

**Jonathan Rodgers**  
**Senior Executive**

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29 July 2025

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Dear Jayne and Rob

**202<sup>nd</sup> Supplemental Agreement to the Track Access Contract between Network Rail Infrastructure Limited (Network Rail) and First Greater Western Limited (trading as Great Western Railway (GWR)) dated 4 March 2016**

1. Today, we issued directions under section 22A of the Railways Act 1993 (the Act) to Network Rail and GWR (jointly the parties) to enter into the above supplemental agreement. This letter explains the reasons for our decision. ORR's approval of this application will allow passengers to call at the new Charfield station when it is due to open in Spring 2027, improving access to the rail network and encouraging rail travel.

**Background**

2. On 24 April 2024, ORR wrote to industry setting out a process for access applications for December 2024, May 2025 and December 2025, given our expectation (as confirmed by Network Rail) that we would receive numerous complex and competing applications across that period. Applications were submitted to ORR for direction as "unsupported" applications, as Network Rail was not able to agree that there was sufficient capacity and therefore submit agreed applications for our approval.

**Application**

3. The purpose of this supplemental agreement is amend table 4.1 of Schedule 5 of the contract to allow for GWR services to call at Charfield Station, when opened, on the route between Bristol and Gloucester. Any services that stopped at new station would

not stop at another station on the route (Cam and Dursley) in order to minimise the impact of this change.

4. The initial submission of this application anticipated this amendment to be effective from the Principal Change Date (PCD) in December 2025, as the station would be ready during the currency of that timetable. However, on 12 February 2025, GWR advised us that the earliest date the station was likely to open was March 2027. A revised application, reflecting this change was subsequently submitted on 8 April 2025.
5. This revision to the original application is in line with our [letter dated 1 November 2024](#) which sets out how we consider revisions within this process. The change regarding the station opening does not impact on capacity or interact with other existing applications.
6. This amendment will be effective from the PCD in December 2026, subject to the infrastructure at Charfield Station being completed.

### **Industry consultation**

7. The initial industry consultation took place from 21 May to 21 June 2024.
8. Industry was then invited to comment on Network Rail's final representations from 13 to 27 May 2025. No further comments were received.
9. In the initial consultation, Avanti West Coast, Amey Infrastructure Wales, DB Cargo and Cross Country either said they accepted or had no concerns or objections to the application.
10. Freightliner commented that until it understood that its services could be accommodated alongside other operators' services, it would not provide its support until Network Rail's advance timetabling work was complete.
11. We have concluded that the lack of response from industry to the most recent opportunity to comment means that there are no outstanding objections to GWR's application.

### **Statutory Consultation**

12. As required under the Act, on 30 May 2024, we sought Network Rail's representations on the application, and it replied on 28 June 2024. We forwarded these representations to GWR on 3 July 2024 and asked for its comments. GWR provided comments on 22 July 2024.
13. Following the completion of Network Rail's capacity analysis it sent its final representations on 8 May 2025. Again, we forwarded these to GWR and asked for its comments, which it provided on 27 May 2025.

### ***Network Rail's representations***

14. In its initial representations dated 28 June 2024, Network Rail noted that it needed to undertake a number of assessments and analysis to inform a position whether it

supported the application or not. It also made some specific comments on the application and expressed some concerns.

15. GWR made some general comments on Network Rail's representations.
16. In its final representations, Network Rail stated that it was now in a position to support the application. This reflected discussions between the parties since the initial representations. It noted that the application would have little impact on capacity and performance and no effect on a nearby major level crossing. With regard to interactions with other applications, Network Rail noted that any interactions were not due to the changes introduced by this application but were conflicts with access rights already held by GWR.
17. Network Rail also noted the revisions to the application and suggested that the amendment to the contract should take into account the possibility that Charfield station might not be available within the currency of the PCD 2026 timetable.
18. GWR said that it supported Network Rail's representations.

#### **ORR review**

19. In early 2025 we wrote to Network Rail identifying potential for it to progress this application, given it is an addition of one extra stop to an existing service and the application form stated that no effect on the timetable is felt.
20. After we received the final representations in May 2025, we carried out a full review of the application, taking into account issues that were being considered in relation both to this application and to the competing demands on capacity on the wider network.
21. We noted the minimal impact on capacity, performance and interactions with other applications, arising from this amendment, as set out by Network Rail.
22. We have looked more widely at other applications from both passenger and freight operators to run services in the same area and we do not believe that there is any direct conflict with their requests for capacity, such that directing Network Rail to enter into this supplemental agreement would preclude us from doing the same for any others.
23. We concur with Network Rail's suggestion regarding the possibility that Charfield station might not be available within the currency of the PCD 2026 timetable. This will be reflected in a footnote to table 4.1. We have also corrected a minor error in the drafting of the supplemental agreement.
24. Overall, we concurred with Network Rail's assessment on the basis that the impacts on capacity and performance are minimal and that the additional call has a number of benefits. We concluded that we would direct the application in line with Network Rail's support, as set out in its representations.

## **Our duties under section 4 of the Act and our decision**

25. We have considered this supplemental agreement, and we have concluded that its approval is consistent with the discharge of our statutory duties under section 4 duties of the Act: in particular, those relating to:

- enabling persons providing railway services to plan their businesses with a reasonable degree of assurance (section 4(1)(g))
- promoting improvements in railway service performance (section 4(1)(zb))
- protecting the interests of users of railway services (section 4(1)(a))
- promoting the use of the railway network for the carriage of passengers and goods (section 4(1)(b))

We have looked very closely at all the evidence submitted from the parties and consultees. We have concluded that we should approve the in the form set out in this letter and accompanying directions notice.

## **Conformed copy of the track access contract**

26. Under clause 18.2.4 of the track access contract, Network Rail is required to produce a conformed copy, within 28 days of any amendment being made, and send copies to ORR and GWR. ORR's copy should be sent for my attention.

## **Public register and administration**

27. Electronic copies of this letter, the directions notice and the supplemental agreement will be sent to the Department for Transport and Network Rail's Policy and Access Team. Copies of the directions notice and the supplemental agreement will be placed on ORR's public register and copies of this letter and the supplemental agreement will be placed on the ORR website.

Yours sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Jonathan Rodgers.

**Jonathan Rodgers**