

Rail Sector Liaison Panel

Minutes of the third meeting of the Rail Sector Liaison Panel, held by Zoom call on 16 July 2020 at 2pm.

Present:

Chair: Jon Walters

Vice-Chair: Emma Vincent

Billy Quinn

Christopher Hodges

Judith Turner

Matthew Thomas

Susan James

Apologies:

John Smith

Minutes prepared by Judith Turner (Deputy Chief Ombudsman, Rail Ombudsman)

The Chair declared the meeting open at 2pm.

1. Previous Minutes & Matters Arising

Previous Minutes were accepted.

2. Industry Update

a. Covid-19;

b. Sector Insights

EV confirmed that in the early days of the COVID crisis it took the industry a while to find its feet and there was uncertainty due to the implementation of the EMAs. Once this had been clarified, however, there were more agile and consistent mechanisms in place.

In the recovery period, the likely issues are around face coverings, managing capacity/demand and timetabling (which by 7 September is expected to be back close to 100% based on current trajectory).

There has been a governance structure change at RDG.

EV saw the issues from a consumer perspective arising out of the ongoing timetable bids and the release and reservation system which have timing implications for pricing and booking. As industry exits from EMA to BAU, focusing on real recovery and revenue will become an issue. It was noted that the DfT have been effective in maintaining stability with Trade Unions.

SJ confirmed from a consumer perspective that t&cs were not set up to cater for this situation and therefore following these has been a challenge and there was little consistency at the beginning of the crisis. It was also noted that Transport Focus had

sought clarity direct from the DfT regarding the refunds policy. There is a divide between London and the rest of the country with the latter recording 35% wishing to return to public transport, whereas the latter sat at circa 24%. Facemask enforcement is likely to be a challenge and the types of complaint will correspondingly change. Other issues may arise out of long distance and some commuter trains being reservation only, and there are different rules in Devolved Administrations that cross-border services will encounter. This presents a particular challenge around messaging to passengers.

3. Brief Initiative Updates

- a. **Byelaws:** JT provided an update on the campaign. Calls with stakeholders were now underway and actions being collated. JW and SJ attended a stakeholder call on 15 July. The project had ORR support and was well received with TOCs. JT agreed to keep the panel apprised of next steps.
- b. **EBR:** CH confirmed there was strong support for the concept and updated the panel that, following a meeting with JT and EV, a letter had been drafted and approaches would be made to the industry alongside Government and regulators. EV confirmed that progress had been made internally and reiterated that the time was right for this, EMAs indicating that something needs to change. CH agreed that this was relevant in terms of discussions surrounding culture and public ownership as other examples illustrate.

4. AOB

a. Governance and ORR Review headlines

JW led the discussion on the report which was positive overall, but which presented challenges and the role of the RSLP within the governance recommendations was a starting point for the panel. BQ confirmed the majority of the report was sensible, however some issues such as the watering down of the legal training requirements of Ombudsman staff would be contended. BQ also noted the review's reference to financial transparency and it is noted that this continues to be a priority for the scheme and is minuted as such.

SJ stated that in her opinion the Governance issues were never resolved from the initial discussions. EV added that there is no decision making framework within the SC which should be addressed at owning group level. She confirmed that this was a dynamic issue for the industry, not just the Ombudsman.

ACTION: A further discussion of this document and its findings regarding the RSLP would be added to the agenda for the next meeting.

5. Date of Next Meeting

No additional points raised, Chair thanks everyone for their flexibility in view of the current situation. The date offered for the next meeting is 28 September 2020 2-4pm

Meeting closed 3pm