



Department  
for Transport

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29th April 2022

Mr John Larkinson  
Chief Executive  
Office of Rail and Road

Dear John

Thank you for your letter of 5 April 2022, I appreciate you setting out your thoughts on the 2022/23 timetable recasts for the West Coast Main Line (WCML) and East Coast Main Line (ECML).

I understand the complexity of these projects and the critical point they are at in terms of decision making. Please be assured that all parties are working together to ensure successful delivery of the timetable recasts and I have noted the contents of Network Rail's response to you. The Department will support both Network Rail and the operators to achieve this and I set out below the Department's position on a number of points raised.

### **West Coast Main Line Timetable December 2022**

As per [Andrew Haines/Jake Kelly's letter], Network Rail is working collaboratively with operators through the timetable production process and is confident of delivering a successful timetable change in December 2022. DfT franchised operators have received relevant contractual instructions to bid compliantly to the industry timetable production process timescales for the December 2022 passenger change date, progressing any access right changes needed in a timely fashion.

Regarding power supply, the proposal for the Bushey Power Supply Upgrade is currently being taken through internal approvals within Government which we aim to have in place by the end of May 2022. We believe that the proposal offers good value for money. Release of these funds will enable key possessions to take place later this year, enabling Network Rail to deliver Entry into Service by December 2023, with full project close-out in Summer 2024.

### **East Coast Main Line Timetable May 2023**

On 6 April 2022, the Department confirmed to the ECML Programme Board that the industry should continue to plan for the ECML Event Steering Group (ESG) timetable to be implemented in May 2023 subject to the necessary Government approvals.

This position has been taken as we believe the five issues raised by the Cross Industry Timetable Assurance Programme Management Office (the PMO), which recommended deferral from May 2022, have been addressed. Performance modelling for the ECML has been conducted, which shows an improvement in 'Right Time' (RT) performance and 'Annual Minutes Lateness' performance compared to the pre-pandemic December 2019 timetable, despite the new timetable having more services. We note, however the concerns about the modelled reductions in performance from those currently being experienced by passengers. There will need to be a renewed performance focus both in the operational readiness phase and actual operations. This is a key issue to weigh against the benefits in capacity and revenue that the ESG timetable will bring.

I am pleased to see that Network Rail has confirmed that the power supply issues will have either been resolved or mitigations will be in place to support full timetable introduction in May 2023, pending completion of the upgrades in 2024. I recognise the critical importance of freight operators being comfortable with the proposals and note that Network Rail has a clear workplan for resolving any remaining freight paths prior to the timetable bid date.

I also recognise that the key infrastructure dependency is the extension of Newcastle platform 11. Funding has been approved and, whilst I understand current plans expect completion in January 2023, there do need to be clear mitigation plans for any potential late delivery. We will wish to see assurance from the PMO that these mitigation plans, and those relating to other infrastructure schemes, are acceptable and deliverable.

We are working with Network Rail and operators to complete the required governance to meet the required planning timelines. I recognise the potential risks this could pose and that ultimately this may lead to a need to defer implementation of the changes.

It is critical that we ensure time is allowed for discussions with affected parties and other stakeholders to achieve the best outcomes that meet the needs of passengers. I recognise there are a range of potential risks and am clear that if we are advised by the PMO that there are material risk to the safe and effective implementation of the timetable we would be making a clear recommendation to Ministers to defer.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'C Bailey', written in a cursive style.

Conrad Bailey  
**Director General, Rail Strategy and Services**