

FRS Cardiff-York - Industry Consultation Responses

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All Consultees
(by email only)

Andy Wylie
Head of Regulation & OA Contracts
First Rail

c.c. David Reed, ORR

6th January 2026

Dear Consultees,

First Rail Stirling Limited – Section 17 Application (XC Services)

As many of you raised the same points in your comments, these are being dealt with in a composite response, except for the NR representations to the ORR, which have been dealt with separately.

Mant thanks to those that have supported our application. We quite understand and expect the former franchised operators not to be supporting the application, on Competition Act grounds if nothing else. For the avoidance of doubt, we have not colluded with any other TOC/FOC in formulating these proposals.

Many of you mentioned abstraction. We are quite content for the ORR to apply its usual tests as part of the evaluation process. We would like to point out that if any of you are using MOIRA in coming to any abstractive conclusion, the algorithms within it will usually produce abstraction figures of between 74% and 91%, depending on the application. Reality is somewhat different.

In the Open Access world, we cannot accept poor or mediocre performance. It has a direct effect on our bottom line. The conflicts in paths that exist reflect the differing versions of the databases that we were using to look at these services but we aim to be compliant with the Rules (especially any restrictions listed in 5.2.2), but it must be recognised that databases change over time and even the May 2026 timetable structure is likely to alter again before the commencement date for our services.

Clear choices will have to be made over the use of paths by different operators if capacity is at a premium. However, the existence of any plan that is to take place sometime in the future is not a basis for “reserving” capacity. We contend that reserving capacity without any application for rights is neither legal nor any basis for rejecting the aspirations of others.

We are confident that we will be able to operate the cl.222 units reliably. We have operated them before, the units will have come off the Stirling services (this application

is dependent on new stock being authorised for that service) and they have a high level of systems redundancy, if maintained properly.

We are anticipating that our train provider will be procuring maintenance on our behalf so details of exactly where they will be stabled will be up to them, all to become clearer as the contractual discussions take place. We will just drive them to the relevant depot but it is anticipated that the main maintenance depot will be on an established site in the Midlands.

I am not sure why a couple of operators feel threatened by the possibility that train crew may want to pursue other career opportunities. We believe in the free movement of labour and any new commercial activity in any location, not just involving railway work, brings that risk today. Arguably it is a greater risk to OA operators who can lose well trained staff to other non-rail businesses.

The awarding of rights does not prevent those rights being terminated if a “better use” can be found for the section of railway concerned. This process is clearly set out in part J of the Network Code. So, the ORR awarding rights to First Rail Stirling does not prevent any strategic rail plan being implemented in the future.

Yours Sincerely

(signed)

Andy Wylie

From: Martin Clarke
Sent: 14 November 2025 09:00
To: Gianmaria Cutrupi
Subject: Re: Industry Consultation – First Rail Stirling, Section 17 Application, Cardiff Central-York
Attachments: Outlook-5qufydby

Hi Gian

Thanks for this proposed Track Access Contract amendment to allow for new open access services between Cardiff and York.

The evidence also shows that competition provided through open access operators can be good for passengers, and we recognise the additional journey options provided by these proposals. However, care is needed to ensure it does not have negative impact on other passengers, for example taking up additional capacity compromising service resilience, particularly around already congested areas such as Birmingham.

Best regards

Martin

Martin Clarke
Rail technical advisor

Transport Focus

The independent transport user watchdog

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25th November 2025

Dear Gianmaria,

XCTL's response to Proposed Application under Section 17 between Network Rail Infrastructure Ltd and First Rail Stirling Limited (FRS).

This letter constitutes XCTL's formal response. Unfortunately, we are unable to support this Section 17 Track Access Application at this current time. We do not have sufficient information or clarification to demonstrate to us that the proposal is viable.

[REDACTED] pandemic, XCTL operated an hourly service in both directions between Reading and Birmingham. Since the pandemic, this service has been restored in part but has not as yet returned to its hourly frequency. XCTL has bid a May 2026 timetable to fully align with the NRC TSR2 and TSR3 requirements, with expectation of rights to match this service level. This proposal seeks to utilise some of the currently unused paths on this corridor which are required for both TSR2 and TSR3 between Birmingham and York in alignment with the paths identified as available for CrossCountry within the ECML ESG for post December 2025. This brings a number of concerns to XCTL:

Conflict (future) - With potential future XCTL growth, XCTL services on this route have been gradually restored in recent years, leading towards a likely full restoration of the hourly service, at least between Reading and York. If approved, the First Stirling service would conflict with, and prevent, the full restoration of an hourly XCTL service, since there would not be sufficient capacity to operate both services in full. This is therefore a direct blocker to the ability of XCTL to achieve the TSR2 and TSR3 (for May 2026) levels of services through the geography detailed above.

Uncertainty over existing capacity - One of the reasons for not restoring the XCTL service more fully already has been the difficulty in obtaining paths, between Birmingham and Newcastle mainly because of the growth in freight traffic during and since the pandemic coupled with a new ECML Timetable and concerns around performance on this route. Given that XCTL have not been able to obtain such capacity, it is unclear how First Stirling expect to do so without detrimentally affecting overall network performance.

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Finally, there is concern over the availability of performance resilient paths through the West Midlands geography. West Midlands Trains is shortly to commence the new 2 tph service between Kings Norton and Birmingham (via Camp Hill) while also seeking to reinstate to 6 tph on the CrossCity south. Has any performance modelling been undertaken to establish how 9 WMT, 3 XC as well as freight services would perform with the proposed additional services? Previous modelling undertaken as part of the Midland Rail Hub work has identified a variety of infrastructure interventions required between Birmingham and Barnt Green in order to operate such an uplift in service frequency which are not yet funded.

Yours Sincerely



Martin Haffner
Track Access Manager

**Our
Values**



crosscountry

From: Peter Sargant
Sent: 01 December 2025 17:22
To: Gianmaria Cutrupi
Cc: Andy Wylie
Subject: RE: Industry Consultation – First Rail Stirling, Section 17 Application, Cardiff Central-York

Dear Gianmaria

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this application.

West Midlands Rail Executive welcomes some aspects of this proposal, particularly the potential calls at Worcestershire Parkway, Bromsgrove and Tamworth which would be beneficial for the region.

