

## THE OFFICE OF RAIL AND ROAD

### 236<sup>th</sup> BOARD MEETING

Tuesday 25 November 2025, 09:00 – 12:50

At DoubleTree Hilton Leeds City Centre, 2 Wharf Approach, Leeds, LS1 4BR

**Non-executive members:** Declan Collier (Chair), Xavier Brice, Ian Dobbs, Lindsey Fussell, Madeleine Hallward, Anne Heal, Ann Metherall, Daniel Ruiz.

**Executive members:** John Larkinson (Chief Executive), Richard Hines (Director of Railway Safety).

**In attendance:** Feras Alshaker (Director of Planning and Performance), Fiona Bywaters (Board Secretary), Will Godfrey (Director of Economics, Finance and Markets), Russell Grossman (Director of Communications), Liz Herridge (Chief Operating Officer), Graham Richards (Director, TfL Analysis), Liz Thornhill (General Counsel), Stephanie Tobyn (Director, Strategy, Policy and Reform).

*Other ORR staff who attended are shown in the minutes.*

#### Item 1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, and in particular, Lindsey Fussell and Ann Metherall to their first board meeting as newly-appointed Non-Executive Directors.
2. Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Catherine Waller (Non-Executive Director).

#### Item 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3. Ann Metherall declared an indirect non-financial interest pertaining to the secondment of a family member to Transport for London, under procedure rule B9. As there was no suggestion of bias, the Board agreed that the Non-Executive Director may participate in any relevant discussion – unless determined otherwise in future.

#### Item 3 APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

4. The minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2025 were approved, subject to the following amendments:
  - a. Clarification to the sequencing of the Temple Mills International Depot (Item 4) minute; and
  - b. Clarification that the Minister for Rail attended the meeting via MS Teams.
5. A brief update was provided on actions arising and completed from previous meetings.

#### Item 4 CHIEF INSPECTOR'S MONTHLY REPORT

6. Richard Hines (RH) introduced the report, and provided an oral update referring to:

- The Chief Inspector's update to Network Rail's Safety, Health, and Environmental Compliance Committee (SHECC) meeting on 19 November 2025, noting the refreshed approach to preparing a summary paper initiated in May 2025.

*Redact the following bullet point as it relates to proposed or ongoing enforcement action:*

- [...]
- The derailment of an Avanti West Coast passenger train near Shap, Cumbria on 3 November 2025, further to a Board update by correspondence. This was said to relate to an adverse weather event, rather than an extreme weather event. It was confirmed that the location had been identified by Network Rail as a 'high-risk' site and bank slip monitoring equipment had been installed as part of risk mitigation. The functionality of this equipment formed one of a number of ongoing lines of enquiry in the investigation. Updates would be included in monthly reports as appropriate.
- The current industry position in relation to the management of catastrophic train accident risk. In particular, this concerned the lack of pace in securing tangible improvements with overspeeding risk control and the mixed extent of cooperation between Operators and Network Rail. A letter from the Chief Inspector had been sent to all dutyholders to set out the concerns and requiring Director-level representatives to attend an in-person meeting. An oral update would be provided to the December meeting of the Health and Safety Regulation Committee.
- Resolution in respect of a proposed amendment to the Employment Rights Bill, relating to children volunteering at heritage railways. Guidance would be produced to support the sector in its obligations.
- Evidential hearings scheduled for January and February 2026, in relation to the Carmont Fatal Accident Inquiry (FAI).
- A new cohort of trainee Inspectors, anticipated to join ORR from February 2026.
- The wider context of a challenging, and growing, reactive workload which would form the basis of a substantive discussion at the December meeting of HSRC.

7. Following questions from the Board, further discussion focussed on:

- The overspeeding risk profile, including: whether overspeeding incidents were recorded on a train driver's licence (where it was confirmed that a certificate accompanying the licence contained 'safety of the line' details); automated and technological means of mitigating the risk; influence of culture; possible routes for enforcement action; and an investigation into

an incident at Grantham South. The Board expressed its support at the initiative taken and action required.

- Clarification of ORR's role in safety (not security), in the context of the Huntingdon train attack earlier in the month. The Chair suggested that the Director of Railway Safety explore the use of disguised or low-profile protective barriers that staff can use during an active assailant or marauding attack scenario, from the airline industry.

8. Liz Thornhill (LT) provided an oral update in relation to relevant legal activity, including:

*Redact the following bullet point as it relates to proposed or ongoing enforcement action:*

- [...]

*Redact the following bullet point as it contains information otherwise thought to be sensitive:*

- [...]

9. The Board noted the impact of judicial processes on the length of legal action, and considered whether this would need to be escalated. Updates on the above two examples would be provided in future reports as appropriate.

#### **Item 5 CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT**

*Redact this report from the published version as time-sensitive and covering confidential issues.*

10. [...]

#### **Item 5A RAIL REFORM UPDATE**

*Redact this report from the published version as it contains information the disclosure of which is thought likely to prejudice the effective conduct of ORR's affairs as it relates to uncompleted policy development.*

14. [...]

