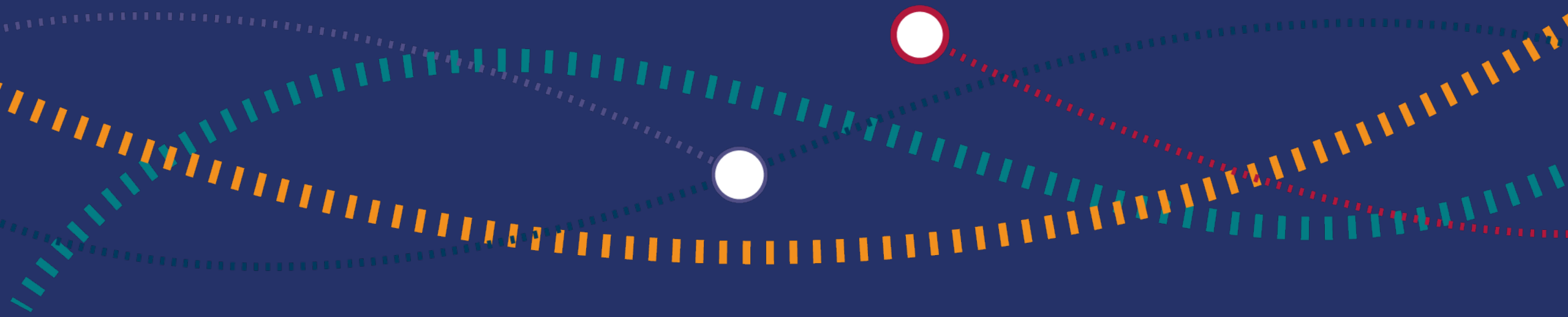


# A Year in Rail and the Track Ahead

17 July 2025



# Agenda



**Keynote address** - Ruth Cadbury MP,  
Chair of the Transport Select Committee

**Annual Health and Safety Report** – Richard Hines,  
HM Chief Inspector of Railways and Director of Railway Safety



**Network Rail Annual Assessment** – Richard Coates,  
Deputy Director, Railway Planning and Performance

**Annual Rail Consumer Report** - Stephanie Tobyn,  
Director of Strategy, Policy and Reform and Director for Scotland



**The Track Ahead for the rail industry** – John Larkinson,  
Chief Executive Officer

**Q&A** – Hosted by Russell Grossman,  
Director of Communications



# Annual Health and Safety Report

Richard Hines, HM Chief Inspector of Railways and Director of Railway Safety



## Network Rail

- Maintained good health and safety performance. Substantial progress made on overdue assessments for structures and dealing with weather-related risk, under focussed regulatory attention.
- Overall train accident risk was broadly consistent. However, serious incidents remain a concern, including 29 high potential risk events – mostly at level crossings. A freight train derailment in Audenshaw (Sept 2024) caused significant infrastructure damage, no injuries.
- Network Rail's Occupational Health team continues to lead a positive shift in the organisation's approach to health risks, though further work is needed on issues like management of exposure to welding fume.



## Mainline operators

- Number of Signals Passed at Danger (SPADs) continued to increase, although high-risk events remained relatively stable. Improving the consistency and quality of SPAD cause recording, including adhesion related events, is important to support more effective industry-wide learning and mitigation. An effective approach to address concerning overspeeding events also requires coordination between operators and infrastructure managers.
- Our updated guidance on Managing Rail Staff Fatigue received positive industry response and we continued work to understand and test industry's capability to manage digital safety risks.

## Non-mainline railways

- We continued focus on London Underground's maintenance practices for ageing building assets, particularly on water ingress, identifying areas to strengthen risk management. We also concentrated on their change management approach for the highly complex four-lines modernisation programme.
- We maintained strong strategic collaboration with the Light Rail Safety and Standards Board (LRSSB) and our proactive tramway regulation focused on two key areas – Medical Fitness of Safety-Critical Staff and Non-Motorised User Crossings.

## Policy, Strategy and statutory activities

- Delivered statutory work through health and safety permissions and approvals, including those associated with the transition of Train Operating Companies into public ownership.
  - Served four Improvement Notices and concluded three criminal prosecutions, including two involving trackworkers fatalities at Margam and Surbiton.
  - Collaborated with our economic colleagues and industry to review how businesses assess the [costs and benefits of health and safety interventions in rail](#). We identified important learning points to support best practice and improve consistency.
- 
- Continued working with the Department for Transport to explore options for streamlining the current statutory train driving licensing regime. A key early outcome (subject to a change in the law) was the agreed reduction of the minimum licensed train driver age from 20 to 18 years.
  - Invested in our own capability by establishing three cohorts of trainee Inspectors and Inspector Assistants, alongside strengthening continuous professional development of our qualified staff to keep pace with the evolving railway environment.



