

Rail access rights planning and use, 14 December 2025 timetable change

This publication provides management information on access rights planning and use.

It provides management information on access rights planning and use. It provides a holistic view of passenger track access rights and can display how these are being used across the network including:

- 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.

The latest data includes applications up to the principal change date which began operation on 14 December 2025. Download the factsheet for more details.

The factsheet is accompanied by a Power BI dashboard and data tables available below.

View the glossary for more information on dashboard terminology.

View the dashboard, hosted on Power BI:

Page navigator				
All access: Overview of case processing timescales	Passenger case overview by region	Passenger case overview by type	Freight case overview by type and complexity	Freight cases by type
Stations and depots	Passenger and freight: Live cases	All access: Detail of case processing timescales	Passenger: Dec 2023 rights usage (schedule 5)	Passenger: Jun 2024 rights usage (schedule 5)
Passenger: Dec 2024 rights usage (schedule 5)	Passenger: May 2025 rights usage (schedule 5)	Passenger: Dec 2025 rights usage (schedule 5)	Passenger: Dec 2023 timetable services planned and ran	Passenger: Jun 2024 timetable services planned and ran
Passenger: Dec 2024 timetable services planned and ran	Passenger: May 2025 timetable services planned and ran	Passenger: Dec 2025 timetable services planned and ran	Passenger: Track access contract details	

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.

Access rights planning and use factsheet: 14 December 2025 timetable change

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Data tables

Table 1: Total Number of track access rights in each service code, by operator, Great Britain, biannual data, December 2025 timetable

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Table 2: Total Number of track access rights in each service code, by operator, Great Britain, biannual data, December 2025 timetable

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Table 3: Passenger track access applications, Great Britain, December 2025 timetable

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About ORR's role

ORR approves (or directs) the granting of access rights and monitors the timing of Network Rail and train operators' applications. Comparing when an application is made against the Network Code timescales is important 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
- the greater certainty supports better operational planning for trains and crew