

Efficient Engineering Access Steering Group

Interim Progress Report: December 2006

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Executive Summary

The Efficient Engineering Access Steering Group started work in the second half of 2005 following an ORR seminar on the issue. The objective was to develop a solution acceptable to all parts of the industry. The choices then appeared stark: longer and more disruptive possessions which would make travel at weekends and late evenings less attractive or shorter less disruptive possessions which would enable more passengers to use trains but with a risk of higher unit costs for Network Rail.

The Steering Group set up three working groups to look at efficiency of NR contractors' work in possessions, to look at planning processes and to develop some KPIs.

These groups met through late 2005 and the first half of 2006. Two key pieces of research were funded by ORR which informed the discussions at the working groups. These were a cost benefit analysis of longer vs shorter possessions on Western Route and some benchmarking work comparing productivity on NR with that elsewhere in Europe and Australia.

Network Rail's efficiency improvement programme gave encouragement that improvements could be foreseen and this was reinforced by work done by EWS jointly with NR. It was the sustainability work done for DFT on WCML that was possibly most influential in deciding the way forward, however the WCML report set out clearly the revenue foregone on this key route from the intrusive possessions for the upgrading work. Taking account of this and the somewhat inconclusive results of the Western study, it became clear that what was needed was an industry case. For busy routes with high revenues, particularly at weekends, there would be real benefits for the industry as a whole from shorter possessions, even at the expense of more expensive renewals techniques, probably using more medium output plant.

This approach was endorsed at the ORR seminar in October 2006 where it was decided that the Steering Group should continue until mid 2007 to review the following:

- development of a methodology to decide the best possession strategy for each route;
- review Network Rail's ongoing efficiency improving work; and
- finalise KPIs to measure the improvements achieved

Introduction

The Efficient Engineering Access Steering Group has been meeting for over 12 months. Following the successful seminar in October 2006, a number of further actions have been agreed to deliver the improvements which can be achieved.

This interim report explains the development of the engineering access work, describes the outcomes from the seminars and sets out the way forward.

History of Efficient Engineering Access

1. As the rail industry was privatised, it was recognised that there needed to be some incentives to encourage Railtrack not to demand excessively long possessions for engineering work which would adversely impact on train operators' revenues. The concept of a "Free Possessions Allowance" was developed where Railtrack would get the same amount of possessions traditionally given on each route without charge. Any longer possessions would be paid for under Schedule 4. The "Free Possessions Allowance" set out the norms for each route into which most types of work were fitted.
2. The compensation payable to TOCs was limited to their revenue losses from the extended possessions and did not include the costs of replacement transport (usually buses). These were not excessive for a regime of relatively short possessions and a relatively low workload of engineering work such as was seen in the early days of Railtrack.
3. Two things then changed - ORR decided as part of the Access Charges Review in 2000 that the Free Possessions Allowance should disappear and that TOCs should be paid compensation for the revenue losses from all possessions. The effect was that the incremental cost in going from the traditional (free) possession to something more intrusive was marginal. It should be noted that there has never been a compensation regime for freight operators akin to Schedule 4. These longer possessions became encapsulated into the Rules of Route.
4. Probably the most significant reason for change though was the accident at Hatfield. The extent of the temporary speed restrictions imposed was such that train operators agreed much longer possessions so that Railtrack could carry out the major programme of track (mostly rail) renewals work to ameliorate the devastating impact of the post Hatfield speed restrictions. This pattern of extended possessions continued as Network Rail took over the network and introduced professional project management skills into managing renewals. These longer possessions became encapsulated into the Rules of the Route.
5. In preparing for the CP3 review, ORR had some information which suggested that there was scope to reduce renewals costs through a different approach to possessions. LEK had produced a report which indicated that unit costs could be reduced by a significant amount through the more efficient use of plant and manpower which could be achieved through longer possessions. This resulted in the SRA asking Network Rail to develop proposals for Efficient Engineering Access strategies to be taken into account by bidders in the preparation of franchise bids. However, the SRA required these strategies to be developed with no TOC engagement.