# Delivering a range of statutory work

**1,454**

new train driving licences issued

**1,257**

train driving licence renewals processed



**10** doctors,

**24** psychologists and

**4** training and examination centres recognised and added to our registers



**24** level crossing orders

**1** revocation order

**3** directions

**1** authorisation delivered



**5** certificates of exemption from the relevant requirements of the Railway Safety Regulations 1999 relating to the operation of mark 1 rolling stock



**38** mainline and

**4** non-mainline safety certificates and authorisations issued



Reported to RAIB on

**83** recommendations:

**54** closed

**27** open

**0** reported as insufficient response

**2** reported as other public body



# Theme 1: Keeping Today's Railways Healthy and Safe – Building the Foundation for Tomorrow



The responsibility to operate a safe railway every day remains constant. A safe and healthy railway today is the foundation for a better railway tomorrow. Fulfilling this responsibility demands focus, coordination, and sustained industry commitment.

## **Key priorities include:**

- Maintaining health and safety performance
- Clear accountability
- Consistent delivery and continual improvement



# Theme 2: Embedding Health and Safety at the Heart of Reform and Change

Safety must remain the guiding principle throughout this period of change. Change brings opportunity, but also complexity and risk. By embedding health and safety thinking from everyone with expertise into every stage of reform – from strategic design to implementation – we must ensure that transformation and change strengthens, rather than compromises, the safety of our workforce, customers, and operations.

## Key priority areas include:

- Safety-led transformation
- Leadership accountability
- Resilience through transition



# Theme 3: Enhanced Collaboration Across Interfaces: A Necessary Safety Leadership Capability



In inherently high-risk, complex systems, collaboration is not optional – it is a core leadership capability. Leaders who collaborate effectively are better equipped to manage complexity, align diverse perspectives, and expedite the adoption of technology. Collaborative leadership within and between organisations enables better decision-making, builds a stronger safety culture, and delivers more resilient operations – especially in times of change.

## **Key priorities include:**

- Leadership capability
- Greater alignment
- Partnering and cultural modelling

# Network Rail Annual Assessment - Economic regulation/Railway efficiency

Richard Coates, Deputy Director, Rail Planning and Performance





# Network Rail Annual Assessment



Although Network Rail missed the targets set for combined infrastructure and train operator cancellations and punctuality, the company reduced its delay to train services.

Where regional performance was poor, it responded to ORR's challenge by developing credible improvement plans. ORR took enforcement action to secure better performance improvement plans in the Wales & Western region and train performance has since improved.

- Cancellations of passenger trains reached record levels of more than 4 per cent, with train operator cancellations the dominant factor. Even so, we required Network Rail to demonstrate it has plans to address where its own performance was worse and we are content that it does.
- Network Rail's delivery against targets for running trains on time and its contribution to minimising delays varied across its regions. ORR took enforcement action in Wales & Western region to secure better performance improvement plans and we required Network Rail to develop a better performance improvement plan in its Eastern region, which we will be closely monitoring.
- Freight performance improved and Network Rail only narrowly missed the national target set for freight cancellations.

More than

4%

of trains cancelled during the year

84%

of trains on-time within 3 minutes



# Network Rail Annual Assessment



**Network Rail delivered its efficiency and infrastructure renewals plans for the year but constrained funding, some delivery challenges and inflation are putting pressure on future delivery.**

- Network Rail delivered £325 million of efficiency in Year 1. This was supported by its delivery of overall renewals volumes for the year.
- Network Rail needs to carefully manage future delivery of efficiency and core renewals in a constrained funding environment impacted by inflationary pressures, some Network Rail driven cost overruns and a continued funding gap.



**£325 million**  
of efficiency delivered



# Network Rail Annual Assessment



**Network Rail delivered stable asset reliability but needs to minimise future risks and continue to engage constructively on ORR concerns over its management of structures and buildings.**

- Overall, railway asset reliability remained steady across the network during the year. But risks to future asset reliability, including from constrained funding, need to be carefully managed.
- Network Rail has not delivered structures and buildings examinations and assessments in line with its standards. It needs to continue to engage constructively with ORR concerns in this area.





# Network Rail Annual Assessment



**Network Rail saw an unprecedented volume of access applications this year from operators. However, its decision making was not timely and it needs to speed up its decisions on access to the network.**

- We wrote to Network Rail's System Operator on several occasions during the year seeking improvements to its plans for allocating capacity on the railway.
- We have required it to improve the pace at which it makes decisions on applications for long-term access to the East and West Coast Main Lines to remove barriers to passenger and freight operators to delivering efficiency and growth.
- We are beginning to see the benefits of this intervention as Network Rail has improved its responses to access applications in recent months.



