

Office of Rail Regulation, Network
Rail and Transport Scotland

Passenger Information During Disruption

Information Provision during Winter
2010-2011 in Scotland

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1 Introduction

Passenger research has consistently shown that the rail industry has a poor record at providing useful information when services are disrupted. Only around one in every three passengers is satisfied with the information provided when there are delays, and improving this ranks fifth in order of passengers' priorities (after prices, punctuality, frequency and crowding). The industry has recognised the urgent need for improvement and has implemented a joint programme of work endorsed by the National Task Force.

This programme of work centres around the adoption of an approved code of practice published in November 2009, which specifies key requirements for Train Operating Companies (TOCs), Network Rail and the National Railway Communication Centre (NRCC) that will enable the provision of timely, correct and consistent passenger information during delays and disruption.

Arup, as the Independent Reporter, has been requested to undertake a review of the implementation of this Passenger Information During Disruption (PIDD) approved code of practice (ACOP). The work was planned to investigate a sample of incidents that occurred across the network from January 2011 to April 2011, and from them to draw together a picture of how well the ACOP is working within the industry. The findings will be issued in a report in May 2011.

However, as a result of the severe weather suffered across the UK from late November and throughout December, an additional review was requested of the management of information during this period. An initial study only covered performance in England. A further request was made to carry out a separate review of events in Scotland from the 27th November to the 31st December 2010 which was particularly badly impacted by a prolonged period of bad weather. This report summarises the findings from that review, which will also feed into the final study report due for publication in May 2011.

2 Methodology

The review took place in March 2011, three months after the worst of the impact. Some of the knowledge of what actually happened was lost given the passage of time. However, a meeting was held on the 9th March with ScotRail and the Network Rail (NR) route to review the evidence that was available and to discuss with them the reviews that were held.

Separate meetings were also held with Transport Scotland on the 8th and 9th March who shared with the Reporter Team samples of the passenger correspondence they received, many of which made reference to passenger information.

3 Overview of the Weather Impact in Scotland

Before considering the use of PIDD over this period, it is useful to understand the weather's impact on train services. The cold spell first started to impact Scotland from the 27 November having been well predicted through weather forecasts. The first Extreme Weather Action Team (EWAT) session was held on the 24 November in response to the current weather forecasts.

The first day with a significant impact was Monday 29 November where a contingency timetable of 86% of normal services was planned and only 78% of that plan actually reached their destination. Heavy snow fell during that week such that by Friday 3 December only 48% of trains were planned to run of which 91% reached their destination.

The position remained at similar levels over the weekend but deteriorated further on the 6 December when another wave of heavy snow badly hit the Strathclyde area in particular. On Tuesday 7 December, 48% of services were planned to operate, but only 67% actually reached their destination (in other words only around one third of the 2,200 services actually ran their full journey). Similar levels of disruption continued until Thursday 8 December with a gradual improvement in service levels starting on the 10 December.

During this week the problems became less about falling snow, and more about the impact of very low temperatures. In particular this was having a severe impact on fleet availability as the prolonged exposure to continuous sub-zero temperatures began to cause major ice build up.

In terms of service provision, by Monday 13 December the number of trains operating had improved with 96% of services planned to operate and 91% of these reaching their destination, not good by normal standards, but a massive improvement on the previous weeks. The weather remained very cold through until the 31 December with fresh snowfalls continuing to cause disruption. Fresh falls in the week prior to Christmas had a major impact with the train plan gradually reduced during that week with only 65% of trains planned to operate on the 23 December. The position between Christmas and New Year was much improved and the cold spell ended during the New Year period.

4 Weather Management

NR receives its forecasts from its supplier Meteogroup. However, they have access to a variety of forecasts such as from the Met Office and BBC and these were all used to keep a very close overview on predicted snowfalls. The general view was that apart from the 6 December, the levels of snow and the cold temperatures were correctly forecast. The 6 December falls in the central belt were much more disruptive than expected (as evidenced by the EWAT records) and this also had a major impact on the roads network in the area.

EWAT meetings were held throughout the period from the 24 November. These were supplemented by 09.30 conference calls jointly with NR and TOCs to discuss the service provision. NR and ScotRail were in constant dialogue during the whole period. Gold Command (the industry control structure for response to

major incidents) was manned throughout by both NR and ScotRail staff, and the benefits of both Controls being based in the ICC helped communication flows.

5 Passenger Complaints

The Reporter Team reviewed correspondence sent to Transport Scotland. The following are examples of the complaints received on passenger information.

“... I checked my train departure online. The Inverness to Aberdeen service was due to depart Inverurie at 08:06, as it has been marked to do all week. This information was online at 07:22 ... On reaching the station at 08:00 ... discovering that the train had left at 07:50...”

“... I received a text telling me that the 15:45, 16:18 and 16:50 back to Largs were all either delayed or cancelled ... I went to the station to try for the 16:18 and was pleased to see it was running on time ...”

