



“Like you, we faced major challenges in January from the extended period of snow – just three weeks after the last one.

The team at NRE responded very quickly and in addition to the normal service set up a disruption ‘hotline’, which provided callers with constantly updated information about the status of all TOC services. Heavily promoted in the media, the service took over 10k calls in the 1st hour, with over a quarter of a million calls received in the eight days it was in operation.

The new website launched in December did have teething problems on some of its 16,000 pages. These have now been fixed and we will soon be launching our next batch of improvements.

And, although the year has only just started we have won an award. Stations Made Easy provides individual

2010–11 will be a year of improving customer experience and providing consistency of information for passengers

maps showing facilities for all 2,500 National Rail stations. Its success was acknowledged at the recent National Cycle Rail Awards.

I would like to extend thanks to all those who worked with us to make 2009–10 such a success. A list of NRE’s achievements is summarised on the back page, as are our plans for 2010–11.

It will be a year of improving the customer experience and providing consistency of information for passengers.”

Chris Scoggins
Chief Executive
chris.scoggins@atoc.org



Single data feed set to improve CIS nationally

A drive to improve accuracy of passenger information is one of a series of initiatives aimed at improving performance during disruption to train services being overseen by the National Task Force (NTF), which involves the Department for Transport, Office of Rail Regulation, Network Rail, Association of Train Operating Companies, TOC owning groups, and freight operators.

The passenger information part of the project is being led by Jason Durk, NRE’s Head of Passenger Information, who explains: “NTF was set up five years ago to tackle performance issues. Performance is actually improving, but the provision of good quality passenger information remains a big issue when things go wrong and, as an industry, it needs to be addressed.”

This was underscored by recent research published by Passenger Focus, the official consumer body – although the decision to make big improvements was taken before publication of the last National Passenger Survey, in which only 36 per cent of rail passengers said they were satisfied with how well their train company handled delays.

“What continues to annoy passengers is the way delays are managed by the industry and a poor performance in this area often results in passengers reporting greater dissatisfaction with the train company,” said Passenger Focus.

Anna Walker, who chairs the Office of Rail Regulation, said: “Passengers have sent the rail industry a clear message that there is significant

room for improvement.”

According to Jason Durk, the problems are caused by information flows within the industry, often with different TOCs having different procedures or, for example, uploading an amended timetable to TRUST but not into the Train Service Data Base.

“Having 66 different installations of Customer Information Systems across the network plays its part in the poor quality message to the customer, and fundamentally undermines the provision of the accurate and consistent information they need when disruption occurs. We aim to address this.”

As we reported in the last edition of Enquirer, NRE’s information system ‘Darwin’ now has the ability to

pinpoint accurately the whereabouts of trains as they travel on the network, providing a significant boost in accuracy of forecasts for customers waiting at, or en route to, stations.

Using Darwin to keep customer information systems up to date will mean that when details of contingency plans, or changes to them, are input to Darwin by a train operator, all stations served by that TOC’s trains will display more accurate information, irrespective of which rail operators manage each individual station.

For example, CrossCountry – which operates no stations at all – will be able to input up-to-date details of service alterations or contingency plans and be guaranteed

the correct information will be displayed at any station at which its trains call.

The project will also mean an end to circumstances – commonly complained of by passengers – where trains are shown to be running on time when they are in fact late or even cancelled.

But these problems will be largely overcome by driving all station Customer Information Systems (CIS) from Darwin.

“A few years ago, when serious disruptions occurred, the train companies often turned CIS screens off and showed no information at all,” says Jason Durk. “But now we are moving the industry to a position where we will be able to show as much information as possible, and which is as accurate as possible.”

Network Rail recently approved funding for Phase 1 of a programme to roll out Darwin as a national CIS feed. The first phase will see the CIS at all 17 Virgin Trains’ stations fed with real time information directly from Darwin – providing a significant change to the way that information is provided on the West Coast.

In coming months, work to interface the Virgin systems with Darwin will be undertaken by Thales and Amey with the aim of feeding the 17 CIS locations directly from Darwin by November this year. And by the end of 2013 the aim is for all real time information, including the remaining 49 CIS installations around the network, to be generated from the one source.

■ NRE’s ongoing developments to improve its systems – see page 2.



“We are moving the industry to a position where we will be able to show as much information as possible, and which is as accurate as possible”

Jason Durk, Head of Passenger Information

Disruption info boosted by NRE developments

National Rail Enquiries is implementing a series of actions to improve its own systems following the lessons learned from last January's snow storms.

