

John Larkinson
CEO, Office of Rail and Road

Via Email
26th June 2020

Dear Mr Larkinson

On January 8th I wrote to you setting out our approach, initial thoughts and several immediate commitments regarding customer information. One of those commitments was to provide a plan to improve customer information by June 26th, which is duly attached. Our plan will not be a surprise to the ORR, as since your initial letter on November 15th we have worked transparently and collaboratively with your team. I would especially like to thank Stephanie Toby, Marcus Clements and Nick Layt for their continued positive engagement and shared goal of making a significant and sustained improvement in providing the information that customers want.

Since our initial response, the world has had to, and continues to deal with Covid 19. Whilst the safety of our teams and customers is always our primary focus, delivering a safe, reliable service during the crisis has taken substantial effort and focus. Whilst this has had an impact on our ability to progress some of the workstreams, it has also provided opportunities to introduce new processes that positively impact information for customers, both during the crisis and beyond. A good example has been the National Rail Communications Centre (NRCC), which has played a pivotal role in supporting the provision of relevant and timely real-time customer information during the crisis.

Our vision for customer information is clear: "to provide customers with the information they want, when and how they want it". Our approach to developing this plan has been built on collaboration between operators, Network Rail, ORR, Transport Focus & DfT at many levels and across many disciplines, always ensuring customer insight is at the heart. Every assumption and intervention contained within the plan is underpinned by relevant customer insight, cross-referenced against a range of independent reports (including Winder Phillips) to ensure it will have a positive, measurable impact for the customer.

What we have done

In my letter of January 8th, we made 7 specific commitments. I am pleased to say we have progressed all of them:

- **Work with Winder Phillips on the Customer Information Measure (CIM):** We have proactively engaged with the ORR and Winder Phillips on developing their model and 4 train operators will shortly commence a pilot. The CIM is seen as a key tool to drive improvement, and success will ultimately be measured through customer reaction. We are keen to progress this initiative at pace with the ORR.
- **Present to Customer Board the business case for redeveloping the National Rail Enquiries website:** We have agreed funding of £7m to transform customers' digital experiences of NRE and the information we provide.
- **Rollout of a personalised information tool:** The industry is in the process of rolling out the Zipabout passenger connect tool. We already have in excess of 100,000 customers using the service and are grateful to the DfT for funding further expansion of the service with proactive alerts about crowding and information about social distancing.

- **Commit to change governance:** We have created the Customer Information Strategy Group (CISG) as one of RDG Customer Board's 4 strategic sub-groups; with a Customer Board member chairing this new forum. The group have taken accountability for this information plan and are enacting further changes to governance arrangements to focus on delivery of this plan.
- **Information quality review of National Rail Enquiries:** A new role of Information Quality Manager has been created and filled within RDG. The post-holder reviews the information needs of our customers by using insight and ensures consistency across channels. To support this, the NRCC now undertake a weekly 18-point quality and consistency check across operators.
- **Rollout of the one-team station concept:** The rollout of the one-team concept has been impacted by the current Covid crisis. However, plans for Liverpool Street and other stations including Kings Cross and Leeds are now being actively progressed.
- **Commit additional resources:** Both Network Rail and RDG have invested in additional resource to develop this program. We have sufficient resource to complete the tasks detailed in the response, which for the majority of workstreams will move us towards business case. A continuing challenge we face going forward will be resourcing beyond this plan especially given the economic environment we are now operating in.

Our initial plan is attached; it sets out our approach, principles and governance structure put in place for this programme. It secondly details the proposed interventions; setting out the customer issues we are seeking to address, the activities to be taken over the next 12 months and the accountable industry governance group.

What we are doing

Set-out in the plan are 13 work packages that are the key enablers in achieving our vision for customer information. The plan is completely aligned to our Customer Information Strategy, endorsed by RDG Customer Board in July 2019. These interventions and the principles that underpin them have been discussed at length and agreed by a diverse range of governance groups, ranging from Better Operations Programme Board and Customer Information Group through to RDG Board.

Each intervention has been validated as to the proposed impact for the customer by operator and cross-referenced against our target customer propositions. Our propositions and therefore measurement of will evolve as we iterate them based on customer insight.

Previous attempts to deliver significant and sustained improvements to customer information have identified many of the same issues and interventions as this plan. In previous programmes not all the recommendations have been taken forward or implemented. It is therefore imperative that core processes, core systems and culture are changed in order to drive a significant change in the quality of customer information we provide. We believe this approach, along with implementing the CIM and being guided by customer insight, will enable this programme to be successful.

We have started work to crystallise the benefits, timescales and costs of each work package in order for investment decisions to be made. It is our intention to continue to work collaboratively and transparently with the ORR during this phase.

Recognising that making significant improvements in customer information will take time, resources and funding, we have developed a number of 'quick win' interventions that can be delivered in a shorter timeframe, for example work packages 4 and 10.

What we plan to do

Most work packages in this plan will progress towards an industry business case. One of the key challenges highlighted in our initial response was funding industry initiatives such as these, particularly within the current franchise structure.

We have shared our plans with the Williams team, the passenger services team at the DfT and outlined where we will need their support. As a result of those positive initial conversations, we have committed to providing them with a detailed overview of the support (including financial) we require, the impact we believe our plans will have and reporting progress as a key metric. As part of the transition to the delivery phase that we are now entering, we will seek to formalise our working relationship on this programme with the DfT and would welcome the inclusion of the ORR in this process.

In summary the industry is committed to working together to achieve our vision for customer information. RDG, the operators and Network Rail firmly believe that we need to work in partnership with the ORR, DfT and Transport Focus to remove the obstacles, adopt an industry-wide strategy and most importantly keep the customer at the heart of what we do.

This programme remains a key focus and priority for RDG Board and we will continue to monitor progress and support the team.

Yours Sincerely,



Chris Burchell
Chairman