

Michael Beswick
Director, Rail Policy
Telephone 020 7282 2031
Fax 020 7282 2043
E-mail michael.beswick @orr.gsi.gov.uk

16 May 2008

National Rail standards regimes: seeking views

Standards (or rules, specifications etc.) play a key role in facilitating the delivery of a safe and efficient railway by, for example, optimally specifying interfaces and providing standardised methods of working.

Between 2009 and 2014 railway undertakings and infrastructure managers will be required to deliver greater capacity and improvements in performance and safety, and to do this more efficiently. The growing programme of enhancement work that will, in part, underpin this, will put added pressure on the rail industry to ensure that it has suitable standards.

The industry also faces the acceleration in the development of Technical Specifications for Interoperability (TSIs) and their extension from high speed to conventional rail networks. The interim period where TSIs are a mixture of genuinely pan European specifications and national requirements presents additional challenges in steering an effective path toward interoperability.

Over a number of years, standards have been cited as the cause of inefficiencies in the way that the rail network is maintained, enhanced and operated. These inefficiencies are seen as arising from, among other things, unnecessary requirements that cost money and the stifling of improved methods of working.

We recognise the work the industry has done and is doing to improve standards. We have recently approved a new Railway Group Standards Code prepared by the industry to improve the process for changing standards.

Against this background, we are keen to:

- understand whether there is a clear view on what is the purpose of the standards regimes;
- understand whether the various standards regimes are fit for that purpose;
- identify any systemic problems with them, or with the way they are applied; and
- review ORR's role as safety and economic regulator in relation to standards.

To this end, we invite you to make representations on the four issues set out above. We are particularly interested in the standards regimes managed on behalf of the industry by the Rail Safety and Standards Board, the Network Rail company standards regime and the processes by which input is made to the development of TSIs. However, if you think that there are other standards regimes that we should consider please feel free to draw these to our attention. It would be helpful if you could illustrate any points of principle you wish to make with concrete examples. If you think it would be beneficial, we would be happy to meet with you to explore in depth any points you wish to make.

Representations, preferably in electronic format, should be emailed to:

michael.haizelden@orr.gsi.gov.uk

Alternatively they can be mailed to:

Michael Haizelden
Manager, Strategic Options
Office of Rail Regulation
One Kemble Street
London
WC2B 4AN

You should make clear whether you wish any part of your representation to be kept confidential. Otherwise we will publish all representations on our website.

The closing date for the receipt of representations is Friday 18 July 2008.

We will analyse the representations we receive and produce a report, that may, among other things, identify proposals for further actions.

Yours sincerely



Michael Beswick