Jason Durk, Head of Passenger Information, said the aim was to answer three key questions:

1. What would be done differently if it snows again?
2. What more must be done before next winter?
3. What more can be achieved during the remainder of the Rail Regulator's control period 4, which extends to March 2014?

Among the actions being taken, the

resilience of NRE's Darwin computer system will be further improved, including increased bandwidth and the introduction of a 'full disaster recovery configuration.'

On the NRE website, a colour-coded National Service Indicator should be introduced in May this year and all work to fix capacity issues is to be validated by independent consultants this summer. Also by the end of May, all TOCs should have generic disruption urls in place to make it easier to communicate website addresses. And, in the autumn, service level agreements should be concluded between TOCs and NRE to standardise and formalise

timelines and quality of information between all parties.

Before the end of 2010, any outstanding issues regarding resilience of TOC websites should be fixed – and Darwin workstations will be available in all train operating companies for use when amendments and/or cancellations to planned train services are too demanding to be handled through the Tyrell system.

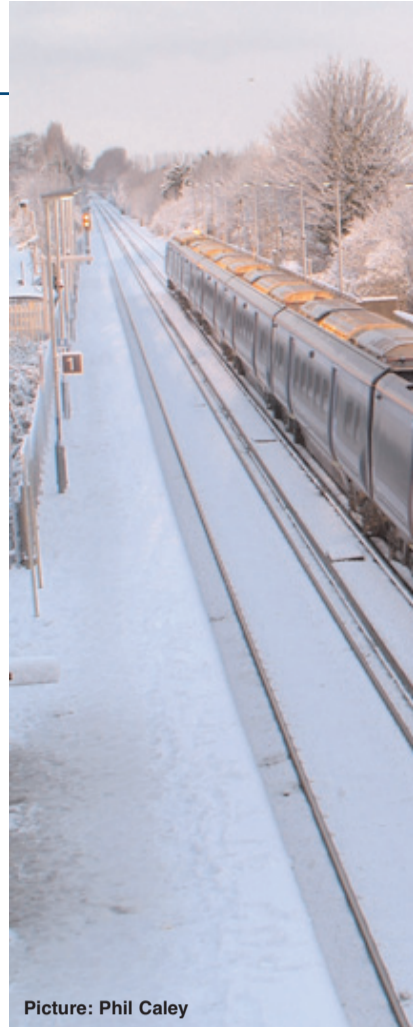
By September next year, NRE's Real Time Journey Planner should be driven directly by Darwin and, by the end of 2011, the aim is that all train operating companies will take their disruption information centrally from NRE, further

improving consistency.

And, in future, in serious disruptions, with on-going delays the system will not forecast train operations beyond an hour ahead.

Customer information will also be boosted during serious disruptions by activation of a dedicated 'hot line' first introduced by the Contact Centre Team last January when snow falls disrupted services. During that period over 10,000 calls were made in the first hour to information recorded by the National Rail Communications Centre – and over a quarter of a million calls were received during the service's eight days of operation.

Picture: Phil Caley



Centres' friendly rivalry for customer satisfaction

FRIENDLY rivalry between National Rail Enquiries' two contact centres, based in Mumbai and Delhi, continues to ensure high levels of service to rail customers by maintaining customer satisfaction and call accuracy.

The second contact centre in New Delhi went 'live' on 19 October last year, having been set up – including staff recruitment and training – in only four months. The Delhi ramp-up was a phased approach over October to mid January, starting with 10 per cent of total calls and ending with 50 per cent of total calls – an average increase of 12-15 advisers going live each week.

The quick and smooth start-up was assisted by a number of secondments from NRE's contact centre in Mumbai, and 16 of the Mumbai staff have now moved permanently to the new centre in Delhi.

Both centres are operated by the same company, Intelenet Global Services, partners of NRE for over five years.

"We are treating Mumbai and Delhi as two independent contact centre providers," says Tejpal Singh, NRE's Head of Contact Centres.

"For business continuity, everything is separate and resilient at each location. There are no interdependencies between them at all.

"As a result, there is a friendly rivalry between staff at the two sites."

A group of staff at the Delhi contact centre and (below) some of their 'friendly rivals' in Mumbai.



The Delhi centre is already handling 50 per cent of all telephone calls, despite being open for only 17 hours each day – the Mumbai centre is open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, 364 days a year.

