

Oxford Civic Society¹ response to the ORR Business plan consultation Financial Year 2013-14

Question 1 – balance of activity

We believe that there is a major omission in the proposed activities: the responsibility and advantages to the rail industry for working closely with providers of other transport modes to provide easier access to rail services. This omission affects three of the strategic objectives:

2. *Support a better service for customers.* Customers are interested in the whole journey, not just the rail part. Easy and timely interchange with other modes, whether bus, tram, bicycle or walking has a major effect on the decision of customers to choose rail rather than the car. We suggest that the final sentence of this objective is modified to read “Promote on-going improvement in the experience of passengers by encouraging the industry to work together, including to provide greater transparency of information, *and easy transfer between rail and other transport modes at rail stations*”.

3. *Secure value for money from the railway, from users and funders.* Easy modal transfer for passengers will help to make more of them choose the railway as part of their journeys, thereby increasing the viability, revenue and profit of rail services. We suggest adding a new sentence at the end of this objective “*Work with providers and local authorities to make intermodal transfer easier for passengers, thereby increasing the likelihood that passengers will choose to use rail for part or all of their journeys*”.

4. *Promote an increasingly dynamic and commercially sustainable sector.* More passengers using rail services as a result of easier modal interchange should mean greater commercial sustainability, as well as making more actual and potential services viable. Although some collaboration with bus companies already exists (e.g. *Plus bus*), there are more opportunities for joint marketing and timetabling (e.g. as on the GW Cotswold route) and developing better interchanges (as is so common in many other continental European countries). So, add to the end of this objective “*and collaboration with other transport providers where appropriate to provide better whole journey experiences for customers using rail for part of their journeys*”.

Question 2 – Focus of activity on customer experience and transparency

Customers are concerned with the *whole* journey, not just the rail part. There is therefore also a need to focus on easy transfer between modes, both in the physical planning (including for disabled persons) at railway stations, but also by working with other providers on joint timetabling for transfers (as, for example, in the Swiss *taktfahrplan*) that do not waste time.

Question 3 – Ambition for dynamic and sustainable sector

There appears to be no ambition to work with other providers of transport to provide easy or seamless journeys, of which rail may only form a part. Making it easier to transfer from one mode to rail (and vice versa) should increase the number of customers who choose to use rail for part of their journey, rather than using the car for the whole of it. This would increase rail revenue and sustainability, and also make a significant reduction in the carbon cost of the journey.

Question 4 – Depth of aspiration

There appears to be little aspiration to work with other providers of transport to make rail more attractive as part of a journey, through provision of better interchanges that encourage

customers to use rail as part of their journey, as is the case in, for example, Germany, The Netherlands and Switzerland.

Question 5 – Organisational capacity

It is not clear that ORR has currently the capacity to work more closely with providers of transport services outside the rail industry, to enhance the performance of both.

Question 6 – Monitoring Network Rail

While Network Rail is mainly concerned with rail matters, it needs also to work with other providers of transport services and local authorities to promote easy intermodal transfer, thereby increasing business for both. It also needs to work more positively with local authorities to develop stations and other rail estate to the benefit of both parties. This work, or lack thereof, needs to be monitored.

Question 7 – Measuring ORR's efficiency and performance

One measure might be the increase in rail use associated with improved provision for intermodal journeys. This is in addition to overcoming the artificial barriers created within the railway industry by privatisation: users are not generally concerned about which company or companies provide transport services – they see the rail industry, and indeed the transport industry, as a whole. The rate of introduction of travel cards that are valid for all companies providing transport, whether on rail or road, would be a useful measure.

Question 8 – Major omissions of activity

As will be clear from what is written above, one major omission of activity is encouraging the promotion of intermodal travel between rail and other modes.

¹The Oxford Civic Society is a voluntary, non-profit making society with charitable status founded in 1969. We are dedicated to ever improving the City of Oxford as a place to live, work and relax in. Our core activities focus on Buildings & Public Spaces, Travel & Transport, Environment and Community. To find out more, visit oxcivicsoc.org.uk.

We are currently particularly concerned to ensure that in the replacement of the existing Oxford rail station a full transport hub for rail and buses and cyclists is provided. We believe that this will be provided best and most cheaply on a new site at the Oxpens, which also offers valuable city-centre development opportunities for offices, a hotel and accommodation. We are concerned that Network Rail is refusing to consider this site, without having provided any details of an alternative plan.

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