Improving Customer Information

Industry Progress Report to the Office of Rail and Road

September 2022

Smarter Information Smarter Journeys

Executive Summary

The need for change

In 2019, the rail regulator, the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), commissioned research by Winder Phillips Associates on the provision of information to customers, including during disruption.

This showed that whilst there had been improvements in recent years to customer information systems, providing information - particularly during disruption - remains a challenge. The research indicated that there was no clear industry strategy for delivering improvements to providing customer information, no agreed understanding of what good information looks like and a lack of customisation for the needs of different customer groups.

Based on extensive customer information research, we are aware that there is more that we can do to keep our customers informed when they choose to travel by rail. From speaking to customers, we understand that the provision of customer information during disruption is a particular concern, and have learned that[1]:

44% were dissatisfied with how well they are kept informed

56% were dissatisfied with how information is provided during disruption

43% of customers believe the frequency of updates needs to be improved

> *"...there is more that we can do to keep our customers informed when they choose to travel by rail."*

Outside of train punctuality, the areas most important to customers are accuracy, consistency, trustworthiness and usefulness of information.

In response to these challenges and the ORR's Winder Phillips report, the rail industry committed to a plan of action to improve customer information – the Smarter Information, Smarter Journeys Programme (the Smarter Information Programme).

Our vision for customer information

The Smarter Information Programme aims to achieve a step-change in customer information though a clear vision based on core principles of transparency and customer insight, and the objective "to provide customers with all the information they want, when and how they want it". At the heart of this vision lies our ambition to make the customer experience simpler and more consistent through collaboration across the rail industry. A customer-centric approach will also support broader industry goals, including revenue opportunities through improved customer satisfaction.

[1] *PIDD 29: Key Insights – Jan to Mar 2020*

Image: Birmingham New St Station concourse

To deliver this, we have identified the root causes behind some of the customer feedback and set up a wide range of initiatives which focus on delivering real solutions for customers.

We are fully committed to working together to achieve our vision for improved customer information, and our approach to deliver this since we kick-started the process two years ago has been built on collaboration between train companies, the ORR and independent passenger watchdog Transport Focus – jointly led by the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) and Network Rail – supported by a range of cross-industry stakeholders.

Indeed, the Smarter Information Programme has worked with other teams to find customer-facing solutions to long-term industry challenges, deliver against recommendations in the 'Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail' and quickly adapted processes to improve the proposition for customers during Covid-19 and incidents of extreme weather disruption.

As highlighted in the chart below, since the programme has launched, improvements to customer information have resulted in an increase in customer satisfaction with Customer Information during disruption. Demonstrating that the programme is having a positive impact on customer's experience when travelling by train.

Q: Overall, how well do you think the train company kept you informed about the delay or cancellation (very satisfied + fairly satisfied)
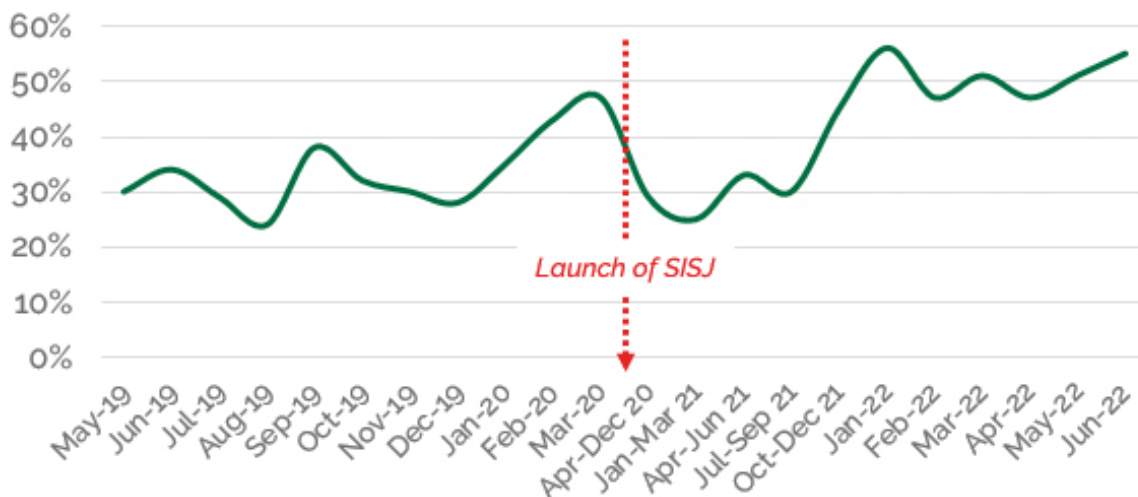
Source; RDG PIDD-29 survey

According to the PIDD-29 survey, customer satisfaction with Customer Information during disruption increased from an average score of 33% (very satisfied + fairly satisfied) in the year prior to SISJ launch, to 44% (very satisfied + fairly satisfied) in the period since the programme launched. Satisfaction hit a high of 55% in the latest month (June-22).

Executive Summary

"Customers must have the information they need to plan and make their journey, especially when there is disruption. While improvements have been made in recent years, more still needs to be done and industry is working together to meet customer expectations."

Jason Webb, RDG Lead,
Smarter Information Programme

"The Smarter Information Programme is crucial to driving change. We are fully committed to progressing this work, so that customers can start realising the benefits as soon as possible. The programme is a real collaborative industry effort."

Jo Shelley, Network Rail Lead,
Smarter Information Programme

Our commitments to customers

Two years ago, as part of 'Customer Information – An industry response to the Office of Rail and Road', we identified a set of initiatives which aim to deliver information improvements for our customers for every part of their journey – at home when preparing to travel, at the station, when onboard a train or as part of their overall journey experience.

These initiatives, commonly referred to as Work Packages, ranged from short-term tactical improvements, through to longer-term strategic transformation. The programme of work we set out in 2020 was ambitious and wide-ranging, and we have seen many challenges, with Smarter Information, Smarter Journeys being an unfunded programme and born in the midst of a global pandemic.

