

## ORR calls for improvement after Avanti's timetable recovery plan stalls

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The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) has written to Avanti West Coast calling for significant improvements to its recovery plan for releasing timetables to passengers ahead of travel.

Despite Avanti initially making reasonable progress against their September 2022 plan and increasing notice for passengers to book travel in the lead up to Christmas, the ORR says the position has deteriorated in 2023.

For weekends in January, passengers have only been able to book tickets at a few days' notice.

Avanti's current plans for February show a better picture for weekday travel, but still fall short of passengers' needs for weekend journeys.

Under Avanti's passenger information licence requirement, ORR has asked Avanti to submit an improved recovery plan for timetable production by 2 February 2023.

Stephanie Tobyn, Director of Strategy, Policy and Reform at ORR said: "Passengers are rightly frustrated

that this situation has deteriorated so quickly after a steady start to the recovery plan late last year.

“By 2 February we expect Avanti to identify what has gone wrong and set out how it intends to get back to releasing timetables in normal industry timescales so that passengers can plan and book journeys with greater confidence”.

“Failure to produce an acceptable plan or to deliver improvements may lead to more formal measures.”

In response, an Avanti West Coast spokesperson said: “Unfortunately, some tickets for Saturdays and Sundays have only been available at short notice due to having to write unprecedented numbers of bespoke timetables to accommodate industrial action and engineering work stretching industry train planning resource. We know this causes huge uncertainty and inconvenience for passengers and we’re sorry for that.

“We’re working with our colleagues at Network Rail to get tickets on sale as soon as possible and are encouraging passengers to sign up for ticket alerts. We’re also working closely with the ORR and keeping them informed. Weekend tickets are now on sale up to mid-February, and by mid-March we’ll be selling weekend tickets six weeks out.”

*Photo credit: ORR*