Tejpal Singh says the call quality and customer satisfaction achieved continues to be the same high level as previously recorded in the UK.

New web wizard joins NRE

JONATHAN Chong has joined NRE's team as Web Development Manager. He has a wealth of experience in web development and worked previously in the finance industry. Jonathan will be looking into how NRE can best use new technologies and take the website forward. One of the latest NRE innovations is a 'Visit a Friend' application now available on social media site Facebook. The application enables users to plan journeys and share travel details with their friends – as shown by Jonathan below.



Jonathan Chong Jonathan has just planned a journey to Manchester using the Visit a Friend application by National Rail Enquiries. Plan your own journey today!



10 seconds ago via Visit a Friend · Comment · Like · Plan A Journey



National Rail Enquiries

Visit a friend

Invite friends

Upcoming events

My saved journeys

Visit a Friend

Hello Jonathan, welcome to our Facebook app.

Use our app to plan journeys to visit your friends, let your friends know where you're going or plan journeys to upcoming events. To get started, choose a friend from the list below (they need to have their location filled in their profiles for you to visit them with our app).

[Hui Chai Liew](#)

[Ian Flanagan](#)

[James McNicholas](#)

[Jan Sz](#)

[Jana Weigand](#)

[Janet Hoi-Ling Leung](#)

[Jazlyne Mae](#)

[Joan Tan](#)

[Joe-Joe Wong](#)

[Joel Leigh](#)

[Joan Paula Juson](#)

[Jonas Jaanimagi](#)

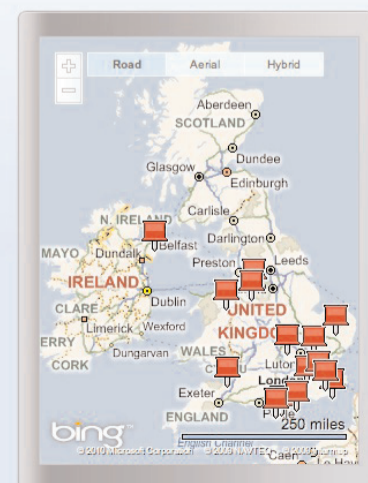
[Julia Chuah](#)

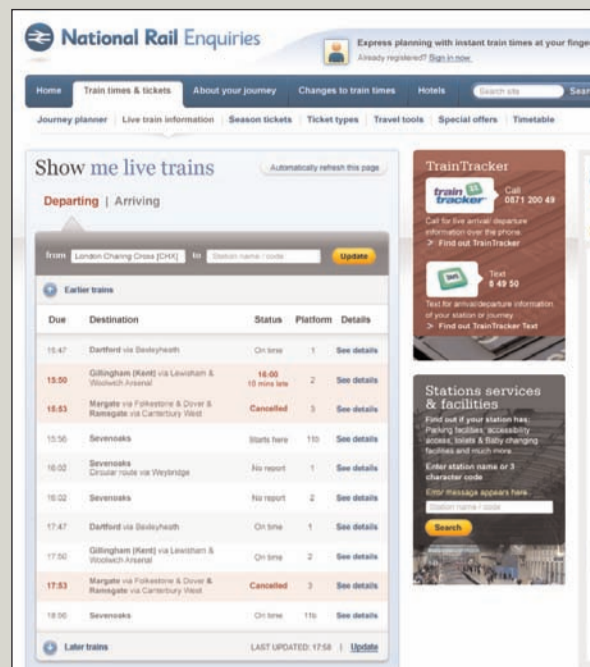
[Julie Sharp](#)

[Julio Romo](#)

[Kashif Nasir](#)

[Luca Allam](#)





From April 2010, the NRE Live Departure Boards area will be colour-washed in line with the rest of the new website.

Website redesign wins wide praise

NATIONAL Rail Enquiries' website was re-launched at the end of 2009 with a new, user-friendly design.

As one of the most-used websites in the UK, the new look has received a lot of attention and reviews. Most have been "resoundingly positive", says NRE, with a consistent theme of praising the site for its improvement over the previous version, citing its clean look, ease of use, simplified navigation and speed.

Here is a selection from recent reviews.

Webuser Magazine 'The refreshed website is now much less frustrating to use. Start and destination fields now auto-complete, for instance, and click-throughs are provided to vendors selling journey tickets. There are other welcome touches too, such as the ability to generate week-long 'pocket timetables' (in PDF format) of any chosen journey.'