Since 2020, we have seen:

£20+ million funding released for programme business cases	**£7.5 million repurposed funds secured within Control Period 6[2], demonstrating value to customers and the taxpayer in the process**	**216 stakeholders get involved in the programme and its Work Packages**
44 organisations get involved in the programme and its Work Packages	**100% of customers impacted by the improvements made**	**+10 percentage points increase in customer satisfaction with Customer Information during disruption**

[2] AZ/Line of Route Station Timetable Poster derogation received in 20/21 £1m a year, £4m in total. Permanent derogation to stop printed timetables currently being considered; awaiting final approval from the Department for Transport: £1.5m per year, £3.5m total

Meeting objectives

The below table outlines whether we have been able to meet the objectives we set ourselves two years ago.

It is thereby important to note that we have mapped the meeting of objectives against the 2020 commitments and that in some cases, this has meant that the programme has moved away from the original commitments as the scoping of the Work Packages became clearer over time.

Generally, the Smarter Information Programme has gone over and above the original commitments to the ORR and will continue to push further in order to make the customer proposition simpler and better for customers, our teams and taxpayers.

	Work Package	Achievements to date	Customer statement
1	**Improving personalised journey notifications**		
	To run a pilot of notifiying changes to customers' rail journeys and put forward a delivery roadmap for national rollout.	✅ Funding agreed with a national rollout of personalised journey notifications underway.	*"I am told useful information before, during and after my journey."*
2	**Improving information at stations**		
	To develop a business case for improving Customer Information Screens (CIS) at stations based on customer insight. To make recommendations for improving Operations Information Screens (OIS) at stations. To roll out functionality at JCDecaux Screens, enabling Network Rail to use large format advertising screens at managed stations to display messaging to customers during disruption.	✅ Rolled out a series of enhancements to CIS at stations. ✅ Progressed work to deliver improvements to OIS and the way in which they are maintained. ✅ Rolled out functionality at JCDecaux Screens to enable Network Rail to display key messaging at its managed stations during major disruption.	*"The information at the station is easy to find and up-to-date and I can find everything that I need to know."*
3	**Improving information onboard**		
	To develop a funding approach for approval and draw up a business case for the use of Global System for Mobile Railway Communications (GSM-R), a system that would allow drivers to talk to signallers, helping to inform onboard customer announcements.	✅ Business case to use GSM-R for onboard customer announcements approved and full funding for project secured. ✅ Progressed additional workstream to reduce repetitious onboard announcements, thereby meeting a key requirement as outlined within the 'Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail'.	*"I am kept updated on relevant information while I am on the train."*

	Work Package	Achievements to date	Customer statement
4	**Improving information from control**		
	To get a better understanding of industry plans for core (Stock and Crew) operational systems.	✅ Completed exposé into the challenges of deploying (Stock and Crew) operational systems with follow-up work endorsed for delivery by RDG's Better Operations Programme Board. ✅ Worked in partnership with Network Rail to develop and pilot the 'Historic Incident Data Analysis' system, which uses historic average data to forecast the length of a delay during unplanned disruption.	*"The information I am given is accurate and I get this information when I need it."*
5	**Improving industry incident management systems**		
	To understand current and proposed plans for incident management systems. To revise incident management training to ensure customer information is included. To understand the roadmap for the rollout of the Network Rail incident management tool.	✅ Commitments being implemented outside the Smarter Information Programme as appropriate. ✅ Work underday within Network Rail with funding secured to support the further development and implementation of the Incident Management System on the Kent & Sussex route.	*"Staff confidently help with my questions."*
6	**Improving the quality of real-time information**		
	To draw up a business case for priority Darwin* changes and ensure users are aware and using additonal functionality within Darwin.	✅ Business case for priority Darwin changes developed and approved; rollout of proposed changes in process and progressing. ✅ Enabled GPS through Darwin to train operators signed up for this data feed.	*"The information I am given is accurate and timely."*
7	**One team, one station**		
	To test and roll out the 'one team' concept at three pilot Network Rail stations, and plan approach for rollout across all Network Rail managed stations. Identify approach for rollout to non-Network Rail managed stations.	✅ Developed and submitted 'one team' plans to the Department for Transport and Transport Scotland. ✅ Additional work passed on to the Managed Stations Integration Programme, with future work to be covered by the Great British Railways Transition Team.	*"I can get help from any member of staff at a station."*

* Darwin is the GB rail industry's official train running information engine, providing real-time arrival and departure predictions, platform numbers, delay estimates, schedule changes and cancellations

	Work Package	Achievements to date	Customer statement
8	**Working together during disruption**		
	To replace outdated industry Codes of Practice for customer information provision during disruption, and to review and implement new processes for collaboration during disruption.	✅ Developed and published the customer-facing 'Customer Information Pledges' and incorporated them as the regulated Code of Practice required under train operators' Office of Rail and Road licence conditions. ✅ Industry processes have been tested, iterated and improved following disruption from storms and industrial strike action.	*"I know that the railway is 'working as one' to help me get to my destination and that information they provide is accurate and timely."*
9	**Improving the quality and consistency of industry information**		
	To identify key opportunities to improve the National Rail Communication Centre's (NRCC's) processes to support customer information. To identify opportunities to co-locate control teams and learn lessons from when this was done during the 2012 London Olympics.	✅ Focused on externally measuring and evaluating end-to-end NRCC processes, with to-date implemented improvements having resulted in more timely and accurate customer information. ✅ Supported work on implementing a Pan-London interstation incident process and delivering a post-incident debrief. ✅ After an initial review, the workstream to identify opportunities to co-locate control teams has been put on hold.	*"I know the train companies work together and provide me with the information I need to make informed choices when I travel."*
10	**Data Marketplace**		
	To provide open and available data sources to third parties for them to develop additional customer information tools.	✅ Commitment made to be delivered outside the Smarter Information Programme and reported on as part of the Data Market Place Programme. ✅ Close contact with this programme given Work Package 11.	*"I get consistent information, no matter the channel, before, during and after my journey."*

