

APPLICATION TO THE OFFICE OF RAIL AND ROAD FOR A PASSENGER TRACK ACCESS CONTRACT, OR AN AMENDMENT TO AN EXISTING CONTRACT

ORR ensures that train operating companies have fair access to the rail network and that best use is made of capacity. If a train operator wants to access the national railway network, it will need a track access agreement with Network Rail which requires ORR's approval under the Railways Act 1993. When determining access to the network, we must have regard to our [statutory duties](#), most of which are set out in section 4 of the Act. We must exercise our functions (which include the approval of access contracts) in a way that we consider best achieves those duties.

Use this form to apply to the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) for a passenger track access contract, or an amendment to an existing contract by a supplemental agreement, under sections 17-22A or the Railways Act 1993.

It sets out ORR's standard information requirements for considering applications. Our [track access guidance](#) (and our [making an application](#) guidance in particular) explains the process, timescales and the issues we will consider. Please read the guidance before completing the contract and this form.

If the facility owner and beneficiary have agreed terms, the facility owner should fill in the form. If not, the beneficiary should fill in the form.

A pre-application industry consultation is usually required before submitting an application. Please see the industry [code of practice for track access application consultations](#) for more information.

This form should be completed up to section 10 and sent to consultees along with a copy of the proposed contract or supplemental agreement. Sections 10 and 11 should be filled in after the consultation and before applying to ORR.

We are happy to talk to you informally before you apply. Please contact us [here](#). You can download a copy of this form, and of our model track access contract, from our [website](#). Please ensure that you are using the latest version of this form as published on our website. We may ask for applications which have not used the latest version to be resubmitted.

You may also use and adapt this form if necessary to apply to use railway facilities other than those of Network Rail. Do not use this form for HS1, for which a separate form is available on our [website](#).

1. Application Summary

1.1 Beneficiary company name:

Alliance Rail

1.2 Facility owner details:

Network Rail:	☒				
Region:	Southern ☒	Eastern ☐	North West & Central ☐	Wales & Western ☐	Scotland's Railway ☐
Other Facility Owner:	☐	Please state:			

1.3 Application under the Railways Act 1993 section:

17	☒	18	☐	22	☐	22A	☐
				Supplemental Number:			
				Current contract date:			
				Current contract expiry date:			

1.4 Applicant status:

Public Service Operator ☐	Public service contract start date:	
	Public service contract end date:	
	Name of funder (e.g. DfT, Local Authority):	
	Does the funder support this application?	Yes ☐ No ☐
Open Access ☒		
Charter Operator ☐		

1.5 Executive summary of the proposed contract or amendment:

This application is seeking to introduce 5 new daily services (each way) between London Waterloo and Marchwood and 9 new daily services between Southampton Central and Marchwood using available capacity and off-lease refurbished Class 769 bi mode trains. An additional number of start and end of day services will also be timetabled to operate between Eastleigh and Waterloo (2) and Eastleigh and Marchwood (2). The Totton Junction to Marchwood line will revert to passenger use with the station at Marchwood re-opened. Trains will be formed of 4 and 8 coaches.

Proposed commencement date:	December 2027
End date:	December 2034
Date approval or directions wanted by:	October 2026

1.6 Industry consultation:

Who carried out the consultation?	Network Rail & Alliance		
Consultation start date:	3 July 2026	Consultation end date:	3 August 2026
Not carried out ☐			

1.7 Applicant details

Facility Owner Company: Network Rail Contact name: Job title: Address: Waterloo General Office, LONDON, SE1 8SW Phone: E-mail:	Beneficiary Company: Alliance Rail Contact name: Job title: Address: Riverside Lodge, Naburn Lane, Fulford, YORK, YO19 4RB Phone: E-mail:
---	--

1.7 Date of application to ORR:

TBCF

1.8 Checklist of documents attached to the application form:

- Proposed new contract (S17 or S18) or supplemental agreement (S22 or S22A) ☒
- Marked up Schedule 5 (where applicable) ☒
- Marked up comparison to model contract (where applicable) ☐
- All consultation correspondence ☒
- Supporting documentation required for competing services (see section 6.2) ☐
- Other supporting documents, side letters or collateral agreements (please list):

