

# Rail access rights planning and use, 17 May 2026 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 17 May 2026. 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           | Stations and depots                                    |
| Passenger and freight: Live cases                                           | Freight cases by type                         | All access: Detail of NR supported case processing timescales | Passenger: Dec 2024 rights usage (schedule 5)          | Passenger: May 2025 rights usage (schedule 5)          |
| Passenger: Dec 2025 rights usage (schedule 5)                               | Passenger: May 2026 rights usage (schedule 5) | 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: May 2026 timetable services planned and ran                      | Passenger: Track access contract details      |                                                               |                                                        |                                                        |
| Together we protect and enable rail and road systems that work for everyone |                                               |                                                               |                                                        | Last updated: 06 August 2026                           |

## Key messages

- Passenger train operators made 26 applications for capacity use (track access) for the May 2026 timetable change date (SCD 2026) to deliver improved or continued services. While ORR assessed and approved these applications ahead of the timetable change, the timing of applications and the duration of access rights supported by Network Rail continued to present challenges.
- Network Rail could not agree access for 3 (out of 26) passenger applications, containing 166 rights (approximating to 166 train services). The remaining 23 (out of 26) passenger applications were supported by Network Rail.
- Around half of the applications Network Rail supported provided rights for 12 months or less, while the remainder extended beyond 12 months, including some across multiple timetable periods.
- Timeliness remained a significant issue, with 20 of the 26 applications submitted after the date passengers should be able to buy tickets (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.
- As of 7 June 2026, passenger operators planned to use 96% 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” were TransPennine, GTS (Elizabeth Line) and c2c. It is now TransPennine, GTS (Elizabeth Line) and First Rail London. These operators should also work with Network Rail to ensure their contracts accurately reflect the rights required.
- Applications increased to secure missing contractual rights for services already operating and to correct contract errors, particularly from West Midlands Trains, Merseyrail and TransPennine in the North West & Central region.
- Accurate contract management will become increasingly important through rail reform, providing a reliable picture of existing access rights and network use to support future capacity decisions.
- Between 14 December 2025 and 17 May 2026 (PCD 2025 and SCD 2026), ORR approved the amendment of station and depot access agreements to enable nationalisation of WM Trains Limited. This enabled the Secretary of State sponsored transfer scheme to proceed to timeline.
- In the same period, ORR approved new access agreements for stations and depots to enable First Rail London Limited to take over the London Overground concession on 3 May 2026.
- 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 final data from SCD 2026 (and current data for PCD 2026) will be on ORR’s website in autumn 2026.

Access rights planning and use factsheet: 17 May 2026 timetable change

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## Data tables

Table 1: Total Number of track access rights, by operator and flow in each service code, for weekday and weekends, Great Britain, biannual data, May 2026 timetable

Published 28 September 2026

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Table 2: Total Number of track access rights in each service code, by operator, Great Britain, biannual data, May 2026 timetable

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Table 3: Passenger track access applications, Great Britain, May 2026 timetable

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