“Ticket office staff never have a clue, and I experience of being told that a train is running by counter staff only to get to the platform and find it is cancelled...”

“... This week again, ScotRail have cancelled every train service before 08:00 and are not keeping their website or National Rail enquiries up to date ...”

“... The electronic announcements and message boards at platforms being totally inaccurate, misleading and in many cases telling blatant lies...”

“... The information screens tell you a train is On Time or still running when it is clearly not ...”

“... Why have a journey check facility that gives false information ...”

“... 10 minutes later to then tell us it was cancelled – even the driver was confused ...”

6 Passenger Information During Disruption Policy

Procedures/Processes Status

Network Rail Scotland and ScotRail went for a ‘soft’ launch of PIDD on 2 August 2010. They recognised that not all procedures were in place nor was staff training complete, but wanted to learn from experience so that they could go formally live with PIDD in December 2010. Various procedures were in place during the poor weather from the 27 November to 31 December 2010 which are summarised below.

ScotRail Procedures

The following is a summary of the procedures:-

- Code of Practice for Customer Information

This was issued in July 2010 and describes the processes ScotRail intend to use for customer information dissemination. It sets out the requirements for information provision on and off stations, including setting out the format of

Tyrell messages. However, the document makes little direct reference to PIDD or CSL2 and does not actually describe what different arrangements apply when CSL2 has been activated.

- Control Communication Arrangements for PIDD

This was issued in September 2010 to controllers. The document sets out the key requirements for Control staff on the implementation of PIDD. This includes the applicable CSL2 thresholds. It also includes the separation of Scotland into Blue Routes (main routes) and Orange Routes (the more rural services) with different thresholds.

- CIS Operations Protocol

This was issued in March 2010 and sets out the requirements for the operation of the CIS systems. It describes disruption as being Low, Medium and Severe but makes no reference to PIDD.

- Do Not Travel Advice

This was issued in December 2009 and has not been updated to incorporate PIDD. It sets out when 'Do Not Travel' should be made and by whom.

- Alternative Transport and Connectional Policy

This was updated in March 2010. It sets out the policy for holding connections and the use of buses or taxis during disruption. The procedure does not make reference to PIDD.

- Disruption Handling

This was issued to key team leaders in January 2009 and sets out guidance on roles and responsibilities in terms of disruption. This is currently being updated to comply with the PIDD requirements.

- On Train Handbook

An updated version that includes PIDD has been signed off by the National Rail PIDD champions. It needs to have the green-yellow-red operational status added and will then be issued in April 2011.

NR Procedures

NR had the following procedures in place:-

- National Control Instructions Section 2.3

This was re-issued on the 4 December 2010 during the poor weather period. The update includes the generic requirements for implementing PIDD.

- Scotland Route Incident Management and PIDD Procedure

This was issued on the 10 August 2010 and covered more specific requirements within Scotland for use by Control staff. It makes reference to blue and orange routes but the narrative does not make it clear what actions are taken and there is some use of red and yellow disruption levels but these are not clearly defined. The activities list discusses what happens if yellow levels are reached and not red. However this latter point appears to be because of document formatting.

General Comments on Procedures

It is not clear how the procedures used actually relate to each other and comply with the PIDD ACOP. They have clearly been developed over time and as new procedures were produced existing documents have not been amended to ensure consistency. This means that key definitions, like the various disruption thresholds, were not the same within different procedures. ScotRail and NR have already recognised this and a new overarching process, Managing Service Disruption, has been produced. This is a joint document and is based around the good practice procedures supplied by the PIDD Implementation Team. At the time of this review, this procedure is not yet signed off. When it is implemented it is important that each existing document is reviewed and either amended or withdrawn. Many of the related documents, e.g. the Do Not Travel Policy which currently lacks a clear status, should be made part of the same suite of procedures and controlled alongside it.

It is also far from clear in any of the procedures within the Managing Service Disruption exactly what CSL2 means to staff in terms of how their duties change. The procedures refer to an “enhanced level of customer service” but do not actually define what this is. It is important that the procedures make it clear exactly how CSL2 changes the process for supplying information to passengers (including intending passengers). This will partly be addressed by the roles and responsibilities documents currently being produced (but not available prior to Christmas) but the actual information flows that show the overall picture need to be set out much more clearly. It might be worth looking at c2c’s procedures for CSL2 which have been used as the model for other TOCs.

The procedures were also unclear on the use of hub and satellite stations and the relationship with the Customer Service Centres. It is important that the lines of communication between the Information Controllers and station staff is set out in both normal/green operations and when CSL2 is triggered. If these lines of communication change then the actual procedures should be clearly set out and the technology that may support this. A review of the arrangements in FCC may prove beneficial whereby station staff are sent information on an incident via FCC’s intranet.

