

# TRANSPORT

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## New roles for ORR but Villiers reforms parked

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Responsibility for approving train operators' passenger complaints handling procedures and disabled people's protection policies is to be transferred to the Office of Rail Regulation from the Secretary of State for Transport.

But proposals to give the ORR powers to enforce train service performance requirements or arbitrate on changes to train operator franchise agreements have been shelved.

Former transport minister Theresa Villiers and ORR chair Anna Walker launched a consultation in December 2011 which considered the case for giving the regulator a greater role in overseeing the rail industry. This proposed giving the ORR responsibility for overseeing passenger complaints handling procedures and disabled people's protection policies rather than having responsibility split between the ORR and DfT.

But, more controversially, the consultation also considered transferring responsibility for monitoring and enforcement of train service punctuality and reliability, and the monitoring and potential enforcement of TOC responsibilities in respect of service quality standards, from the Department for Transport to the ORR. The consultation suggested this could reduce industry costs in line with the conclusion of Sir Roy McNulty's Rail Value for Money review that there were efficiency and performance benefits to be gained by bringing together the regulation of industry performance in one place.

In a joint statement this week the DfT and ORR said: "The government has decided that it will not at this stage proceed with additional measures outlined in the consultation on service quality standards, the enforcement of train service performance and a role for ORR as an adviser or arbiter on franchise change. It will keep under review the option of transferring such functions to ORR in the future."

Michael Roberts, chief executive of the Association of Train Operating Companies, responded: "This is a broadly helpful response from government to a range of recommendations from the transport select committee. In particular, we support the decision by government not to go beyond a limited extension of the ORR's regulatory role as this would have risked creating 'double jeopardy' for train companies and added cost for the industry."

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