#### **Items 6/6A NATIONAL HIGHWAYS PERFORMANCE AND RIS3 EFFICIENCY REVIEW**

*Rachel Gittens (Deputy Director, Strategic Road Network) joined the meeting for item 6.*

19. Feras Alshaker (FA) introduced the report and referred to the executive summary of ORR's advice on National Highways' draft Strategic Business Plan (The third Road Investment Strategy – RIS3) which had been circulated to the Board on 20 November.
20. FA also provided an oral update referring to:

*Redact the following bullet point as information which is otherwise thought to be potentially sensitive:*

- [...]
  - Next steps of the RIS3 efficiency review, where the advice would be sent to the Secretary of State on Friday 28 November. Meetings were arranged with DfT and National Highways for the following week. The Board recognised the challenging timelines involved in producing the efficiency review and welcomed the work undertaken.
21. Following questions from the Board, discussion focussed on:
- The Key Performance Indicator relating to customer satisfaction, particularly further to discussions at the joint ORR/National Highways meeting of boards earlier in the month.
  - The challenges of conveying the distinction between maintenance, renewals and enhancements to road users.
22. The Board requested that future iterations of the report contain a short summary analysis of KPI commentary in order to facilitate focused discussion.
23. **The Board noted the contents of the performance update.**

*The Board adjourned for a short break.*

## **Item 7      COMMUNICATIONS DASHBOARD – Q1 AND Q2**

*Jennifer Webber (Head of External Engagement), Adele Potter (Head of Internal Communications and Engagement) and Lisa O'Brien (Head of Media Relations, Campaigns and Digital Comms) joined the meeting for item 7, via MS Teams.*

24. Russell Grossman (RG) introduced the report, referring to the summary slide of headlines, including positive coverage of ORR's access role (and the Temple Mills International Depot decision) and revenue protection review, as well as strong social media ratings.
25. Following questions from the Board, discussion focussed on:
- Performance on X (formerly Twitter), LinkedIn and Instagram, noting that the best performing content on the latter pertained to a history-based video. The Communications Team confirmed the most suitable platforms on which to have a presence were kept under continuous review.
  - Indicators of effective engagement and stakeholder mapping.
  - Adaptation of core messages where appropriate during the rail reform process (with reference to the briefing on ORR's role).
  - Risk appetite in relation to raising ORR's profile and proactive engagement (which was determined on a case by case basis).

## Item 8 AMENDMENT TO BOARD PROCEDURE RULES

26. Richard Hines (RH) introduced the report, referring to the recommendation of the HSRC to amend Rule 55 of the Board Procedure Rules (following a discussion at its September 2025 meeting) and paragraph 16 of the report (with regards to residual risk of human error, mitigated by the development of a written procedure in the Quality Management System (QMS)). Fiona Bywaters (FB) introduced the recommendation to amend committee membership sizes for flexibility, given the increased size of the Board.
27. The Board further explored practical steps undertaken to reinforce the need for effective internal communication within the directorate, and to the Chief Executive and Board, with regard to novel or contentious decisions. RH referred to the Operations Forum as a mechanism of coordination and oversight, whilst expectations continued to be reinforced via the Senior Leadership Team. The written QMS procedure would be circulated to the HSRC for assurance purposes.
28. Assurance was sought that communication oversights would not be repeated in future, given the challenges presented by cultural change. RH referred to the overall trajectory of improvement, with the work to strengthen the directorate's approach. Further information would be shared with the HSRC at its December meeting on the regulatory excellence programme and initiative to establish a Chief Inspector's Office.
29. **The Board resolved that:**
- a. **Rule 55 of the Board Procedure Rules be amended, following the recommendation of the Health and Safety Regulation Committee, as follows:**
- “The board is required to make adequate arrangements for the enforcement of the relevant statutory provisions under the Health and Safety at Work Act, including those made pursuant to s15(1) of that Act. Our board delegates the performance of these enforcement functions to our director of railway safety on the conditions that:*
- this delegation will be carried out in full compliance with our board approved health and safety enforcement policy;*
  - where ~~performance~~ a **decision** is considered novel, contentious or of reputational risk to the organisation, they shall inform the Chief Executive when intending to exercise the delegation (or as soon as possible thereafter in the case of urgent enforcement or imminent danger) **and ensure the Chair of the Board is notified for awareness as soon as practicable;** and*

*where a prosecution decision meets these criteria, they shall also ensure the Board is notified prior to any external communication.”*

**b. The terms of reference of the People Committee and Highways Committee, be amended with regard to their membership clauses as follows:**

- *Highways Committee, G5: “**at least** three non-executive members of the board including one with relevant specialism who will chair the committee.”*
- *People Committee, E6: “The board makes appointments to the committee, including the committee chair. The committee will consist of **at least** three non-executive members of the board.”*

**Item 9 CP7 PASSENGER TRAIN PERFORMANCE RESET: FINAL DECISION ON TRAJECTORIES (2026-2029)**

*Steve Helfet (Deputy Director, Railway Operations), Will Holman (Head of Rail Economics) and Matt Wikeley (Head of Rail Outcomes Policy, via MS Teams) joined the meeting for item 9.*