However, WMRE has serious concerns about this proposal for the following reasons:

- WMRE is supporting CrossCountry's plans to fully restore its services on the Reading – Birmingham – York – Newcastle route in 2026, and we would be worried that this proposed service would prevent this from being achieved.
- WMRE is joint client for the Midlands Rail Hub (MRH) project which is promoting new services between Birmingham and Cardiff/Swindon and Birmingham and Derby/Sheffield using the proposed new network capacity being created by the Bordesley chords and other infrastructure improvements. It is unclear whether the service plans for Midlands Rail Hub would be compatible with this proposal, and we are concerned that the business case for MRH could be undermined if the benefits of the future MRH services are not able to be delivered as planned.
- WMRE is currently working with West Midlands Trains and Network Rail to secure the restoration of the full 6tph service on the Cross City line, for which the rolling stock already exists. It is unclear whether this proposal would conflict with the ability to deliver this full service which has strong passenger and stakeholder support.

We would therefore require comfort that any short-term capacity that might notionally be available to support the operation of these services would continue to be available into the medium and long term and our strategic development plans are not impacted by this application.

Kind regards

Peter

Peter Sargant
Head of Rail Policy and Strategy



London Northwestern
& West Midlands Railways



Gianmaria Cutrupi
Network Rail
By Email Only

02nd December 2025

Dear Recipient,

Re: First Rail Stirling, Section 17 Application, Cardiff Central - York

Thank you for providing West Midlands Trains (hereafter “WMT”) with the opportunity to comment on the Section 17 application.

WMT have analysed the provided train paths and are concerned about the importing of delay minutes from the ECML into the West Midlands from this proposal. The Southbound services are planned with 3-minute dwells at Birmingham New Street, this gives insufficient recovery time for the distance of service, and could negatively affect our Cross City, Camp Hill and other local services. There are further concerns about the current validity of the proposed services following the remark in section 4.2 of the Form P which states ‘Once discussions with Network Rail (NR) can take place, Lumo will work with NR to fully validate these paths, adjusting them as required’.

There are also external comments that WMT wish to highlight as a part of this proposal. Network Rail’s West Midlands Strategic Advice states that “the railway in Central Birmingham has been operating at or at near to full capacity for several years and is incapable of providing more services without enhancement. Previous attempts to increase services have resulted in a drop in performance and has made the railway harder to manage in times of perturbation. This doesn’t just affect the local services but causes a ripple effect of delay across the whole national network as long-distance services can easily transmit delay from the Birmingham area to other national hubs, affecting the whole network.” This industry remark, as well as the comment in section 1.5 of the Form P which states “The plans also will deliver more capacity on an increasingly congested corridor while delivering intermediate connectivity across the route’ means WMT will need more information on any performance analysis that has been done before supporting the increased capacity request.

Lastly, WMT wish to express concern around the abstraction of revenue between Bromsgrove and Birmingham New Street as a direct result of the proposed calling patterns of these services.

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In summary, WMT would need more specific information on performance and revenue impact before we are able to support this proposal.

Yours sincerely

Charlie Green
Track Access Contract Manager

To: Gianmaria Cutrupi
Aspirant Open Access Operators Manager
Network Rail

To: Andy Wylie

(By email only)

4th December 2025

Dear Gianmaria, Andy,

Re: First Rail Stirling Limited t/a Lumo: Section 17 Industry Consultation for a new track access contract to operate Cardiff Central – York services

This letter sets out East Midlands Railway's (EMR's) response to Lumo's Section 17 industry consultation for a new track access contract to operate new services between Cardiff Central and York from December 2028.

EMR has significant concerns about the proposal.

1. The proposed Lumo services are likely to abstract a high level of revenue from other operators, which will have financial implications on taxpayers.
2. The application has many conflicts across the route between York and Derby, and in particular the Doncaster to Sheffield corridor which is heavily utilised by both passenger and freight services. In our view the proposed paths do not work and cannot be accommodated alongside existing services.
3. The application is fundamentally flawed as it does not reflect the services that other operators will be running in May 2026. Most notably, it does not consider the planned reinstatement of CrossCountry services in May 2026, that have been offered by Network Rail.
4. The nature of the paths mean that they are likely to conflict with strategic plans to develop the timetable in the East Midlands.
5. Lumo has not yet undertaken performance modelling, and therefore the impact is unknown. However, it does appear that the application will import a significant adverse performance impact to the East Midland routes.
6. It is also noted that there is a parallel application in for a Cardiff-Edinburgh Service making use of this same corridor.

1. Revenue Abstraction

- We are concerned about the level of abstraction, but it is not possible to carry out an accurate MOIRA analysis until we receive the updates for December 2025. This is because of the significance of the timetable change across the entire rail network in December 2025, which will be particularly important when assessing the level of abstraction. Please could Lumo confirm the base timetable it has used in MOIRA to assess the revenue impact?
- In section 1.5 of the Form P it states, “*Rail’s mode share on this route is only 15% compared to 51% on well-served comparable flows.*” Please could Lumo confirm which well-served comparable flows it is referring to?
- It is important that a sensitivity test is included, to understand the abstractive effect after the CrossCountry services are reinstated in May 2026.

2. Timetable Structure

- It is noted that the Lumo train plan is based on the December 2025 timetable, but no attempt is made to demonstrate how other services are flexed to accommodate the proposed Lumo services. EMR have looked at the proposed paths between York and North Stafford Jn, and we are not confident that the paths are viable.
- Please can Lumo confirm the number of carriages to be used on the Class 222 units, which is relevant to platforming.
- The first Derby – York service is missing from the SX F3 prints. We have assumed it will operate in the similar path as the Saturday service.
- In Section 4.3 of the Form P it states, “all paths are compliant”, however, it is not clear to EMR how Lumo have resolved the conflicts to make the paths compliant. We have been pragmatic and ignored minor non-compliances and ignored QJ paths. Therefore, the issues listed below are more fundamental, and to verify the accuracy of the statement above, please can Lumo explain how you are going to fix the issues below.
- We are firmly of view that if there are significant problems with the weekday paths over the section of the route that affects EMR, then there is likely to be challenges elsewhere on the route and on other days of the week. The analysis below only includes a weekday, and we do not propose to review the weekend paths until the issues below are resolved.

Northbound

1M01XX [SX] 05:16 Cardiff - York

- Clashes at Dore Station Jn with 6M28 07:45 Barrow Hill Up Sidings – Tunstead Sidings crossing to the Hope Valley. There is no easy solution given the limitations of pathing freight on this route.
- Runs through 4E02 08:04 Hope to Drax between Wincobank Jn and Mexborough.
- Booked to arrive in York Platform 5 at 09:32 and depart at 10:01, with no ECS working. In this time Platform 5 is used by 1V52 (09:38 – 09:42) and 1N90 (09:55 – 09:57). Platform 5 should not be used for terminating services to avoid poor performance of the resulting train plan.

