



Network Rail Infrastructure Limited  
George Stephenson House  
Toft Green  
York  
YO1 6JT

21 October 2024

Dear Feras,

Thank you for your letter dated 9th October.

I am responding on Jake Kelly's behalf, having agreed to lead the Eastern Region during a period of his absence. The Route Directors and I recognise that industry train service performance on Eastern Region is not at the level to which we aspire. I welcome ORR's recognition of Eastern's significant effort to improve, and the progress made in developing and implementing our performance improvement plan.

As you have outlined, our forecasts indicate that train performance, most notably On Time performance, has moved away from year-end target levels. As you will be aware, these forecasts incorporate industry contribution to performance as a feature of the "whole system," in both punctuality and cancellations. Over the same time period as you have set out within your letter (since August '22) the 24% increase in Network Rail delay minutes you outline corresponds with a 19% increase in On Time failures associated with Network Rail causes. Whilst operator caused delay minutes have been observed to be static by ORR, operator caused On Time failure causes have increased by 12%.

I provide this as an illustration of the "whole system" complexity informing our forecasts, and to offer some context to the broader decline in the performance measures for which ORR hold Network Rail to account. The Route Directors and I are committed to improving the Network Rail related causes, and to working with industry partners in support of whole industry improvement of train services for passengers and freight users.

At a meeting with the ORR on 25<sup>th</sup> September, and a subsequent call on 4<sup>th</sup> October, Jake outlined that he had instigated a regionally governed programme to strategically assess the Region's performance plan delivery against "whole system" risks, identify gaps where applicable, and test good practice in each route – and our high level timescales for doing so. Following your subsequent letter, my team will continue, and now accelerate and adapt this activity to provide a refreshed plan by 20<sup>th</sup> December. It is regrettable that, in order to meet ORR's required timescale, this acceleration and adaptation coincides with the autumn period. As we have set out previously within our existing performance plans and regular engagement with ORR, autumn is a key focus for our Route teams in improving train service performance.





My team will undertake this activity in three phases, drawing on the approach undertaken by Wales & Western in response to ORR's Final Order, and will engage with ORR to outline the outputs of these phases prior to providing the final plan on 20<sup>th</sup> December. As you recognise in your letter, a 'one size fits all' approach to defining and prioritising "whole system" activities is not suitable for Eastern Region. Our operating model within Eastern empowers our four Route teams to prioritise and address the areas impacting train service performance, recognising the unique and varying factors to each of the four Routes, and the fact the Routes are closest to their asset, their industry partners and causal factors in each geographical area. It therefore follows that our plan will not necessarily address the same factors that underpins the Wales & Western plan despite drawing on the approach taken.

The refresh of our plan will be structured using the industry's "whole system model for performance" and provide strategic themes in the areas of the model for which our evidence indicates improvement is needed.

### Phase 1 – design and structure of the plan

This phase will evaluate the strategic focus areas by which we will prioritise our plan, and focus on the underpinning evidence and analysis to confirm the alignment of our actions with issues impacting performance, considering areas such as; infrastructure asset performance; wider industry impact on elements such as service recovery; and wider societal or environmental risks such as trespass and extreme weather. The output of this phase will be the formulation of our improvement plan's structure and associated strategic themes. We anticipate providing this output to ORR by 8<sup>th</sup> November.

### Phase 2 – development

Through workshops undertaken with each Route and supporting area of Network Rail's businesses, we will assess the alignment of our current action plans, forecast benefits, and address gaps that may exist in each strategic theme. We will use this opportunity to set out case studies of best practice, and to consider the operator engagement feeding into the plan. We will also assess the relationships between our action plans and indicators by which we will measure benefits. The output of this phase will be a draft improvement plan, and an overview of how we propose to manage the plan – both in respect of delivery and in respect of refreshing the plan to respond to any emerging risks and issues in train service performance. We anticipate providing this output to ORR by 29<sup>th</sup> November.





### Phase 3 – review and finalisation

The final response to ORR will set out the evidence that underpins the strategic themes and actions, accountable owners, and the methodology by which we will monitor the delivery and benefits of our plan. We will also outline engagement plans with Train Operators in order frame our commitments and the considerations arising from operators in developing them. We anticipate providing a draft plan to ORR by 13<sup>th</sup> December, prior to providing our final plan on 20<sup>th</sup> December.

Thank you for offering your team's engagement during this process. I would welcome ORR providing comments on the output of each phase, and our draft plan. In doing so, I would welcome ORR indicating the extent to which, and how, the four principles by which you will assess our plan are being satisfied. Recognising the compressed timescales required by ORR, I would welcome ORR's responses within 7 days of each output.

I have separately contacted your team to propose a fortnightly senior engagement review of progress with Network Rail and ORR colleagues, and I look forward to working with you and your team in improving train service performance.

Yours sincerely,

Paul McKeown

