

Meeting of Scheme Member Panel

Minutes

Meeting date: 14/10/2025

14:00 – 16:00 Held virtually

Present:

Julie Allan – Govia Thameslink Railway (Chair)

Joanne Ferguson - Scotrail

Jason Ness – Great Western Railway

Paul Jackson – Hull Trains

James Shuttleworth – West Coast Railways

Natalie Freeman – Rail Ombudsman

Matthew Thomas – Rail Ombudsman

Apologies

Mike Ross - LNER

Nicola Mayers – Network Rail

Julie Balmain - Nexus

Minutes prepared by the Rail Ombudsman secretariat.

The Chair declared the meeting open at 2pm.

A) Actions from the last meeting

MT presented an update against the action log.

Of note, the adjudication outcome profile was discussed, including the reduction over time in the proportion of cases upheld in full. However, it was noted that a significant majority of cases were resolved at simple or mediation stages.

Consistency across the sector was discussed and it was noted that outcome profiles do vary between operators and except in the case of disputes upheld in full, whether a particular approach is best is a nuanced question.

There was appetite from the Panel for other industry comparisons on outcome profile – **action** RO to update the Panel at next meeting.

B) Review of the Rail Ombudsman's objectives (Chair)

JA presented an overview of the Rail Ombudsman's Annual Business Plan objectives, with the aim of using the Panel in its advisory capacity to support successful delivery of relevant objectives.

MT discussed a Rail Ombudsman report on Passenger Assistance, which is closely related to the root cause analysis project undertaken in collaboration with the Statutory Appeals Bodies and Govia Thameslink Railway. MT gave an overview of content and the resulting recommendations to the sector and passengers. The Rail Ombudsman would like to engage the industry – Redress Support Group run by RDG a key forum – but also passenger and disabled people's organisations.

The Panel discussed the optimum means for reviewing casework recommendations with the industry, with the objective of gathering collective written feedback coordinated via RDG's Redress Support Group, but with a need to consider any operators/retailers outside RSG. MT referred to the relevance of this work to ORR's Complaints Code of Practice.

JA felt that it was important the industry continues to use the Rail Ombudsman to the fullest extent, noting that following proper processes and then being held to account was the right approach – it is important to do this rather than simply paying out for complaints, in order to learn and improve.

C) Operational update and Summary Performance Report

MT updated the panel on the recent annual contract audit by ORR. Report was due imminently at time of meeting.

Case volume has increased noticeable recently. Broadly inline with seasonal variations and forecasts, but the recent uplift is more striking. Keep monitoring performance. The Panel discussed case volumes in their respective organisations and resulting forecasting considerations. There was agreement amongst Panel members that passenger expectations of settlements/compensation have increased over recent years. Whether the nature of complaint issues can be coupled with forecasting was discussed; it was agreed that performance on the network would be a strong indicator of future volume. MB noted that RDG's data capability would be useful to the group to pursue this further.

NF presented an update on operations. The Panel members were interested in understanding echo cases and the determination of frivolous or vexatious complaints from persistent repeat complainants. NF explained that the RO must approach determination on a case-by-case basis and that there is a high threshold to meet. The Panel felt that more work within the industry was needed on the subject, with the aim of a clear and consistent approach.

MT presented the Summary Performance Report and discussed with the Panel.

D) Panel Member perspectives on: procuring objective evidence in cases concerning accessibility issues

NF presented an overview of a case in which the Rail Ombudsman's Independent Assessor had recommended engagement with the Advisory Panels on the subject of evidence gathering. NF advised that the Rail Ombudsman will prepare a case study addressing the theme.

Panel members felt CCTV was usually good evidence – not without limitations in particular lack of sound – but that availability is often an issue due to retention period

The value of bodyworn video was also discussed; uptake however was a limiting factor with industry relations concerns and also in practice, staff may not activate the recording immediately or at all because they are not aware at the time that the interaction warrants it.

The standing of staff statements was queried and discussed.

Non-visible disability can be a factor in the sort of interactions discussed; this presents an additional consideration for revenue protection activity.

JA summarised that further work would be useful – rebriefing by the Rail Ombudsman to the sector on the sort of evidence that is expected and a consistent industry position on what should be available to provide.

E) Member updates - brief update on any key activities or issues impacting passengers from the perspective of the Panel Member

LF noted:

- Transition to public ownership and related considerations (especially in context of earlier discussion on evidence) regarding applicability of FoIA.
- ISO 22458 certification valuable.

JF noted:

- Change of key supplier on customer relations.
- Adoption of new CRM.

JN noted:

- Delay Repay claims have dominated
- Preparatory works for GBR and noted the constructive relationship between industry and RO in current landscape.

MB noted:

- Work across the sector on ORR's Accessible Travel Policy Guidance.

- Upcoming work for NRE relating to railcards.

JS noted:

- Experience of casework and reflections on process for engaging operator prior to release of adjudication decisions – action NF/JS to discuss further during service review.
- Charter landscape in context of reform.

PJ noted:

- Hull Trains affected by industrial action backlog but recovering well.
- Lumo performing well.

JA noted:

- Revision to National Rail Conditions of Travel with regard to evidencing justification for refunds.
- Summary of meeting discussion and outputs (see below).

F) Review of matters arising, actions and close

Advisory Statement:

The Rail Ombudsman should continue to engage proactively with the industry on the subject of evidence gathering. This engagement should aim to establish a shared understanding of evidentiary expectations, grounded in a realistic assessment of what can reasonably be obtained and provided in practice.

Action	Date to achieve	Responsibility
NF and JS to hold further discussion re casework	TBD	NF to arrange
RO to provide further insight on other industry outcome profiles	Next meeting	RO