Planet Anarky 'This is a real improvement. I used the old site for years, and this is definitely a relaunch to be proud of.'

The New Marketing 'www.nationalrail.co.uk works on principles that most consumer and retail sites should aspire to.'

eConsultancy 'National Rail Enquiries relaunched its website . . . giving the site a much needed makeover. The site was redesigned

by Fortune Cookie, and at first glance, seems to be a massive improvement on the old version with a fresher, cleaner look.

The site doesn't actually sell tickets, but you can get price information, and will show the cheapest ticket for the journey, and send you to the rail operator's or a third party site such as thetrainline to place an order. . . I like the new site a lot more than the previous incarnation, which was due an update. It is clearer and easier to use, and even with the heavy load on the servers, it works quickly enough.

The functions of the site are clear, navigation has been much simplified, and the overall look and feel is a big improvement.'

Andy Kinsey 'This site has finally come of age – offering the same services in a newly formatted way clearly works. Right down to the details of the clock in the top right hand corner, this is a superb redesign and many could learn from the idea of Simple is Best.'

About.com 'The new-look National Rail Enquiries website is a great improvement in both appearance and utility.'

It has always been useful, but in the past it was a bit of a dog's dinner to look at, confusing and difficult to use. But take a look at National Rail Enquiries now. Everything is organised to make it easy for you to get details of train journeys, find the cheapest fares and buy your tickets.

There are a lot more functions, including the Stations Made Easy web tool, which have all been streamlined and made easy to navigate and use.'

Tnooz 'Web design agency Fortune Cookie has unveiled the long-awaited overhaul of the UK's leading train planning website.'

Fortune Cookie has completely redesigned the user interface . . . Fortune Cookie says the project is the biggest the agency has undertaken in its history, eclipsing its other high profile work in the travel sector for tour operating firm Kuoni.'

Crack team brings high-speed turnaround to Help Point calls

A GROWING source of activity for National Rail Enquiries is dealing with calls from Help Points at stations around the British network.

Head of Contact Centres Tejpal Singh says Help Points had previously been installed at many stations with good intent. "However, because of the unpredictability of the call volumes and the time range of the calls they became difficult for the TOCs to handle," he explains.

"Now we have a crack, dedicated team of people in Mumbai to take calls around the clock. We get around 10,000 calls every week, all of which we aim to answer within 10 to 15 seconds."

The team has been developed since NRE undertook a trial project, answering calls from 150 Help Points at First Great Western stations.

Now seven more TOCs have commissioned NRE to handle their Help Point calls – Arriva Trains Wales, East Midlands Trains, First Capital Connect, National Express East Anglia, Northern, Southeastern and, most recently, London Midland.

In addition, South West Trains diverts Help Point calls from its stations to NRE as an overflow during periods of high activity due to disruption or because of major events, such as a rugby international at Twickenham.

At the contact centre in Mumbai, Reema Seth leads the team of 20 specially-selected advisors who handle calls from Help Points.

Five or six of the team are on duty at any one time, Reema explained. "Most calls are about the whereabouts of the next train. But we do get some threatening calls occasionally.

"Some callers threaten to damage property or to jump on



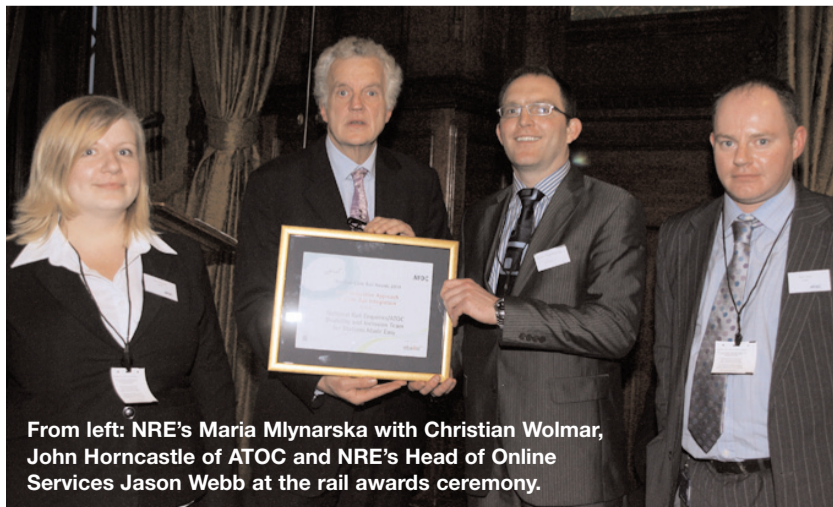
Above: Members of the Help Point staff in Mumbai with Team Leader Reema Seth third from right.

the track. The difficult calls tend to come late at night and at weekends."