6. A number of pilot studies were undertaken - on Anglia Route where as many jobs as possible were included in a possession on the GE Main Line, on GW Route where a desktop study showed that efficiencies could be achieved through longer possessions and on South Eastern Route where the train operator and Network Rail worked together to develop a standard possession pattern which would facilitate a long term maintenance strategy.
7. ORR organised an industry seminar in April 2005 to discuss with the industry the way forward. Were the significant gains suggested in the LEK report achievable? Did the pilot studies give the correct answer? Had the joint NR/SRA work on Efficient Engineering Access demonstrated the best way forward?
8. At the seminar, passenger and freight operators pointed out strongly that the studies so far had not produced any conclusive results and that more analysis was required. In particular, no proper account had been taken of the losses to the industry as a whole from passengers who could not travel and freight which could not be diverted and importantly, the conclusions were based on the assumption that little further efficiency was to be gained from NR's use of the existing possession pattern.
9. It had been considered that a further review (reduction) of NR's costs might be possible if longer possessions could be agreed but in view of the lack of consensus, ORR decided that no further reduction in NR expenditure should be imposed in CP3 from the use of longer possessions and that an industry group should be set up to achieve agreement throughout the industry on the way forward.
10. This was set up under the chairmanship of Jim Morgan of FirstGroup representing ATOC, Network Rail, ORR, DfT, Transport Scotland, EWS and Freightliner also provided representatives with Simon Feast of ATOC as Secretary of the group.

Possessions Steering Group

At its first meeting on 18/07/05, the group decided that there was a significant amount of work to be done and that this should be done through three separate workstreams so that there was the time for the necessary analysis and discussion to be completed within a reasonable timescale. These groups were as follows:

11. Workstream One was established to examine the efficiency with which Network Rail carried out work in existing possessions and its plans for improvement.

Objective:

The overall objective of this work stream was to ensure that all parties in the industry understood and were able to constructively challenge the efficiency with which renewal and maintenance is carried out. A consensus on this will facilitate whole industry optimisation.

This work stream covered:

- The efficiency with which the time available during a possession is used;
- The overall efficiency with which plant and machinery is used;
- The availability of appropriate equipment to undertake possessions efficiently;
- The efficiency with which possessions are taken and handed back.

Chaired by Network Rail (Charles Robarts), with representatives from Network Rail, RFOA (Ian Smith), ORR, & ATOC (Jim Morgan).

12. Workstream Two was established to examine possession planning processes and the economic case for changing possession lengths.

Objective:

The objective of this work stream was whole industry optimisation balancing the needs of Network Rail to renew and repair the track, with the needs of the passenger and freight operators.

This work stream covered:

- The rules applied on the running of trains during possessions, e.g. single line working;
- Fewer longer possessions versus more shorter possessions;
- Diversionary policies;
- First & last trains;
- Timetabling;
- The planning process.

Originally chaired by ATOC (Tim Clarke), with representatives from Network Rail, RFOA (Lindsay Durham), another TOC, ORR & DfT.

13. Workstream Three was established to examine regulatory issues and propose some KPIs

Objective:

The 2 objectives of this work stream were:

- i) Ensuring that the incentives facing players within the industry achieve the whole industry optimisation that emerges from the first 2 work streams; and that the commercial interests of the parties are respected.
- ii) Measuring the outputs of Network Rail and developing appropriate KPIs.

This work stream covered:

- Schedule 4 compensation;
- Regulatory processes
- Network Code;
- Rules of the Route;
- Franchise specification;
- KPIs & overall targets.

Chaired by ORR (David Brace), with representatives from Network Rail, ATOC (Alec McTavish), and RFOA.