1M03XX [SX] 07:02 Cardiff - York

- Departs Sheffield at 10:53 and runs one minute behind 1N09 10:52 Sheffield to Leeds between Sheffield and Holmes Jn, headway is 3 minutes.
- Departs Doncaster Platform 8 at 11:19, 30 seconds after 1D09 09:40 King's Cross – Bradford Foster Square departing Platform 4 towards Adwick. TPR requires 2 minutes and adjustment time to be applied approaching Shaftholme Jn for the movements from Platform 8 to the Down Main. The service is only booked a 13-minute turnround at York (Passenger to ECS), which could be reduced and further exacerbate an already high-performance risk.

1M05XX [SX] 10:03 Cardiff - York

- Uses the same path as 6E51 12:05 Peak Forest Cemex – Selby between Dore Station Jn and Swinton. Following the introduction of the new Northern fast service between Sheffield and Leeds in December 2025, there is less capacity for freight on this section. Therefore, Lumo should identify an alternative path for 6E51.

1M07XX [SX] 13:04 Cardiff - York

- Uses the same path as 1L72 15:23 Lincoln – Leeds between Sheffield and Wincobank Jn. This could be resolved, but it will result in the loss of strategic freight capacity. The change would occupy the regular hourly freight path from the Hope Valley to Swinton, which should be left vacant if the industry wants to realise the future rail freight growth target of 7.5% within CP7.
- Runs through 0D01 16:30 Tinsley S.S. – Belmont Down Yard between Swinton and Mexborough. This is based on the new timings in May 2026 because of the reinstatement of CrossCountry services.
- Runs through 4L00 16:21 Masborough – London Gateway between Mexborough and Hexthorpe Jn.
- Departs Doncaster in the same path as 4S07 17:03 Doncaster iPort – Millerhill S.S.
- Booked to arrive in York in Platform 10 from the NNL at 17:32, only 30 seconds after 1S49 11:27 Plymouth – Glasgow Central arrives from the LSL in Platform 9.

1M09XX [SX] 15:03 Cardiff - York

- Uses the same path as 6H13 11:20 Banbury Reservoir Tarmac to Tunstead Sidings between Tapton Jn and Dore South Jn.
- The margin between 1R78 14:52 Norwich – Liverpool departing Sheffield Platform 2 and 1M09 arriving is 2 minutes, TPR requires 4 minutes.
- Headway is non-compliant with 1L80 17:23 Lincoln – Leeds departing Sheffield. Whilst this is relatively minor, it needs to be considered in the context of the problems south of Sheffield.
- Runs through 6D16 18:23 Tinsley S.S. – Hedon Road Sidings between Mexborough and Hexthorpe Jn. This is based on the new timings in May 2026 because of a retiming to 6M61 18:32 Attercliffe Sidings to Liverpool EMR.

1M11XX [SX] 18:21 Cardiff - York

- See section 3.

Southbound

1V00XX [SX] 10:01 York - Cardiff

- Headway non-compliant with 1J43 08:34 Bridlington – Sheffield between Aldwarke Jn and Sheffield. Whilst it is only 30 seconds to 1 minute deficient it exacerbates the problem at Aldwarke Jn, where it is already clashing with 2N11 10:15 Sheffield – Leeds. A greater concern is the way the path has been forced into Sheffield in a 5-minute gap when the headway is 3 minutes. Retiming trains to adhere to a 3-minute headway would result non-compliance junction margins at Sheffield, and ultimately impact 1V52 07:03 Edinburgh – Plymouth. Because of the interaction between 1V52 and 1C41 11:00 Sheffield – London St Pancras, it risks the on-time departure of the London train, which will impact on other services on the Midland Main Line including Thameslink.

1V02XX [SX] 12:34 York - Cardiff

- See section 3.

1V04XX [SX] 15:45 York - Cardiff

- Departs York one minute behind 1V64 13:05 Edinburgh to Cardiff, headway is 3 minutes. With capacity limited, it is not clear to EMR how having two trains depart York to Cardiff at the same time makes best use of the network.
- The margin between 1A26 15:40 Leeds to King's Cross arriving in Platform 3A at Doncaster and 1V04 arriving in Platform 8 is 30 seconds, TPR requires 3 minutes.
- The margin between 6E08 13:06 Wolverhampton Steel Terminal to Immingham Sorting Siding passing through Platform 1 at Chesterfield and crossing to the Barrow Hill Lines and 1V04 arriving Platform 2 is 1 minute, TPR requires 3.5 minutes.

1V06XX [SX] 18:32 York – Cardiff

- See section 3.

1V08XX [SX] 20:36 York - Cardiff

- Runs through 6M43 19:59 Selby to Peak Forest Cemex between Wincobank Jn and Sheffield.
- Runs through 6V79 18:39 Immingham Sorting Sidings to Margam between Clay Cross North Jn and Ambergate Jn.

1V98XX [SX] 06:54 York - Cardiff

- Uses the same path as 2U30 06:54 York – Manchester between York and Colton Jn This is more complicated to resolve because 2U30 must start from Platform 4 at York.
- The margin between 1F07 07:43 Leicester – Sheffield crossing St Mary's South Jn and 1V98 passing is 1 minute, TPR requires 3 minutes.
- Runs through 6L56 06:25 Tunstead Sidings – Barham between Dore South Jn and Chesterfield South Jn. We believe this is a new path in May 2026.

3. Train Slots in the May 26 Working Timetable which cannot be accommodated

- The application has made no attempt to demonstrate how the CrossCountry services being reinstated in May 2026 can be accommodated. This should be highlighted in Section 4.1 of the Form P and does little for the credibility of the application. More detail on each of the specific issues is provided below:

- 1V02 [SX] departs York to Cardiff at 12:34, in a nearly identical path to 1V88 12:35 York to Reading. Whilst the paths start to diverge south of Colton Junction, 1V88 is directly followed by 4D87HA / 4L87HA at minimum headway. Not all train slots can be accommodated between York and Doncaster.
- 1V06 [SX] departs York to Cardiff at 18:32, in a nearly identical path to 1V98 18:34 York – Reading. The CrossCountry runs via Pontefract Baghill, and the Lumo service via Doncaster. However, between Aldwarke Jn and Brimingham New Street the paths are nearly identical.
- 1M05 [SX] arrives in Platform 6 at York at the same time as 1V90 14:35 to Reading – York departs. With only a 6 minute turnround in the platform, this will be challenging to resolve.
- 1M09 [SX] passes Swinton 1.5 minutes before 4O31 17:46 Leeds F.L.T – Southampton M.C.T passes from Moorthorpe. This margin should be 4 minutes, but the relevance to CrossCountry is that 4O31 cannot be flexed because it is followed by 1V98 18:34 York – Reading via Pontefract Baghill.
- 1M11 [SX] depart Derby to York at 21:00 and runs in a nearly identical path to 1E68 18:45 Reading – Newcastle as far as York.