All calls are recorded and if a threat is of sufficient concern, the Mumbai team have a hot line to advise British Transport Police and to alert Shiona Naylor, NRE's Customer Relations Manager.

Mumbai's Help Point team members must have already spent at least a year working as an advisor, taking calls from rail customers.

Selection is also based on their ability to empathise with callers and their knowledge of each TOC's products, its routes and local geography, says Reema.



From left: NRE's Maria Mlynarska with Christian Wolmar, John Horncastle of ATOC and NRE's Head of Online Services Jason Webb at the rail awards ceremony.

Stations Made Easy app wins 'most innovative' rail award

THE Stations Made Easy application, launched last autumn, has made National Rail Enquiries and the Association of Train Operating Companies' Disability and Inclusion Team the winners in this year's National Cycle Rail Awards.

The award, presented at the Houses of Parliament by cycling fan and transport journalist Christian Wolmar, is for the 'most innovative approach to cycle-rail integration'.

Stations Made Easy, which is accessed on the NRE website, provides an interactive map of each of the 2,500-plus National Rail stations, showing the stairs, doors, lifts and other objects that may need to be negotiated when moving around a station.

Central to the application was the massive job of auditing over 2,500 stations and taking over 1.4 million photographs.

A benchmark for achievement

THE last twelve months have seen record achievements for National Rail Enquiries, with a company-wide expansion of our services and a series of successful initiatives designed to push up real-time accuracy and also drive down running costs. The result has been a list of goals achieved and new standards set. They are as follows:

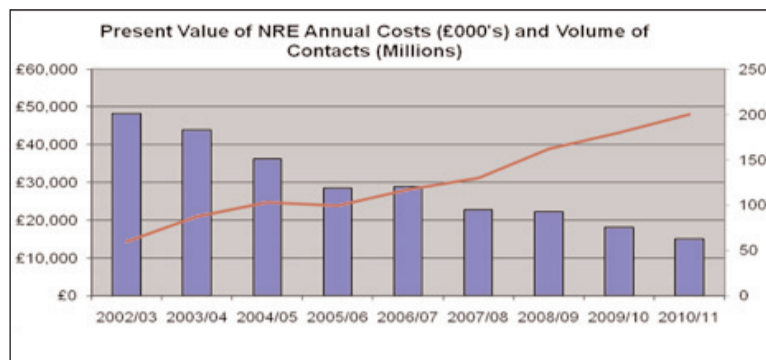
1. NRE £2m below budget. NRE further reduced its running costs whilst increasing the overall number of contacts. Over the past eight years we have reduced our costs by nearly 70% whilst more than tripling the number of contacts we handle.

2. Over 250 services to 45 clients. Many NRE services are available for other rail companies to rebrand and run as their own – the Live Departure Boards is one of our most used, appearing on 15 TOC websites. We currently provide over 250 of these services to 45 train operating companies and third party clients to help provide consistent information across all channels.

3. Contact Centre migration: Customer Satisfaction maintained. The NRE team successfully managed the transition of 100% of calls to their partner's operations in Delhi and Mumbai, setting up the new site in Delhi in just four months and delivering the whole project early and below budget. Just as importantly, customer satisfaction stayed at its customary high level throughout.

4. Help Points team answering 10k calls per week. A dedicated team in our Mumbai contact centre now answers 10,000 station Help Point calls per week on behalf of nine train operating companies. The transition to NRE has greatly improved the service, allowing TOC control room staff to concentrate on train running.

5. Disruption Hotline. During the severe snow disruption in January



The steady reduction in NRE's operating costs is shown above in blue, compared with the inexorable increase (red line) in total contacts.

NRE set up a recorded information helpline to provide constantly updated information about the status of each TOC's services and with the capacity to handle 10,000 simultaneous calls. The Hotline was heavily promoted by the media and answered over a quarter of a million calls during the period of disruption.

6. Recorded messaging boosted by new telephony platform. In April the contact centre service moved to a new telephone network supplier, providing enhanced functionality for recorded message provision, allowing callers a multitude of onward routing options.

