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27 March 2015

Dear Richard,

RE: 49th Supplemental Agreement (Sunderland extensions)

Thank you for your letter dated 13 February. The purpose of this letter is to respond to your comments.

Virgin Trains East Coast (VTEC) proposes to operate the new service using 2+9 high speed trains (HSTs). This train is 247 metres in length which is longer than the platforms at Sunderland (by approximately 2 coach lengths). In addition, the leading Power Car would be off the platform. We are working with industry partners, and Network Rail in particular, to agree a solution for the safe operation of a VTEC train at Sunderland. From various site visits and a test train on 22 February, we have identified the need to build a walking route for drivers - this will be approximately 67 metres in length at the south end of the station. In terms of other matters at Sunderland, it would be necessary for Northern Rail staff to isolate the fire alarm sensors at platform level while a VTEC train is occupying the platform, in the same way they do for Grand Central services.

VTEC does not believe that the introduction of these extensions would materially impact on train performance on the route between Newcastle and Sunderland. Given the times of day that VTEC proposes to operate these services, the performance impact would be minimal.

VTEC does not believe that its proposal conflicts with the firm rights currently held by operators on the route between Sunderland and Newcastle. Indeed, as only contingent rights are being sought, VTEC does not understand how its proposal could possible conflict with the existing rights held by others.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phil Dawson'.

Phil Dawson
Regulation & Track Access Manager

cc Mark Garner, Network Rail
David Reed, ORR