

Alice Kaiser
Head of Passenger Track Access
Office of Rail and Road
Telephone:
Email:

Nick Millington
Route Director, Wales & Borders Route
Network Rail Infrastructure Limited
Telephone:
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7th October 2025

Dear Alice,

RE: Late and poor-quality delivery of Transport for Wales Rail Limited (TfWRL) access applications for December 2024 .

Following on from your letter of the 12th September 2025, I firstly wanted to take this opportunity, whilst replying to your concerns, to highlight the transformation we are going through in Wales and Borders, along with TfWRL.

Following a long period of limited funding in rail infrastructure and services in Wales; Welsh Government, through TfWRL, is funding a transformational programme of improvements. This includes an uplift in services, underpinned by an £800m investment in rolling stock, and a further investment of £1.1bn into the transformation of the Core Valley Lines.

The above does involve a significant volume of change. The relatively late changes by TfWRL does provide its challenges for all of us with all this leading to a significant increase in workload in comparison to other routes and regions. But this investment does support governmental priorities of increased passenger numbers, boosted productivity and growth in the Welsh economy.

The creation of the Wales Rail Board comprising of Welsh and UK Governments, Network Rail and TfWRL has led to further funding improvements via the recent UK Government Comprehensive Spending Review, and Welsh Government Network North Wales Programme. All indicating the ambition that both governments have in growing the rail network in Wales and Borders which is a great opportunity for us all.

On review of the ORR recovery plan, which we implemented back in January 2025, we have completed over 20 activities, have addressed our regulatory process management, made changes to contractual tables and refreshed the data, addressed our quality assurance and peer reviewing process with some positive feedback at our periodic meetings with TfWRL and the ORR.

Additional to the above, we have undertaken large amounts of training within the team and national customer teams, plus increased our resources. I believe we have now completed all actions on our ORR recovery plan which included submission of our final representations letter which was sent to you on Friday 3rd October 2025. With all the agreed actions in the improvement plan now complete that you endorsed, we look forward to receiving your indication of when you will remove us from the regulatory escalator.

As you are aware it was agreed as part of the Interacting rights plan with the ORR on 2nd May 2025 that the TfwRL representation letter due to its complexity would be one of the last to be submitted (Tranche 8) this was agreed as part of the 'competing and complex' application process.

TfwRL and NR are putting in place interim arrangements through a separate TfwRL unsupported application for December 2025. This will ensure all the rights needed by TfwRL are in place for December, which includes additional rights on top of those included in the 28th, 31st and 32nd applications.

As part of this process, Cardiff was one of the local geographic considerations. This work started in the summer of 2024 on the Cardiff Area Capacity Study, and our Indicative timeframes for completion of the study is March 2026.

We understand, along with TfwRL, the importance for industry and passengers to have long term certainty about services.

NR and TfwRL are working on access applications for May 2026, as mentioned in our last ORR periodic call, and the updates are documented in the ORR weekly action tracker.

I wanted to thank you for your continued support with this exciting and changing time for us in Wales and Borders and for our passengers. If you do require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact the Customer team or myself.

Yours sincerely,

Nick Millington

Route Director Wales and Borders