4. Strategic Planning

- It is widely acknowledged that CrossCountry schedules are to be fixed at the boundary points, when timetables are being developed. This is because of regular interactions with other services across the wider network which have their own capacity constraints (e.g. Birmingham New Street). Whilst this limits flexibility, these paths in the Prior Working Timetable must be accommodated. If this Lumo service was approved, because of its similarities with CrossCountry, it would be a new additional constraint on the development of the future Midland Main Line timetable to facilitate growth, improve connectivity and achieve the aspiration of 90% T-3. This is particularly pertinent with the commitment to East West Rail at Bedford and the new station at Wixams to serve Universal Studios. Therefore, given the current funding position of the railway, we would ask the ORR to consider the potential opportunity costs of prohibiting future revenue generative schemes.
- The Lumo application would not only restrict revenue generative schemes for future GBR managed railway services but will also have an impact on network capacity for freight. From the analysis in section 2, it is shown that the paths encroach on the standard hour freight path between Dore Station Jn and Hexborough Jn. In the hours where there is white space, it is likely to be needed for future freight growth because of the lack of alternative paths on this corridor. This has not been highlighted in Section 4.3 of the Form P, and the applicant is required to describe the impact to other Operators. Please can Lumo describe how it has mitigated any impact to freight capacity on the network, and whether this has any consequential impact to passenger operators.

5. Operational performance

- We would expect comprehensive performance modelling to be carried out to understand the impact of these proposed services and are disappointed it has not been undertaken. For EMR to accept this application it is paramount for us to review the data capturing all services for their entire journey. If the proposed services have a detrimental operational impact on performance, this will have an industry revenue impact that needs to be factored into the analysis.

- The Doncaster to Sheffield corridor is already heavily utilised. On time performance at Sheffield for originating EMR Intercity services sits at 71%, often a reaction to late running from the Doncaster to Sheffield corridor. This is well below a normal standard for services beginning their journey. This lateness is often carried and further increased throughout the journey, which in turn impacts our T3 performance metric, adding to the risk of conflicts, as services travel south. Additionally, increased train services in the area will impact our on-time performance and reduce the ability to flex services during times of perturbation. It is important that any proposals do not impact on EMR's right time operation and the performance of train services in the Sheffield station area.
- Our principal concern is the paths between Doncaster and Sheffield which are not TPR compliant, and in EMR's view do appear to be "forced", contrary to Section 4.3 of the Form P. Without performance modelling, it is important that consultees understand what process Lumo has used to determine the paths are not "forced" and will have minimal impact. Please can Lumo provide more information about how it has determined there will be minimal impact.
- There is very real risk that the proposal will lead to poorer performance on the EMR Lincoln to Crewe route. Many of the paths between York and Cardiff immediately precede the Lincoln – Crewe service between Derby and North Stafford Junction at minimum headway or less. With very little recovery time in the Lumo schedule, it risks delaying not only the EMR service, but also the following CrossCountry services (in both directions because of the crossing move at North Stafford Jn).
- The proposal is not likely to be compatible with the industry performance aspiration for 90% T-3.
- EMR would expect that any approval of this application preserves its capability to operate via Stenson Jn (Castle Donnington), Bighton and the Erewash Valley during engineering work/perturbation.

6. Resource & Contingency and Rescue & Recovery Arrangements

- It is important that the proposal is underpinned by a robust resource and traincrew plan, and service recovery plans and control arrangements. No information on these points is provided in the proposal.
- In addition, rescue and recovery arrangements would need to be robust should new services be introduced. It is unclear what the rescue and recovery plans are should there be a train failure on this busy route.

In summary, EMR formally objects to this Section 17 application to operate new services between York and Cardiff until more information is provided. It is not clear to EMR that there is capacity to run these services, and the scale of the adverse performance impact is unknown.

Yours sincerely,

Lanita Masi
Network Regulatory Access Manager
East Midlands Railway

From: Michael Sasse
Sent: 04 December 2025 13:21
To: Gianmaria Cutrupi
Cc: Andy Wylie
Subject: RE: Industry Consultation – First Rail Stirling, Section 17 Application, Cardiff Central-York

Good afternoon, Gian, and thank you as ever for including the West Yorkshire Combined Authority in this consultation.

We quite accept that open-access passenger operators (OAOs) can play, and have during the franchising era have played, a valuable role in expanding the reach of rail services by filling gaps in the core network, with real wider benefits. They can also, we agree, sometimes provide useful extra capacity, especially when operating full-length trains.

However, this application gives cause for significant potential concern in a number of areas:

- **Network capacity.** Over much of the route that the proposed services would take, the rail network is subject to significant capacity constraints, including but not limited to those parts of the ECML that have been formally declared as “congested infrastructure”. For our example, we would cite York to Newcastle, where the previous second hourly trans-Pennine train has had to be removed for this reason. Reinstating that train is a priority for us, and indeed for the wider North, and we would expect this to be delivered before consideration were given to introducing additional open access services beyond those already in operation. We appreciate that the First proposal would not run north of York, but capacity at and around York itself is significantly constrained, particularly for a train which would terminate / start there and therefore presumably require longer dwell times in the station and/or stabling facilities in the vicinity plus associated shunt moves.
- **Conflict with XC.** Historically (essentially until Covid), Cross-Country operated hourly services on the Newcastle – Doncaster – Sheffield – Birmingham – Reading corridor. While these have not yet been fully restored to 1tph, this is planned, and we would support the desire to do so, not least because they reduce the burden on the very busy XC route via Leeds by providing an alternative (and faster) through route between the Midlands / South Yorkshire and York / the Northeast – as well as providing, via connections at Sheffield, a second hourly opportunity to travel between West Yorkshire and Derby / Birmingham. We would consider that 1tph on this axis should be part of the core XC offer as we move towards the reformed integrated railway under GBR. In this context (as with the previous bullet-point) we would consider that even if there can be shown to be network capacity to operate the proposed OA services alongside accommodating reinstated XC services (and the services on the ECML referred to above), there would be significant concerns as to the performance implications of such a high level of utilisation at critical locations.
- **Rail reform context.** The railway is evolving towards its new structure under GBR, though at present there remain significant areas of uncertainty as both new governance structures and new strategies are put in place to create an integrated national railway. The lines of route concerned in this application are clearly relevant to the strategic intercity network, and there is a potential risk that an agreement at this stage to grant several years’ worth of access to an OAO on these lines could hamstring the options open to GBR both as regards its route development and as regards moving to more efficient and/or better integrated timetables. In addition, there must be the concern that abstracting revenue from the public operator would by definition be damaging to the overall financial position of GBR.

