

John Larkinson
Director, Economic Regulation
Telephone 020 7282 2193
E-mail: john.larkinson@orr.gsi.gov.uk

22 September 2014

Chris Scoggins
Chief Executive, National Rail Enquiries
2nd Floor
200 Aldersgate
London, EC1A 4HD

Train operating company MDs
Paul Plummer, Network Rail

Dear Chris,

Improving passenger information during disruption (PIDD)

I am writing to you, train operating company managing directors and Network Rail to summarise the position we have reached on PIDD and on the next steps.

In 2012 we introduced a new condition into operator and station licences. The purpose of the condition is to ensure that passengers receive appropriate, accurate and timely information about train services so they can plan and make journeys with a reasonable degree of assurance.

ATOC published a code of practice and operators published their own local delivery plans to show how they would comply with it. We have worked on the basis that if operators meet the code of practice they would, in principle, be compliant with the licence.

Since 2012 the industry has improved its processes and procedures. Passengers have seen the introduction of smartphone apps and the better availability of Twitter to build a relationship between operator and passenger. The early phases of the Darwin rollout have introduced more consistent information across the various sources as it streamlines the information shown on station screens, websites and apps. The inclusion of PIDD delivery in staff competency assessments has also helped drive improved customer service.

We all recognised that the position would need to be reviewed and in November 2013 we wrote informing you that ORR intended to assess whether the current code of practice remained relevant and whether a review of the code was required.

We were pleased that the industry responded by saying it wanted to do its own review. Alongside this we asked Passenger Focus (PF) for its views and we funded a specific piece of research to get the up to date views of passengers. This research shows that passengers are still concerned at a lack of reliable information – including becoming



frustrated when front line staff have less information than they have on their mobile phones and when tickets are sold for trains that are not running. It is clear that the code of practice and local plans are not driving sufficient change.

The industry's review considered the findings of the research, the recommendations of Passenger Focus, our views on the progress made so far from incidents that we have reviewed and the lessons from last winter. The industry has produced a revised code of practice and agreed specific new delivery measures. The revised code of practice also incorporates the action from the Transport Select Committee which wants to see an end to passenger information stating that incidents that are affecting services "until further notice".

The new code of practice includes commitments:

- to carry out further national quantitative research for all train operators – with the results being published by each operator;
- for the audit of core messages by a third party;
- to ensure that core messages have better estimates about the duration of the incident;
- for operators to monitor their websites (and other websites that contain information about their services) to make sure that what the passenger can see makes sense; and
- for operators and Network Rail to hold cross industry reviews of local plans to ensure that they are up to date and share good practice

The new delivery measures cover three time bands and include:

- Short term delivery – actions such as ensuring websites have a prominent warning message when the service is disrupted, better promotion of services that are available for passengers to check for delays before they travel, ensuring that amendments are entered into the Darwin system in a timely fashion and giving details of how to claim compensation if the threshold has been reached.
- Medium term delivery (within two years) – actions including integrating the National Rail Enquiries disruption feed into the retail pages of train operator websites so that passengers planning journeys on routes that are disrupted are told about it, making a renewed effort to ensure that staff make an initial announcement within two minutes of a train coming to a stop between stations and reviewing the apps and devices issued to staff to ensure they are fit for purpose.
- Longer term delivery (within CP5) – actions including an aspiration to link retailing websites with the National Rail Enquiries alerting service so that notifications can be



sent for disruptions, delays and cancellations and contacting passengers booked on specific trains if that train is delayed or cancelled.

From our perspective these are welcome developments and we believe they will further improve the service to passengers.

We need to agree how the new code of practice commitments and specific new delivery measures are consolidated into an action plan containing clear, dated deliverables and showing the operators responsible for delivery. Progress with delivery of the action plan can then be monitored by the industry and ORR and publicly reported. We also need to agree the basis on which we will continue to monitor licence compliance by individual operators.

We have agreed that you will publish the first draft of the action plan by November 2014 (the updated code of practice dated July 2014 has already been published on your website) and progress will be regularly reviewed by the industry's National Task Force (NTF) which we attend. We expect the plan to be substantially populated by December 2014 and there will be an NTF supervised change control process to allow any further deliverables/dates to be added (or amended if necessary). In addition to this we will have quarterly review meetings to assess progress in more detail.

Local delivery plans should continue to be reviewed annually and should reflect the new code of practice. Also, as now, we will expect regular reports from operators and we will be contacting operators to confirm submission dates and the content of those reports. We will also ask them to demonstrate compliance with the action plan at a local level where they have specific actions.

In summary therefore, in assessing future compliance with this licence condition we will assess whether operators are delivering against the new code of practice via their revised local delivery plans and delivering the specific measures in the action plans. We will report publicly on progress.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Larkinson', is written over a light blue rectangular background.

John Larkinson