

## **RAIL OMBUDSMAN BOARD MINUTES**

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Directors of Rail Ombudsman (Company Number 14303967) (the "company") held on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024

### Present:

Chief Executive and Chief Ombudsman: Kevin Grix (KG)

Executive Directors: Judith Turner (JT) Richard Puckey (RP)

Non-Executive Directors: John Peerless-Mountford (JP) [Chair]

Jonny Westbrooke (JW), James Walker (JWA), Helen Saxon (HS) and Gobi Ranganathan (GR)

Matt Thomas (MT)

Apologies for Absence: None

### **1. NOTICE, QUORUM AND APOLOGIES**

The Chair reported that sufficient notice of the meeting had been duly given and that a quorum was present.

### **2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Declaration of Directors' interests notice was circulated prior to the meeting and will be updated accordingly.

### **3. MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING**

The minutes of the Rail board meeting 17<sup>th</sup> June 2024 were approved by the board and signed by the Chair on behalf of the board.

### **4. FINANCIAL SUMMARY AGAINST CONTRACT**

RP summarised the financial position against contract with the board

### **5. OPERATIONAL UPDATE**

#### **Operational Update**

##### **Case volumes**

Case volumes since the last Board meeting have been relatively consistent. From a forecasting point of view, this will improve confidence.

Actuals for the first contract year i.e. 26 Nov 23 – 25 Nov 24 were approx. 3990 cases closed (indicative figure not subject to full QA but used to illustrate suitability of 4,000 case assumption).

## **SLA performance**

MT presented an update on service ratings, noting that the first contract year closed on "Excellent" – no service points and testament to the team's capability to manage cases to challenging deadlines.

ORR proposed a small change to the target to resolve cases within 30 working days – change request has been signed.

## **Scheme Member engagement**

Natalie Freeman has reported positive engagement by Scheme Members and normal working practices continue – collaborative approach focused on insight creation and two-way feedback to ensure high standards are met throughout the process. A current challenge with responsiveness on part of one operator, which will be escalated to ORR as part of SLA reporting.

Some concern that misdirected calls are received whereby caller believes they are calling a train operator – engaging where necessary on relative prominence of phone numbers in operator's published materials.

Positive engagement continues across the industry, in particular via the Redress Support Group, which provides a forum through which the RO can impart insight and also capture industry experiences.

## **Key activity**

### *Contract Audit*

The first of what will be an annual practice took place during October.

Key finding – adherence to Communications and Engagement Strategy Plan should be more robust – publication dates (Annual Review), Panel meetings.

ORR appetite for additional consumer satisfaction monitoring Discussed.

### *Advisory Panels*

Have met twice during 2024 and at the time of the Board meeting arrangements for a joint meeting of both Panels early in the New Year are being finalised.

Panels have bedded in – minutes published.

Board to consider advisory statement arising from the Scheme Member Panel – see 6 below.

### *Other*

Root Cause Analysis working group (RO/SABs/GTR) approaching completion of a review of passenger assistance issues. Objective is to highlight issues at source and contribute to long-term sustainable solutions – with insight from casework key.

Liaising with ORR on the new high-profile review of revenue protection activities. High level insight already provided. ORR's intention is to engage RO (amongst others) for insight.

Engaging constructively with all stakeholders with regard to future landscape / Passenger Standards Authority

### **Key upcoming**

Following ORR's accessibility testing and audit work earlier in the year, a new website and CMS rollout due to take place during Q1 2025.

Third Party Retailer membership – active discussions underway involving ORR and retailers.

## **6. ADVISORY STATEMENT FROM SCHEME MEMBER PANEL**

The Board was presented with the following advisory statement ahead of the meeting:

“The Rail ADR Service Board should consider the mechanism used for the Scheme Member Survey, in particular whether an anonymous approach would garner more feedback and promote a higher response rate.”

the Board's direction was to go ahead with exploring the methods for adopting an anonymous approach and noted that it would be useful to understand any difference anonymity makes to the feedback received.

## **Annual Business Plan 2025**

A draft has been prepared for consideration by the Board. MT presented an overview (draft circulated prior to meeting). MT will circulate the final draft following the meeting and the Board will feed back via correspondence.

## **7. QUALITY & COMPLAINTS**

Complaint numbers and feedback arising from the IA was discussed. One complaint has resulted in an application for judicial review.

Reviewing adjudication templates and producing a guide to rail which looks at how RO manages rail complaints end to end. This guide will serve as an induction tool for new starters.

All Ombudsman team members attended a three-day internal training course. Focus areas included practical telephone training, mediating, conciliating, and they've also in addition had plain English training.

A case summary document has been introduced at an earlier process stage to ensure that both parties are aware of each other's position and to mitigate complaints about the fact that things have been missed during the complaint handling process.

Received some positive feedback on Trust Pilot which is a good platform for feedback.

**8. AOB**

Nothing to note

There was no further business, and the Chair declared the meeting closed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John Peerless-Mountford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and 'M'.

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John Peerless-Mountford  
For and on behalf of the Board