In light of these matters, we would suggest that to grant the proposed access now could put at risk or prejudice route utilisation and strategies across a significant area of our intercity network.

For completeness, I would add that we have also received a consultation in relation to an application by Alliance Rail for an access contract over a similar route (in that case, Cardiff – Edinburgh), and we shall be responding in similar terms.

Many thanks

Mick Sasse

Michael Sasse

Rail Development Manager

West Yorkshire Combined Authority



Gianmaria Cutrupi
Aspirant Open Access Operations Manager
System Operator
Network Rail

Northern Trains Limited
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(By email only)

04th December 2025

Dear Gian,

**Northern Trains Limited (NTL) formal response to First Stirling Rail (Lumo) Section 17
Application – Cardiff Central to York**

With reference to the above application shared by Network Rail on 04th November 2025, this letter constitutes NTL's formal response to the consultation.

NTL are unable to support this application at this time. The proposed train paths have numerous clashes between Sheffield and Doncaster (Listed below). The proposal does not make any considerations with regards to network performance impact (noting that the December 25 timetable change is already expected to have a performance detriment) or stabling assumptions, therefore NTL is not able to fully assess the impact of this application. It should be noted that stabling in the North of England is already incredibly constrained as well as capacity more generally at Sheffield and York.

Clashes with services running in the December 25 timetable SX:

1M01XX -Direct Clash leaving Sheffield with 4E02GA through to Swinton. Clash with 6E49QJ departing Doncaster, clashes using platform 5 at York

1M03XX – Direct clash leaving Sheffield with 1N09 1052 Sheffield to Leeds service through to Swinton.

1M05XX – Direct clash leaving Sheffield with 6E51GA through to Swinton, Clash with 4G09QG between Shaftholme and Temple Hirst. Direct clash with 1V90EX departing platform 6 at 1435.

1M07XX – Direct clash leaving Sheffield with 1L72GZ between Sheffield and Wincobank. Also clash using platform 5 at Sheffield. Direct Clash with 6E80DA between Aldwarke Jn and Mexborough. Direct clash leaving Doncaster with 4S07LA to Shaftholme Jn. Direct clash at York accessing platform 10.

1M09YX – Clash at Sheffield using platform 2. Headway clash with 1L80GZ, Headway clash north of Shaftholme Junction with 4N14QD. Direct clash with 2U75GP between Colton and York

1M11XY – Direct clash with 6E17GA departing Sheffield until Swinton.

1V00XX – How is this accommodated in York? Direct clash at Aldwarke Junction with 2N11GY. Headway clash with 1J43AG

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NORTHERN TRAINS LIMITED

GEORGE STEPHENSON HOUSE, TOFT GREEN, YORK, ENGLAND YO1 6JT

Company No. 03076444

1V02XX – Headway clash with 1Y13LN departing York. Headway clash with OM22AG between Hexthorpe and Masborough Jn.

1V04XX - Headway clash with 1V64DB between York and Colton Jn. Headway clash with 6V66DA between Hexthorpe Jn and Aldwarke Jn. Headway clash with 1L72GZ between Nunnery and Sheffield.

1V06XX – Headway clash with 1Y19LN from York to Shaftholme. Headway clash with 6D72QL from Shaftholme Jn.

1V10YX – Headway clash with 6M01EW between Swinton and Masborough Jn

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,



Kate Oldroyd
Track Access Manager

Gianmaria Cutrupi
Aspirant Open Access Operators Manager,
Network Rail
George Stephenson House, York YO1 6JT

Cc: [REDACTED], [REDACTED] & [REDACTED]

4th December 2025

Dear Gianmaria

First Rail Stirling Limited t/a Lumo– Section 17 Application, Cardiff Central – York

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on First Rail Stirling’s S17 application interacting with the East Coast Mainline (ECML).

LNER wishes to make the following points on this proposal:

1. The application states that these plans ‘will deliver more capacity on an increasingly congested corridor’. LNER challenges this viewpoint as the current position is several areas of ‘Declared Congested Infrastructure’ with other locations at ‘Early Warning Indicator’ on both ECML and West Coast Main Line (WCML):
 - a. Between Doncaster Marshgate Junction and Copley Hill West Junction, there is an interaction with the proposed services at Marshgate Junction. With the current Capacity Enhancement Plan, Lumo will be aware there are no immediate plans of alleviation of these Congested Infrastructure areas and there is emphasis on the Route Study, which is focusing on long-term plans for alleviation, not in time of the proposed commencement date of 2028.
 - b. WCML has been declared Congested for numerous years with ORR rejecting some new applications for services on the WCML as it is already operating at maximum throughput. There are extensive alleviating works in the pipeline, but these are long-term with no objective to be completed ahead of 2028 in time of the proposed commencement date. Thus, any additional services on this route are only detrimental to the ‘congested corridor’ leading to the written statement from Lumo reading nonfact.
2. LNER challenges there is platforming capacity at York Station to accommodate these services, especially for originating and terminating services. There are existing platforming constraints at York that has resulted in Northern services being required to use through platforms (Platform 10 and Platform 11) due to the repeated deferral and changes to the York North capacity scheme. This is further supported by LNER reviewing the information provided on the services and it has highlighted several significant issues;

In several cases we do not believe the services could be accommodated at York (for example Weekdays 1M01 turning round in to 1V00 conflicts with 1V52 Edinburgh - Penzance at Platform 5 & Weekdays 5M07 conflicts with 1B34 Blackpool to York at Platform 10)

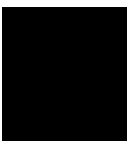
In the Saturday plans, information provided appears inconsistent with services arriving on to one platform and departing from another.

In some cases, it appears that permissive working would be required to accommodate the proposed services on platform 10. However, this is not possible as permissive working is currently only permitted for attaching or detaching sets or in disruption meaning these services could not be accommodated. Therefore, we do not believe there is sufficient capacity to accommodate these services, nor could the services be accommodated even with additional timetabling analysis.