14. Workstream One

- 14.1. This group was established under the chairmanship of Network Rail with members from ATOC, ORR and EWS. It requested details of efficiency initiatives from Network Rail. These were then the subject of a presentation followed by a discussion and agreement on the way forward. There were a number of meetings between August and December 2005.
- 14.2. Amongst the topics discussed were single line working, high output equipment, medium output equipment, patrolling and maintenance possessions and switch and crossing renewals. These outputs came from efficiency improvement work which Network Rail was already taking forward and which has been recently integrated into the Top 100 Renewals Efficiency project.
- 14.3. Some interesting points which emerged from the work were that Single Line Working can still be used but some people believe that train operators are not interested and that it is too difficult. Adjacent Line Open for High Output Equipment however was recognised as important and was being progressed. S&C renewals were being carried out to a far higher standard than was the case in BR days but the normal requirement was a 54 hour possession. With good planning this could be reduced to say 28 hours for a single lead but this was still very disruptive. The Modular S&C Project aimed to use best continental practice to reduce this to 6 hours using specialised equipment including purpose designed wagons.

- 14.4. ORR thought it would be desirable to carry out some benchmarking work to compare efficiencies between Network Rail and various continental administrations. The consultants used were Lloyds Register Rail and their conclusions demonstrated that NR had developed some international best practice but was less efficient in other areas. The conclusions of this report were described at the industry seminar in October 2006.
- 14.5. One area specifically excluded from Workstream One was the taking and giving up of possessions and isolations. This was being addressed through another group within NR reviewing operational efficiency. There was a separate working party chaired by Andrew MacNaughton, NR's Chief Engineer looking at this. Members of this group looked at various international comparisons and decided to adopt Canadian practice. One member of the team represented RSSB and he has produced an amendment to the Rule Book ready for a trial of the arrangements in Scotland in the future.
- 14.6. There is also some parallel work. EWS and Network Rail have also been working with a Canadian engineer who has made a number of recommendations to improve possession efficiency in the UK by adopting some North American practice. TPE has also, through its involvement with Keolis done some comparisons with SNCF practice. These are mostly concerned with maintenance standards but again there are some possession efficiency improvements emerging from the work.

15 Workstream Two

- 15.1 This group looked at a number of issues - starting with the possession planning process. There had been a number of problems with NR giving operators short notice of planned changes for engineering possessions and operators not bidding for the revised train plan in enough time. This caused difficulties with advising passengers when they could travel as well as the availability of discounted tickets. There was considerable public concern about this issue and ORR was threatening to take action if the problem could not be resolved quickly. NR already had plans in place to address the issue through a much more rigorous control over late possession requests and train operators had increased their own train planning resources. Workstream Two looked at the revised processes, particularly those within NR and concluded that, if they were complied with, they would reduce this problem to acceptable levels.
- 15.2 One of the problems which has made understanding of the impact of possessions much more difficult is the lack of research into passenger behaviour when faced with a possession. Some passengers do not check in advance and have their journey times considerably extended

when there is engineering work. Others do check - some decide to change their travel dates whilst others decide to travel by car, coach or air - a loss to rail of their fares both in the short and possibly medium and long-term. The group looked at some research commissioned for the Passenger Demand Forecasting Council - the joint industry body which manages the PDFH forecasting tool. This found that the potential losses to the rail industry were more significant than earlier predictions and that it could not be assumed that given enough notice, potential passengers would change their behaviour. Whilst this study, carried out for PDFC by Steer Davies Gleave did not give detailed predictions of what would happen in different scenarios, it did indicate the need for further analytical work.

