

August 23, 2013 5:37 pm

Network Rail punctuality falls

By Jane Wild



Network Rail punctuality has fallen, according to its latest figures, adding to concerns about its performance.

Punctuality attributable to Network Rail was 91.3 per cent, down from 92 per cent in the same period a year earlier, the data, published on Friday showed.

The owner of the UK rail network has already been hauled up for its poor performance on the matter by the rail regulator.

The Office of Rail Regulation imposed a minimum punctuality target on Network Rail for the first time in June.

Network Rail has a target of 92.6 per cent that it must meet at the end of March or face a fine of £1.5m for every 0.1 percentage point it falls short of the target. It is now virtually impossible for the company to avoid being penalised.

The poorest punctuality was on the West Coast and East Coast mainlines, the two main routes between London and Scotland.

Virgin Rail, which operates the West Coast route, is suing Network Rail to force it to improve its infrastructure. Virgin said delays had cost it £10m to £15m and was frustrated that it had damaged passenger perception of its services.

Network Rail said: “The challenge we have faced over the past year and will continue to face. . . is one of success – more people wanting to use more trains, more of the time.

“At peak times, many of the busiest parts of the network are operating at full capacity, which means that even the smallest incident has the potential to cause knock-on delays to an extent that would not have been the case even a few years ago.”

Mike Hewitson, head of policy at Passenger Focus, the independent watchdog, said: “Passengers tell us that punctual trains are what they want most from the railway, so they will be disappointed with the decline in overall performance.

“Passenger satisfaction with punctuality has also gone down in our latest passenger survey. It is essential that this is reversed so that passengers can get back to depending on the railway.”

About 60 per cent of delays to train services in the UK are attributed to Network Rail.

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