# Key areas of focus for 2025-26



- Continuing to monitor Network Rail's delivery of train service performance, including delivery of performance improvement plans
- Resetting of passenger train performance expectations for the final three years of control period 7



- Ongoing scrutiny of how Network Rail is prioritising expenditure in response to pressures



- Increasing our focus on Network Rail's delivery of maintenance activity
- Monitoring Network Rail's progress in addressing concerns over structures examinations and assessments



- Continuing focus on Network Rail providing high quality representations on access applications



# Annual Rail Consumer Report

Stephanie Tobyn, Director of Strategy, Policy and Reform, and Director for Scotland



# Review of Revenue Protection Practices

This review was commissioned by the Secretary of State following media stories around operators appearing to take disproportionate action against passengers which led, in some cases, to prosecution. But equally fare evasion is a crime that costs the railway hundreds of millions of pounds every year, denying operators legitimate revenue and undermining fare-paying passengers' sense of fairness in the system.

## Recommendation 1: Make buying the right ticket simpler and easier

**Short / medium-term** – Provide plain English explanations of ticket types, validity and restrictions.

**Medium / longer term** – Redesign ticketing systems and review policies to eliminate known points of confusion (such as on restrictions relevant to the use of railcards).

## Recommendation 2: Strengthen consistency in how passengers are treated when ticket issues arise

**Short / medium term** – Adopt consistent principles as part of a new governance framework

**Short / medium term** – Identify and adopt best practice in encouraging behavioural change.

**Medium / longer-term** – Improve data sharing across the industry to support identification of persistent offenders.



# Review of Revenue Protection Practices

## **Recommendation 3: Introduce greater consistency and fairness in the use of prosecutions**

- **Short-term** – Introduce a consistent test for prosecution, including guidance on weighing public interest factors in favour of (or against) prosecution.
- **Short-term** – Develop best practice in the use of out of court settlements, including the basis of calculating the settlement fee.
- **Longer-term** – Undertake a wider review of revenue protection legislation to simplify, including the use of railway byelaws.

## **Recommendation 4: Make information on revenue protection easy to access and understand**

- **Short/medium term** – Review and improve passenger-facing revenue protection information to ensure it is accessible, clear, and easy to understand.

## **Recommendation 5: Greater coordination, oversight and transparency of revenue protection activity**

- **Short-term** – Establish an appropriate forum or body tasked with identifying and promoting best practice across all aspects of revenue protection policy and enforcement
- **Medium-term** – Create a shared revenue protection dataset with consistent measures to support long-term oversight, to improve transparency and help the industry make the best use of its resources.

# Failed Passenger Assistance

Redress is a way that operators can seek to put things right for a passenger where they have failed to deliver assistance and the passenger has raised a complaint about the service.

We are consulting on amending our Accessible Travel Policy (ATP) Guidance to require all operators to determine appropriate redress on a case-by-case basis, as opposed to capping redress to the price of the ticket.



# Accessibility More Generally



- Communication between stations
- Focus on localised improvement – Northern
- Benchmarking performance
- Ombudsman:
  - Website upgrade
  - Whatsapp channel
  - Better signposting with vulnerable and low awareness groups

# Key Areas of Focus for 2025-26



**Revenue protection** – response from Government on the proposals made and next steps.



**Assistance** – publish a first report benchmarking operators' performance in delivering assistance & publish response to the assistance redress consultation..



**Assistance** – support operators with any proposals to move to alternative approaches to communications between stations on handover – electronic handovers.



**Retailing** - review the existing 'industry' Code of Practice on retail information to provide clarity to retailers on their obligations to passengers;



**Stranded trains** – reconvene the industry to consider passenger safety and welfare, and ensure that the industry is set-up to maintain momentum on work in this area;



**Complaints** - continue to work closely with the Rail Ombudsman to drive forwards upgrades to the service.



# The Track Ahead

John Larkinson, Chief Executive Officer





# Q&A panel

Hosted by Russell Grossman, Director of Communications



Thanks for joining us. Slides can be found at  
[www.orr.gov.uk/yearinrail](http://www.orr.gov.uk/yearinrail)

If you have any questions, talk to one of the speakers  
after the event or email us at  
[stakeholder.team@orr.gov.uk](mailto:stakeholder.team@orr.gov.uk)

A decorative graphic is positioned in the lower half of the slide. It consists of several overlapping, curved dashed lines in orange, teal, and red. Three solid white circles are placed at various points along these lines: one on a red line near the top right, one on a teal line near the bottom center, and one on an orange line near the bottom left.