

Regulator provides progress report on Network Rail's response to improving performance in the North West and Central region

May 28, 2021



One year on from its investigation into Network Rail's impact on poor train performance in the North West and Central (NW&C) region, the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) finds progress has been made, but an extended focus is required in the coming months to ensure improvements are fully delivered for passengers and freight.

In May 2020, ORR found Network Rail had identified the main causes of poor performance and had started to develop remedial action plans but lacked delivery timescales. ORR consolidated its conclusions into a series of 25 recommendations to strengthen these improvement plans across the region.

Network Rail accepted all of these recommendations and overall the NW&C region has made good progress against the majority of these in difficult circumstances. ORR is satisfied that 19 of the recommendations have been addressed and these activities, and their benefits, are now being monitored.

The regulator has concerns however on the slow progress of six recommendations; which primarily relate

to asset management and two on operations. The region has made good progress with electrification works and understanding unexplained failures on the network, but it still has to develop many of the processes which it agreed, including:

- Improving the capabilities of staff in making timely interventions to issues such as track faults or drainage problems;
- Further developing its weather resilience and climate change plan;
- Reviewing how the region manages track side vegetation.

Graham Richards, Director, Planning and Performance at ORR said: “We recognise that the COVID-19 pandemic and Putting Passengers First reorganisation has affected the pace of progress.

“While good progress has been made on the majority of our recommendations, we now expect a final push on addressing those that remain.

“We will keep our enhanced monitoring in place for the time being as we continue to hold the NW&C region to account for delivering these improvements.”

Photo credit: Office of Rail and Road