- 15.3 The group recommended that a pilot study be carried out to see whether or not, taking all factors into account, longer or shorter possessions would be beneficial for the rail industry. In response to this Network Rail dedicated three full time resources to work on the workstreams. After some thought, it was agreed that the pilot study should be carried out on the GW Route as a follow up to the desktop study. ORR appointed NERA to carry out the work assisted by a number of other consultants. A number of workshops were arranged and from which two options emerged. One looking at shorter possessions and one looking at longer possessions compared with current practices. The impact on NR costs was calculated as well as the changes in revenue, bus and other operator costs and user and non-user costs. This was pioneering work and needed some careful thought on the right approach. It was assumed for the analysis that NR would not achieve any other efficiency improvements other than those from the changed possession length.
- 15.4 From the work, two issues emerged - firstly, the adverse revenue impact was very much reduced by the availability of suitable diversionary routes on Great Western. Secondly, it was unrealistic to assume that NR would not be progressing a number of efficiency improvements - there was in fact a continuous process within NR to meet and better targets set by ORR. The results of this study showed a small benefit to the total industry from longer possessions, though these savings were dominated by a large job at Wootton Bassett Junction. Examining the results does give much better detail of the revenue and user and non-user impacts. It can be seen that these would be much bigger for a route where diversions were more difficult.

16. Workstream Three

- 16.1 Although the remit of this group was to look at both the regulatory process and KPIs, it sensibly decided to defer consideration of the regulatory processes until the way forward became clearer.

- 16.2 Network Rail was already producing a range of KPIs to aid its own business management processes. These were explained to the group by NR, discussed and modified in line with NR's emerging thinking. A final set was circulated for comments on 14/09/06.

17. Industry Seminar

At the 2005 industry seminar, it was stated that there would be a follow up in 2006. This was held at ORR on 6th October and was attended by 65 people from NR, freight, and passenger operators, ORR, consultants and other stakeholders. The action points from this meeting are detailed in Appendix 1. Some key points emerging were as follows;

- 17.1 Network Rail made a commitment that it saw its role as to facilitate the operation of trains not to seek ever longer possessions to reduce unit renewals costs. This point was made strongly by Robin Gisby and reinforced later by John Armitt. Further work was needed to help determine the best possessions pattern for each route but the principles were clear. The involvement of operators was essential to develop the optimal possession pattern.
- 17.2 Robin Gisby restated Network Rail's commitment to the principles of running a seven day a week railway. NR's priority is to build on the work carried out by the Sustainability Strategy Steering Group which set out DfT and operator aspirations for the upgraded WCML. NR will deliver the SSSG proposals for the West Coast timetable south of Manchester for December 2008 and will implement the necessary activities to carry this out for the whole of the West Coast Main line hopefully by 2009. Peter Leppard has been seconded to make this happen. Some problems remain: South Manchester resignalling, S&C north of Crewe and Rugby, Bletchley, and Milton Keynes remodelling. Some additional equipment may be required.
- 17.3 NR have 100 ideas to improve possession efficiency but progress has not always been good in delivering these. Ben Rule of Network Rail (and his replacement) has moved over from project managing work on autumn delivery to focus on these initiatives. The challenge is to take forward possession initiatives with an increased focus on delivering the identified improvements.
- 17.4 Ian Smith described some of the opportunities which needed to be grasped – more single line working including use of bi-directional signalling needs to be used more and planning of what can be done in a possession needs to be much more ambitious. Schedule 4 and schedule 8 regimes had not delivered the expected results.
- 17.5 Stuart Holder of NERA described the pilot study on the Western Route. This had delivered a transferable methodology but special circumstances for that study meant that the conclusions were not necessarily transferable. The study only concluded a very limited

number of efficiency improvements and the results were influenced by the extent of the diversionary routes available on Western.

- 17.6 Huw Davies of Lloyds Register Rail described how Network Rail's efficiency in possessions compared with other railways in Europe and Australia. For bridges and tunnels comparisons were difficult although the Swiss have particularly short possessions. Track maintenance was broadly similar though NR was better than some but not as good as others.

The use of Rules of the Route possessions on MML for 2007 using specially designed machinery for ole renewals would be a big step forward. Signalling works are comparable for maintenance but not where the Signalling Works Testing Handbook has to be used. NR is already reviewing these requirements.