7. New website. Our new website, built using sophisticated research techniques and based on customer feedback, was launched in December. Simplicity and an intuitive design are at the heart of the new site, and have driven usage of features like Cheapest Fare Finder to increase by over 300%.

8. Mobile applications. Mobile journey planning and live departure board applications for Google Android, Orange and the iPhone were developed in conjunction with a number of partners. The iPhone application won Mobile Project of the Year at the UK IT industry awards.

9. Darwin TD feeds and heuristics. A new real-time prediction engine was

developed that now also uses Train Descriptor information to provide rich and granular information across the rail network. We also developed heuristic algorithms so the system can learn from previous train movements, further improving the accuracy of our predictions.

10. Agreement to use Darwin to feed all CIS. The industry's focus on improving passenger information during disruption has led to a collective agreement to improve the consistency of the information at stations. This will happen by feeding existing CIS with data from Darwin.

11. Stations Made Easy. NRE's new interactive tool allows customers to plan step free access around stations. Customers can also view schematic maps and detailed accessibility information for each station. In total, over 1 million photographs help to power the application.

12. Twitter/Facebook application. We have extended the reach of NRE services through a variety of social media channels, including Twitter, providing disruption messages, a Chief Executive's blog and the launch of a Facebook 'Visit a friend' tool which is designed to help people map out train journeys when travelling to visit friends.

Our targets for the year ahead...

NATIONAL Rail Enquiries has seven key initiatives for the year 2010-11.

■ Information at stations will be upgraded by the rollout of Darwin as the one national feed of data to CIS screens. This will significantly reduce TOC and Network Rail costs and improve the quality of information for customers and staff. The coming year will see Phase 1 cover all Virgin stations in Q3 and the start of the next tranche of stations.

■ NRE will lead the zoning of information at stations to improve passenger information and make it easier to locate. During the year all stations will be surveyed to define the zones and the team will work on the creation of the onward travel posters.

■ NRE will introduce in Q2 a colour-coded National Service Indicator to show at a glance which TOCs are affected by serious disruption and which are running normally.

■ NRE will further improve customer experience in the contact centres through trialling the 'warm transfer' of sales leads to TOC telesales in Q2, and through introducing skill-based call routing in Q3.

■ NRE will deliver new functionality to the website to drive up ticket sales by showing the fare for every journey requested from Q4.

■ NRE will make rail more accessible to infrequent travellers through enabling those unfamiliar with the stations that serve their destinations to journey plan using postcodes rather than station names.

■ In Q4, NRE will enhance its services involving travel to London by enabling customers to plan journeys into London directly to any Zone 1 LUL station – by mobile phone or online – and by improving the visibility of Oyster travelcards on its website.



RAILWAY
children
THE VOICE FOR STREET CHILDREN WORLDWIDE

Channel 4 documentary brings wave of support from viewers

By Rob Capener, Railway Children's Head of Communications

FOLLOWING all the national press coverage about Railway Children on the release of Slumdog Millionaire in 2008, we were approached by a film company called True Vision who work on behalf of Channel 4 to film the 'Dispatches' documentary series.

True Vision contacted us for more information as they were looking to produce a documentary entitled 'The Slumdog Children of Mumbai'. We assisted with their research and set up a visit to Railway Children in India for the producer.

The film was broadcast by Channel 4 at 9pm on 21 January 2010. Channel 4 also held a preview at the Royal Society of Arts in London, which included a panel session that

was later featured on the Channel 4 News. The panel included the film's director, its producer, a senior representative from Plan International and the news presenter. Mrinalini, our Programme Director for India, represented Railway Children.

We are over the moon at this fantastic recognition of our work. The broadcast, which was watched by over two million viewers, resulted in an instant and overwhelming response to the children's need.

As a result, we've received over £2,000 in one-off donations and gained 124 new regular donors. Regular donors are particularly good news for us, because they provide ongoing, sustainable income that allows us to plan for the future. The money we'll receive from our new regular donors will indefinitely sustain the activities of one of our

partners who help to support the homeless children we represent.

If you're one of our new donors, we'd like to thank you for your support. If you're not a regular donor, but would like to become one, please go to our website where you can find out how to set up a monthly donation.

If you missed the Dispatches film on Channel 4, you can still catch it by going to our website and clicking on the link.

The Railway Children website is at www.railwaychildren.org.uk

Getting to street kids
before the streets
get to them



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