

Jonathan Rodgers
Senior Executive

10 December 2025



Jayne Tipton
Customer Manager
Network Rail Infrastructure Ltd
Western House
1 Holbrook Way
Swindon
SN1 1BD

Rob Holder
Network Access Manager
First Greater Western Ltd
Milford House
1 Milford Street
Swindon
SN1 1HL

Dear Jayne and Rob

Approval of the 110th 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

We have today approved the above supplemental agreement submitted to us formally on 9 December 2025 under section 22 of the Railways Act 1993 (the Act). This follows an earlier informal submission of a draft agreement for our consideration.

Purpose

The purpose of the application is to add an additional firm Saturday right for a non-stop London Paddington to Reading service designed to relieve overcrowding on another late-night service. The change will be effective from the Principal Change Date (PCD) in December 2025.

Industry consultation

Network Rail undertook the usual industry consultation from 27 August to 24 September 2025. Supportive responses were received from CrossCountry and Transport Focus. Heathrow Express raised some concerns about platform occupancy at Paddington and non-compliance with train planning rules. Discussions between the parties and Heathrow Express continued for several weeks before Heathrow Express indicated it was satisfied that all its concerns had been explored.



ORR review

Our review of the application raised no operational, performance or economic concerns. We discussed some drafting concerns we had with the agreement as we felt that it did not align with drafting of other GWR PCD 2025 applications. This was resolved.

We considered that Heathrow Express' concerns had been resolved but noted that the train planning rules stated that maximum dwell times may not be exceeded unless agreed in writing by the Network Rail Operational Planning Project Manager. We discussed this with Network Rail and it confirmed explicit consent had not been provided but discussions and another process had taken place which inferred their agreement.

We were content with this explanation but we suggest that Network Rail reviews the current train planning rules requirement, to ensure it is fit for purpose, given the challenges experienced with this application.

Our duties under section 4 of the Act and our decision

We have concluded that approval of this supplemental agreement strikes the appropriate balance in discharging our statutory duties under section 4 of the Act; in particular, those relating to protecting the interests of users of railway services (section 4(1)(a)), promoting the use of the railway network for the carriage of passengers (section 4(1)(b)) and enabling persons providing railway services to plan their businesses with a reasonable degree of assurance (section 4(1)(g)).

Conformed copy of the track access agreement

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 the Train Operator. Please send the conformed copy to me at ORR.

Public register and administration

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

Yours sincerely

A large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature area.

Jonathan Rodgers