- 17.7 For track renewals, NR generally took quite a bit longer for S&C renewals but was comparable with some European railways and is best in class for high output ballast cleaning. The picture was less clear for plain line track renewals however where NR used different methods – small road/rail plant rather than medium or high output purpose built equipment.

- 17.8 Single line working is the norm in Europe but a number of people within NR and contractors consider that it is too difficult in the UK – train operators believe that single line working is critical for the provision of continued services during engineering works.

- 17.9 Lucy Pitcher of NR then described the various pilot studies that NR are now leading and which follow on from initial pilot on the Western, these include the West Anglia route, Chiltern and elsewhere. It was important that operators engaged with NR in order to ensure the right conclusions were reached. This would mean sharing revenue information on a confidential basis.

- 17.10 Richard O'Brien of NR described some of the efficiency initiatives that NR would be taking forward under Ben Rule

- 17.11 Richard O'Brien of NR described the KPIs which had been developed to measure the planning impact and use of possessions followed by a description of the possession planning arrangement. Operators raised a number of queries about these, seeking to define some of the issues more clearly.

- 17.12 There followed an open forum session – operators were very supportive of the focus on allowing services to run and strongly supported more single line working. They gave a number of examples where the situation needed to change.

- 17.13 John Armitt gave his strong support for the adjacent line open policy adopted for high output work on the Western and said he was 100% behind the need to maximise services at weekends. However, he noted that there was still a large volume of engineering work required

to deliver a reliable infrastructure and this would require engineering access.

17.14 There was a clear need to improve planning arrangements but NR was addressing this and looking at new systems as well as behavioural changes.

17.15 Michael Lee summed up what he felt had been an excellent day – by CP4 possessions are going to look quite different. He asked those present to comment on the CP4 reviews – it was vital to get more industry feedback.

18. The Way Forward

The Steering Group has met twice since the seminar and the way forward is now clear.

18.1 Schedule 4 would become part of a separate workstream to be established by ORR. Details of the arrangement are currently awaited.

18.2 The Steering Group will continue until July 2007 at the earliest. Its role will be:

- Reviewing progress on NR efficiency programmes from Ben Rule and Paddy Dingwall:
- Reviewing KPIs once these are finished:
- Reviewing parallel work streams and making new recommendations to ensure an integrated whole – industry result;
- Development of a methodology to establish the right possession strategy for each route. The existing case study approach is proving too slow to produce worthwhile results by July 2007 and a fresh approach is needed. NR and ATOC will develop this with ORR observing the process but it will need endorsement from TOCs.

Jim Morgan
Chairman, Efficient Engineering access Steering Group
December 2006

References

1. Cost Benefit Appraisal of EEA Possessions Strategy – Draft Report for ORR. October 2006, NERA Economic Consulting, London
2. Possession bench marking exercise Report for Office of Rail Regulation. September 2006, Lloyds Register Rail, Birmingham
3. Sustainability Strategy Steering Group, West Coast Route Steady State Maintenance and Renewals. July 2006 Network Rail, London.

APPENDIX 1

Possessions Seminar Friday 6 October 2006

Headlines

- Network Rail is committed to facilitating train operation at weekends, not taking ever longer possessions. Total industry impact is key to this.
- SSSG on WCML needs some significant work but Peter Leppard is being seconded to sort it out. London – Manchester to be delivered by December 2008, remainder to follow as soon as possible.
- NR has 100 possession efficiency improvement plans. Ben Rule to take this forward, starting with the top ten.
- High Output equipment as efficient as anywhere else and Adjacent Line Open now working.
- SLW needs to be taken seriously again – TOCs do want it!
- Western Pilot study demonstrated the problems with choosing an untypical area – no widely applicable conclusions from this. It also demonstrated the need for strong input from TOCs on revenue implications.
- S&C takes far too long to relay. Modular S&C will give benefits but NR urged to make improvements earlier.
- Specification for reballasting needs to be reviewed to enable ballast cleaning rather than traxcavating.
- Possession take up and hand back times is another area being reviewed with a view that these can be cut substantially.
- TOCs need to make clear that they do want to run trains and that part of Sunday is better than none of it!