Series of F3 prints proving the existence of capacity in the current timetable
A paper outlining the importance of the reopening of the Waterside Line

2. Licence and railway safety certificate**2.1 Please state whether:**

- you intend to operate the services yourself; or ☒
- have them operated on your behalf. ☐
 - if so, please name the proposed operating company:

2.2 Does the proposed operator of the services:

- (a) hold a valid train operating licence under section 8 of the Railways Act 1993 or an exemption under section 7, **and** ☐
- (b) hold a valid safety certificate under the Railways and Other Guided Transport Systems (Safety) Regulations 2006. ☐

If the answer to (a) **or** (b) is no, please state the point reached in obtaining a licence, exemption and/or safety certificate.

Alliance Rail does not currently have a valid train operating license and an accepted safety certificate, but these will be procured following the award of access rights if the application is approved.

3. The proposed contract or amendment

3.1 Application overview: Please detail the proposed contract or amendment. This should cover the services, the commercial terms, and the reasons for making the application in the terms proposed. This information should be laid out clearly and concisely and fully highlight the changes from the previous version of the contract (in the case of an amendment).

There has been a long-held aspiration to return passenger rail services to the 'Waterside' line which extends from Totton through Marchwood to Fawley. A significant public investment was made to evaluate the potential for a new service with a detailed Draft Business Case being developed alongside consultation on a Strategy Research Report. The demand was assessed using a detailed multi model study (The Solent Sub-Regional Transport Model (SRTM)). While there is significant

evidence and support for the re-introduction of passenger rail services, the full scheme itself was cancelled by the Government in September 2024 due to lack of funds.

While the focus on this application is building on the work done by the Restoring Your Railways (RYR) scheme and the previous Alliance application on re-opening the line as far as Marchwood; a limited number of direct London services are planned which will provide Totton and Hook with more frequent and faster trains. It will also open up this part of the New Forest to direct trains from London and stations between Southampton and London, offering new tourism opportunities not identified or valued by the initial RYR study. It is also noted that the Hythe Ferry, linking the Waterside to Southampton has not operated since August 2024 and, in early 2026, was put into liquidation.

There is merit in introducing a small number of open access passenger services on the main Southampton to Waterloo line to support the further passenger benefits that come from having limited competition 'in the market'. These competitive benefits for passengers are consistently demonstrated on the East Coast Main Line.

Following an earlier submission which had been rejected by the ORR, Alliance has addressed all the issues highlighted by the ORR, noting that on that occasion the ORR had made a number of errors in its determination, including on capacity and noting that there was uncertainty around its (ORR's) own revenue forecasts.

A number of exchanges have taken place since the rejection letters of 12 May 2026 and 10 June 2026, including a detailed meeting held at ORR offices on 12 June 2026. That meeting challenged the entirety of the ORR decision, including capacity, infrastructure, Class 769 and revenue development. At the meeting of 12 June 2026 ORR accepted that a compliant timetable indicated that capacity must be available. While Network Rail sought to challenge the output of its own capacity planning team, suggesting 50% of the developed services would require 'further flexes' - when challenged on this by Alliance in January 2026, Network Rail was unable to give any examples. For some reason, despite being aware of that challenge, the matter was ignored by the ORR in its rejection decision. No performance analysis was undertaken by Network Rail.

Alliance has again supplied the initial F3 prints from its 'capacity exercise' and will work alongside Network Rail and others in developing a new timetable for December 2027. Work on a new timetable for the December 2026 timetable had begun by Network Rail in 2025 with a series of meetings of which Alliance was included. Those meetings had progressed to develop services including all operator aspirations and applications (only Alliance had a live application). That work was suspended later in 2025 while a review of TPRs was undertaken by Network Rail. Alliance notes that SWR has an application submitted for new services to commence in Dec 2027 which is supported by Network Rail.

