

**Stephanie Tobyn**  
Director, Strategy, Policy and Reform



**By email only**

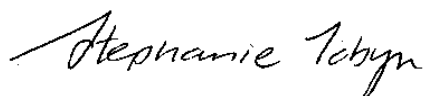
Department for Transport  
Network Rail

16 December 2022

**Reform of rail timetable production**

1. Industry has operated routinely outside contractual timescales for timetable production leading to uncertainty for operators and rail customers alike. Since 2021, industry and funders have participated in developing the proposals to change the timetabling process through the Better Timetabling for Passengers and Freight (BTPF) programme. We have regularly made clear, our expectation is that Network Rail must implement plans (which funders and industry follow) either for Network Code timescales to be respected, or for new ones to be developed and agreed.
2. BTPF reflects a new way of working supported by funders, many operators and Network Rail as a response to changing rail demand and the funding environment. Ahead of the closure of the BTPF consultation on 21 December 2022, I am writing to stress that any impact of those changes *on customers* must be understood and managed by funders and industry.
3. The proposal currently out for consultation by Network Rail, on behalf of stakeholders, includes two timetable change dates in June and October, with an optional third in February by consensus. The new dates mean shortened, later bid and offer timescales for operators and Network Rail, and the publication of confirmed timetables at “T minus 8 weeks”, which changes the link with informed traveller timetables for passengers.
4. While we consider there are potential benefits from industry and funders agreeing a contractual process with greater predicted timetable compliance, we have highlighted three substantive points in our BTPF consultation responses or in meetings with Network Rail:
  - a) Whether the proposals comply with the definition of “Working Timetable Period” in The Railways (Access, Management and Licensing of Railway Undertakings) Regulations (2016);

- b) How the publication of confirmed timetables at T-8 meets the requirements of Network Rail's Network Licence (conditions 7.17 and 7.18); and
  - c) That industry and funders should assure themselves of the impact on passengers, whether positive or detrimental, of changes to the timetabling process.
5. We are open to receiving further information, mitigations or solutions to these issues. It is important that Network Rail, funders and operators can address each point to avoid any ORR process being unduly onerous or complex, should BTPF Proposals for Change be submitted to us.
6. Network Rail and operators are best placed to answer our first two points. Funders and operators may be best placed to understand the impact of the timetabling process on outcomes for passengers. Working together, all parties involved in the BTPF proposals should consider the likely impact on passengers of any proposed changes to the timetabling process, make the case for change and communicating that change to passengers in due course.
7. We will publish a copy of this letter on our website.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Stephanie Tobyn'.

**Stephanie Tobyn**