

# ORR appoints provider and strengthens Rail Ombudsman scheme for passengers

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The **Office of Rail and Road (ORR)** has announced Dispute Resolution Ombudsman (DRO) as the provider of the new ORR-sponsored Rail Ombudsman scheme.

Dispute Resolution Ombudsman, who operate the current Rail Ombudsman scheme under a Rail Delivery Group contract, were appointed following a competitive tender process and their contract will run for five years.

The ORR sponsored scheme will introduce improvements for passengers, including:

- strengthening the accessibility requirements of the scheme, including by building improved representation of disabled passenger interests into the scheme's governance arrangements
- a requirement to undertake testing around the access and usability of the scheme for passengers with disabilities, as well as testing general passenger awareness of the service
- strengthened relationships with transport user groups

ORR also intends to review options for reducing current case-handling response times down from the

current standard of 40 working days.

Stephanie Tobyn, director for strategy, policy and reform at the ORR said: “ORR is delighted to be delivering on the Plan for Rail commitment to take on sponsorship of the Rail Ombudsman. An Ombudsman is vitally important in providing resolution where passenger complaints cannot be settled directly with the train company.

“ORR sponsorship provides ongoing stability to the Rail Ombudsman scheme, assures its independence, and supports its continued evolution in driving continuous improvement across industry.”

The May 2021 [Plan for Rail](#) set out an intent for ORR to take over sponsorship of the Rail Ombudsman from the Rail Delivery Group (RDG). Since this announcement, ORR has been working with stakeholders in government, industry, transport user groups and the Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) sector to put in place the arrangements to take on ORR’s new sponsorship role. This included launching a competitive tender process earlier this year to find a provider for the ORR-sponsored scheme.

Kevin Grix, CEO and chief ombudsman of the Rail Ombudsman, said: “We are proud that our work to raise standards and resolve disputes over the last five years, as the serving Rail Ombudsman, has been recognised as the best solution by the ORR for the future. This recognition enables us to take forward our work delivering for passengers and the rail industry. We welcome the ORR’s plans to improve the passenger experience and look forward to playing a central role in helping them.”

ORR will be working closely with Dispute Resolution Ombudsman, Rail Ombudsman scheme members and wider stakeholders to support the transition to the new ORR sponsored scheme, which will come into effect later this year.

Consumers need not take any action and can continue to access the Rail Ombudsman scheme as normal throughout the transition period.

*Photo credit: Office of Rail and Road*