	Work Package	Achievements to date	Customer statement
11	**Providing real-time facilities information**		
	In conjunction with Work Package 10, to develop a proof of concept to show train loadings and identify facility information available from each train operator.	✔ Delivered Train Loading Phase 1, making average loading data available within Darwin interfaces. ✔ Funding sought to make priority data sets available through industy systems (Train Loading Phase 2). ✔ Developed business case for showcasing the highest priority real-time facilities information. ✔ Launched Zipabout's Alert Me via Whatsapp service, which includes busyness information for trains. ✔ Progressed work to provide real-time information on the status of lift and escalators at train stations.	*"I can find out if things important to me are working before I travel and while on my journey."*
12	**Defining the ultimate customer information experience**		
	To develop the 'As Is' and 'To Be' customer information experience proposition.	✔ Delivered an industry-wide agreed vision for what good customer information should look like by 2030, aligned against wider industry priorities and based on research insights. ✔ Developed a roadmap to deliver the ultimate customer information experience and - in turn - industry's customer information strategy.	*"The industry understands my needs as a customer and puts them first."*
13	**Monitoring & measuring performance**		
	To agree an initial version of the Customer Information Measure, and identify pilot opportunities for testing.	✔ Ran two pilots with findings shared into the broader Customer Experience Maturity Model, which is being taken forward by the Great British Railways Transition Team.	*"My train company has the things that matter to me on my journey monitored and reported."*

Out of the 13 Work Packages of the Smarter Information, Smarter Journeys Programme:

6	2	5
Have delivered on the original commitments and are working on additional deliverables	**Have made good progress and will deliver the original commitments in 2022**	**Are being delivered elsewhere (3 of which we delivered key milestones before handing over)**

While significant progress has been made, it is imperative that work does not stop here, and as such, the programme has already started the rollout of further Work Packages, with Smarter Information 2.0 set to go live later this year. At the same time, we continue working in close collaboration on other initiatives that impact customer information.

Image: Young customer looking out of a train window

Delivery highlights

- First personalised journey notifications sent, informing customers of changes to their upcoming train service prior to departure and thereby providing a customer-facing solution to 'Informed Traveller'
  - ✓ Customers will be able to purchase their tickets further in advance, giving them confidence in their travel arrangements

- Delivered improvements to Customer Information Screens available for train operators to use, and have worked with Transport Focus to update our customer insights to ensure future plans are based on what customers want
  - ✓ For customers this will mean more relevant, accurate and consistent information at stations, now and going forward

- Secured full funding to deliver enhanced on-train customer announcements via GSM-R across the GB rail network, meaning information will flow directly from train operator control rooms to customers via the on-train Public Address (PA) from 2024
  - ✓ This will mean more accurate information during disruption, leaving customers reassured, and enhance customer safety as they will know when to remain onboard a stranded train

- Delivered an onboard 'announcement blueprint' based on customer insight gained from extensive research undertaken, and secured funding for implementation – thereby addressing the requirement to remove repetitious verbal on-train announcements as set out in the 'Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail'
  - ✓ For customers this will mean less white noise and disruption during their train journey, only receiving the information they require and in a consistent manner

- Supported the development and pilot of the 'Historic Incident Log Data Analysis' system, which uses historical data to help better estimate the length of a delay during unplanned disruption
  - ✓ Advised by operators, customers benefit from an improved understanding of how long unplanned disruption is set to impact trains and when normal rail services are likely to resume

- Secured funding to deliver functionality enhancements within the industry's real-time information system Darwin by spring 2023
  - ✓ This will allow for altered timetables to be displayed up to 90 days in advance, supporting customers with their journey planning
  - ✓ Reasons for a delay will be displayed at stations and customers will know when a train is being diverted, or have stops removed or added - enabling them to make informed decisions when travelling by train

- Delivered plans as a first crucial step for industry to adopt a 'one station team' approach across the rail network
  - ✓ This will mean clearer and more consistent information provision for customers at stations in the future

- Working in collaboration, published customer-facing 'Customer Information Pledges', bringing a range of historical and outdated industry documents into one place and incorporating them as the regulated code of practice required under train operators' ORR licence conditions
  - ✓ This will give customers an increased understanding of what good looks like and what to expect when travelling by rail

Delivery highlights continued

- ✅ Delivered a series of enhancements to the National Rail Communication Centre Bulletin Editor, thereby personalising bulletins and making them more relevant to customers

  - ✓ This means more accurate customer information being provided more quickly during disruption

  - ✓ The risk of information overload is limited, reducing the confusion this can cause for customers

- ✅ Delivered average train loading data within Darwin, making them available as open data

  - ✓ This will give customers a better understanding of how busy a train is likely to be when planning to travel, giving customers confidence post-pandemic

- ✅ Based on extensive stakeholder research, delivered an industry-wide agreed vision for what good customer information should look like by 2030 - and a roadmap to achieve this

  - ✓ Customers' needs are put first with industry delivering against an increased understanding of what customers want in the space of customer information

- ✅ Delivered two pilots to inform the national rollout of a new Customer Experience Measure

  - ✓ When implemented in full, this will allow for a more consistent and better delivered customer experience across the rail network

- ✅ Examined industry response processes for cases of severe planned or unplanned disruption and implemented recommendations from the 31st October incident review, seeing processes being refined, tested and enhanced

  - ✓ This allows for clear and consistent messaging for customers, with regular and relevant updates during planned and unplanned disruption

- ✅ Conducted weekly 'consistency checks' in conjunction with the ORR, the Department for Transport (DfT) and Transport Focus, ensuring consistent customer information provision across all train operator websites and National Rail Enquiries

  - ✓ More consistent information available to customers on train operators' website and National Rail Enquiries

- ✅ As a programme, connected with other industry initiatives and understood dependencies, thereby advancing Smarter Information deliverables - for instance, progressing work to provide customers with real-time information on the status of lifts and escalators at train stations and feeding this into the RDG-led National Rail Accessibility Map

  - ✓ Customers benefit from overall improved customer information, available for every part of their journey and during disruption

- ✅ As a programme, supported and promoted close working between Network Rail, RDG, train operators, Transport Focus, ORR and third parties, with industry collaboration leading to a significant shift in industry culture

  - ✓ Driving change that will make a real difference, putting customers' needs at the heart of industry decision-making

Work Package 1 – Personalised Journey Information

" I am told useful information before, during and after my journey "

What we set out to do: As part of this workstream, we committed to achieving industry consensus and securing funding for improved notifications to customers regarding changes to their journey, personalised to their needs.

Where we are: We have to date worked with the Network Rail System Operator, the project Task and Finish Group has identified a customer-facing solution to 'Informed Traveller.' This will see customers who have purchased a ticket via a digital retailing channel being notified automatically of changes to their train service prior to their scheduled journey.

To enable this, a newly-developed industry timetable comparator tool will be communicating timetable changes to retailers; where a change to a journey is confirmed by a retailer, customers will be alerted in advance.