7 Staff Competence in PIDD

The PIDD ACOP sets out some of the key requirements for staff in terms of understanding PIDD. There are several types of staff who need to be trained:

- First Response staff who attend the incident on site. The Mobile Operations Manager (MOM) will be the first person on site and will generally be responsible for giving the initial assessment. If the incident is serious then a Rail Incident Officer will be appointed. The MOM will often become the RIO.

The RIO will manage the response on site and help formulate the Prioritised Plan with the Lead Operations Controller in conjunction with the Train Operator Liaison Officer (TOLO) if required, and the Asset Recovery Manager (ARM) who is an asset engineer. The ARM will set out the engineering elements of the prioritisation plan.

- The Control Office is responsible for ensuring that the correct operational and technical resources are mobilised and engaged. A Lead Operations Controller will be nominated to liaise with on site staff and act as the focal point for developing a Prioritised Plan. A Lead Information Controller will be nominated to manage the flow of information to staff and passengers.
- On Call personnel/duty managers will oversee and direct the response to the incident.
- Customer facing staff including on train and at stations.

General briefings had been given to Network Rail and ScotRail Control Staff and had been cascaded within ScotRail to train crew and on station staff.

However, in terms of specific training in the key areas of Prioritised Planning and Core Messages the levels of training are mixed. By late November, only 2 out of 7 staff in the ScotRail Control who cover the Customer Service Control desk had been trained in the production of Core Messages. This was partly a result of training being cancelled due to the bad weather (and re-scheduled for the 30th March 2011) and difficulties in releasing staff to attend courses. Similar issues have arisen with attendance on the Prioritised Planning course with 3 ScotRail Duty Control Managers (plus one manager who steps up to cover the role) still to attend at the time of the review.

The focus within NR has been to train up the Control staff with five Duty Control Managers, six Operations Managers and five Infrastructure Delivery Managers having been trained so far in Prioritised Planning. Less stress has been placed on training staff likely to attend the site of incidents, and none of the Incident Controllers who will be responsible for actually producing the prioritised plan have been trained. NR are looking at getting their own trainer in Scotland trained to carry out more localised courses. No formal training has been given to MOMs with the view taken that the lead will be taken in Control. However, all staff have been briefed on PIDD.

Nationally, NR has recognised that there is a gap in the training of front line response staff such as MOMs. It is proposed that this gap will start to be filled by providing training to these staff via the Quarterly Safety Briefings.

It was stated that when NR Scotland and ScotRail launched PIDD that it was not clear when training courses would be made available. They also report that the quality of the training courses has improved over time. However, they are unaware of any future Core Message and Prioritised Planning courses planned from April 2011, which is a concern given that about 40% of their staff still require training. The importance of having trained staff was demonstrated by the management of the incident at South Gyle on the 25 February (see Section 10), and endorses the plan to train their own trainer.

8 Emergency Timetables During the Snow

The basis of sound provision of train service information is the timetable that is planned to operate. Ideally this should be communicated to passengers as far in advance as possible, and be as reliable as events reasonably allow.

As the weather deteriorated it was decided to curtail services by implementing amended timetables. ScotRail and NR had regular discussions during the daily conferences based on the current forecasts, the state of the infrastructure and, as the period progressed, the levels of fleet availability. They were under external pressure to operate as many trains as possible each day, in particular on those routes where alternative road and air transport were badly affected by the weather.

ScotRail did not have a pre-planned winter contingency timetable to be used as a basis for the train service – although the pressure to operate as many services as possible would probably have meant that such a timetable would have required adapting to reflect the available infrastructure and fleet. Throughout the early period of the bad weather the timetable changed frequently until 13 December when it largely settled down to a single plan.

There were constant challenges to attempt to run services when the reality was that experience showed on most days that they were too ambitious, given that on many days less than 90% of trains in the contingency timetable actually reached their destination (on nine days this was less than 80%).

During the initial phase of poor weather the revised timetable was uploaded by the NR Control staff overnight. However, during the latter period, schedules were uploaded by the NR Operational Planning team in Milton Keynes.

Milton Keynes staff used the new facility developed by Network Rail to upload the next day's timetable into the industry Integrated Train Planning System (ITPS). This Day A for Day B facility was delivered in November 2010 (previously it was effectively Day A for Day C) and was one of the lessons drawn by the rail industry from the snow in January 2010 to help provide better passenger information. It works best when a timetable is pre-prepared and can be selected 'off the shelf', and the NR operational planning team had requested the TOCs to prepare contingency timetables for this purpose. ScotRail had not prepared any winter contingency timetables, and as noted above, the timetable varied from day to day anyway. This meant that Milton Keynes staff had to input each train manually each day.

To make this new facility work, NR Operational Planning requested at the 1000 daily national EWAT that details of the next train's timetable should be sent to them by 1300. This would give them time to upload the changes and then for the systems to generate the daily timetable file (known as the CIF) which in turn provides the information for the various passenger information systems, as well as details of train movements for signallers.

However, it appears that during December decisions were taken on the next day's timetable by NR and ScotRail after the 1300 deadline and closer to 1600. Whilst they liaised with Milton Keynes, it is likely that the later time introduced risk for errors to be made in uploading the timetable.