3. The application states the services are designed to capture mode share from car and is listed. LNER queries if the appropriate appetite is present to compete with car transport and for the connectivity.
4. Linked to point 1, in the performance section the application states 'anticipate minimal impact'. Due to the Congested Infrastructure, it is unfathomable that these proposed services would have minimal impact. LNER holds rights for 6.5tph services, a part of the December 25 timetable development it was determined that one of the reasons that LNER 0.5tph could not be accommodated was capacity and performance concerns at Doncaster which seems contradictory to the 'minimal impact' anticipation. LNER requests a detailed performance analysis is carried out and the results are shared for these proposed services.
5. The units that are to be used are 222 as per the application. However, there are performance concerns with these units due to the decline in reliability due to the age of the units and the maintenance requirements which is leading to failing units. Does Lumo have any concerns regarding the fleet reliability and have Lumo proactively prepared for any of these concerns?
6. The proposals serve no new markets and duplicate existing services and are likely to be almost entirely abstractive.

Based on our performance concerns and the insufficient capacity at York Station, we formally object to this application.

Yours sincerely,



Olivia Richardson
Track & Station Partnership Manager

From: Rob holder
Sent: 04 December 2025 16:26
To: Gianmaria Cutrupi
Subject: Re: Industry Consultation – First Rail Stirling, Section 17 Application, Cardiff Central-York
Attachments: Outlook-5qufydby

Hello Gian,

many thanks for sight of the Applications by First Rail Stirling Limited (and Alliance Rail Limited) concerning aspirations for services between Cardiff and the North East, the additional timetable material, and for the opportunity to comment.

First Greater Western Limited (“GWR”, “Great Western Railway”) has a number of concerns including the following.

1: Revenue Abstraction

GWR has undertaken some initial modelling. In this, these do abstract ticket revenue from GWR and other established train operators. Outputs indicate that these are likely to fail a Not Primarily Abstractive test.

The proposals look to provide an open access operation providing services between Cardiff Central and either York or Edinburgh, via Awre, Birmingham and Sheffield. GWR observes a slight revenue effect as GWR operates to Cardiff Central, Newport, Gloucester, Cheltenham and Worcestershire Parkway via alternative routes. The modelling shows high levels in value and rate of abstraction overall.

GWR notes this scheme does offer benefits, such as connecting areas such as Chepstow with more journey opportunities, and direct links to key settlements, and providing Gloucester with direct journey opportunities to beyond Derby, however as other operators generally provide at least an hourly alternative along the core sections of this route, or half-hourly services within local areas along this route, a significant amount of demand is likely to be abstracted.

For GWR, we expect to see abstraction mainly centred around local flows within South Wales and Gloucestershire, as well as where passengers would be diverted off longer routes (e.g. via London or connecting at Bristol Parkway).

The model underestimates any abstraction likely from introduction of any specific train operator fares.

2: Congestion

-
The Office of Rail and Road included both Cardiff and Gloucester (as well as points further north on the route traversed by the proposed services) as acknowledged limited capacity areas when it asked the industry to prioritise half a dozen or so areas for medium term new rights analysis in Spring 2024.

In addition it is known that work is underway to seek a solution to the limited capacity through the Severn Tunnel caused by the geography, signalling headways and the traffic carried. There are

proposals too to consider amending planning rules through the Tunnel which in fruition have the potential to limit planned throughput further. Because of this and known aspirations for additional services through the Tunnel the choice of route via Awre for the First Rail Stirling Limited and Alliance Rail Limited applications is welcomed. Because of this, consideration might be given to limiting any firm access right in Schedule 5 to the Awre route apart from times of perturbation or planned engineering work.

Cardiff and Gloucester / Cheltenham are important nodes for high speed services from London Paddington operated on behalf of the Secretary of State by GWR. Pathing of existing services is already tight, and anything that affects GWR advertised or delivered journey time adversely is not welcome.

There is a review of infrastructure needs at Cardiff. Network Rail is leading development of a Strategic Advice covering known service aspiration and potential infrastructure needs some of which are far reaching.

3: ATP

Any rolling stock operating Severn Tunnel - Westerleigh needs to meet the requirements of the Sectional Appendix.

4: Stabling and Rolling Stock Maintenance

Space for this is thought to be at a premium on Wales and Western Region.

5: Human Resource

GWR is wary of shortage becoming part of its operations if crews real or potential transfer.

I should be very grateful if you would arrange for these comments to be borne in mind please. In view of them GWR does not support the applications.

Many thanks.

Rob

Robert Holder | Network Access Manager | Great Western Railway
1 Milford Street | Swindon | SN1 1HL

First Greater Western Limited | Registered in England and Wales number 05113733
Registered office: Milford House, 1 Milford Street, Swindon SN1 1HL.

For the attention of:

Andy Wylie ([REDACTED])
Gian Cutrupi ([REDACTED])

South Yorkshire
Mayoral Combined Authority
11 Broad Street West
Sheffield, S1 2BQ

Wednesday, 07 January 2026

RE: Industry Consultation – First Rail Stirling, Section 17 Application, Cardiff Central-York

Dear Andy/Gian,

Thank you for sharing details of Lumo's proposal to introduce six daily Cardiff–York services from December 2028. We welcome initiatives that seek to improve rail connectivity and deliver affordable travel options for passengers, which are consistent with Mayoral objectives in South Yorkshire. This proposal would provide welcome, new direct connectivity between South Yorkshire and South Wales.

However, we would like to highlight several considerations that need to be addressed to ensure the proposal delivers the best outcomes for South Yorkshire's passengers and the wider network:

1. Network Capacity and Pathing

The proposed services appear to use scarce capacity north of Sheffield Midland station. Given the strategic importance of this corridor for South Yorkshire connectivity, we are concerned about allocating these paths to services that largely shadow existing CrossCountry (XC) services.

We would also seek assurance that these paths do not compromise the anticipated reinstatement of XC's established Newcastle–Reading service, which remains a local priority for restoring established connectivity.

Further still, we would also emphasise the importance of safeguarding future capacity for Northern Powerhouse Rail (NPR) connectivity through South Yorkshire. NPR remains a critical strategic priority for the region, underpinning economic growth and improving journey times to key northern cities. Any new open-access paths should be assessed against their potential impact on NPR delivery, particularly through constrained infrastructure such as Nunnery Junction and Doncaster.

2. Service Pattern and Overlap

The proposed timings closely mirror existing XC services, such as the proposed southbound departures from Sheffield being around four minutes before the existing XC services and arriving at Birmingham five minutes before XC's.

Journey times between Sheffield and Cardiff of around 4h 30min are broadly comparable to current options when changing at Derby, suggesting limited time savings, which raises questions about whether the new service offers sufficient differentiation or network benefit beyond duplicating existing flows.

3. Operational Risks

Extended dwell times at Doncaster (up to 7 minutes) and Sheffield (8.5 minutes) could create conflicts, particularly at Doncaster where Platform 4 is heavily used. Additional crossing moves at Shaftholme Junction, Swinton, Wincobank Junction, and Nunnery Junction may also increase complexity and risk of delay propagation.

