

Reactions to the Office of Rail Regulation determination:

ATOC

The Association of Train Operating Companies sees the constructive approach adopted in the Office of Rail Regulation's (ORR) Periodic Review as a positive step forward but stresses there is much unfinished business to resolve.

ATOC fully supports the twin big themes of driving further efficiency gains in Network Rail while allowing it to invest for future growth in demand.

The requirement on Network Rail to set out improvement plans for each train operator and the proposed major upgrade schemes such as Thameslink, Reading station and East Coast Main line are measures which should deliver real benefits to customers over the next five years.

Michael Roberts, Chief Executive of ATOC said: "At a time when all parts of the rail industry are looking to reduce costs, this Review is a constructive attempt to balance continued focus on improving Network Rail's efficiency with recognition of the challenge this poses in the shorter term.

"A particular challenge for Network Rail over the next five years will be whether it can learn from experience with recent major rail projects and deliver a much bigger programme of enhancements to time and cost while causing less disruption to passengers.

"The target to cut disruption from engineering works and the £220m fund to keep the railway open seven days a week is good news for train operators and their passengers."

The fund will allow Network Rail to invest in sufficient infrastructure and equipment including extra signalling, crossovers and specialist machinery to allow trains to operate on eight key corridors such as the East Coast and Great Eastern main lines while engineering works take place, including at weekends.

"The Review leaves much unfinished business to be resolved," said Michael Roberts. "Apart from having to deliver a major investment programme, a way needs to be found to fund preparatory work in the short term for other major schemes which are likely to be needed in the long term, such as extending electrification to significant parts of the network.

"The Department for Transport also has yet to approve the ORR's initiative to encourage close working between train operators and NR by allowing them to share in the benefits of efficiency improvements. This measure is an important part of the Review and now needs a green light from Ministers."

Liberal Democrat Shadow Transport Secretary, Norman Baker said:

"The ORR is right to try to increase efficiency and raise the quality of Network Rail's service.

"But it is essential that these savings come from better management practices and greater efficiency, not by cutting back on schemes that increase railway capacity.

"The ORR's role should be to ensure that improvements take place efficiently, not to decide whether they take place at all.

"Unless we have a serious programme to reopen closed railway lines, increase capacity and build new stations, travellers will not escape cattle truck Britain."

Shadow Conservative Transport Secretary Theresa Villiers said:

"Network Rail needs to up its game on efficiency and value for money if it is going to deliver the new capacity that passengers are crying out for. The regulator needs to be tough on Network Rail to ensure that the interests of passengers are protected."

"But Labour must also deliver on the promises it has made on tackling chronic levels of overcrowding on the rail network - a problem they have been far too slow to wake up to. For example, the long list of promises on rail in John Prescott's Ten Year Plan have still not been delivered."