This seminar demonstrated that there had been a major change in approach from both TOCs and NR. The challenge over the next few months would be to build these commitments into future Rules of the Route.

1. Welcome & introduction- Michael Lee

Some firm conclusions are needed over the next 12 months as to what our strategy on possessions is going to be in the future.

2. Background to Industry Possessions Review (slides) – Jim Morgan

Jim Morgan gave a brief overview of progress since the last seminar in May 2005.

What are the big issues? – Robin Gisby

Robin Gisby stated that Network Rail is committed to changing possession patterns so that operators could run trains 7 days a week.

Network Rail's (NR) priority is to deliver the West Coast (WC) timetable for December 2008. Peter Leppard from NR is being seconded for the next 2 years to oversee the WC project. South West Manchester resignalling project is still to be fully delivered. NR are currently delivering T-4 on engineering trains, and recognise the need to get better.

NR have 100 possessions efficiency improvement ideas, however they have not been good at delivering on all of these. Ben Rule from NR who has done some good work on autumn delivery, will now focus on these initiatives starting with the first 10, then the next 10 and so on, to ensure they are cascaded throughout NR.

Possessions have been something of an orphan until recently, and the challenge now is to take the issue forward.

Sustainability Strategy Steering Group (SSSG) has documented what operators want for WCML. NR is committed to this but won't be able to get everything in place for the December 2008 timetable. Key outstanding deliverables: S&C north of Crewe, and Rugby, Bletchley & Milton Keynes remodelling. NR have not ordered all the equipment needed to deliver SSSG yet, such as kit to produce modular S&C. NR want to work towards delivering SSSG, but need to get on and do it now. NR envisage a phased approach from 2008 onwards probably targeting with London- Manchester first.

High output equipment does a good job, but its efficient use doesn't fit with TOCs' preferred access patterns. This is a challenge for NR and the TOCs.

NR have produced a number of KPIs. NR need to get the balance right between cost and efficiency, and delivering the access that the TOCs want. NR is completely committed to delivering access that enables TOCs & FOCs to operate their businesses effectively. It isn't acceptable that Sunday afternoons are as unpredictable for passengers as the position is currently.

3. An Operator's perspective (slides) – Ian Smith

Operators are concerned that we are in danger of losing the discipline of SLW, and NR should make better use of bi-directional signalling. Schedule 4 doesn't apply for FOCs, who are focussed on running trains rather than being

compensated for not running them. Schedule 8 has created a culture of stopping work short to avoid paying compensation. EWS would rather that NR finished the job, even if this means a possession overrun.

4. Achievements since the last seminar in May 2005 (slides) – Richard O'Brien

4.1 Cost benefit appraisal, Western pilot study (slides) – Stuart Holder, NERA

Stuart Holder stressed the unusual features of the study area which need to be borne in mind. Paddington to Didcot is a 4 track railway, which therefore means trains can still run during possessions. The Western also has several diversionary routes which can be used during possessions, with relatively small time impacts in some cases. On this particular route and with these features therefore the option for shorter possessions (referred to as the TOC friendly option) is not cost favourable.

External comparisons (slides) – Huw Davies, Lloyds Register Rail

Following these 2 presentations, Jim Morgan summarised where we had got to. There were 2 main types of work on Western: Plain Line Track Renewals (PLTR) and S&C.

On PLTR, GB is quite unique in that our specification calls for complete ballast renewal, when elsewhere normally traxcavation is used. This is because our specification for new ballast going in is high. The current contractual environment means that the most appropriate mechanisation has been replaced by lots of road/rail machines which take longer.