Air quality remains a critical issue for Sheffield, which introduced a Clean Air Zone in February 2023 to tackle harmful emissions. While we welcome the industry's progress toward decarbonisation, such as EMR phasing out Meridian units and Northern planning fleet renewals, the proposed Cardiff–York services would rely on 20-year diesel traction. Extended dwell times at Sheffield and Doncaster raise concerns about localised emissions in sensitive areas. This is particularly relevant given national commitments to reduce air pollution and transition to a cleaner rail network. We would encourage Lumo to consider how these services can minimise emissions and align with both the Clean Air Zone objectives and the wider environmental goals.

Summary

We recognise the potential benefits of Lumo's low-cost model and the ambition to increase rail's mode share on the Cardiff–York corridor. However, we believe further work is needed to:

- Demonstrate clear added value compared to existing services.
- Confirm that the proposal does not constrain future strategic service restorations and aspirations.
- Address operational risks and ensure efficient use of limited network capacity.

We look forward to continued engagement on this proposal and to exploring options that align with our vision objectives of improving connectivity, reliability, and affordability for passengers across the network.

If you have any questions, comments or require further explanation to any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours Sincerely,

Melanie Corcoran

Executive Director of Transport

South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority



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Andy Wylie
First Rail Stirling Limited

Gianmaria Cutrupi
Aspirant Open Access Operators Manager
Network Rail

By email only: [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]

4 December 2025

Dear Andy and Gianmaria

Transport for Wales and Transport for Wales Rail Ltd response to the Industry Consultation on First Rail Stirling Limited, Section 17 Application, Cardiff-York

Thank you for consulting us on the proposals from First Rail Stirling Limited to submit a Section 17 application for a new Track Access Contract. This response is from Transport for Wales (TfW) as the Transport Authority and Transport for Wales Rail Limited (TfW Rail) as the train operator for the Wales & Borders network.

TfW and TfW Rail are unable to support the application as proposed, because we have concerns regarding revenue abstraction, network capacity and performance, and pre-existing funded commitments.

We elaborate on our key concerns below.

Economic and subsidy implications

TfW operates services between Cardiff and Gloucester/Cheltenham and so a new service on this route to/from Birmingham and York would inevitably abstract existing revenues from us, as well as from other operators.

TfW has invested in new trains for the Cardiff to Cheltenham Route (the Class 231s) to provide more comfortable and reliable services; this public investment would undoubtedly have a longer payback period if revenue were to be abstracted from the route.

We are keen to understand the financial implications of the proposals in more detail and we would be happy to provide our own analysis to ORR if required.

Operational, capacity and performance considerations

The fully timed paths that have been provided are helpful for us to understand First Rail's intentions, but our analysis of the paths against existing services suggests

numerous conflicts that we cannot see could be easily resolved.

As well as specific conflicts being evident, our analysis from the application data raises some important operational concerns at major locations on the route:

- Network Rail has been undertaking a Cardiff Area Capacity Study to help inform long-term planning; the Strategic Advice is due to be published in January 2026. The workstream did not include these proposed Cardiff-York services in its assumptions. Platforming at Cardiff Central is a particular concern, especially as longer trains are proposed that are likely to prevent platform sharing. Platform dwell times and necessary ECS movements west of Cardiff (e.g. to arrive at Platform 3 and depart later from Platform 1 or 2) will also have a negative impact on capacity.
- We are concerned with platforming at Newport and the potential interface of the proposed services with our existing Ebbw Vale Town - Newport services that use Platform 4.
- At Severn Tunnel Junction, additional movements will have an interface with movements to and from the Severn Tunnel which could have a direct impact on the use of capacity through the tunnel.
- On the South Wales Mainline, capacity between Cardiff and Severn Tunnel Junction is already intensively utilised, including from 2027 by the committed Lumo Paddington-Carmarthen services.

It is difficult to assess performance implications without more specific information.

The application contains no detail on expectations for stabling and maintenance of rolling stock at the Cardiff end of the proposed route. Existing stabling and depot capacity for passenger trains in the South Wales area is at a premium, including at Cardiff Canton depot which remains at capacity.

Political and future service provision

TfW is concerned about the potential impact of these proposed services on future planned and committed services in the South Wales area.

First Rail will be aware of TfW's committed plans to serve Bristol, both with an initial 2-hourly West Wales-Bristol service from December 2026 and later the Burns services that will call at new stations on the Relief Lines between Cardiff and Severn Tunnel Junction.

There are also new and additional services proposed by other existing and aspirant operators that could affect capacity, of which First Rail will be aware.

Other concerns

The application does not explain potential staffing arrangements. TfW has invested heavily in recruiting and training new traincrew in South Wales to deliver significant timetable uplifts and to support its £800m investment in new trains, as well as bringing

Sundays into traincrews' working week. This is already paying dividends with improved availability of traincrew to help robustly deliver the timetable. We would like to understand potential risks to TfW Rail's operations should a new operator seek to recruit trained staff in the Cardiff area.

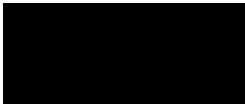
Conclusion

TfW and TfW Rail remain committed to improving passenger services and increasing journey opportunities the Wales & Cross-Border network. This application raises several concerns that we expect all parties to carefully consider.

In particular, we want to properly understand the potential financial implications for TfW. We also look forward to learning more about the potential timetabling implications and whether specific infrastructure interventions might be deemed to be appropriate.

For these reasons, TfW and TfW Rail are unable to support the application as presented to us. We will be happy to work with First Rail and Network Rail to explore the implications of the proposals in more detail.

Yours sincerely



Alexia Course

Chief Commercial Officer, on behalf of TfW



Marie Daly

Chief Operations Officer and Managing Director, TfW Rail

CC: **Colin Lea**, Planning and Performance Director, TfW Rail
Nick Millington, Route Director, Wales and Borders Route, Network Rail

From: Ian Kapur
Sent: 06 December 2025 08:50
To: Gianmaria Cutrupi; Andy Wylie
Subject: RE: Industry Consultation – First Rail Stirling, Section 17 Application, Cardiff Central-York

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this Section 17 application.

There are parts of the route on which GBRf has some capacity concerns, viz. Sheffield to Doncaster and Doncaster to York. Especially with the new ECML Dec '25 Timetable in mind, there are occasions where, for example, new Northern services are running in paths through Sheffield station towards Aldwarke for which cross-route freight (e.g. to/from Hope Valley) naturally fits.

GBRf has concerns that, with even more new passenger services (of any kind), there will be insufficient capacity for any new freight services.