Ultimately, this will allow for customers to purchase a ticket at least 12 weeks prior to them wishing to travel, improving confidence in their travel arrangements and industry information more widely.

Since December 2020, and as an initial step, customers are being alerted of late changes to timetabled services through the National Rail Enquiries Journey Planner on a weekly basis, with any changes then fed into Train Operating Companies' (TOCs') individual journey planners. This is because of a change to the bulletin protocol where the NRCC add bulletins for late confirmations. This means customers are better informed of potential changes to preferred services before travelling, and when searching through online journey planners.

At the end of 2021, the appointed supplier SilverRail delivered the timetable comparator tool, and in May 2022, retailer Raileasy sent out the first notification to its customers – paving the way for a national rollout of personalised journey notifications by the end of 2022.

On top of delivering personalised journey notifications for customers, Work Package 1 has also been developing a solution that will give customers an indication of the likelihood that a train schedule will be altered as a result of planned engineering works prior to booking.
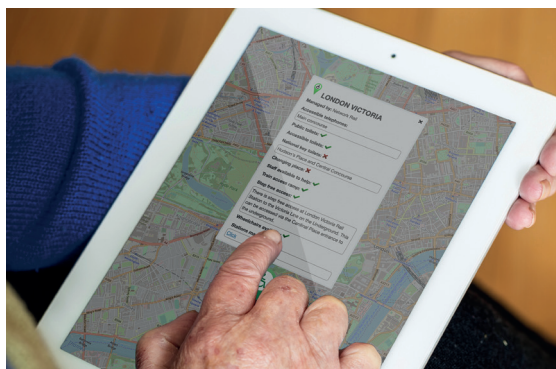

Image: Customer on iPad

Status: Met key milestones with further deliverables being implemented.

Commitments from the ORR response met through the creation of the funding proposal. Further deliverables include securing funding, delivering the technical capability, and managing the onboarding of TOCs and retailers which is currently planned until end Dec 22.

Work Package 2 – Improved Customer Information Screens

Customer statement

" *The information at the station is easy to find and up-to-date and I can find everything that I need to know* "

What we set out to do: Improved consistency and accuracy of information screens providing customers with an up-to-date information source which is consistent across the network.

Where we are: As an initial step, the team identified a set of base functionality improvements for Customer Information Screens (CIS), including:

- Disruption mode - maximising display space and announcement time available for running services; stopping cancelled services from filling up display screens during severe disruption

- Warnings of future delays - providing information about future delays affecting a train's onward journey before customers board

- Next fastest train public address (PA) - providing details of alternative services to certain key calling points in PA cancellation announcements

- '410 delay reasons' - utilising industry standard of 410 reasons for delay

- Short platforms - providing information when a train will stop at a station with a platform shorter than the length of the train

- Suppress non-essential announcements - only providing 'essential' announcements during severe disruption through tagging announcements

- Compensation phase - providing customers with appropriate compensation advice when trains are delayed or cancelled

- Events-driven announcements - enabling operators to record PA announcements to play when an event happens

Out of the 20 possible enhancements originally proposed, 16 were tested and deployed, including the above-listed improvements; where they were not previously offered at stations, including Network Rail managed stations, they are now available as a result of this programme's funding and project management. For customers this means that they will benefit from more relevant and consistent customer information at a station environment.

Aside from implementing changes to CIS, the team has worked on delivering improvements to Operational Information Screens (OIS) and the way in which they are maintained; and rolled out functionality at JCDecaux Screens to enable Network Rail to display key messaging at its managed stations during major disruption.

To ensure that any plans are based on what customers want, the project team secured funding and joined forces with Transport Focus to conduct new and refreshed customer research on 'Digital Customer Information at Stations'.

The results of this research were published in July 2021, seven years after the last major research was completed.

Status: Met key milestones with further deliverables being included in SISJ 2.0.

Commitments from the ORR response met for base CIS functionality, OIS recommendations and JC Decaux screens have been delivered. Enhanced functionality / digital screens strategy is being put into SISJ 2.0.

Work Package 3 – Improved onboard announcements

Customer statement

" *I am kept updated on relevant information while I am on the train* "

What we set out to do: As part of this workstream, we committed to improving onboard announcements through changes to onboard technology and employee training.

Where we are: Funding has been secured from Network Rail to improve onboard announcements via changes to the GSM-R system and providing new capability in train operators' control rooms. This work will see information flow directly from control room to customers via the on-train PA.

As part of the proposed solution, a new cloud-based application will see bespoke real-time messages played, using a text-to-speech capability on GSM-R cab radios. This will mean more relevant and effective customer information, while reducing traditional concerns relating to driver distraction as the announcements will not play out in the driver's cab.

In 2022, Siemens was appointed to deliver the required GSM-R cab radio software upgrades, with ReadSpeaker selected as the preferred text-to-speech engine provider – this will allow for on-train announcements to be delivered in eight languages (including Welsh), a total of 19 voices.

The embedded engine will work without internet connectivity – thus presenting a reliable product – and will moreover support visually impaired customers, with all customers standing to benefit as automated text-to-speech messages will be communicated more clearly and generally reduce the overall risk of mass self-evacuation during disruption.

Capability delivery is fully funded with 'train the trainer' tuition for train operators also provided by Network Rail.

In the meantime, the team has secured the additional introduction of TOC terminals to train operators who requested this which – in turn – has allowed for the increased use of GSM-R for TOCs to provide better customer information onboard. To encourage the use of TOC terminals in controls, the project updated the 'train the trainer' material and provided 'train the trainer' sessions to all train operators who requested this.

Separately, on top of work to enhance onboard train announcements via GSM-R – and in response to calls for "fewer annoying and repetitious recorded announcements" as outlined in the 'Williams-Shapps Plan for Rail' in 2021 – the programme team conducted an in-depth review of all current announcements, using customer insight and feedback to inform a long-term strategy for announcements.

As part of this, the team secured further funding to implement an 'announcement blueprint', which includes criteria around how frequently and how often announcements should be delivered. A detailed training programme for onboard staff to further enhance the delivery of live announcements, is to be delivered as part of this project before the end of the year.

For customers, this will mean increased consistency across the network, so they will know what to expect when travelling by train.

Status: Met key milestones with further deliverables being implemented.