Despite a number of site meetings to evaluate and agree infrastructure requirements, Network Rail supplied an 'officially sensitive' document to the ORR in January 2026 which contained a series of high-level numbers on what it had independently determined were the infrastructure upgrades required to bring the route into passenger use. Alliance only had sight of a version of the document on 16 June 2026, some 4 days after the meeting with the ORR. Network Rail has an obligation to stakeholders, the 'Stakeholder Engagement Duty' within its Network License. In particular to be *"transparent, in that sufficient information is made available to enable effective engagement with Stakeholders"*. It is unclear why the ORR would accept this Network Rail 'officially sensitive' document without challenge when it is produced in isolation and in contravention of Network Rail's license conditions to Stakeholders at 1.7 and 1.8(i)(ii)(iii) and (iv). The document contained only high-level numbers without reference to requirements. It was also produced with 'third party rates', which grossly inflate costs, even though Network Rail was aware that Alliance would deliver the work itself. The Network Rail costs included £3.7m for 'Marchwood Station Development' but it contained no detail on what that would entail. Alliance had provided the ORR with a more detailed estimate of the work required from a registered Network Rail approved supplier.

Significant work has been undertaken on the position of the Class 769 in relation to its introduction on the route. In this instance, significant assistance has been provided by the Network Rail system compatibility team and Alliance and Porterbrook are grateful for that assistance. The Class 769 has a Statement of Compatibility (SoC) approval, and can operate at 100mph, using MU differentials on the SWML. If this application is approved, then further testing will be undertaken to identify and

address the small number of potential (identified through modelling) interactions on the infrastructure. A full set of SRTs have been produced and consulted on at a recent Wessex TPR forum, which will be further developed for passenger operation if the application is approved.

Meetings held with the ORR regarding its revenue forecasts have focused on the disparity between the ORR's numbers and those produced by Alliance's long-standing revenue specialists AECOM. While information exchange continues, an ORR summary of its position suggested that some of the difference relates to a different baseline timetable used. A remaining £3.1m difference was, however, not able to be explained by the ORR, but could, it stated, be due to the ORR using a different version of MOIRA. It is expected that a clear position will be established on these issues which will give confidence that the decision making process will be clear and thorough to enable evidence based decisions to be taken with confidence.

Having addressed the matters raised by the initial decisions of the ORR on 12 May 2026 and 10 June 2026 and having discussed the resubmission plan with Network Rail, Alliance is confident that re-submitting its proposal to establish a new service will be dealt with in an open manner by the infrastructure provider, giving clarity to the process in identifying capacity, working alongside other operators to deliver a new and improved timetable for December 2027. While it is possible that the re-cast may not be delivered on time, Alliance requires firm rights based on its work in identifying capacity and is prepared to work with Network Rail on its delivery plan. Meetings are currently in place with Network Rail to discuss the capacity and the Waterside requirements to agree a workable plan.

The Alliance proposal is for an hourly service between Marchwood and Southampton Central with a number of services extending on to/from London Waterloo. This expanded service will strengthen the initial draft RYR business case by offering direct services from London and stations to Southampton into Marchwood and later potentially an expansion of services to Hythe and towards Fawley as was initially envisaged. The proposed calling pattern is: Marchwood – Totton – Southampton Central – Southampton Airport – Eastleigh – Winchester – Basingstoke – Hook – London Waterloo.

At this stage, the re-opening of the line to passenger traffic and the re-opening and upgrade of Marchwood station are the focus. With trains available, the application seeks approval to begin operations in December 2007 into the re-cast timetable planned. Based on infrastructure and fleet investment, Alliance is seeking a 7 year track access contract. It is anticipated that a new bi-mode fleet will be sought during the operational period, and that, along with the potential further re-opening towards Hythe and Fawley, further applications would be made in the future.

3.2 Safety risks: Please explain any important safety risks that have been identified arising from the proposal and how these will be controlled (by reference to the facility owner's safety authorisation and the train operator's safety certificate).

