

T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Edward Mountain MSP
Convener
Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee
Scottish Parliament
By email: netzero.committee@parliament.scot

28 March 2024

Dear Convener,

Publication of Network Rail Delivery Plan for Scotland for Control Period 7, 2024-29

I am writing to inform you in your role as the Convener of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee that earlier this month I confirmed, via a letter to the UK Secretary of State for Transport, and in accordance with the required process, that I am content with Network Rail Scotland's Delivery Plan for the next five-year regulatory funding period, Control Period 7, 2024-29.

I believe that the Plan will be a welcome boost to the rail supply chain and workforce in Scotland; offering certainty for the forthcoming five years and reassurance of the Scottish Government's continued investment in rail in Scotland. A weblink to the newly published document can be found here: [Scotland CP7 delivery plan \(networkrail.co.uk\)](https://networkrail.co.uk).

The Network Rail Scotland Delivery Plan is the culmination of two years activity from the regulatory periodic review process: it also aligns with funding provided and fulfils outputs and requirements specified by the Scottish Ministers in their High Level Output Specification (HLOS), all as previously notified to the Committee. The Final Determination provided by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) provides assurance that this is achievable.

I met with the Chairs of Network Rail and the ORR to stress to them the importance the Scottish Ministers place on securing value for money for the £4.2bn funding being provided by the Scottish Government over the next five years. Both organisations recognised weaknesses identified in an earlier version of the Plan and the need to secure appropriate improvement. The plan demonstrates how Network Rail will operate, maintain and renew the network over the next five years, and I now feel confident that the Plan will facilitate delivery of the Scottish Ministers' priorities for a safe, high performing and efficient railway, subject to its effective execution by the Network Rail management team and robust monitoring by the regulator (ORR) throughout the control period.

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I understand that senior representatives from Network Rail attended the NZET Committee on 19 March 2024 and described how various elements of the Plan will now be put into practice, including over £400 million being spent over the next five years to make the railway more resilient against extreme weather events. This is alongside the steps already put in place such as the new Network Rail weather desk at its Scotland integrated control centre, offering 24/7 support from dedicated meteorologists to better predict, plan and react to adverse weather and its impact on the network.

Concerns were raised previously about reduction in Network Rail's planned renewals work. This reflects a conscious choice by Network Rail to improve its approach to asset maintenance for CP7, relying less on renewals and more on maintenance. This was identified by Network Rail as the best way of delivering a more efficient railway which is also safe and affordable, achieving better value for money. Network Rail will facilitate this through a greater, more efficient utilisation of existing infrastructure and modern asset condition monitoring equipment and processes. I understand that the ORR representative provided positive assurance to the NZET Committee meeting, confirming that the ORR deemed Network Rail's plans to be safe.

The challenge will be right from the outset to ensure full, efficient and timely delivery of all the commitments in the Delivery Plan, which will be necessary to meet the requirements of our High Level Output Specification. Critically these include increased expenditure to improve the resilience of the network to climate change, additional funding to deliver enhanced performance and a proper focus on improving the attractiveness of the railway for passengers and freight users, for example through improved journey times.

Yours sincerely,

FIONA HYSLOP
Cabinet Secretary for Transport

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St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG
www.gov.scot

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