Problems were created throughout the period with duplicate or even triplicate schedules being in the system. These were said to have continued even when the

schedules were being input in Milton Keynes and on occasions it was said that even when only minimal changes were being made in the latter phases of the snow, the problem persisted.

One of the lessons drawn by NR and ScotRail is the need to produce winter contingency timetables that align to the key route strategies. They are aiming to produce nine timetables for different scenarios by December 2011.

9 Impact on Passenger Information

The days from the 29 November saw a deterioration in the level of train service provided. During this early period the provision of services was fluid with many late changes caused by either new line closures or resource shortages. The impact of this fluidity alongside the timetable difficulties had a profound impact on the provision of accurate information.

9.1 At Stations

Information to station staff is issued by two ScotRail Customer Service Centres (CSCs) based in Dunfermline and Paisley. These two centres perform the function of the 'hub stations' as defined in the PIDD ACOP to key network stations on the Scottish network. These key stations then pass on information to their own satellite stations. Glasgow Central, Glasgow Queen Street, Edinburgh Waverley, Perth, Aberdeen and Inverness sit outside this arrangement and receive their information direct from Control.

The CSCs issued the next day's contingency timetable to staff including those selling tickets (as well as to train crew book on points). Staff should have been aware that if routes were suspended then tickets should not have been sold for travel on them. However, this was an inference rather than a specific action and ScotRail have identified the lesson to make this clearer in future.

Retail staff receive all Tyrell messages. However, they have to manually switch from their ticket selling screen to see them and so it may be possible that they do not read them immediately. Ticket machines continued to sell all tickets during December.

Station staff had no visibility of Tyrell messages on train cancellations or delays experienced by other operators. ScotRail are now planning to get access to and disseminate Tyrell messages from East Coast, Transpennine Express, Virgin and Cross Country.

9.2 CIS/Announcements

At the majority of stations in Scotland, CIS is operated from the two CSCs. The exceptions are Glasgow Queen Street which has its own stand-alone system operated by ScotRail staff, and Glasgow Central and Edinburgh Waverley which also have their own systems and are operated by Network Rail staff.

A large number of complaints received by ScotRail were about the inaccuracies of the CIS systems. In the early period, in particular the late changes to services, it meant that the systems were frequently showing incorrect information since it was difficult to update for the latest changes which in all probability were not always

relayed from the ICC to the Customer Service Centres given the volume of changes being managed.

The major cause of problems was the lack of a robust timetable within the system itself. The difficulties experienced with contingency timetables meant that the system struggled to cope with CIS showing cancelled trains as running or vice versa.

To overcome the problems within the systems, the decision was taken during the first week of December to switch off the automatic CIF feed by which CIS is updated overnight for schedule changes. Staff in both Customer Service Centres took the revised plan as issued by Control and input this manually into the system instead. This helped to stabilise the position for the latter part of the month. However, the signallers and drivers still received the automatic CIF timetable file with its errors. This introduced potential discrepancies in the information provided to the train operators and to passengers.

Further, the CIF file still populated the timetable information on the NRE and ScotRail websites, and whilst ScotRail staff carried out checks for consistency with CIS, it also introduced the possibility of discrepancies between these different channels of passenger information.

At Glasgow Queen Street, ScotRail decided to only show the trains that were running rather than to list all the trains that were cancelled or had changed schedules. They felt that this worked well and presented a clearer and more positive message to passengers.

9.3 OIS

In addition to CIS, twelve of the larger stations in Scotland are fitted with Network Rail's Operated Information System (OIS) screens. These screens have a higher definition than CIS screens and one of the ideas was to use them in a similar way to the London Underground screens that show the status of each of the Underground Lines (Major / Minor Delays / Good Service).

The screens are operated by NR Control staff and during the snow they were used to provide generic messages on the state of train services. They were therefore not affected by the problems with the timetable information.

9.4 ScotRail Website

ScotRail use Journey Check on their website to update passengers on real time running. This relies on a robust timetable base within the system and up to date running information being supplied.

The fluidity of the service changes caused problems for passengers. A number of complaints were received from passengers who checked Journey Check before setting out only to find that the situation had changed when they arrived at the station. This can happen for any incident that affects the train service and not just during the bad weather, but the increased number of unplanned service changes during this period would have increased the risk of catching passengers out in this way. To help mitigate against this, ScotRail ran a marketing campaign during the bad weather period to advise passengers to sign up to their journey alert text messaging service that would alert them of any service changes on their route.

The lack of a robust timetable within the system created major problems at times during December. This meant that the system had within it the duplicate schedules or trains that had been cancelled but still shown to operate. In turn the website did not carry reliable information and was, alongside CIS problems, the main cause of passenger complaints.