*Commitments from the ORR response met through the rollout of additional GSM-R fixed terminals and the associated training, through the creation of the business case for GSM-R announcements and the business case for the reduction in repetitious pre-recorded announcements. Securing funding and delivering against the business cases are over and above.

Work Package 4 – Integrated Network-Wide Operational Systems

Customer statement

" *The information I am given is accurate and I get this information when I need it* "

What we set out to do: Understand the industry strategy for Integrated Traffic Management and Stock and Crew Systems; identify and address blockers to unblock richer and more accurate customer information.

Where we are: When an incident occurs that disrupts the railway, customers expect the industry to respond quickly and to let them know when an issue will be resolved, so they can decide whether to wait or find an alternative mode of transport. Delays in getting this information out can cause real frustration for customers.

That is why, as part of Work Package 4, the programme worked in partnership with Network Rail's Information Technology Innovation and West Coast South Route Control teams to develop a way in which a reasonable average forecast of time to return the infrastructure to train operators for services to be resumed could be provided.

To progress this workstream, the team built the 'Historic Incident Log Data Analysis' ('HILDA') system, which provides Network Rail controls with average 'Time to Arrive' at the site of incident and 'Time to Normal Working' for different types of incidents using data from the Control Centre Incident Log. Given the time pressure on Network Rail control staff during unplanned disruptions, 'HILDA' was designed to be fast and effective to use; and was successfully piloted for two months by the West Coast South control team in Rugby Rail Operating Centre who continue to use the tool.

Also, as part of Work Package 4, the project team completed an exposé into the challenges of deploying operational (Stock and Crew) systems, which highlighted concerns around operational systems and the impact of this on customer information. Following a review, it was determined that this work did not fall within the scope of the Smarter Information Programme and was consequently endorsed for delivery by RDG's Better Operations Programme Board.

The importance of backend and operational systems cannot be understated in terms of providing timely and relevant information to customers, and should therefore remain a key priority for the Smarter Information Programme and beyond.

Status: Met key milestones with further deliverables being implemented elsewhere as appropriate.

Work Package 5 – Industry Incident Management System

Customer statement

" *Staff confidently help with my questions* "

What we set out to do: Adopting industry-wide standards for Incident Management Systems and live messaging systems (or closer integration standards between systems).

Where we are: With relevant work underway within Network Rail, the team has stopped delivery against the objectives of Work Package 5 as part of the Smarter Information Programme. That said, as progress in this space will significantly enhance the quality and timeliness of customer information, it is imperative it remains a whole industry priority.

Within Network Rail, funding has been secured to support further development and implementation of the Incident Management System (IMS) on the Kent & Sussex route. IMS will support better sharing of information on events and will allow those managing and responding to an incident to coordinate activity more effectively. This allows control teams to provide more accurate information to customer service teams – and ultimately customers - as to the likely extent and duration of disruption. The Network Rail Southern team is currently implementing a business change programme to ensure that the benefits of the new system can be realised in full.

Image: Staff in control room

Status: Being implemented elsewhere as appropriate.

Work Package 6 – Improving real-time information

Customer statement

" *The information I am given is accurate and timely* "

What we set out to deliver: Subject to funding approvals, deliver added functionality for Darwin and optimum up-time to ensure that it meets its key purpose of being the central repository of information for real-time train information.

Where we are: A key focus of our work to improve customer information, and therefore making for a better overall customer experience, has been to advance the industry's real-time information system Darwin by securing funding and delivering a number of functionality enhancements.

One of these improvements will allow for altered timetables to be displayed beyond the current 48-hour limit up to 90 days, making customers aware of problems known to train operators and how these may impact services further in advance, thereby supporting them with their journey planning.

Other enhancements will enable TOCs to clearly communicate to customers that a service has been cancelled, but also when a train is being diverted or may be delayed; have stops cancelled or may call at additional stations. At the same time, the reason for a delay or cancellation will always be displayed at stations, and operators will be better equipped to communicate to customers when a train is being diverted - or have stops removed or added. This will give customers the full picture and enable them to make informed decisions when travelling by rail.

Funding for these enhancements has been secured, with all improvements to be delivered by spring 2023.

Separately, the team enabled GPS through Darwin to TOCs which signed up for this data feed; GPS wraps a layer around real-time predictions, thus making it more reliable. The project team are also assessing the benefits of integrating Darwin to the Network Rail Traffic Management System (TMS) which may increase the accuracy of Darwin even further.

Also as part of Work Package 6, the project team is working towards mapping out what facilities are available on which trains, and where on a train. For this, information will be fed into Darwin, with Darwin then configuring the facilities on a specific train by considering a train's painted number and livery code. Following this, relevant facilities information will be pushed out to customers through the traditional back- and front-end systems, such as the Integrated Passenger Transport Information System and the Online Journey Planner. Funding for this additional deliverable is presently not available but proactively sought by the project team through the development of the requirements and business case for approval.

Status: Good progress towards customer statement with original commitments to be delivered on in 2022 and further activities to continue after.

*Commitments from the ORR response will be met when the analysis of the benefits of integrating TMS to Darwin has concluded and, if necessary, a business case has been created. Further activities include the delivery of the Darwin change requests, the technical roadmap and the scoping of future improvements.

Work Package 7 – One team

Customer statement

" I can get help from any member of staff at a station "

What we set out to deliver: Deliver the 'one team' concept at all Network Rail managed stations, to make sure any member of staff can help and it doesn't matter if they are Network Rail or TOCs.

Where we are: As the industry is working collaboratively to shape railway reform, Network Rail and TOCs have been committed to adopting the 'one station team' approach across all managed and multi-operator stations.

To date, train operators that run out of Network Rail's 20 managed stations have successfully submitted 'One Team' plans both to the DfT, as well as Transport Scotland. These plans defined short-, medium- and long-term initiatives which would limit, and ultimately stop customers from being able to distinguish between Network Rail and operators' frontline staff - thus allowing for more consistent information provision at stations while supporting the overall ambition of providing a seamless journey experience to customers.

In early 2022, with the emergence of other, related industry programmes such as the Managed Stations Integration Programme which aims to develop new operating principles for stations that is set to simplify the customer experience across stations, the decision was taken to formally close Work Package 7 down. On top, with the creation of the Great British Railways Transition Team (GBRTT), it was deemed that future work would be better placed within GBRTT, rather than the Smarter Information Programme.

