

# *Grand Union*

Michelle Woolmore

Head of Franchise Management

Network Rail

Copy: Emyl Lewicki

Office of Rail & Road

30 November 2022

Dear Michelle,

Please find below comments on the letter forwarded to the ORR, dated 28 November, regarding the applications for directions for a proposed track access contract (TAC) between Network Rail Infrastructure Limited (Network Rail) and Grand Union Trains Limited (GUT).

I note your comments about the HS2 proposed services, but these are some years into the future and during the desired contract period are still only defined by an interim TSS. The Network Rail lead work for the WCML (South) ESG has shown that when working together the industry is more than capable of producing compliant and high performing timetables to meet a number of aspirations.

As you have noted, a number of existing services will be withdrawn, and with Phase 2a not expected to be completed until the mid 2030's, a 10 year track access contract is reasonable. I also understand that HS2 phase 2b (Crewe to Manchester) is still in the Parliamentary process and that the Golborne link to the WCML south of Wigan has been removed from the current proposals. This suggests that there remains some

**GRAND UNION TRAINS LIMITED**

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uncertainty about both the new HS2 infrastructure to be provided and the timescale to which it will be built.

However, it also needs to be noted that Grand Union's services are specifically designed to serve a number of destinations off the core route and to attract passengers to rail by offering direct services, whereas HS2 is very much a limited stop core trunk route service which requires passengers to make connections through a number of hubs.

At this stage it is also unclear as to the performance of new HS2 trains on the 'classic' network both in relation to their line speed and their other operating characteristics. We are aware that work is underway, (driven by Avanti's replacement of tilting Voyagers with new Hitachi IEP trains), to enable certain non-tilt multiple units on the WCML to operate at higher differential speeds, closer to or equal to current EPS speeds for tilting trains. However, it is not clear, at this time, whether HS2 trains will meet the required criteria and be able to take advantage of that improvement.

Grand Union will be investing in a new build train fleet which is the underpinning factor in requesting a contract for 10 years. While the manufacturer of the units has yet to be determined, I can confirm that the trains, once chosen, will have performance characteristics that outperform the rolling stock used to develop the current train paths. It is likely that our new trains will be of a type already in service on Network Rail and we intend to deliver trains that can make use of non-EPS multiple unit speed differentials, which will offer both journey time and capacity improvements. We will of course work closely with Network Rail if there are areas of gauge compatibility and route clearance that still need to be determined.

I note your comments regarding operational concerns in stabling and servicing for example. While we are as yet unable to confirm what those specific requirements would be, it is worth noting that Network Rail colleagues in Scotland have no concerns about the impact of Grand Union's proposed limited new service as outlined in its Carlisle-Stirling Report of 28 March 2022. The specific concerns you have raised will also arise for Network Rail from the proposed introduction of HS2 trains at some stage in the future.

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Grand Union is pleased to have been actively involved in the very positive way in which Network Rail and the Industry addressed the difficult issue on the WCML following the Declaration of Congested Infrastructure, and the significant and positive output from the ESG. With services proposed to be introduced from 2025 the issues raised in this letter are ones that we will be able to fully address as our plans develop and with the same co-operative working relationship.

Regards

Ian Yeowart -

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