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Network Rail Representations for the proposed 60th Supplemental Agreement to the Track Access Contract between Network Rail Infrastructure Limited and Northern Trains Limited dated 03 March 2016.

As directed in your letter dated 30 May 2024, Network Rail is making its representations in respect of a Section 22A of the Railways Act 1993 for the 60th Supplemental Agreement (SA) of the Track Access Contract (TAC) dated 03 March 2016 between Network Rail Infrastructure Limited (Network Rail) and Northern Trains Limited.

In line with ORR's letter of April 24 2024 to the industry on 'Competing and/or complex track access applications for December 2024, May 2025 and December 2025 timetable changes', Northern Trains Limited submitted this application to the ORR on 20 May 2024 as a Section 22A.

Your letter made clear to industry that "We expect applications received by 20 May 2024 to be of sufficient quality, completeness, and certainty to enable Network Rail, industry and ORR to assess them. A prerequisite for achieving this is that applicants will have discussed their plans with, and sourced information from Network Rail before submission (in line with our guidance)."

It further "...requested that Network Rail produces a high-level plan by 05 June 2024 for ORR and industry. This will set out when it will produce its robust assessment for the applications submitted by 20 May 2024."

Network Rail fulfilled this request on 05 June 2024 outlining the plan for undertaking capacity and performance assessments to inform both Network Rail and the ORR on the applications received.

That response should be considered alongside this Representation.

In particular, it should be noted as indicated therein that:

- due to the unprecedented scale of 83 unsupported applications received at one point in time, Capacity Planning plan to phase its analysis,
- assessments will initially focus on applications and geography which do not overlap with the ongoing East Coast Mainline Event Steering Group (ECML ESG) Development work to mitigate the risk of redundant analysis,
- all ECML ESG related applications will be considered following decisions as to the implementation of the ESG Timetable,

As we set out in the High-Level Plan; “Only those rights which potentially interact, contain the required level of information to inform assessments, were discussed with Network Rail and are intended for the next three timetable changes will be considered by Network Rail.” and that “Applications consisting of rights for geography not impacted or for later timetable changes should be considered separately.”

These factors have shaped the anticipated plan for submission of evidence related to this and other applications.

Whilst Network Rail was made aware by Northern Trains Limited that they would be applying for the proposed access rights as requested in ORR’s letter, Network Rail has not yet had an opportunity to fully consider its position on this application and whether it can eventually support the proposed access rights.

ORR, in its invitation to NR to make written representations, expects that NR will:

- include all of the necessary information for ORR to take an informed decision; or
- to refer to all of the necessary analysis and the confirmed timelines Network Rail requires to reach its decision on the application. This should include the “5 June 2024 capacity analysis” and any other analysis Network Rail needs to complete;
- recognise which other applications within the published list of “20 May 2024 applications” could interact with each application.
- Confirm any interested persons name(s) or confirm there are no interested persons.

Network Rail can confirm that we will not be able to in this representation provide all the necessary information for ORR to make an informed decision at this point in time. However, in this representation we will address each of the points above as well as provide:

- provide an initial view of the application Form P and supplemental;
- where applicable, highlight if Network Rail believes that some of the access rights sought are outside the scope of the ORR’s letter dated 24 April 2024;
- an indication of how Network Rail will be able to provide its final representations and any intermediate representations so that ORR will then have all relevant information from Network Rail to assist ORR in making an informed decision.

Interested Person(s)

Network Rail is not aware of any persons who would fall within the definition of “Interested Person” in paragraph 1 of Schedule 4 of the Railways Act 1993 in relation to the application made by Northern Trains Limited.

Keeping you informed

As stated in the letter to the ORR on 05 June 2024 “The plan will need to be flexible and reviewed through the process to consider industry decisions in relation to the ECML ESG along with potentially other changing industry priorities and requirements. For example, recommendations from the East Coast Task Force may impact on industry resources, in particular timetabling resource. This could require changes to the remaining stages of the plan, including impacting when analysis can be completed.”

In the letter we also stated “We propose establishing a change control mechanism to track changes in the plan, when and where required, to retain transparency and clarity. This may also lead to consequential changes to anticipated dates of any resulting representations planned by our customer teams.” Where such changes in timeline occur, we will notify you of any impacts expected content, volume or timing of forthcoming information.