Level crossing risks on the branch line have been evaluated as part of the extensive studies undertaken with no significant risks (for an hourly service) highlighted. Marchwood station already has a member of Network Rail staff in-situ to manage the signalbox and level crossing. All other crossings are AHB. It is noted that in an RYR briefing paper by Mott MacDonald (Jan 2023) in considering the effect on the initial scheme of operating only one train per hour - it stated that for Marchwood "*...maintaining the manually controlled crossing gate is safe*", although Alliance is still looking to upgrade this crossing to full barriers.

3.3 Contract duration: For new agreements or extensions to existing agreements, please provide justification for the proposed duration and, if more than 5 years, with reference to the [Railways \(Access, Management and Licensing\) Regulations 2016](#).

Alliance would be looking for an initial 7 year track access contract to reflect the infrastructure, rolling stock and staffing investment along the route.

3.4 Terms not agreed with the facility owner (for applications under sections 17 or 22A only):

Please explain any areas of the application which have **not** been agreed, the reasons for the failure to agree and the reasons for seeking these provisions.

Discussions are progressing with Network Rail on the requirements of bringing the branch back into passenger use and on participation in the recast work planned for the December 2027 timetable. Alliance has proven that capacity exists in the current timetable, and as Network Rail is supportive of the changes requested by SWR, then it is reasonable for Alliance to expect and receive, that same level of support from Network Rail for its new application. That position will become clearer as further meetings take place.

However, Alliance is aware that the Class 769, while formally route cleared at 100mph, still has a small number of potential infrastructure interventions to address, so is making this application as a Section 17 application while those matters are under review.

3.5 Bespoke provisions (departures from ORR's model access contracts)

Does the proposed contract include any departures from ORR's model access contract:

Yes

☐

No

☒

If yes, please set out and explain any:

- areas where the drafting of the application changes ORR's published template access contracts (as appropriate, cross-referencing to the answers below). Please also explain why these departures have been made.

- instances where the proposal departs from the charging and/or performance regimes established by ORR's latest periodic review (or subsequent interim reviews) as reflected in ORR's model access contracts, including the financial implications (e.g. establishment of an access charge supplement or rebate).

- new processes (e.g. a self-modification provision) which have been added. Please also demonstrate fully how this new process is robust and complete.

3.6 Consolidated contract

For amendments to existing contracts, is the version of the consolidated contract on our [website](#) fully up to date? If not, please explain why not.

N/A

4. The impacts of the proposal

4.1 Benefits: please set out what specific benefits the proposal will achieve. Please describe the benefits to passengers and any impact on other operators, including freight operators.

The benefits of limited competition are now well established, and in this instance will be accompanied by a re-opening for a railway and station which will help address the road congestion that exists in the Waterside area, improve the infrastructure in advance of the developments planned, provide significant new employment and bring growth to this forgotten but important area of Hampshire. The local benefits are significant and are best captured in the extensive study work that has been previously undertaken, noting that work did not evaluate the tourism potential of the through services from the Wessex Main Line. Supporting information from a number of those documents is attached to the application.

The delivery of a new open access service to Marchwood without public investment will strengthen the case for further investment in the future to extend services towards Hythe and Fawley.

4.2 Capacity: How have you satisfied yourself that there is enough network capacity for the services in the proposal? Please include details on all relevant capacity considerations, including but not limited to track, platform availability, and power supply traction.

A detailed capacity exercise was undertaken directly with Network Rail's capacity planning team late in 2025 to prove capacity existed on the branch and main line by developing a compliant timetable. Those F3 prints are attached. With a recast planned for December 2027 then new timings will be developed for all planned services. In work undertaken for the recast that was initially planned for December 2026, Alliance services were developed and included. On the main line, Alliance is only seeking to operate a small number of services between Marchwood and London Waterloo so will have little effect on power supply. However, with the Class 769 being a bi-mode train, it can still operate during times of power supply failure.