When CSL2 is declared, a pink 'Disruption Box' appears on the home page that summarises the Core Message. During the bad weather period, ScotRail added a temporary home page that provided a menu of routes (up to 35) for users to click on to obtain information on their line of route. This was a different approach to other TOCs and NRES who provided more of an overview and a summary for each route in the same message. An overview confirming the state of the network and which routes were open and closed might have been more helpful. That said, the Reporter Team did see some complaints that the messages on the website were too simplistic, suggesting that all services on a route were cancelled (for example, between Edinburgh and Dundee) whereas some were in fact running with modified stopping patterns (for example, the Edinburgh – Aberdeen services additionally stopping between Edinburgh and Dundee). There is therefore a balance to strike between providing summary information and the detail required to avoid misinterpretation.

ScotRail's website saw greater demand for information during the snow period. Traffic increased from the usual 26,000 visits per day to a December average of over 84,000 visits per day. Specific demand for Journey Check increased to 49x normal demand. The initial increase in demand led to the website crashing, but this was remedied by ScotRail creating a temporary home page. Nexus Alpha have since enhanced the website so that it can handle 100x normal capacity and 10x the peak demand experienced on the 6th December.

9.5 National Rail Website

ScotRail provide information to the NRCC to update the National Rail website, including the live arrival and departure boards. This feeds through to other systems such as Train Tracker and i-Phone Apps.

During the very early period in late November, ScotRail were providing detailed changes via Tyrell which were praised by the NRCC for keeping them up to date. As part of this review, NRCC also stated:

"It is the view of the NRCC that ScotRail provided good information on the effects the snow was having on their services bearing in mind the very difficult circumstances in which they were seeking to operate and the constantly changing situation. There was good communication by way of emails and telephone calls as well as attendance at national telephone conferences convened by the Network Rail Weather Strategy team." ('ScotRail information during the snow in Late November and December 2010', February 2011, NRCC)

However, as the situation deteriorated (both in Scotland and the rest of the UK), the position became more difficult.

Despite declaring CSL2, ScotRail did not issue regular Core Messages. They did provide the line of route messages each day which NRE uploaded for ScotRail. NRE, though, provided a service overview bulletin on their own website which they updated to reflect service changes throughout the day. They based these

updates on the various Tyrell messages they received. This process appears to have led to some discrepancies. For example, on December 17th ScotRail had withdrawn the Motherwell – Cumbernauld services but this was not mentioned in any of the NRE service bulletins for that day.

The problems with timetable and schedules created very real problems with the live arrivals and departures information. Because inaccurate schedule data was in the system, it meant that the information provided could be inaccurate including cancelled trains or service groups appearing to be operating when checking the website.

An example of the problems caused occurred on Christmas Eve when the network was booked to shut down at approximately 21:00. Journey Planner showed trains operating after this time and passengers were able to purchase tickets for late night trains between Edinburgh and Aberdeen. This resulted in them being transported by taxis.

Following these problems during the bad weather, ScotRail have since been in discussions with NRE about improving the accuracy of the live arrival and departure boards. As a result NRE will be providing the facility to only show trains departing in, say, the next 30 minutes. This will then give staff the time to correct any errors in later train schedules. As these trains are corrected, the window of trains to view can expand. ScotRail are also getting a DARWIN terminal so that they can make these corrections themselves. These are welcome developments because it is clear from some of the complaints shared with the Reporter Team that the problems were a source of a high proportion of complaints. It was also apparent that passengers routinely check both ScotRail's own website and National Rail and noted the differences in the information being given.

9.6 Call Centre

ScotRail operate a call centre at Fort William with 15 staff working on a shift. They answer timetable enquiries, provide real time arrivals and departure information, sell tickets and generate messages via Twitter. They use the ScotRail website as the basis of the information they provide, but also receive Tyrell messages from Control and can phone the two CSCs for any further information or clarification.

Passenger feedback on the Twitter responses was the most positive of any communications channel, and the number of followers doubled between the 5th and 9th December. There are now 3,500 followers.

9.7 Text Messages and Email

ScotRail advise that during December 2010 a further 6,529 people registered with their text alert service, so that more than 21,000 people are now signed up to automatically receive disruption information on their regular journeys.

During December, ScotRail proactively sent texts to advise passengers to check their website for service information. On the 15th December they e-mailed 400,000 people and sent a text message to 38,500 people to apologise for the ongoing disruption, explained the reasons and detailed actions being taken.

9.8 On Train Staff

Conductors and drivers currently have mobile phones. During the snow, many of them phoned Control for information which resulted in some times when Control staff were overwhelmed with phone calls. According to ScotRail's PIDD procedures when CSL2 is declared the conductor managers are expected to phone the relevant conductors to update them with information. The conductors themselves are encouraged to phone the CSCs for information. The precise lines of communication and information need to be clarified with all staff.

ScotRail are currently investigating the possibility of issuing conductors with Blackberries. This will allow them to receive e-mails and Tyrell messages directly from Control.

