

# Grand Union

David Reed

Senior Manager, Access Policy

Office of Rail and Road

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By email

Dear David,

## **Grand Union proposed Track Access contract with Network Rail - GWML**

Below is the Grand Union response to Network Rail's reply to Grand Union's Section 17 application.

Our preference would always be to agree our contract with Network Rail, but as is acknowledged in their response this is not always possible. With the introduction of the EE test, and discussions on-going regarding a further direct award, then our application needed to be made to meet the timescales for delivery and also to provide clarity for direct award discussions.

On flexing rights and journey time protection Grand Union is aware of the need for more timetable flexibility for development of the network, and while not directly referenced in the draft contract, will continue to discuss options with Network Rail if access is approved.

Eversholt Rail is working with consultants and Network Rail on route clearance issues for the first phase specified equipment, and the second phase specified equipment is route cleared for the entire length of the proposed service.

Grand Union intends to invest as outlined in the Form P, and if access is approved would expect the length of the contract award to be tied to certain investment provisions. Improvements at Severn Tunnel Junction are at an outline stage, but would include additional parking, lifts to all platforms, and a new station building to support waiting, toilets and parcels handling ability. However, the main change at Severn Tunnel Junction would be 'off the railway' as Grand Union seek to provide direct

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access to the station from the adjacent M4 motorway. Discussions with the South East Wales Transport Commission on this initiative are on-going.

In relation to the services to be provided, Grand Union has, and will continue to work closely with Network Rail, who has so far identified that 75% of paths could be accommodated. Further timetable work is taking place with Network Rail on this capacity exercise, and there are particular flighting options to optimise the timetable if access is approved by the ORR.


As stated by Network Rail, Grand Union is also looking at operating with 7 coaches in its initial phase to improve SRTs which may aid with further timetable work.

Platforming at Paddington is impacted in the short term by the serious delays to Crossrail, but once the tunnels are open Paddington becomes less of an issue.

It is also clear that with much less prescription in track access contracts, Network Rail's ability to utilise valuable capacity is significantly improved, and having been given those tools it is incumbent upon them to use them, particularly as the proposed services are so important to the people of South Wales.

Grand Union will continue to work alongside Network Rail on its emerging timetable, and is involved with the two ESG's underway on the Great Western Main Line and Wales and Borders, which will help in identifying the ability of the network to accept this limited number of new services.

Yours sincerely



Ian Yeowart

Managing Director

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