4.3 Performance: What is the impact on network performance? Please outline your assurance process that shows that any performance risk is tolerable in comparison to the benefits of the application. Please explain any risk mitigations. Please attach any associated evidence to support your case.

The recast timetable will undertake performance work on all operators changes, but it is not expected that the recast itself will contain any more trains than operated pre-Covid.

4.4 Maintenance and renewals: Are there any implications for the facility owner's maintenance and renewal activities?

While Alliance is not seeking a line-speed increase on the branch from Totton, it is acknowledged that there will be some required improvement to Network Rail's maintenance activities.

5. The expression of access rights

5.1 Changes to rights: please provide full descriptions of any new rights required, as compared to the previous contract (in the case of an amendment). Please attach a fully marked-up version or document comparison of any tables in Schedule 5 which are being modified as a result of this application.

N/A

5.2 Flexing rights: Please explain any limitations on the facility owner's flexing rights in the proposal and the rationale for such limitations.

None

5.3 Specified equipment: Please explain any changes to specified equipment (rolling stock). Has the vehicle and route acceptance procedure in the Network Code (Part F) has been completed? Please explain whether you have, or will have, the rolling stock necessary to exercise the rights.

The Class 769 has a SoC in place and is able to use the MU differentials on the route and thus operate at the full 100mph line-speed. A series of SRTs have been developed and consulted on by Network Rail.

5.4 Contractual obligations: Are the proposed services necessary to fulfil obligations under a public service contract? For publicly contracted operators seeking additional access rights, we will expect to see evidence of funder support for the specific rights and of operators' intent and ability to operate the new services.

No

5.5 Public funding: Other than the DfT, Welsh Government or Transport Scotland, are the proposed services subject to financial support from central or local government including PTEs. If so, please give details.

No

5.6 Long Term Planning Process: Is the Long Term Planning Process (or similar devolved authority or regional service delivery project) relevant to this application? If so, please explain how the proposed rights are consistent or inconsistent with this.

The application is consistent with a number of previous and recent studies on re-introducing passenger services to the route along the branch line.

6. Competing passenger services:

We would expect to apply the 'not primarily abstractive' test to:

- (i) a new open access service which would compete with franchised services and so impact on the public sector funder's budget;
- (ii) a new franchised service which would compete with an existing franchised service, where we would expect to focus the test on areas where the competing franchised services are operated on behalf of different funders or where for some other reason there are particular concerns over the impact on a funder's budget; and
- (iii) a new service, which might be open access or franchised, which would compete with an existing open access service and which, if it caused the existing open access operator to withdraw from the market, could reduce overall competition on the network.

6.1 Please state if your application is for a competing passenger service, and if so please describe the nature of the competition:

It will compete at a number of locations between Waterloo and Southampton. However, it provides an improved service for Totton and a significantly faster service at Hook in particular. It re-opens a closed station, introducing a completely new service to Marchwood which will benefit both local and longer distance passengers.

6.2 For competing services, please also confirm that you have attached as part of your submission to ORR the following:

- Business plan, including details of:
 - forecasts of passenger traffic and revenues, including forecast methodology;
 - pricing strategies;
 - ticketing arrangements;
 - rolling stock specifications (e.g. load factor, number of seats, wagon configuration); ☐
 - marketing strategy;
 - estimated elasticities of the services (e.g. price elasticity, elasticity with respect to quality characteristics of the services).
- Demand forecasting (including associated spreadsheet models) demonstrating modelled generation : abstraction ratio. ☐
- Indicative timetables, including associated .spg files ☐

7. Incentives

7.1 Train operator performance: please describe any planned performance improvement initiatives and/or enhancement projects associated with the operation of the proposed services aimed at improving operator performance.

We are looking to invest in improving the infrastructure on the branch line. Class 769 trains will also have full C4 and C6 exams prior to entering service and have driver advisory systems installed. We are also discussing with Network Rail installing monitoring equipment on board the trains.

7.2 Facility owner performance: please describe any planned performance improvement initiatives and/or enhancement projects associated with the operation of the proposed services aimed at improving the facility owner's performance.