Some of ScotRail's services are driver only operated (DOO). ScotRail endeavour to have ticket examiners on all these services, and they have been briefed on PIDD. Like conductors, they currently carry a mobile and may soon be issued with Blackberries to receive e-mails and Tyrell messages direct from Control. Drivers are expected to update information when the train is stationery and when they receive information from signallers. Drivers have been briefed on the overall principles of PIDD but have not been given any specific instructions on what they are required to do for both DOO services and conventionally manned trains. ScotRail plan to issue PIDD roles and responsibilities statements to both drivers and ticket examiners.

9.9 The Media

ScotRail's press office issued several briefings each day starting at 0500 with the aim of spreading the message on which train services were operating as widely as possible. The next day's timetable was also issued at about 1900. Occasionally what was broadcast was heavily edited to fit in the available time and lost some accuracy.

ScotRail also invited journalists to visit their depots. This was considered to be a success at explaining the problems faced by ScotRail during the bad weather, and in turn helping passengers understand the causes of the delays and cancellations.

10 Reviews undertaken by ScotRail and Network Rail

A joint meeting was held in January to review the snow period. A number of improvements were identified and placed on an action tracker.

11 Review of an Incident at South Gyle – 25 February 2011

A separate questionnaire was issued to ScotRail and Network Rail to review how passenger information was handled for major track circuit failures in the South Gyle area affecting all services between Dalmey and Haymarket on the 25th February 2011. The questionnaire is the standard one being used for the national PIDD review and the intention was to look at how many lessons learnt from the

snow period had been put into practice. It also gives an opportunity to review how well PIDD is being applied in Scotland to more 'routine' incidents.

The track circuits failed at 0640 and four trains were in the vicinity at the time. It is clear from the logs that quick action was taken to despatch staff to site and to start re-planning services impacted on what is a very busy route. An initial 20 minute gap in services was instigated by cancelling services and to prevent any potential impact on the Edinburgh - Glasgow services. Contingency arrangements were put in place including diverting via Winchburgh Junction to maintain a service.

However, the PIDD arrangements were not in line with the ACOP or the local procedures discussed in section 5.

The Holding Message that was issued at 0645 was not fully in line with the ACOP format and did not include any advice for passengers. This message was repeated at regular intervals but was not converted into a Core Message so at no stage during the incident was a clear message issued to all ScotRail personnel or NRE with the impact on passengers, clear advice to passengers or the service plan being worked to. No mention was made of replacement buses being implemented for instance.

The decision to implement CSL2 was not taken until 0820 by which time the morning peak had been heavily disrupted for passengers commuting into Edinburgh.

A prioritised plan was put in place but only at about 0820. This did include the use of temporary block working for instance, but by the time the plan was agreed this was already in place. There was no evidence that an initial assessment was given during the early stages of the incident.

The track circuit failures were realigned at 0836 although disruption continued for several hours after this due to the impact on train crew and units.

Trains were cancelled correctly through Tyrell during the incident which fed through into the various downstream systems.

Post-incident reviews have been held into the incident by both ScotRail and NR. The NR review appears to have focussed on the engineering and operational aspects and has not covered the application of PIDD. The ScotRail review did identify the shortcomings of the application of some aspects of PIDD, in particular the length of time it took to declare CSL2 and the quality of the messages put out by the Control.

In discussion it was stated that the key NR and ScotRail controllers on duty that morning had not yet received the key PIDD training modules, i.e. core messaging and prioritised planning. However, both organisations expressed some disappointment in the management of the passenger information flows. The ScotRail review did highlight that few complaints were received at Edinburgh Waverley on the day although correspondence had still not been assessed at the time of the Reporter Team visit.

12 Conclusions

Weather Conditions

The levels of snow experienced and the ongoing length of the cold spell put the railway system in Scotland under unprecedented levels of pressure at the end of 2010. In effect they were operating under CSL2 for a period of five weeks. It was clear to the Reporter team that both NR and ScotRail staff worked hard to keep the railway operational during this time.

PIDD Compliance

PIDD was given a 'soft' launch in Scotland in August 2010 in order to build up experience prior to going live in December 2010. However, training was not complete by December with both NR and ScotRail still needing to train a high proportion of their teams. Also the PIDD procedures were not fully coherent with different definitions of CSL2 appearing on documents. The relationship between key procedures was unclear.

ScotRail and Network Rail have recognised their shortcomings in PIDD arrangements that were in force during the bad weather period and again highlighted by the South Gyle incident. A new joint procedure has been drafted, Managing Service Disruption, which sets out a more coherent approach to PIDD compliance. This includes much clearer definitions of disruption levels including the use of Red, Yellow and Green as used by other TOCs. They are also planning to introduce a Black level for network wide disruption, again in common with some TOCs. They plan to define how the provision of information will change when moving from Yellow to Red, and from Red to Black.

However, it is important that all other existing documents are reviewed to ensure that the definitions are consistent. The status of these other documents, for example the Not to Travel Policy, should also be made clearer by incorporating them into a single suite of procedures rather than as stand-alone documents as at present.

