

Network Rail: Passengers and freight at the heart of new £44bn, five-year plan for railway

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Network Rail has published its £44 billion, five-year plan (2024-29, Control Period 7 – CP7) for the railway in England and Wales that sees increased investment in tackling climate change, improving train performance from current levels, investing in things that matter most to passengers and freight users, and making our ‘green’ railway, even greener.

In December the Department for Transport (DfT) published two key documents. One set out what it wanted our railway to deliver (High Level Output Statement – HLOS) and the other, how much funding it was making available (Statement of Funds Available – SoFA). Over the last two years, and more intensively over the past three months, Network Rail has been working on plans to deliver the best railway it can for the amount of money available – £44.1bn, which, after adjusting for changes in electricity costs, is £1.8bn more than CP6 (2019-2024).

Whilst funding for enhancements to our railway is no longer included in this funding settlement, the Government has already committed substantial investment – some £96bn – in the Integrated Rail Plan, with a substantial portion of these funds being delivered in projects during the course of CP7.

Sitting below the national overview, are four more detailed, regional plans for England and Wales, and plans for our national functions. Scotland's Railway continues to align CP7 plans with Scottish Ministers' HLOS and SoFA, which was published in early February 2023. We aim to publish the final Scotland CP7 SBP in Summer 2023.

Network Rail explains plan for England and Wales:

Is focused on our customers: by planning to deliver a more punctual and reliable railway than today and improving passenger and freight customer experience:

- Recognising the need to improve performance over the remainder of CP6 and giving passengers and freight users the highest level of train performance possible in CP7 **
- renewing lifts and escalators, improving lighting and passenger information systems to improve personal security and safety
- more than doubling investment – to £1.6bn – in tackling climate change, and making our railway more resilient and sustainable. This includes investment in earthworks and drainage renewals, and improvements to our capability such as the creation of dedicated earthworks and drainage teams, operational weather expertise, climate change adaptation strategy investment and continued investment in the Weather Risk Taskforce
- Our plans also include investment in the reduction of emissions and targeted net-zero initiatives, focussing on meeting Government objectives for biodiversity, air quality and waste.
- focused on value for money by making every penny count and targeting efficiencies of £3.4bn over the period

Supports all who use the railway: by continuing to put passenger, public and workforce safety at the heart of our plans;

- investing in technology and innovation such as installing equipment on trains which monitors infrastructure condition remotely without needlessly sending employees onto the track
 - investing £1.85bn in next-generation signalling that has the ability to improve reliability and train performance

Supports economic growth and connectivity: our plans include investment in technology and research and development, and will facilitate the introduction of major projects such as Transpennine Route Upgrade, preparing for HS2 and other targeted investment across the country, along with:

- supporting the continued growth of rail freight through an ambitious but realistic target of 7.5% growth across the network
- laying the foundations for GBR that will be key to the railway becoming more efficient through reuniting track and train. A reformed railway will see this settlement go further by enabling a simpler, better railway for everyone.

Network Rail's chief executive Andrew Haines said: "As we look to the next five years, the Government's commitment to invest £44 billion in the operations, maintenance and renewal of England and Wales's

railway is a clear indication of the strong economic value rail brings to Britain.

“Our plan for CP7 is ambitious, focussed on our passengers and customers and reflects the current complexities and challenges facing the industry. There will no doubt be obstacles ahead and I look forward to working collaboratively with the sector to deliver this plan, reshape the industry and build a railway that is fit for the future.”

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) will now review this initial strategic business plan and review how it measures up against the Government’s HLOS and SoFA and publish its draft determination on this plan later this year including targets, measures and incentives it will hold Network Rail to deliver over CP7.

Summaries of the national, and each region’s and function’s CP7 strategic business plan can be downloaded [here](#).

Photo credit: Network Rail