See 7.1

7.3 Monitoring of services: Will all proposed services be monitored for performance throughout their journey? If not, please explain.

All services will be monitored.

7.4 Performance regime changes (for applications under sections 17 or 22A only): where applicable, please provide justification for any changes to Schedule 8 of the track access contract in the proposal. If necessary, please provide any relevant information in support of the changes proposed.

N/A

8. Enhancement

8.1 Enhancement details: where the proposal provides for the delivery of any network enhancements, or the services in the proposal are subject to any planned network enhancements, please give full details of the relevant enhancement schemes, including a summary of outputs from the scheme, timescales and the extent to which the network change procedure in the Network Code (Part G) has been completed (where appropriate, by reference to submissions made under ORR's enhancement reporting framework).

Improvements to the branch line resilience, although line-speed improvements are not sought at this stage. There will be significant improvements at Marchwood station to enable it to be brought back into regular passenger use.

8.2 Enhancement charges: please confirm that the arrangements for the funding of any network enhancements are consistent with the [investment framework](#), and summarise the level and duration of payments, and the assumed rate of return.

This is being discussed more formally with Network Rail.

9. Other

9.1 Associated applications to ORR: please state whether this application is being made in parallel with, or relates to, any other current or forthcoming application to ORR (e.g. in respect of track, station or light maintenance depot access contracts). Where the application is being made in parallel with any other application from the same operator, please ensure the applications are consistent with one another. Where the application relies on another operator relinquishing access rights, please provide evidence that this process has been completed.

Alliance will be seeking station and depot access agreements alongside this application.

9.2 Side letters and collateral agreements: please confirm here that the whole of the proposal between the parties has been submitted with this application and that there are no side letters or other documents which affect it.

No side letters.

9.3 Confidential redactions: please list any information that you have redacted from any documentation sent to consultees. If there has been no pre-application consultation, please list any information you want us to exclude from publication. Please provide full reasons for any redactions.

None in the documents provided to consultees.

10. Pre-application consultation

10.1 The consultation:

If consultation has not been carried out, explain why not. If it has, please list the consultees.

Consultation has been completed.

Who conducted the consultation?

Network Rail.

List all consultees who responded and include their responses and any associated documentation or correspondence between the parties.

Responses were received from SWRL – GBrF – GTR – Heavy Haul – London Travelwatch & GWR.

10.2 Resolved issues: please explain any issues raised by consultees which have been resolved.

10.3 UNetwork Railesolved issues: Please explain any issues raised by consultees which have ***not*** been satisfactorily resolved and why you think these issues should not stop ORR approving the application.

Most of the issues raised were around the timetable and performance. With a recast timetable under development, then no specific timetable for the Alliance services is available, although an aspirational timetable has been shared where requested. Questions on the branch line upgrade have been addressed. SWRL raised a number of points which are firmly in the domain of the ORR and so Alliance is not in a position to address them.

10.4 Subsequent Changes: Have any changes been made to the proposal following consultation?

No changes have been made.

11. Certification

Warning: Under section 146 of the Railways Act 1993, any person who, in giving any information or making any application under or for the purposes of any provision of the Railways Act 1993, makes any statement which he knows to be false in a material particular, or recklessly makes any statement which is false in a material particular, is guilty of an offence and so liable to criminal prosecution.

For agreed applications under section 18 or 22, Network Rail should complete the information below. For disputed applications under section 17 or 22A, the beneficiary should complete it.

I certify that the information provided in this form is true and complete to the best of my knowledge

Signed: Date: 19 August 2026.....

Name (in caps): Job title: Managing Director.....

For (company) Alliance / Grand Union Trains.....

2. Submission

12.1 What to send: please supply the application form, the proposed contract or amendment and, where possible, any other supporting information, in electronic form by e-mail, **in plain Microsoft Word or Open Document Text format** (i.e. excluding any macros, auto-para or page numbering, or other auto-formatting).

12.2 Where to send it:

Email: track.access@orr.gov.uk