GB Railfreight is, therefore, currently unable to support this supplemental application without further advice on the capacity aspects from Network Rail.

Regards,



Ian Kapur | Head of Strategic Access Planning

5th Floor, 62-64 Cornhill | London | EC3V 3NH

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Department
for Transport

Department for Transport
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SW1P 4DR

Tel: [REDACTED]

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20 January 2026

Gianmaria Cutrupi, Aspirant Open Access Operators Manager
by email: [REDACTED]

Dear Gianmaria,

First Rail Stirling, Section 17 Application, Cardiff Central-York

Thank you for sharing the above track access application from First Rail Stirling, and for providing the Department for Transport the opportunity to respond to this industry consultation.

The Government's view is that Open Access can provide benefits such as improved connectivity and choice for passengers but can also increase costs to taxpayers and create additional performance pressures. Open Access services must genuinely add value for customers and the overall rail system and not inhibit the efficient operation of the network or divert significant revenue from existing operators – all of which are currently supported by the taxpayer in some form. The Secretary of State was clear on the importance of this in her 6 January letter to the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), and this remains the case.

Further, we would ask and expect that ORR be mindful of the reforms set out in the Railways Bill now in Parliament, particularly the future role of Great British Railways (GBR) to be a directing mind with responsibility for deciding the best use of network capacity. ORR will of course need to consider any access decisions, including extensions to existing contracts, before the formal stand-up of GBR very carefully and in line with its existing legal duties.

Analysis undertaken by the Department suggests that, due to the phase-in period of the Infrastructure Cost Charge (ICC), this application would not meet the 0.3 'Not Primarily Abstractive' (NPA) threshold set out in the ORR's guidance until the fifth year of a proposed 5-year contract. This represents poor value for taxpayers, particularly in the four years from December 2028.

First Rail's proposed services also raise a number of performance-related concerns. Given the number of existing train services that interface with the services that First Rail Stirling have applied to operate, there are potentially widespread knock-on impacts to planned services from numerous operators and significant risk that any delays across the route would directly impact performance across the Cross Country (XC), Great Western Railway (GWR), East Midlands Railway (EMR), Transport for Wales (TfW), TransPennine Trains (TPT) and West Midlands Trains (WMT) networks.

In particular, we note that First Rail Stirling's proposed services would run parallel with existing XC services and are very closely timed around existing or proposed XC Reading-Doncaster-Newcastle services north of Birmingham and other existing services. As such, these proposed services are likely to be detrimental to XC train service punctuality. This in turn introduces potentially material performance risk to existing inter-city services at Birmingham as well as at a number of other

locations where First Rail Stirling's proposed services have similar or identical timings to other operators' existing services at Cardiff, Birmingham and Doncaster.

The proposals outlined in this application therefore offer little in the way of new connectivity for passengers, largely replicating existing operators' services. XC operate a daily service each way along the entire route proposed by First Rail Stirling as well as hourly services between South Wales and the East Midlands and other inter-city services between Yorkshire, Birmingham and the South-west. TfW have introduced hourly services on the Severn Estuary line improving connectivity from South-east Wales to the Midlands.

Further, the Department is already working with XC to deliver service enhancements and offer improved connectivity as soon as possible. In a letter from Eddie Muraszko to Louise Beilby of ORR dated 19 February 2024 (copied to Lawrence Bowman and Henry Bates at Network Rail), the Department made clear the long-standing intention to reinstate XC services on the Newcastle-Doncaster-Reading route as soon as possible and explained the reasons why this had not happened in May 2023 under XC's then existing track access rights. Operating to a standard hourly pattern, these XC services can be accommodated within the December 2025 East Coast Main Line (ECML) timetable. As well as providing additional capacity in the North-East and South Yorkshire, these hourly services are the most practical way of providing additional capacity to mitigate significant overcrowding on very busy services between Yorkshire, Birmingham and Reading whilst making efficient use of existing infrastructure. First Rail Stirling's proposals would put these additional XC services at risk, potentially requiring more passengers to change trains at Birmingham New Street to reach their destinations. This would be significantly less convenient for passengers, reduce rail revenue, and would particularly impact passengers with reduced mobility or those travelling with children.

As an early step in delivering these Departmental objectives, from December 2025 XC will be reintroducing two additional services each way on the Newcastle-Reading route as well as reinstating a Southampton to Newcastle train. This demonstrates our view that these planned improvements for passengers travelling from York to Birmingham can be delivered by XC sooner than the December 2028 date proposed by First Rail Stirling in this application.

The Department has already funded 12 additional trains to increase capacity on the XC inter-city network, which came into service in May 2025, and has been working with XC through 2025 on a business case to acquire further trains to reduce crowding and deliver additional services including on the Reading-Newcastle route.

First Rail Stirling's application states that the proposed services would terminate at York platform 6 and then shunt to Holgate sidings. This approach is likely to increase the performance risk to punctual service delivery on XC and TPT services towards Leeds as well as other services on the ECML at the south end of York station. We also note that the proposals include shunts at Cardiff that appear to be timed very closely to existing train services.

This application would also have impacts across the West Midlands, where key stakeholders are committed to the reinstatement of a 6tph service on the Cross-City line as soon as possible with the West Midlands train fleet sized to deliver this stakeholder objective. Further, work to reopen the Camp Hill line to local passenger services is well underway. This application from First Rail Stirling would adversely affect capacity and performance on the line between Bromsgrove and Birmingham New Street, and it is unclear whether additional Open Access services can be accommodated at New Street alongside these additional Cross-City and Camp Hill line services.

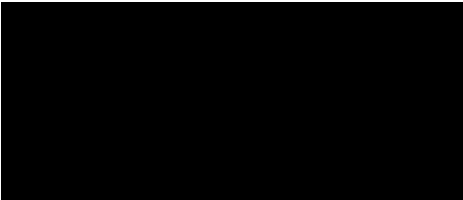
The Government remains committed to an ongoing role for Open Access in the reformed rail sector and is clear that in the right circumstances Open Access can provide benefits to innovation and connectivity. We are equally clear, however, that the benefits delivered by individual Open Access services must genuinely outweigh performance and taxpayer impacts.

In summary, the Department does not believe that this application from First Rail Stirling to operate new Open Access services between Cardiff and York would be in the best interests of taxpayers or

passengers, and would in fact worsen the overall performance and the reliability of services across a significant area of the network. Therefore, for the reasons explained above, **the Department for Transport does not support this application.**

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you have any questions about the Department's response or the points raised.

Yours sincerely,



Alex Szyjanowicz
Deputy Director, Rail Reform