The competence of staff in key areas of the policies is also recognised as insufficient currently, with clear gaps in the core message training and prioritisation planning. This is partly the result of cancelled courses and difficulties to release staff to attend because each course to date has been planned in England. Some additional places have been found, but training in Scotland, either by courses held there or by training trainers will improve this.

One specific issue for NR is the training of out-based staff. Some IMDMs who act as Asset Recovery Managers (ARMs) and some Local Operations Managers have been trained, but this is not universal. No MOMs have received formal training in PIDD despite the fact that they are usually first on site and can give initial assessments. This has been recognised as a weakness nationally and NR have recently developed new training modules for MOMs. A full review of training given and what remains to be done should be undertaken quickly.

ScotRail have also recognised that the roles and responsibilities of staff are not well set out currently. As a result they are planning to issue full roles and responsibility statements to all key personnel. This is welcome but to do so they should also strengthen the actual definitions of what must happen during disruption. Currently they state that staff must carry out an "enhanced level of

customer service” during CSL2 but do not define what this means. In particular the lines of communication at stations are not defined clearly. The role of the two Customer Service Centres should be defined and how this relates to hub and satellite stations. This is vital if the intention to ‘push’ information rather than ‘pull’ it is to apply. Similarly the methods for getting information to on-train staff should be defined during CSL2 and normally.

Contingency Planning

ScotRail tried to operate as many trains as possible each day. This meant that the timetable changed from day to day until 13 December (when it largely settled down) to reflect changes in the weather and available infrastructure and train fleet. As explained, it made reliable information provision more challenging. It resulted in:

- Constantly changing schedules each day which would not be available for viewing on the website in Journey Check until early in the morning.
- Train planning systems had to be updated every day which was manually intensive and error prone (see below).
- Errors led to confusion for staff including signallers unsure about some train schedules.
- The timetables were generally too ambitious and not robust enough to deal with trains and infrastructure failures occurring during the day. This meant that the passenger information systems had to be updated regularly during the day and helped to explain why passengers found different services running when they arrived at a station to what had been shown earlier on the website – a source of many passenger complaints.

Network Rail and ScotRail have started work on preparing nine contingency winter timetables that fit with Network Rail’s key route strategy. These should be ready by December 2011. They will provide a more solid base for winter timetables, whilst recognising that there will be some changes to reflect the precise circumstances of the day.

Train Information

The new ‘Day A for Day B’ facility within Network Rail’s national timetable system (ITPS) allows TOCs to send the next day’s timetable for upload by 1300. This then populates the various website and CIS passenger information systems.

However, as noted above, ScotRail did not have any pre-planned contingency timetables and so the next day’s timetable had to be uploaded manually by Network Rail staff at Milton Keynes. Typically, they received the timetable from ScotRail by 1600 which restricted the amount of time for upload. It was perhaps not surprising that errors were made.

This led to ScotRail deciding to switch off the daily timetable CIF file produced by ITPS in CIS. They considered it would be easier for their staff to manually input the day’s timetable directly, which was done by staff overnight. This arrangement started towards the end of the first week in December and continued to the end of the month.

Whilst this improved accuracy within CIS, it meant that there were now two versions of the timetable – one in CIS and one from the daily CIF which populated the timetable information on the ScotRail and NRES websites. ScotRail checked the websites and CIS for consistency, but the errors in the CIF would have been shown on the websites unless they were corrected. NRES staff were unaware that ScotRail had switched off the CIF from their own CIS.

Having two versions of the timetable on different passenger information systems introduces the risk of inconsistencies and confusion. Whilst appreciating the very difficult circumstances during December, the aim should be to prevent this happening again. The ATOC sponsored project to synchronise train information between the DARWIN database and TOC CIS systems will achieve this, but does rely on an accurate daily CIF timetable file. Preparing contingency timetables in advance will be a great help to reduce the risk of error. Also ScotRail are getting access to a DARWIN terminal and training in April 2011 so they can make corrections themselves rather than via NRES staff.

Another potential source for discrepancy between CIS and Journey Check on the website is the process by which the two systems are updated. Control issue a cancellation or change in train schedule via a Tyrell template message. This automatically updates DARWIN and the websites. ScotRail's CIS is updated manually by the two Customer Service Centres and so is likely to take longer especially if there are many changes to make. ATOC's DARWIN project should address this discrepancy.

Service Information

Whilst CSL2 had been declared, a regular Core Message was not produced during the snow period. This should have clearly set out an overview of what services were running, both for staff and passengers.

ScotRail's website has a 'Disruption Box' which essentially displays the core message setting out the problem, overall impact and advice to passengers. In this case, ScotRail instead provided a list of routes from which users could select their own route to receive an overview of the service on that route. In order to provide a bigger picture more quickly, it may have been better to also provide one (albeit longer) core message – perhaps aided with a map.