30. Will Godfrey (WG) introduced the report, referring to Annex 3 of the paper in particular (correspondence sent by the Chief Executive of Network Rail to the Chief Executive of ORR, in reference to Eastern Region CP7 performance trajectories). It was proposed that the recommendations be taken in turn.
31. Steve Helfet (SH) introduced recommendation 1 regarding using Network Rail’s latest forecasts as the proposed targets for Time to 3, Cancellations and Network Rail delay, other than for the Eastern Region (which was to be covered in recommendation 2). Reference was made to the Independent Reporter’s (and ORR’s) assessment, also contained within the paper.
32. WG introduced recommendation 2 which related to the punctuality and delay targets for the Eastern Region. Three options were presented for addressing the performance effects associated with the East Coast Main Line timetable changes – in particular, whether and how to adjust for the initial period of adjustment to the new timetable (referred to as a ‘bathtub curve’). The three options presented were: (a) Network Rail’s forecasts; (b) an evidenced-based adjustment to the Network Rail forecast which would moderate the bathtub curve in Year 3 and remove it from the Year 4 target; and (c) removal of the bathtub curve.
33. On balance and carefully considering the Network Rail proposal that their forecasts be accepted for the Eastern Region - with a commitment to bringing a managing change request to ORR in September 2026 if future performance materially departed from the submitted forecast - it was recommended that the Board proceed with making an ORR-calculated, evidence-based adjustment. Recognising the complexity and uncertainty in the timetable change, option (b) (as described above) was recommended to the Board as it was seen to most closely reflect an ambitious yet realistic trajectory.
34. In response to a Board question, further explanation was provided around the ‘bathtub curve’ effect. It was also confirmed that ORR had made its own

assessment of the information which aligned with that of the Independent Reporter.

35. The Board recognised that were it to agree with recommendation 2, it remained open to Network Rail to submit an evidence-based managing change request.
36. Finally, WG briefly introduced recommendation 3 that proposed delegating authority to finalise and implement the financial incentive regime to the Director of Economics, Finance and Markets.
37. **The Board resolved that:**
  - a. **Network Rail's latest forecasts (submitted to ORR in September) be agreed as the final targets for Time to 3, Cancellations and Network Rail delay, subject to an exception for the Eastern Region;**
  - b. **On balance, an evidence-based adjustment be agreed to the Eastern Region year 3 and 4 targets for punctuality and Network Rail delay; and**
  - c. **Authority to finalise and implement the financial incentive regime be delegated to the Director of Economics, Finance and Markets (noting that the final targets for Cancellations and Network Rail delay for all regions would establish the baselines for the financial incentive regime).**

## **Item 10      REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES**

38. Daniel Ruiz reported on the meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 27 October 2025. The Committee had discussed, among other matters:
  - Internal Audit progress report, noting reasonable assurance provided in respect of budget management;

*Redact the following bullet point as it contains information otherwise thought to be sensitive:*

  - [...];
  - A newly-produced assurance map by RSM in response to a committee request;
  - Updates to the corporate and strategic risk registers (the latter of which would be presented to the Board in January for its consideration);
  - Positive progress reported by the quarterly IT and Security update;
  - The recommendation of the committee that the Board receive training around matters relating to cyber security and artificial intelligence risks; and
  - Procurement of expertise in respect of risk resilience.
39. The Chair invited reflections on the stakeholder dinner held the night prior, following visits to Leeds Station and the Transpennine Route Upgrade Safety Training Facility (TRUST), as well as the M1/M62 Lofthouse Interchange. The

Board welcomed the rich discussions from a wide variety of stakeholders and the informative visit, noting in particular:

- Challenges to recruitment and retention in the construction industry, and the beneficial impact of apprenticeship schemes;
- How ORR might further engage with the supply chain, inviting the Chief Executive to reflect on future opportunities;
- Cost sustainability of major projects; and
- The implications of AI use, suggesting that the Board might usefully discuss this issue in future.

#### **Item 11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

40. The Board noted the dates of the next meetings and items below the line, namely: the Board forward programme; committee minutes approved since the last meeting and the Quarter 2 Risk Report (presented to Audit and Risk Committee).
41. The Chair reported on his recent meetings, including with Dr Richard Judge (regarding the DBT review) and with the Minister for Rail (also attended by the Chief Executive).
42. Finally, the Board noted the following committee membership changes, that:
  - **Xavier Brice be appointed to People Committee, and stood down from Audit and Risk Committee.**
  - **Lindsey Fussell be appointed to Highways Committee and Audit and Risk Committee.**
  - **Ann Metherall be appointed to Health and Safety Regulation Committee, as its Chair, and to People Committee.**

#### **Item 12 REFLECTION ON THE MEETING**

43. Following the departure of the Executive in attendance, the Non-Executive Board Members then evaluated the effectiveness of the meeting.

Meeting end: 1.04pm  
Approved: 27 January 2026