As a result, initiatives outlined within the 'One Team' plans will be owned, tracked and managed at a more local level and Work Package 7 produced Terms of Reference for managed stations as one of its final deliverables – to assist them in forming their own steering group to govern and progress their plans.

Image below: Rail staff helping at kiosk. / **Image right**: Rail staff assisting wheelchair user through ticket gate

Status: Met key milestones with further deliverables being implemented elsewhere as appropriate.

Work Package 8 – Collaborating During Major Disruption

Customer statement

" *I know that the railway is 'working as one' to help me get to my destination and that information they provide is accurate and timely* "

What we set out to deliver: Agree and implement improvements to collaborative working during disruption through refining the operating model/framework, employee traineeship and awareness and automation of processes.

Where we are: As part of its initial scope, the Work Package 8 team looked to review existing information policies, codes of practices and ORR-mandated actions to ascertain if they were still fit for purpose. This review highlighted the need to refresh, modernise and consolidate the existing information requirements into one document and produce one set of 'customer promises'.

In December 2021, the project team published the 'Customer Information Pledges'. These are customer-facing and brought a range of historical and outdated documents such as the Approved Code of Practice for Customer Information (ACOP) which had last been updated in 2016, into one place to serve as a single point of truth on customer information. A key objective for the pledges was to switch the language used for providing information to customers from 'operational' to something that customers would be able to recognise. On top, they clearly outlined train operators' commitments to meeting customers' needs and put in place a mechanism for TOCs to

be held to account in delivering against said pledges. As a result of the 'Customer Information Pledges' being launched, customers now benefit from an increased understanding of what good looks like, and what they can expect when choosing to travel by rail.

Indeed, the pledges are key to the way in which information is given to customers and from April 2022, they have been accepted by the ORR as the regulated code of practice required under the licence condition for all train operators.

Since the launch of the pledges, the scope of Work Package 8 has been revised and is now focused on implementing improvements to the way in which industry keeps customers informed during disruption – aiming to put in place clear information principles for 'Do Not Travel' and 'Ticket Acceptance' notices.

The project team is set to deliver these improvements by creating an industry-wide best practice guide following a review of the 'As Is' 'Do Not Travel' arrangements and processes. Expected outputs from this work include:

- ✅ Best practice messaging templates for 'Do Not Travel' and 'Ticket Acceptance' notices
- ✅ Clear 'Communication Principles'
- ✅ Strengthening and enhancing personalisation of the 'Do Not Travel' messaging

The addition of scope for Work Package 8 was largely inspired by the severe weather conditions the UK experienced on 31st October 2021, and which caused significant disruption to rail customers. At the time, Network Rail Chief Executive Officer, Andrew Haines, commissioned an industry-wide review to examine how customer information was distributed, and how customers were managed on the day. To progress this work, colleagues from the Smarter Information Programme held a workshop with representatives from across industry. Key findings identified a lack of coordination and control at an overarching level, resulting in a number of short-, medium- and long-term classified recommendations being put forward on how processes should be improved to reduce similar failings in the future.

Short-term recommendations were enacted in response to storms Eunice and Franklin in February 2022, and more recently, during Industrial Strike Action in June 2022 – these made a real difference to customers and received positive feedback from across the industry, including Transport Focus and the ORR.

Medium- and long-term actions have been built into the remaining Work Packages or have been re-assigned to other industry programmes or teams, such as the GBRTT Design team.

Most recently, the team has started to implement cross-industry 'Teams chats' which allows for TOC controls and staff to easily engage and align their approach in terms of customer information in the run-up to and/or during disruption. This was initially tested between Govia Thameslink Railway and Southeastern, but is now being rolled out across the rail network and is set to include the National Rail Communication Centre, as well as the National Operations Centre (NOC).

Status: Met key milestones with further deliverables being implemented.

All deliverables from the original mandate have been completed.

Work Package 9 – Pan London/ National Rail Communication Centres

Customer statement

" I know the train companies work together and provide me with the information I need to make informed choices when I travel "

What we set out to deliver: Agree and deliver on the optimised operational model for pan-industry information centres, for example National Rail Communication Centre and multi-operator teams based in the Palestra, TfL covering London.

Where we are: Since its inception in 2020, Work Package 9 has been split into two parts. Work Package 9a is focused on implementing a Pan-London interstation incident process and delivering a post-incident debrief. This was decided by the Task and Finish Group in place of an operational model of Pan London.

As the name suggests, a Pan-London incident report will provide industry with a clear process to follow during times of disruption across the Greater London area. The post-incident debrief will outline the process to get stations up and running as quickly as possible following disruption.

There has been a long-standing need for these, but further focus on these workstreams has come following the 31st October 2021 incident and the severe disruptions caused during storms Eunice and Franklin earlier this year.

As a result, we have followed and supported Network Rail's progress in delivering a 'Southern Stations Incident and Debriefing' form, which is now included in the 'Station Incident Response Plan' and is housed on the latter's 'Toolkit' landing page as good practice for all Southern stations to use. As an imminent next step, the Smarter Information Programme is facilitating for the Pan-London incident brief process to be progressed by the NOC and be embedded in its incident management process.

Separately, Work Package 9b is working to enhance information provided to customers through improvements to the National Rail Communication Centre's (NRCC) Bulletin Editor. The Bulletin Editor, provided by SilverRail and in place since 2002, adds journey planner alerts to the National Rail Enquiries Online Journey Planner, thus updating rail users on the status of a train and the exact route it is set to take during disruption.

Specifically, these enhancements will improve NRCC's efficiency, resulting in information being provided more quickly during disruption, and reducing the amount of bulletins appearing to customers - limiting information overload and the confusion this can cause for customers.

In addition, an NRCC bulletin will only show information relevant to a customer's journey during disruption, namely for the specific leg of the overall journey that is affected and not all the possible journeys between two locations. As a result, customers will benefit from more accurate and tailored information.

To date, the project team has delivered a series of planned enhancements. Since these went live in February 2022, there has been a bulletin duplication reduction of almost 80% and improved accuracy of bulletin placement of almost 45%.

A further part of Work Package 9b is focused on externally measuring and evaluating end-to-end NRCC service and current processes, as well as establishing quarterly monitoring, thereby aiming for timely, more accurate and consistent information provision for customers now and in the long-term.