Such an overview message would also have helped communications with NRES. The NRES practice during the bad weather was to provide an overview message on their website that summarised the state of train services in Scotland. They constructed this from the ScotRail line of route messages but on occasions they misinterpreted some of the information. ScotRail had to request such errors to be corrected, although on the one day we looked at the NRES message still contained some wrong information for a route.

Channels of Information

During December, the use of ScotRail's website, Twitter, text messages and e-mail increased significantly. It is clear that these channels of information are becoming increasingly important to passengers. In response to this, ScotRail have increased the capacity of their website to cope with 10x the peak demand they

experienced on the 6th December. This also underlines the importance of ensuring that the information provided is accurate and timely.

Ticket selling

There were occasions when tickets were sold during December for trains that did not operate. ScotRail are looking to extend the provision of Tyrell messages to ticket retail staff to include information on other train operators. However, staff have to check if Tyrell messages have arrived and so may not receive the information for some time. This is a network wide problem and not just specific to ScotRail – as is the selling of all tickets by ticket machines during disruption. Consideration should be given by the rail industry as to how this could be improved.

Going Forward

Network Rail and ScotRail have identified a number of improvements to make for next winter and for the general provision of passenger information, some of which are noted above. In addition, there are some industry wide initiatives that will help including the ATOC sponsored DARWIN project and PIDD itself.

The impression given to the Reporter team is that both Network Rail and ScotRail are committed to making these improvements. It will be important that all the initiatives are project managed to ensure they are co-ordinated and tested, and that adequate training is provided to staff.

Appendix A

Definitions and Glossary

Asset Recovery Manager

A Maintenance Engineer who will manage the engineering recovery of an incident and provide the infrastructure plan.

Core Message

A jargon free message issued by a Control Office during Major Delays/Disruption at intervals not exceeding 20 minutes when CSL2 is in operation. A Core Message will contain three key pieces of information:

- The Problem – including infrastructure issues
- The Impact on service
- The Advice for Customers

Customer Service Level 2 (CSL2)

The term applied to enhanced mobilisation that will enable delivery of enhanced information and associated Passenger Train Operator specific customer service requirements during Major Delays/Disruption. CSL2 must be activated and notified once the Mandatory Services Disruption Threshold has been exceeded and may also be activated for lower levels of disruption if required by Train Operators.

Darwin

The National Real Time Train running database that powers all NRE Real Time channels and those used by TOCs, Passenger Train Operators and 3rd parties.

Darwin Workstation

A train management tool that allows quick and easy updates of train service schedules within the Darwin database.

Do Not Travel Warning

A structured advice issued by Passenger Train Operators during Major Delays/Disruption when travel is not recommended. This will take account of any viable alternatives.

Holding Message

An initial message issued by a Control Office containing the available details of an incident/disruption and the impact on service. A Holding Message will be issued within 10 minutes of the Control Office receiving advice of the incident/disruption.

Major Delays/Disruption

A level of delays/disruption above a Passenger Train Operator's defined Mandatory Service Disruption Threshold.

Mandatory Service Disruption Threshold

Each Passenger Train Operator will define a Mandatory Service Disruption Threshold above which the PIDD Arrangements will always be applicable. This threshold may be Passenger Train Operator or route specific.

Once triggered this will enable the Passenger Train Operator and associated Network Rail route(s) to engage the enhanced information arrangements in the PIDD Approved Code of Practice and provide staff (and third parties such as NRE) with the confidence that regular information will be available for passing on to passengers. It will also enable Passenger Train Operators to introduce any additional predetermined operational/customer service arrangements that are associated with their management of Major Delays/Disruption.

This enhanced level of mobilisation/information provision should be designated Customer Service Level 2 (CSL2).

Passengers

Customers who are undertaking their journey (e.g. on train or station – including transfers, LUL etc.).

Prioritised Plan

A plan formulated within a Control Office to manage an incident and recover the service in a structured way. Such a plan will include prioritised actions and milestones.

Rail Incident Officer (RIO)

The competent and certified person appointed to manage and co-ordinate the response to incidents affecting Network Rail infrastructure on behalf of rail businesses.

Ticket Acceptance Policy

A Passenger Train Operator policy that covers the following key aspects during disruption:

- Disrupted trains;
- Travel by alternative routes;
- Decision making on the day;
- Communication on the day;
- Ticket issuing during disruption; and
- Periods of amnesty

Train Operator Liaison Officer (TOLO)

The competent person appointed by the Lead Train Operator to co-ordinate the TOC response to incidents involving trains and affecting Network Rail infrastructure.

Tyrell

A messaging system that is used by Passenger Train Operators and Network Rail to pass information to frontline staff, passengers, websites, and 3rd party organisations (primarily from Control Offices).

Appendix B

Meetings held during the review

The Reporter team held the following meetings during this review:

- 8th and 9th March – with Transport Scotland to understand the nature of correspondence from passengers during the period of bad weather under review.
- 9th March – with First ScotRail and Network Rail to review the evidence of the provision of passenger information.