support as we seek to influence change. We will encourage feedback on how we work and how we can be more efficient.

We will continue to maintain focus on the types of events and risks that could result in **potential major train accidents** including:

- an industry strategy to reduce **overspeeding**
- looking at the **competence** of key safety-critical railway staff such as drivers, incident controllers and signallers
- understanding the causes of **trains passing the end of their movement authority** (including Signals Passed at Danger 'SPADs')
- managing **fatigue** risks
- a targeted inspection campaign on safety at **level crossings**

In the second year of **Control Period 7 (CP7)**, we will continue to work with Network Rail on the safety commitments in its Delivery Plan. We will look at its capability to deliver asset maintenance and continue to inspect its Modernising Maintenance Programme.

Occupational health, and the safety and wellbeing of rail workers remains a priority. We will focus on exposure to **welding** fumes, and on the control of **manual handling** risks, which is a major factor in staff absences. We will also collaborate with industry on **welfare** provision for railway workers,

including a national intervention project.

Extreme weather events and their impact on buildings and structures management remain a priority, with earthworks failures a specific concern. We will continue our extreme weather strategic project, including drainage inspections, where we now have good data on assets.

As new technologies and advanced digital systems become more prevalent across industry, we recognise that the risk profile associated with **software-related failures** is changing. We will drive a coordinated systems approach to managing digital safety and security, continue to develop our in-house expertise and carry out inspections.

We will monitor and influence **major new schemes** to foster a culture of safety by design, supporting the TransPennine Route Upgrade, East–West Rail project and HS2 as the projects progress.

Our focus with **Transport for London** includes management of its civil assets and risks from ageing infrastructure.

We continue to support and influence the **tramway sector**, reporting on the safety of pedestrian, cycle and bridleway crossings on tram networks, and inspecting operators' contractor management arrangements.

Our engagement with the **heritage sector** will include delivering workshops with the Heritage Railways Association on competence, level crossings, occupational health and use of the Risk Management Maturity Model (RM3). Our inspections will focus on derailment risk, following an increase in 2024-25, and the general safety of selected railways.

We will input on **industry policy, legislation and guidance** as it relates to health and safety. This year we will continue close working with government and industry to introduce a reduction in the minimum age for train drivers and then to achieve wider reform of the train driving licensing regime to streamline processes and reduce bureaucracy and costs. We will also conduct, on behalf of government, another statutory review of the Railways and Other Guided Transport Systems (Safety) Regulations 2006 (ROGS) to assess whether the legislation still meets its original objectives.

Our important **day-to-day proactive and reactive work** of inspections, investigations, enforcement, and statutory activity, such as issuing of safety certificates and authorisations, train driving licences and renewals, level crossing orders and RAIB recommendations follow-ups to

support how dutyholders deliver for customers, will continue across the year.

A large piece of work will be to continue to support the **Fatal Accident Inquiry** into the circumstances surrounding the tragic deaths and injuries from the train derailment at Carmont, Aberdeenshire, in 2020.

We will continue to take a **data-driven approach**, augmented by inspector expertise, to address sector-specific risks, provide visibility of our decision-making, and focus resources in the right areas. Our workplan for 2025 to 2026 includes learning opportunities for our trainee Inspectors and Inspector Assistants.

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