

please reply to:

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Dear Sir,

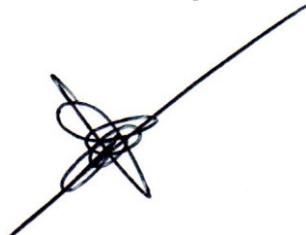
Comments on recommendations for ORR Timetable Inquiry Phase 2

Railfuture is a national independent voluntary organisation campaigning for a bigger, better railway in Britain, so we welcome the opportunity to provide an informed response to the recommendations for Phase 2 of the ORR Timetable Inquiry into the May 2018 timetable changes.

We would like to thank you for the invitation to the presentation of your interim report, which we felt was open and well explained.

Our comments on the recommendations for Phase 2 are overleaf.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Chris Page
Chair, Railfuture

Railfuture comments on recommendations for ORR Timetable Inquiry Phase 2

Terms of Reference and Overall Approach

The terms of reference – seeking recommendations which take account of planned future major network and timetable changes – are clearly the correct way forward. Indeed it has already been accepted by the Government that no such changes should be made without very firm assurances about the industry's readiness to deliver. This should include well researched and rehearsed back-up plans using simulation models, to ensure that there is no repeat of the chaos which ensued with the May 2018 timetable.

Equally many timetable changes will be required to achieve the increase in services necessary to deliver the extra passenger capacity needed for economic growth and a reduction in national carbon emissions. The rail industry needs continued investment so must hold its nerve – programmes should not be delayed. Passengers must see the benefits in terms of increased capacity and service reliability to more customers. Therefore the process must be smooth and straightforward so that programmes, projects and extra services are delivered successfully and on time.

The inquiry should also consider how the government can be assured that timetable commitments in new franchise bids are deliverable, so that users do not suffer the effects of unrealistic winning bids.

Full and extensive consultations with **all** stakeholders - which must include rail users and their representatives – on all future proposals for major timetable changes should take place. Full programme and project management procedures should be applied and users' representatives should be offered a place on all programme and project boards.

Workstream 1 Timetabling & System Operation

a) **System Operator's Role**

To deliver a service, as distinct from an engineering project, requires a systems integrator, a role which Network Rail must adopt as a mainstream activity. This entails ensuring that all the relevant components are in place before going ahead. This is different from just putting the timetable into the database.

We strongly support the need to measure and assess the SO's performance. There is clearly a need for suitable assessment criteria agreed with all parties, with monitoring against agreed targets at key points. Whilst more extensive use of technology to speed up and simplify train pathing should improve the overall approach to major timetable changes, there remains a need for experienced timetablers to check the viability and resilience of the proposed timetable (eg ensuring that realistic turnround and dwell times are used) – something which doesn't seem to have featured strongly recently! Frequent reorganisations and staff relocations (as happened with the move of Network Rail timetabling staff to Milton Keynes) must be avoided as they inevitably result in loss of accumulated knowledge. Retention of 'institutional memory' is essential.

b) **Timetabling Process**

The need to review how the process works is key to the introduction of timetable changes. The current process takes far too long (approx 18 months) and is very inflexible. Options for how to reduce the timescale and how to improve NR/TOC liaison (so that Network Rail becomes more responsive to the needs of the end

customer, the passenger) should form part of this review. The Secretary of State's plans to bring track and train much closer together could play a key role here.

A more timely and carefully controlled, ie disciplined, staged timetable implementation process with clear milestones at T-40 T-24, T-12 is required. This should be the production line to delivery of the promise to the customer and should be managed as such. Network Rail has done this for physical projects with the GRIP process.

The way that priority is assigned to services should be considered, so that lower priority services are not exceptionally constrained, eg by an extremely irregular service interval. It is also essential to involve experienced timetablers with local knowledge in both the review and the timetabling process.

c) The Role of TOCs

We strongly support the proposal for Passenger Impact Assessments (with agreed assessment criteria). Railfuture and its affiliated Rail User Groups would be keen to help design these assessments, based on their knowledge of the services involved. To achieve a balanced service which works for users the TOCs must provide the local knowledge which the Network Rail timetable planning function has lost as a result of centralisation. Where services on a route are provided by more than one TOC, the TOCs must work together. Contingency plans in the event of disruption should be predefined, and should not unreasonably favour one group of users at the expense of another. TOCs need to up their game by involving rail users and their representatives more closely in timetable planning and consulting them at each stage of the process. Northern and GTR have already made good progress in this direction. Whilst recognising commercial sensitivities, the current secrecy surrounding proposed timetable changes is unacceptable from the passenger's viewpoint. Even if TOCs can't meet users' aspirations, an honest approach with proper explanations is needed with all stakeholders treated equally. The TOCs must also adopt a much longer term, strategic co-ordinated approach to driver recruitment, training and retention.

Workstream 2 Management of Systemic Risks

Delivery of any product or service needs a strong, informed and intelligent client focused on delivery not just of the physical elements but on the service being produced for the customer. All the components of delivery should be focused on this. The industry must address the issue of providing leadership in the form of an intelligent client. Just forcing increasingly panicky players to meet a timetable change date is not leadership.

The British rail industry must become agile enough to react to major change and to adjust quickly to supply side disruption.

Where timetable changes are related to infrastructure enhancement projects or new rolling stock, there should be oversight by an 'industry readiness board', using effective program and project management techniques.. This Board must have the necessary information and authority to ensure that systemic risks are identified and managed, and that decisions are made quickly without the need for multiple levels of approval by government. The Board should make the final Go/NoGo decision in due time (ie whilst the NoGo decision can still be implemented successfully) without undue pressure from government, either direct or indirect (eg by repeated requests for assurance that the date will be met).

The proposed 'target operating model' for the delivery of network change sounds a good way forward and we look forward to more details of this proposal. The need to consult with government and industry is welcomed, but this should also include users' representatives at an early stage.

Workstream 3 Role of Regulation

It is clear that ORR must take a much stronger role in the timetabling process and the operation of Industry Readiness and Project Boards. This should include closer monitoring and enforcement where needed, especially of the constraints on proposed timetable changes imposed by uncertainties in delivery of planned infrastructure or rolling stock programmes. ORR should satisfy itself that TOCs (and bidders, where a franchise competition is in progress) have the capability to meet their agreed commitments and to enforce penalties where these are not met. This should include contingency plans and provision of information to passengers in the event of disruption, and the availability of staff, reserve rolling stock and other back-up arrangements.