Status: Met key milestones with further deliverables being implemented. Assessing whether additional scope is required in SISJ 2.0.

*Commitments from the ORR response met regarding the NRCC. For Pan-London, a Task and Finish Group was set-up and mapped processes and implemented some improvements, although not to the scale that was originally expected. This was based on feedback from stakeholders that major overhaul was not needed. We are working with stakeholders now to assess whether it should be included in 2.0.

Work Package 10 – Data Market Place
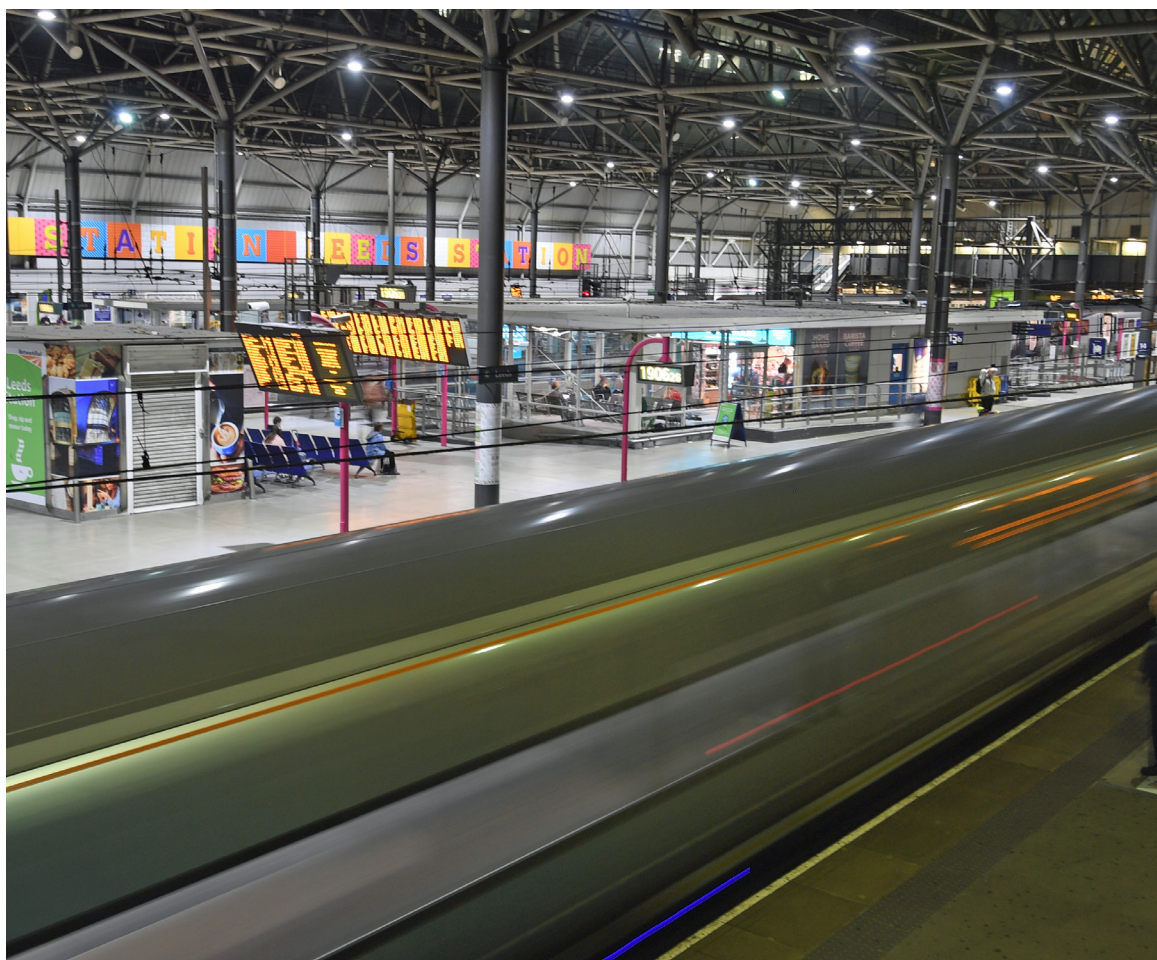
Customer statement

" I get consistent information, no matter the channel, before, during and after my journey "

What we set out to deliver: Open and available data sources to third parties so they can develop additional customer information tools based on this single source of truth.

Where we are: Commitments made as part of Work Package 10 are being delivered outside the Smarter Information Programme and are reported on separately as part of the Data Market Place Programme. We remain in close contact with this programme given our work in Work Package 11 (see next section).

Status: Being implemented elsewhere as appropriate.

Image: Leeds City station

Work Package 11 – Real-time Train and Facility Information

Customer statement

" *I can find out things important to me are working before I travel and while on my journey* "

What we set out to deliver: Strengthening the value chain to allow third parties to deliver an enhanced customer experience through provision of real-time facilities information.

Where we are: A key part of our work within the Smarter Information Programme focuses on improving the quality of information provided to customers relating to facilities at stations and onboard trains. This includes information about car parks, toilets, lifts and escalators, but also train loading – looking at how busy a train is at any given time.

For this, the industry is upgrading the central IT systems which will allow the sharing of data between operators and customers - all data will be made openly available via the Rail Data Marketplace (see above Work Package 10). More publicly available data will help customers make informed decisions about where to park their car when heading to the station, how to navigate around the rail network according to their own accessibility needs or which train to catch based on seat availability.

To date, the project team has delivered against Train Loading Phase 1, meaning that average loading data has been made available within Darwin interfaces (scheduled to go live during summer 2022). This will allow customers to have a better understanding of how busy a scheduled train is likely to be, and will moreover give them confidence when choosing to travel by rail post-Covid. The Smarter Information team are aiming to collaborate with colleagues across the industry to develop a long-term strategy for loading that includes real-time and forecast loading.

For facilities information, funding is to be sought to make priority data sets available through industry systems (Train Loading Phase 2). These priority data sets are for:

- ✅ Car parks at stations
- ✅ Toilets on stations and on trains
- ✅ Station lifts
- ✅ Station escalators
- ✅ Baby change facilities on trains

This follows the rollout of Zipabout's Alert Me via Whatsapp service which provides customers with real-time personalised journey updates before they head to the station, giving customers updates on delays, disruptions and crowding and thereby boosting their confidence.

