

RAIL OMBUDSMAN BOARD MINUTES

Minutes of a meeting of the Board of Directors of Rail Ombudsman (Company Number (14303967) (the "company") held on 29th January 2026

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]

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

Westbrooke (JW) Richard Griffin (RG)

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 4th September 2025 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

MT presented data on cases closed over the last 12 months, noting significant increases occurring during consecutive periods last summer, exceeding notional assumptions. Clear seasonality is now discernable within the last few years' data.

MT presented on performance and reporting to ORR. Higher case volumes have unmasked underlying sensitivity in the performance regime, where even a small proportion of cases resolved well within the provisions of the Rail ADR Service Rules can have a dramatic effect on perceived performance. It was noted that staff could be presented with a choice between delivering against a Key Performance Indicator that considers only speed and sustaining a mediation to the benefit of both parties. Discussions had been held with ORR with a view to mitigating any risk

that the approach to case handling could be adversely affected by arbitrary targets that do not adequately account for the varied circumstances encountered, such as the time waiting for a response from either party, waiting for extra evidence etc. The Rail Ombudsman has proposed to increase exposure by broadening the coverage of the main casework KPI, while restoring a target aligned to the Rail ADR Service Rules. This would achieve full accountability on performance, while mitigating any perverse incentive to handle cases contrary to the provisions of the Rules. ORR were taking action to explore timescales extended by delayed responses from rail service providers. Engagement thus far had been positive and it was expected that this would continue.

Natalie Freeman continued to lead engagement with the rail service providers and referenced extremely positive unsolicited feedback recently received regarding participation in the industry's key working group on complaints. This was a very positive indicator of the Ombudsman's impact and standing, and the industry's appetite for learnings from complaints.

The Scheme Member survey was due to be published, with positive top-line results. HS queried whether the move to anonymous reporting had had a significant effect on results. MT did not have detailed results to hand but noted that the response rate had not increased as a result.

MT noted preparatory engagement on the future Passenger Watchdog continues.

6. OUTPUTS OF ADVISORY PANELS

MT presented an Advisory Statement arising at the Scheme Member Panel in October (published in the minutes of that meeting) concerning expectations around evidence to be provided. The action is to continue to engage with the sector and stakeholders at an operational level.

7. ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN

The document had been shared for comment in advance. MT referred to the feedback received and actioned. The Board ratified the Annual Business Plan for 2026.

8. IA FEEDBACK

Themes & Improvements

The majority of all complaints received related to the decisions which had been made, with no service failures identified. The quality check fail in P7 was a decision related complaint, however it was identified in the quality check that the process, remit and next steps should have been set out more clearly.

IA referrals

We received 8 IA referrals across the 5 periods.

The IA made the following recommendations following their review of the complaints:

The ADR service Rules and Eligibility Criteria should be reviewed and amended to reflect the circumstances within which cases can be consolidated. Associated consumer guidance should also be updated to provide greater insight into the circumstances when this process can be applied, the potential impact of it and any input the consumer may have in this decision. I will not draft wording in this document, as this is for the Rail Ombudsman ADR Services Board, although I would support this activity.

The ADR Service Rules and Eligibility Criteria should also be reviewed in the context of the role of the Deputy and Chief Ombudsman then report via this mechanism for case escalations on complex matters or those not covered by the rules (namely section 3.2 of the Eligibility Criteria). Whilst again I will not suggest wording, this section should as a minimum reflect the timescales for any determination. Further, the consumer guidance should also be updated to provide greater transparency relating to this process-including how decisions are reached and the factors involved. This helps ensure the confidence of all parties in any dispute is retained when determinations of this type are required.

The Rail ADR Service Rules and Eligibility Criteria should be reviewed and amended to reflect the circumstances within which a case addendum can be put into effect following an error or additional evidence being presented once a decision has been made. Whilst I will not draft wording in this document (as this is for the Rail Ombudsman ADR Services Board, although I would of course support this activity), it should reflect how this process will be applied, to ensure all parties can retain confidence in the decisions reached and binding nature of them. Specific sections that may require amending include 7.3 and 8.19

In response to the recommendations made by the IA we are currently reviewing both the Rail ADR service rules, along with our internal processes in order to consider how best to incorporate the suggestions which have been made.

7. AOB

IA report has been circulated for feedback.

IA will have introductions to the board and attend one of the future board meetings this year.

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



John Peerless-Mountford
For and on behalf of the Board

