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Chris Burchell
Chair of National Task Force
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Winter performance and information to passengers

I am writing to you in your capacity as chair of the rail industry's National Task Force.

Passengers and freight customers have suffered serious levels of disruption to their train services during the recent severe winter weather. The quality of information provided to rail users during this disruption has again, in places, been very poor.

The immediate priority, beyond restoring current operations, must be for the industry to review its performance over this period. We recognise that great efforts were made by people right across the railway to keep services running and passengers informed, sometimes in the most hostile conditions, and great credit is due for this. But where there are lessons to be learned this must happen quickly, and practical steps which can improve the handling of any further such conditions for the rest of this winter and for next winter must be taken now.

I know that the National Task Force has work underway to learn the lessons from the recent disruption and intends to coordinate the steps needed to tackle the issues. We fully support you in doing this; we will, though, need to be satisfied that NTF is doing so vigorously and effectively.

On information to passengers, we expect NTF to look closely at the extent to which plans developed following previous such reviews have been properly implemented. We will also look for a rapid and positive response to the findings of Arup's audits into the implementation of the passenger information code of practice, and the provision of passenger information in general. The first set of findings is being provided in advance of the NTF meeting next week.



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We would recognise and welcome effective action by the industry to move quickly to deliver best practice in these areas on its own initiative. But if we are not fully convinced that this is going to happen we are prepared to take steps ourselves to secure improvement, in the interests of all those using the railway.

I am placing a copy of this letter on our website and sending copies to Bronwyn Hill at DfT and David Middleton at Transport Scotland.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Emery". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned on a light blue rectangular background.

Bill Emery