Richard Spoors (Consultant) commented that a lot of equipment was old and poorly maintained following no investment in the 80s & 90s. Road/rail equipment was good for reducing costs as it can be hired in at relatively low cost, but not for efficient possessions. Large investment was therefore required for specialist track equipment.

Chris Gibb said that Virgin had been told that NR don't have the ability to do single line working now.

Graham Smith (EWS) commented that he felt this was a seminal meeting. We could change the basic costs of the railway if we built on what we've heard this morning.

Robin Gisby believed that there is latent demand that would use the trains if they were operated at weekends. Using MOIRA to do revenue analysis purely perpetuated old revenue fluctuations. Stuart Holder confirmed that he didn't believe the numbers either, and they have done sensitivity tests since to confirm them, however they were constrained by the remit.

Alison Forster (FGW) felt the study was flawed because it only looked at part of the FGW route.

Ongoing pilot studies (slides) - Lucy Pitcher

Efficiency Initiatives (slides) – Richard O’Brien

Graham Smith (EWS) commented that ORR’s review of the next control period was underway, and a lot of what we had heard today will inform ORR’s decisions for CP4.

Paul Plummer (NR) said that he would be updating the Strategic Plan for next October, and that more quantification of costs and outputs was needed. Jim Morgan made a plea to operators to engage in this process to help NR to get the right answers.

Lunch

4.2 Measuring the planning impact and use of possessions (KPIs) (slides) – Richard O’Brien

Richard O’Brien (ROB) invited feedback on the proposed KPIs:

Robin Davis (GNER) felt something on the number of cancelled possessions would be useful, as would a measure of network capability after possessions. Niel Wilson (Northern) suggested recording engineering work cancelled at short notice.

Chris Gibb questioned what the percentage of track opened meant? What was the status of lines neither under possession nor available for traffic? It was pointed out that work in overhead line areas can be more disruptive due to the extent of isolations.

Nigel Pennington (Central Trains) had been led to believe that half of booked possessions were not required.

Chris Gibb suggested that NR have a small team to monitor & police the utilisation of possessions.

Robin Davis suggested monitoring the impact of late running trains on possessions.

4.3 Possession Planning Arrangements (slides) – Richard O’Brien

ROB explained how NR were mapping TOC demand profiles and possession requirements for the Stansted route, in order to try and find the optimum mix.

Lindsay Durham (Freightliner) asked how freight operators would be included in these KPIs? ROB replied that NR could map freight demand in the same way as passenger operators. Lindsay pointed out that FOCs usually require a more even pattern of services as they don’t have peaks like the TOCs.

5. Open Forum

Neil Stevens (Railfreight Group) asked why non intrusive temporary crossovers were not given the attention they deserved? - This is one of the NR 100 initiatives, although it is reasonably difficult to do with current practices.

Chris Gibb commented that NR need to do better on the possession planning side, e.g. by not blocking the ECML & WCML at the same time. TOCs often have to point out to NAU where conflicts exist. VXC have a dedicated person whose job was to scrutinise thousands of documents to see how possessions fit together, and he felt they shouldn't have to do this.

-ROB said this was a candidate for major process re-engineering.

Richard Wallace (TfL) pointed out the London area customer demand for earlier starts & later finishing trains like LUL. ROB replied that NR need to respond to how the business is growing & were up for the challenge.

Phil Barrett (One) added that One Railway would like to run later trains on the Stansted route, and that single line working would help facilitate this. Chris Gibb felt that there were no incentives on NR to operate SLW, and were in fact more incentivised not to, for example as rail replacement bus services did not contribute to PPM. Michael Lee (ORR) commented that this was one of the things that needed to change in CP4. Chris Gibb added that it was also very difficult now to recruit extra staff to operate SLW due to pressure to keep costs down.