Summary of Rights Sought

In their application and as a high-level summary Northern Trains Limited are seeking to make a substantial number of changes to their access rights as part of the ECML ESG timetable rewrite, from the May 2025 Timetable until the expiry date of the Track Access Contract (PCD December 2027). If a start date of December 2025 is specified for the ECML ESG, these rights should be considered as part of that timetable change instead. There are wholesale changes to several service groups, in particular ED01 Tyne, Tees and Wear, ED04 West and North Yorkshire Inter Urban, and ED06 South and East Yorkshire Inter Urban, with the application containing additional rights, reduction in rights, and changes to rights. Some key areas are as follows:

- The conversion to firm of contingent rights currently subject to the ECML Policy in ED01.
- Changes to rights in the Teesside area (some increases, some decreases).
- Changes to rights in the Newcastle area travelling towards Carlisle (some increases, some decreases).
- Additional rights between Ashington and MetroCentre, to extend the Northumberland line services.
- One additional firm weekday AM peak right and one additional firm Saturday right between Harrogate and Leeds.
- One additional firm weekday off peak right and one additional firm Saturday right between Sheffield and Huddersfield.

Industry Consultation for this application commenced on 22 May 2024 and was due to conclude on 24 June 2024. Some consultees asked for additional time, which was agreed with Northern Trains Limited. The consultation is now due to conclude on 28 June 2024.

The High-Level plan and Dependencies

The High-Level Plan submitted on 05 June 2024 and our additional engagement with Capacity Planning indicates that the following phases may be relevant for this application:

- Phase 1 - Collation and Scoping
- Phase 2 - Risk Identification for application
- Phase 3 - Production Development Period for SCD 2025 aspirations
- Phase 4a - ECML confirmation for December 2025
- Phase 4b - ECML confirmation for May 2025
- Phase 5 - December 2025 Production Period

This should enable North West and Central (NW&C) Region to consider this application and provide representations to you as per Annex A. Access rights in this application form part of the ECML ESG which impacts on NW&C, so both plans are applicable to this letter .

We are mindful that the High-Level Plan and its analysis, or other issues indicated, may identify dependencies, risks or changes in risk profiles that could require revision or further review of individual responses. We also note the 05 June plan does not guarantee that analysis will not have to continue beyond the timetable development process. Where this is the case we will communicate with the Operator and ORR.

The number of new applications received at this point in time is unprecedented, with 83 new applications received. Of these, 55 are seeking capacity on NW&C Region. This volume of simultaneous applications on NW&C Region, with this number of interactions to analyse, involves a level of complexity not previously experienced. We have sought to indicate, as far as reasonably practical, the timing and availability of information to be provided however we are mindful that as we move through the complexities of assessing the applications the plan may necessarily need to be reviewed and revised.

This, along with the interacting applications matrix in Annex B, should support Network Rail in considering application and interacting location dependencies.

As stated later in this letter, if interactions occur at different points in time, i.e., different Timetable Change Dates then this could have an impact when Network Rail will be able to submit its position with regards to the application.

As stated in our letter of 05 June 2024 to the ORR “Throughout the rights assessment work phases Network Rail intends to communicate with ORR on progress and provide collated information against individual applications as they are assessed through the plan. The intention is to enable decisions during the process, where possible, rather than await a fully completed package of work considering all in-scope applications.”

We also recognised in our letter of 05 June 2024 that “this approach will have to balance the need for business continuity, so that current services may continue to operate and timetable changes can be made when there is low risk of negative outcomes for passengers and freight users, with the need to avoid prejudicial decisions that could unduly favour one party where aspirations interact.”

Common route / regional identified considerations / constraints

This request for rights covers a point in the network where it has been identified at a regional level that more than one application should be considered by ORR at the same time, as any one decision would restrict the ability to accommodate other requests due to the volume of potentially interacting aspirations. The other affected operators’ applications are shown in Annex B, and our plan for providing these is as set out in Annex A.

NW&C Considerations

NW&C Region has several large enhancement projects taking place including TransPennine Route Upgrade, HS2 and Midlands Rail Hub impacting long term capacity utilisation to which we will give consideration when reviewing this application once all the necessary assessments have been completed and Network Rail is able to collectively assess the risks and impact this application may have.

