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By email

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Industry engagement on GBR's future track access charges and performance schemes

Dear colleague,

I am writing to update you on preparations for the future development of track access charges and performance schemes for GBR's first Funding Period (2029 to 2034), and to invite you to participate in a new series of industry workshops beginning early next year.

Context

The Railways Bill entered Parliament on 5 November 2025, marking a major milestone in the UK Government's rail reform programme [available, here: [Railways Bill](#)]. The Bill will establish Great British Railways (GBR) as the single directing mind for the rail system, responsible for both rail infrastructure and publicly funded passenger services.

Once enacted, the Bill will transfer responsibility for setting track access charges and determining the performance schemes to GBR. These frameworks will apply only to operators outside of GBR, including charter operators, devolved services, freight operators, and open access operators. The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) will no longer set these schemes but will instead act as an independent appeals body, ensuring that GBR's decisions align with the new legislation and its forthcoming Access and Use Policy (AUP).

To prepare for this transition, the Government has authorised Network Rail to begin developing GBR's future AUP immediately, so that it is ready ahead of GBR's formal establishment. Building on extensive collaboration with industry partners, Network Rail has now published its AUP Discussion Paper [available, here: [Access and Use Policy](#)], and ORR has separately published a Discussion Paper seeking views on its proposed appeals role [available, here: [ORR Appeals Role](#)].

GBR readiness and early engagement

Given these proposed legislative changes, Network Rail will review and update the charges and performance frameworks ahead of GBR's establishment to ensure they align with the new legislation and are fit for GBR's industry structure.

To support this, we are leading a programme of **Early Industry Engagement** in 2026. This will provide an opportunity to explore potential approaches, test ideas, and understand stakeholder perspectives at an early stage. The aim is to identify shared

priorities for improvement, ensuring that any future reforms to the charges and performance schemes for 2029 to 2034 are practical, transparent, and proportionate.

Our engagement is focused on gaining insight from parties expected to remain outside of GBR, as it is these stakeholders that will be directly affected by the new charging and performance schemes. For completeness, passenger operators coming under public ownership and control will also be invited to comment on specific topics or seek clarity on areas of shared interest, although they will remain outside the scope of our workshops.

Although legislative clarity has improved, the Railways Bill remains subject to Parliamentary passage. Should delays arise, the current ORR-led arrangements may continue for Control Period 8. Our engagement approach will remain flexible to ensure the work remains valuable and relevant under either a GBR-led or ORR-led model.

Next steps

Our engagement will begin with an **introductory workshop on Wednesday 21 January 2026**. We will provide an overview of the proposed legislative changes and outline our engagement plans. This session will also introduce the series of technical workshops that will follow throughout the year. Workshop invites will be sent shortly; there will be an option to dial in remotely although attendance at Waterloo General Offices is preferred.

This initial workshop will be followed by a comprehensive programme of engagement over the course of 2026. In the first instance, our engagement will prioritise the topics that are most relevant for GBR's Access and Use Policy. For charges, this will include defining Costs Directly Incurred. For performance, this will include defining what compensation will be covered in the event of planned and unplanned disruption.

This will be followed by technical workshops on charges and performance topics. These sessions will allow stakeholders to share views, explore issues in depth, and help test potential approaches ahead of formal consultation in 2027. These discussions will help ensure our consultation proposals are mature and well-evidenced, ensuring a smooth transition to GBR setting charges and performance schemes for 2029 to 2034.

We will share and publish a full list of workshop dates once they are confirmed. We will publish dates and materials for these workshops on our website [available, here: [Charges and Performance Schemes](#)]. We look forward to working closely with you in the coming months to help shape a fair, effective, and future-ready framework for access charges and performance schemes.

We encourage you to share this letter with colleagues or other organisations that may wish to be involved. If you know of any stakeholders who should be included in this process, please let us know – we want to ensure we gather a broad and representative range of input.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, you can contact the team via our dedicated inbox: chargesandperformanceschemes@networkrail.co.uk.

Yours faithfully,

Caitlin Scarlett

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