

Rail Data Marketplace

Welcome to your round up of news related to the Rail Data Marketplace (RDM). If at any time you wish to unsubscribe, email us at raildatamarketplace@raildeliverygroup.com.

In This Edition

Programme Summary

The direction of (rail data) travel

Network Rail Open Data survey

Programme Summary

The last newsletter spurred one of our critical friends to get in touch and give us a different perspective on things that we took for granted. Our friend's perception of RDM was not what we expected and it is probably worth trying to address some of his points.

- “Is ‘Marketplace’ the right term to use?” It is easy to see why the term would imply ‘make a charge for access to data’ but we can assure potential users that RDM will include freely available data (in fact the vast majority will be free initially). Our use of the word ‘marketplace’ absolutely includes allowing access to free data sources.
- There is also no intent to start charging for data which was previously freely available from either DfT, RDG or Network Rail. Whilst we continue to refine the commercial model which will allow RDM to be cost neutral, DfT, as a key stakeholder, are committed to an ‘open by default’ approach. Indeed, much has been made of this over the last month; see article below.
- Our critical friend had read and heard much about RDM and was concerned that RDM was a platform to ‘push’ a centralised view of data and how it should be used. If this is an impression that we have inadvertently set, then you have our apologies; we see it as an opportunity to share the breadth of data offerings from as wider group of publishers as possible and allow the consumer to make an informed choice.
- “There is some kind of implication that RDM will solve all of our problems.” Errr, no! RDM is not an attempt to create a ‘single source of the truth’, nor will it somehow magically improve the quality of data. What we hope to achieve is a platform and community which allows transparent feedback on data quality. This has two benefits; firstly, publishers can understand how users perceive their data and take steps to improve it (or at the very least understand the challenges their data is creating). Secondly, potential consumers can get a better idea about the data before investing time and energy in using it.

Trying to correct these perceptions has made this update a little longer than normal but was hopefully worthwhile. In other news, we passed our Government Digital Service Assessment, which we are very excited about and paves the way for opening up RDM for general use in the next couple of months. By that time, we will be able to publish flat files as well as APIs and will have met AA compliance of the WCAG accessibility standard.

Another reason to be cheerful is that we have had our first three Data Publishers on the RDM; Alchemmy, TrainTaxi and RDG. Both Network Rail ENRICH programme and Northern are just in the process of publishing new data sources, so the available data products are expanding. We would also like to send a massive thank you to all of the 20 organisations involved in our Private Beta phase. If you are interested in becoming a Publisher or a Consumer on the RDM platform please send us an email at raildatamarkeplace@raildeliverygroup.com and we will get in touch about the next steps.

The direction of (rail data) travel

It has been a busy month for announcements, publications and speeches, but all with one common theme; the importance of open data sharing.

Sir Patrick Vallance, the Government Chief Scientific Adviser, kicked proceedings off with his ‘Pro-innovation regulation of technologies’ review where he highlighted the importance of open data in driving innovation and economic growth. Of particular interest was his third recommendation: “Facilitate greater industry access to public data, and prioritise wider data sharing and linkage across the public sector, to help deliver the government’s public services transformation programme.” It is encouraging that the Chancellor accepted Sir Patrick’s recommendations in full.

Then in quick succession, the Department for Transport published its Transport Data Strategy, and the Rail Industry Association published their paper ‘Data and Digital Technologies in Rail’. Both highlighted the need for data sharing to drive innovation in passenger experience and operational efficiency and both also identified the Rail Data Marketplace as a key enabler for this within our industry.

The RIA ‘Unlocking Innovation’ conference also saw the Minister of State for Rail, Huw Merriman MP, give RDM a name-check, while Great British Railways Transition Team Lead Director, Anit Chandarana, stressed the importance of open data to the future of rail, along with acknowledging some of the challenges in making that happen.

All of these demonstrate a clear direction of travel and a will to make that happen. The Transport Data Strategy built upon the Cabinet Office Data Strategy and much of the narrative was as expected including the importance of data leadership, good data governance, data standards, a strong data culture and the importance of a skilled workforce in addition to the ubiquitous references to ‘open by default’. However, the document did have a few bold inclusions, one which referred to a “*presumption of open by default*” and suggesting that the Department would “*challenge why data is not being made openly available*”. Another highlighted that it is “*crucial to ensure the next wave of contracts includes data as an asset*.” This bodes well for those wishing to make better use of the data which is generated by the rail ecosystem.

Together these documents and announcements build a coherent narrative around the value and use of data in the future and, either directly or by inference, the place of Rail Data Marketplace as an enabler within that. With RDM nearing the point where it will be publicly available, it looks like we could be busy!

For those who haven’t seen them, links to all of the documents are below:

Sir Patrick Vallance - [Pro-innovation Regulation of Technologies Review - Digital Technologies report.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Transport Data Strategy - [Transport Data Strategy \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

RIA Data and Digital Technologies in Rail - [Data and Digital Technologies in Rail \(riagb.org.uk\)](#)

Network Rail Open Data survey

Our colleagues at Network Rail have asked us to publicise a survey that they are currently running which aims to identify ways to improve the Network Rail Open Data (NROD) service. They are keen to get a broad range of user input to help them decide which features and technologies to deliver, and their priority. If you want to take part, the link is below. The results will also help to shape the Rail Data Marketplace product roadmap, so a potential win/win.

[Network Rail Open Data \(office.com\)](#)