A key consideration included in the plan within Annex A is regarding power supply on NW&C. As previously informed, NW&C has several areas of concern with regards to power supply. For any application utilising electric traction, it is our intention to model the outputs of the capacity assessment to understand the power supply risk both during normal working and in N-1 conditions. In carrying out traction power modelling, NW&C Region adheres to the requirements stipulated in NR/L1/ELP/27000 "Policy Requirements for Electrical Power Assets". This policy states that the electrical power supply system shall have sufficient redundancy to support the peak timetable with one key piece of equipment out of service (known as N-1). In addition to fulfilling Network Rail policy requirements, maintaining the required N-1 redundancy levels in the traction power network supports adherence to contractual, performance and safety targets.

In order to accurately assess power supply it is key that we understand any Empty Coaching Stock moves. We will be requesting this information separately from operators if it was not previously supplied as part of the 20 May applications.

We will undertake internal consultation of the application following our usual business practices however as a result of ORR letter of 24 April 2024 NW&C has 55 application which it must consider. Therefore our internal consultation will be over a longer period of time, and this has been allowed for in the plan.

Power supply and route performance assessments require additional subject matter support from third party organisations and therefore whilst we have included anticipated timescales within the plan these are currently subject to confirmation.

Eastern Region Considerations

Eastern Region has reviewed this application through its initial assurance sessions and is taking forward the relevant actions that will be tracked through the Regional High-Level Plan.

Eastern will be utilising all relevant intelligence gathered as part of the ECML ESG workstream to assist with its ongoing assessment and assurance activities.

Where an application has any additional rolling stock requirements, these will need to be fully assessed as part of the Eastern Region power modelling workstream and align with cross-route power modelling in other Network Rail regions.

As previously highlighted through this representations letter and the 05 June letter to the ORR, we may as we progress, identify dependencies, risks or changes that could result in a change to the plans or activities identified.

Freight and National Passenger Operator Considerations

Our regulated growth target for Railfreight in CP7 is 7.5%. In line with these freight growth targets, we are committed to securing capacity in the timetable for future use. Where capacity and suitable capability can be identified, we will consider applications for the Sale of Access Rights. ECML North is one area identified to meet these targets.

Network Rail Review of Form P and associated documents

Network Rail has performed an initial assessment of the Form P and associated documents submitted with this application and would like to highlight the following:

- The Form P lists -1 firm weekday Off Peak right Darlington-Nunthorpe, but the marked-up table shows -1 AM Peak. There are no Off Peak rights, Northern Trains Limited has confirmed this is a typing error in the Form P.
- The Form P lists +12 firm Saturday rights between Carlisle and Newcastle and vice versa, but the marked-up table shows +11. Northern Trains Limited has confirmed that the marked-up table is correct.
- The Form P lists -12 Saturday rights Morpeth-Carlisle, but the marked-up table shows -11. As there are only 11 rights, Northern Trains Limited has confirmed this is a typing error in the Form P.
- The marked-up tables remove 2 x Saturday Hexham-Middlesbrough rights, but this isn't listed in the Form P – Northern Trains Limited has confirmed the reduction in the marked-up tables is correct.
- The Form P lists -2 firm weekday PM peak rights Carlisle-Nunthorpe, but the marked-up table is for AM peak. As there are no PM Peak rights Northern Trains Limited as confirmed this is a typing error in the Form P.
- The Form P lists +2 firm Sunday rights York-Leeds but the marked-up table has +3. Northern Trains Limited has confirmed the marked-up table is correct.
- The Form P lists +1 firm weekday Off Peak right Sheffield-Huddersfield, but the marked-up table also has +1 on a Saturday. Northern Trains Limited has confirmed that the marked-up table is correct.
- Network Rail will review the necessary considerations for an access rights application, for example performance, safety, power supply, etc., through its usual processes and in line with the plan outlined in Annex A, and cannot at this time state whether it agrees with any further comments made in the Form P. For example, the Form P states “the ECML ESG demonstrated that there was sufficient capacity within the new timetable to accommodate the additional service”, however this has not yet been confirmed by Network Rail in relation to a May 2025 implementation of the ESG.

Network Rail’s Initial Position on the Access Rights Sought prior to necessary assessments being completed in line with the plan

Network Rail has made every attempt in their initial assessment of the Application received to be able to inform the ORR of any early positions it might have on the access rights sought. In this instance it will not be possible in this representation for us to give an initial view, but we have outlined later in the letter the necessary assessments / analysis that need to be undertaken to inform a view.