Alongside this, in collaboration with Network Rail and train operators, work has also been progressed to provide real-time information on the status of lift and escalators at train stations across the rail network and feeding this into the RDG-led National Rail Accessibility Map.

For customers this will mean that they will always have the most up-to-date information on the status of station and train facilities, their availability and whether they are working as required.

Status: Good progress towards customer statement with original commitments to be delivered in 2022 and further activities to continue after.

Commitments from the ORR response will be met when the business case is completed for station facilities and lift escalator data is shown in the National Rail Accessibility Map. Agreed changes to the way loading data is shown in Darwin have already been delivered.

Work Package 12 – Ultimate Customer Information Experience

Customer statement

"The industry understands my needs as a customer and puts them first."

What we set out to do: Ensure seamless delivery of information to customers through robust processes, in language they understand.

Where we are: Since first outlining our objective for Work Package 12 in 2020, the project team have worked with the ORR to further flush out the scope and identify more specific deliverables. Based on this, colleagues from the Smarter Information Programme delivered an industry-wide agreed vision for what good customer information should look like by 2030. For this, the project team spoke to 20 different organisations and gathered feedback from almost 60 industry experts.

As industry prepares for a big step-change in how the railway is run, this vision will guide the long-term strategy for customer information, continue to inform the Whole Industry Strategic Plan (WISP) and support the work of GBRTT now and ultimately, Great British Railways (GBR).

As a next step, the team developed a roadmap to outline which capabilities industry will require to deliver this ultimate customer information experience. This is aligned with GBRTT's priorities and has been crossed-checked with industry's Fares Ticketing and Retail Plan, as well as WISP's set of customer interventions.

The roadmap will further support the process of defining the customer information strategy, set to be delivered as part of GBRTT's customer team this Autumn, as well as a Smarter Information, Smarter Journeys 2.0 - the next iteration of the programme and round of Work Packages.

Status: Met key milestones.

All the deliverables from the mandate have been completed. This work is informing the SISJ 2.0 strategy.

Image: Liverpool St station

Work Package 13 – Customer Information Measure (Maturity Model)

Customer statement

" My train company has the things that matter to me on my journey monitored and reported "

What we set out to do: Agreement to implement a new Customer Information Measure (Maturity Model) and develop additional customer information tools based on this single source of truth.

Where we are: In late 2020, the Work Package 12 project team – working closely with colleagues from the ORR – initiated and supported the launch of two pilots for a new Customer Information Measure (CIM). These were delivered by train operators London North Eastern Railway and CrossCountry working in close collaboration with relevant Network Rail routes and regions, and a deep-dive session to identify 'lessons learnt' followed shortly thereafter. While these 'lessons learnt' were set to inform a 'blueprint' that would ultimately support the national rollout of a CIM, agreement was reached that this should be delivered as part of GBR in the future.

> *Status: Met key milestones with further deliverables being implemented elsewhere as appropriate.*

Image: Male customer checking phone in train station

Conclusion

Two years ago, we set out to achieve a sustainable step-change in customer experience through the provision of better customer information.

To meet our vision of providing customers with all the information they want, when and how and they want it, we created the cross-industry Smarter Information, Smarter Journeys Programme and identified 13 Work Packages focused on delivering real change for customers.

Looking at where we are today in meeting the commitments we made in June 2020, overall, significant progress has been made with the Smarter Information team and stakeholders largely having met these or being on track for delivery.

While we have executed what we planned for originally, we continue to deliver on the ORR mandate; indeed, our work does not stop here, with a next round of Work Packages being rolled out, and version 2.0 of the Smarter Information Programme scheduled for this Autumn.

Enhancements to customer information cannot stop here and we need to keep the momentum. The Williams Shapps Plan for Rail highlights customer information as a key focus area, and improvement in the customer experience overall is underpinned by enhancements to customer information. For this reason version 2 of the SISJ programme is designed to build on SISJ and continue with enhancements to Customer Information. A new strategy will outline how we will deliver SISJ 2.0, its goals and objectives. SISJ 2.0 is due to start in Q2 2023.

To go alongside this, we will track customer satisfaction going forwards via a new customer satisfaction tracker, InfoTrack. InfoTrack will allow us to directly measure the impact SISJ improvements have had on satisfaction with Customer Information, and the questions in the survey have been designed around the programme objectives and outcomes.

As we prepare for a big-step change in how the railway is run, the Smarter Information Programme will continue to be the driving force to improving customer information, with our work fully aligned with that of the Whole Industry Strategic Plan, Great British Railways Transition Team and other key industry players and initiatives.

With Smarter Information being an unfunded programme at its core, much focus has also been placed on raising the programme's profile to gather as much support for what we aim to achieve for customers.

We have worked hard to engage stakeholders, having organised show and tell events, created a brand-new programme webpage and launched a newsletter. As a result, the programme has attracted investment of well over £20 million for improvements, delivered change that has positively impacted customers, brought together more than 200 industry colleagues from over 40 different companies and significantly changed the perception of stakeholders.

Our programme is based on working closely together, and the collaborative nature of Smarter Information has also impacted industry working outside the programme. The customer information delivered to customers during storms Eunice and Franklin, and the recent Industrial Action, has been widely praised by senior stakeholders at Transport Focus and the ORR, and also recognised by the Rail Minister. The good delivery of customer information during these events has been enabled by the joined-up nature of the customer information Subject Matter Experts across the industry (with relationships developed through Smarter Information projects), outputs from the Work Packages, as well as holding detailed wash-up/lessons learned workshops after major events conducted under the umbrella of the programme.

Ultimately, this industry collaboration has led to a real shift in industry culture, resulting in much-needed change being advanced at speed and with customers' needs being put at the heart of decision-making.

Smarter Information, Smarter Journeys gives industry the governance, culture and willingness to work as one, and for the benefit of customers. Our programme is therefore essential in meeting the industry's objective of a simpler, better railway and we stand ready to continue delivering for everyone in Britain.

Smarter
Information
Smarter
Journeys

This document has been produced through collaboration between train operators, Network Rail and Rail Delivery Group as part of the Smarter Information, Smarter Journeys Programme.

Rail Delivery Group

National Rail

www.raildeliverygroup.com

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