

Guide to Lineside Loading

What is lineside loading?

In certain locations it is helpful for Freight Operating Companies or freight end-users to use Network Rail's land to load or unload rail vehicles that are standing on network infrastructure. This infrastructure can be a running line, a freight loop or a siding.

Why is it important?

Whilst many end-users may elect to own and operate their own siding infrastructure, there are instances where the collective investment in, and subsequent use of, Network Rail retained sidings by a number of end-users on 'campus' sites is preferable. Such 'campus' developments are spatially efficient, avoiding multi-tenant duplication of siding infrastructure and optimising precious freight estate land for productive, traffic generating tenure.



A typical lineside loading operation

There are also opportunities for freight use of sidings that would be routinely utilised by Network Rail for engineering traffic or on track machine stabling and so not suited to ownership and operation by an end-user.

In line with Government policy to promote modal shift, Network Rail's Freight and National Passenger Operators (FNPO) development team is involved in a nationwide development dialogue with current and potential end-users exploring opportunities to grow the rail freight traffic base. We have an extensive pipeline of potential new railheads and terminals across Network Rail's freight estate and welcome further discussions with any interested Freight Operating Companies or freight end-users.

Where can it be done?

Lineside loading is not universally applicable on all parts of the network. It is ideally suited to areas of lower frequency traffic (weekly or less) and its application is subject to a number of considerations.

Applicability criteria – running lines

- Construction of a suitable lineside loading apron location on Network Rail's land adjacent to the track, with at least a train length of standage either side of the site clear of level crossings, junctions or signals.
- Identification of an appropriate means of maintaining the integrity of the railway boundary.
- Avoidance of overhead AC catenary; lineside loading on DC electrified lines is possible with suitable conductor rail positioning to afford a safe working area.
- Identification of a suitable timetable period to perform the un/loading operation; on busier lines this may entail agreed occupancy of maintenance 'white space'.
- Agreement of a suitable Network Rail / Freight Operating Company Safe System of Work to encompass proposed train and loading operations; this technique has been proven capable of long term operational duration.

Applicability criteria – network sidings

In addition to network running lines, loading licences are routinely conferred where network sidings are employed in connection with end user sites where variously:

- One end-user's unloading activity occurs on a siding also serving as the access route to a second end-user's facility (so were the first end-user to have tenure of this siding it would create a 'ransom strip' for access to the second end-user's facility).
- Multiple end-users share a common unloading siding and apron area.
- A single end-user has sole use of an unloading siding but does not wish to be responsible for rail infrastructure and so the siding is excluded from (yet set within) the tenant's lease demise.

- A network siding may have dual utility for commercial freight traffic and stabling of engineering trains or on-track machines.

Why is a licence required?

A loading licence documents Network Rail's permission for the use of its lineside land for the purposes of un/loading freight traffic, either by a Freight Operating Company or an end-user. The licence provides a contractual mechanism describing the right to enter and utilise a defined extent of Network Rail's lineside land, in specific circumstances and subject to specific use conditions for the purposes of affecting the loading or unloading of rail vehicles. This is intended to protect both parties' interests.

As a permission to access and use Network Rail's lineside property, licences are a commercial property agreement and are subject to condition 7 of Network Rail's network licence. Like freight leases, loading licences are a freight property mechanism and as such form part of the commercial dialogue FNPO has with investing end-users.

How much does it cost?

As with all property agreements the cost of a licence depends on a number of considerations, fees typically being a consideration of:

Site inspection, repair, remediation cost

Network Rail will seek to recover those costs arising from the lineside loading operation above and beyond routine maintenance and renewal of the network. These activities include:

- Additional maintenance or rectification of boundary gate
- Loading apron inspections
- Maintenance/renewals of the loading apron and surrounding land area
- Clear up of material overspill.

Administrative costs

Additionally, Network Rail will seek to recover any administrative costs associated with establishing and documenting the loading operation and associated licence, plus any ongoing administration costs.

Property Value

In some scenarios the licence can incorporate the rental that would be paid if we chose to grant a lease instead. This element is then directly linked to rents in a particular location.

Fee ranges

Licence fees may be levied either per train (for lower traffic frequencies) or alternatively a fixed annual fee (for higher frequency traffics); the table below illustrates typical upper and lower fee levels, but final costs will be influenced by the factors described above.

Fee format	Typical Low	Typical High
Annual Fixed	£5,000	£15,000
Per Train	£175	£250

In certain instances Network Rail may agree a zero charge for a loading licence where the related costs have already been factored into the rental of an adjacent lease area. In such cases the loading licence is a complimentary document to the lease.

How do I apply?

For parties who are interested in exploring lineside loading as a means to affect modal shift of their traffics, initial contact should be through the FNPO development team in Network Rail.

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