Possible Interactions with Other Applications from 20 May 2024

As requested in ORR’s invitation for NR to make written representations to this application, Annex B to this letter shows where this application could interact with each of the “20 May 2024 Applications” at the previously identified locations.

Please note if the interactions occur at different points in time, i.e. different Timetable Change Dates, then this will have an impact on the dates that Network Rail will be able to submit its position with regards to the application. I.e. if the application submitted for Operator A is to commence December 2024 and there are no concerns or conflicts that does not mean that when Operator B’s aspirations are considered which start in May 2025 that both will be able to be accommodated and therefore Network Rail will have to see the outputs of the capacity assessments for the May 2025 Timetable for Operator B before they can give a final position on Operator A’s application.

ECML Access Rights

As the ORR is aware the members of the Industry PMO agreed in March 2024 that the ECML ESG Timetable which was planned for December 2024, would be deferred pending further development work. Considering this, we are reviewing the requirement for continuation of our previous approach to access rights on the ECML. We expect to be able to communicate further with the industry and the ORR in the near future of our position on this.

In addition, any new or amended rights (which change capacity parameters) whether contingent or firm which are being sought in those 20 May Applications on the ECML, as stated previously and in line with the 05 June 2024 letter from Network Rail to the ORR, Network Rail will not be able to make decisions on this until decisions on ECML are made following consideration by the industry ECML Task Force. It is recognised for those operators who have bid for paths on the ECML for the December 2024 Timetable and they have been offered back to the Operator at D-26 Network Rail will have to consider the support of access rights in the interim only.

This application seeks new and amended rights in the case of the ESG being implemented in May 2025. Northern stated in their submission to the ORR that, if the ESG is deferred until December 2025, then the changes set out in the 60th SA would take effect at that timetable change instead. NR will only be in a position to assess this application post a decision on ESG implementation and ECML Taskforce recommendations as to what Timetable the ESG will be implemented.

Allowing business continuity while preserving freedom of action for ORR in taking its decision

Our letter of 05 June 2024 stated that in this interim period Network Rail will have to balance the need for business continuity, so that current services may continue to operate and timetable changes can be made when there is low risk of negative outcomes for passengers and freight users, with the need to avoid prejudicial decisions that could unduly favour one party where aspirations interact.

We note that some operators have split their applications across different timetable periods, which already provides ORR with the ability to deal specifically with the nearer-term applications now, whereas others have combined different timetable periods in a single application.

Should ORR wish to make a single decision on each application it has received, without breaking that application into parts, then, where a single application has been made relating to multiple timetable periods, there is a risk that rights might not be available in time for an operator to commence services as early as it would like, given the need for all of the information set out in our plans to be available in order for decisions to be made relating to those future timetables.

Where paths associated with some of the quantum rights in this application are included in a New Working Timetable issued under the Network Code Part D process, then Network Rail proposes to work with the applicant on these elements of the application. Our aim, subject to normal governance processes, would be to potentially agree a new Section 22 application for contingent, time-limited rights for that timetable period with no presumption of continuity – in line with the approach that ORR has supported for applications on the ECML in recent years.

This would enable you to reserve your position on future capacity choices, allowing decisions that relate to a later timetable period to be made simultaneously, while making effective use of the railway network in the earlier timetable periods.

Conclusion

Network Rail is aware that this representation letter does not contain all the information needed for this application for the ORR to make a decision and have provided detail in this letter to demonstrate our plan to provide this information.

As explained in our letter of 05 June 2024, these representations letters were mostly expected to reserve our position pending the outcome of the capacity and performance assessments. We are also mindful that the plan and its analysis may identify dependencies, risks or changes in risk profiles that could require revision or further review of this response. However, we hope that the plans we provided give you the reassurance that we will assess this application to inform Network Rail's position in a later representation in line with the plan and letter. In addition, Network Rail wants to give the ORR the confidence that we have made every effort in this letter to give any initial views where we can.

Network Rail asks that while we carry out our assessments, ORR progresses with its own assessments wherever possible to assist in making early decisions/ descoping the scale of applications requiring assessment from Network Rail. Additionally, where we have deemed an application for December 2024 or May 2025 to be unready in the initial representations in this letter, we ask that this be descoped from the analysis requirements as quickly as possible.

Network Rail will continue to keep ORR sighted on the progress of the plan for this application.