Mark Leving (Hull Trains) said that Hull Trains had been refused to allow their diesels to run under overhead line isolations, for example at Potters Bar where the emphasis had been on blocking 3 lines rather than the 2 being worked on due to increased safety requirements. Ian Gee (SWT) said that NR regularly block 3 lines rather than 4 on their routes due to the safety requirement for a 10 foot gap between the worksite & open running lines.

ROB confirmed that SLW seemed to have gone out of fashion and that they needed to relearn the skills. He would take the feedback that the balance isn't quite right at the moment.

Robin Davis (GNER) felt that putting passengers onto the roads was far less safe than on trains. Ian Smith (EWS) suggested that SLW could be a useful work stream given the level of interest shown. Jim Morgan pointed out that the efficiency initiatives group had already looked at SLW, and that NR had made efforts in adjacent line working with their high output equipment.

John Armitt (NR) said that he was a strong supporter of keeping the adjacent line open where possible, and pointed out that this was now being done with the high output ballast cleaner on the Great Western route. He added that he was 100% behind the need to maximise services at weekends. The Operational Efficiency group had been looking at ways of improving access, through changing regulations where it was safe to do so.

Mark Leving said there was no incentive on NR to install crossovers as they are seen as an enhancement, even though this could help facilitate more single line working.

Richard Spoons asked about the reopening linespeed after track renewal had taken place. J. Armitt responded that every line should be handed back at the maximum possible safe speed.

Jim Morgan summarised some of the key points so far. NR is as good if not better than other European countries at using high output equipment. NR need to reduce the time taken for S&C renewals, as it usually takes 54 hours for a single lead junction renewal. 3 of NR's top 10 initiatives are on S&C renewals, so could this be reduced quickly before the introduction of modular S&C? Huw Davis had asked Paul Wiseman how modular S&C could get NR down from 54 to 9 hours and had been informed that NR planned a staged process of working smarter, such as the use of split bearers to reduce the time taken. JM responded that if NR could significantly reduce the time taken, this would be a huge benefit for the Operations teams given the numbers of people involved in re-planning train services.

John Armitt commented that NR had gone from 54 to 27 hours on WCML for such possessions, through a big effort. He believed NR couldn't get to 9 hours without modular S&C. NR had received bids from suppliers, and were evaluating what the suppliers could already do in Europe. ROB added that NR had a phased plan to get these possessions done in 36 hours.

Break

Robin Davis highlighted that GNER have a problem with their capability to operate over all diversionary routes. He suggested that it may be possible to make the Train Guard's route knowledge requirement less onerous than now using GPS technology.

Chris Gibb confirmed that where a good diversionary route existed the train operator would generally prefer this as the financial impact is small, adding that Virgin CrossCountry use most diversionary routes.

Martin Cunningham (NR) confirmed that NR had identified the behavioural issues around single line working. He said it was no surprise that people were seeking an easy way out of single line working, and that training was needed for train planners on how to operate SLW.

John Armitt added that he had just approved a scheme from ROB for a computer system which will give train planners a greater ability to understand what impact possessions will have on timetables across the network. He added that NR would be more focussed on efficiency and meeting ORR targets if they didn't consider passenger interests. NR cannot fundamentally change what has been planned & agreed with their contractors for the next couple of years, therefore a lot of today's discussion will feed into CP4, and ORR need to get the balance right for this. The Operational Efficiency group has already achieved several efficiencies, and they are hopeful of getting possession start up time down from 30 minutes to around 5 minutes.

Michael Lee summed up what he felt was an excellent day. The good news was that by CP4 possessions are going to look quite different. He was disappointed at the level of feedback from the industry on the CP4 review, and implored people to respond. Michael confirmed also that he didn't believe the results of the Western pilot study, and that it was important to get the outputs right in future studies. He accepted that some of the incentive regimes need to be improved, and he looked forward to further outputs over the coming months.

Jim Morgan then closed the meeting, having thanked the steering group and NR for the work they had done.