

Regulator finds Network Rail maintains good stakeholder engagement

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The Office of Rail and Road's annual assessment of how **Network Rail** engages with its stakeholders shows a strong performance in the past year, but overall satisfaction has dipped slightly.

The regulator has assessed how well Network Rail performed against the four overarching principles of good stakeholder engagement defined in its licence from the ORR: inclusive, transparent, well-governed and effective. The assessment derives from an ORR stakeholder survey and Network Rail's business unit self-assessments.

A total of 288 rail industry stakeholders shared their experiences with ORR. When asked to rate the quality of Network Rail's overall engagement, 60 per cent of respondents deemed it as good or very good, however this is a drop of 13 per cent from last year.

Overall, however, the assessment shows that Network Rail's performance on stakeholder engagement remains strong. There were no significant differences between business units in terms of performance, although units had different areas of strength and areas for further development. The self-assessments provided good evidence of improvements the business units have made.

ORR has repeated the recommendation from last year's report that Network Rail's Senior Leadership Team and Board drive a strong culture of stakeholder engagement whilst continuing to support locally tailored engagement across the relevant business units. This will be particularly important as we move through the crucial next phases of ORR's ongoing periodic review (PR23) of Network Rail's outputs and funding for the next five year control period.

ORR also encourages Network Rail to continue to share best practice on stakeholder engagement between the business units.

ORR said this report presents its key findings and recommendations on the quality of Network Rail's stakeholder engagement during the third year of Control Period 6, from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

The ORR assessed the stakeholder engagement activity for each of Network Rail's five regions, the System Operator (SO) and Freight and National Passenger Operators (FNPO) (which together we term the 'relevant business units').

The ORR also commissioned Opinion Research Services, an independent social research practice, to conduct an online survey of Network Rail's stakeholders. This ran from 21 March to 19 April 2022.

A total of 288 stakeholders responded to the survey (a response rate of 9 per cent), and this includes partial responses where the respondent did not complete the full survey. The ORR said it saw an increase in the number of respondents from the previous year's survey but the response rate for this year was at the lower range of its expectations.