Yours sincerely

Lysette Rowley
Franchise & Access Manager NW&C Region

Annex B – Interacting Applications Matrix

Operator/Application/Type	Intended Timetable			A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
	Change Date	Dec-24	May-25	Dec-25	WCML south	Birmingham	BHM-Derby	Derby-Sheffie	Sheffield	ECML&Leed	Oxford	Gloucester
Northern 60th SA 22a	May-25		x	x				x	x			

Operator/Application/Type	Intended Timetable			E	F	
	Change Date	Dec-24	May-25	Dec-25	Sheffield	ECML&Leed
Colas 10th SA 22a	ASAP	x	x	x	x	x
DBC 72nd SA 22a	ASAP	x	x	x	x	x
DBC 73rd SA 22a	ASAP	x	x	x	x	x
DBC 79th SA 22a	ASAP	x	x	x		x
DBC 81st SA 22a	ASAP	x	x	x	x	x
DBC 86th SA 22a	ASAP	x	x	x	x	x
DBC 87th SA 22a	ASAP	x	x	x	x	x
DBC 88th SA 22a	ASAP	x	x	x	x	x
DBC 70th SA 22	ASAP	x	x	x	x	x
GBRf 34th SA 22a	ASAP	x	x	x		x
GBRf 25th SA 22a	ASAP	x	x	x	x	x
GBRf 28th SA 22	ASAP	x	x	x		x
GBRf 41st SA 22A	ASAP	x	x	x		x
Varamis 2nd SA 22a	ASAP	x	x	x		x
CrossCountry UC, Hydra, Stansted 17	Dec-24; May-25	x	x	x	x	x
FLIM 25th SA 22A	Dec-24; May-25	x	x	x	x	x
DRS 17th SA 22A	Dec-24; May-25; Dec-25	x	x	x	x	x
EMR 21st SA 22A	Dec-24	x	x	x	x	x
FLHH 25th SA 22A	Dec-24	x	x	x	x	x
FLHH 26th SA 22A	Dec-24	x	x	x	x	x
FLHH 27th SA 22A	Dec-24	x	x	x	x	x
FLHH 28th SA 22A	Dec-24	x	x	x	x	x
FLIM 21st SA 22A	Dec-24	x	x	x	x	
FLIM 24th SA 22A	Dec-24	x	x	x		x
FLIM 26th SA 22A	Dec-24	x	x	x	x	x
Govia Thames Railway 62nd SA 22A	Dec-24	x	x	x		x
Grand Central 24th SA 22A	Dec-24	x	x	x		x
Hull Trains 28th SA 22A	Dec-24	x	x	x		x
Hull Trains 29th SA 22A	Dec-24	x	x	x		x
LNER 37th SA 22A	Dec-24	x	x	x		x
LNER 38th SA 22A	Dec-24	x	x	x		x
Lumo 11th SA 22A	Dec-24	x	x	x		x
Northern 57th SA 22A	Dec-24	x	x	x	x	x
Scotrail 49th SA 22a	Dec-24	x	x	x		x
TPT 58th SA 22a	Dec-24	x	x	x	x	x
Govia Thames Railway 63rd SA 22A	May-25		x	x		x
Grand Central 28th SA 22A	May-25		x	x		x
Hull Trains 27th SA 22A	May-25		x	x	x	x
LNER 34th SA 22A	May-25		x	x		x
LNER 36th SA 22A	May-25		x	x		x
Lumo 12th SA 22A	May-25		x	x		x
Northern 59th SA 22a	May-25		x	x	x	x
Northern 60th SA 22a	May-25		x	x	x	x
Scotrail 50th SA 22a	May-25		x	x		x
Super Tram 11th SA 22a	May-25		x	x	x	
TPT 62nd SA 22a	May-25		x	x		x
TPT 63rd SA 22a	May-25		x	x		x
Alliance Rail Cardiff - Edinburgh 17	Dec-25			x	x	x
EMR 20th SA 22A	Dec-25			x	x	
EMR 19th SA 22A	Dec-25			x		x
LIS 2nd SA 22a	Dec-25			x		x
Scotrail 51st SA 22a	Dec-25			x		x
TPT 64th SA 22a	Dec-25			x	x	x
TPT 65th SA 22a	Dec-25			x		x
LNER 35th SA 22A May '28	May-28					x