



**Office of Rail and Road
Periodic Review 2018 (PR18) Initial Consultation, May 2016
Historic England Response**

Historic England is the Government's statutory adviser on all matters relating to the historic environment in England. We are a non-departmental public body established under the National Heritage Act 1983 and sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). We champion and protect England's historic places, providing expert advice to local planning authorities, developers, owners and communities, to help ensure our historic environment is properly understood, enjoyed and cared for.

Having considered the consultation Historic England wishes to make the following points:

1. The historic importance and value of the United Kingdom's Railways in promoting local distinctiveness and stimulating economic growth.

Our railways are of major international importance: first developed in the United Kingdom, the concept was then exported worldwide and this legacy sits alongside cathedrals, churches, town halls and other civic buildings, as an essential part of the country's heritage. This historical significance is nationally recognised by many of the buildings and structures afforded statutory protection by listing and scheduling, but there are many others that are of considerable local interest and valued by the public.

Historic railway stations often act as important gateways to cities, towns and local areas, helping to create a strong sense of place. An increasing number show how their successful regeneration has acted as the catalyst to enhancing the wider area, providing new and improved commercial opportunities, together with services which help to support and serve the local community.

2. Early consultation with heritage specialists can help to inform development, enhancement and maintenance projects, there avoiding potential problems and delays later on.



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Historic England is involved in commenting on major development proposals and works to designated structures across the railway network, and providing strategic listing advice, particularly in relation to the routes affected by electrification, in partnership with Network Rail. Where development, enhancement and maintenance projects are based on a full and informed understanding of the heritage assets and their significance, the blend of the new and the old can be visually very powerful and enhance the passenger experience. This can be seen at Kings Cross and St. Pancras which exemplify our approach to ‘Constructive Conservation’.

Early consultation with the relevant authorities (including Historic England and local authority conservation advisors) is the key to success and can avoid potential delays later in the process. However, it should be noted that the majority of modernisation work on England’s historic railways (excluding designated buildings and structures) falls within existing long-established permitted development rights and does not require permission.

3. The need to comply with the *Protocol for the Care of the Government Historic Estate* and having access to appropriate expertise (Questions set out in Chapter 4 of the consultation).

Having been reclassified as a public sector organisation in 2014, Network Rail (and the franchise operators) should adhere to the *Protocol for the Care of the Government Historic Estate* which has been developed by Historic England and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (<https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/protocol-for-the-care-of-the-government-historic-estate/careofgovernmenthistoricestate-2009.pdf/>).

This sets out best practice for the management of heritage assets in public ownership and includes, amongst other things: nomination of a heritage officer, to ensure the significance of any heritage asset is taken into account when planning change, commission regular condition surveys, implement a planned programme of repairs and maintenance, ensure that the design quality of any new work enhances the historic environment and the preparation of biennial conservation reports.

So far as we are aware, Network Rail does not have accurate information relating to the heritage assets in their ownership and this could create potential difficulties when planning and implementing future projects. Other agencies are further ahead in mapping their heritage assets and maintaining information about their condition, and we are prepared to help Network Rail in this regard.



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The organisation would also benefit from having its own in-house expertise and Historic England would support Network Railway in developing this to better manage its heritage assets and setting. This would have the potential to reduce costs and delays in the planning system where Network Rail's investment decisions affect the historic environment.

4. Environmental obligations and monitoring performance (Questions set out in Chapter 5 of the consultation).

The consultation only makes fleeting references to the environment and there is no consideration of the environmental obligations or performance of Network Rail. As a minimum, we would expect to see a firm commitment in Network Rail's Business or Delivery Plan to meeting the requirements of the *Protocol for the Care of the Government Historic Estate* together with a statement on how this is to be achieved. Such a commitment has already been made by Highways England in its *Delivery Plan 2015-2020* (2015), and again, we can help both Network Rail and the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) in developing this. We also suggest the ORR should consider a range environmental performance measures as part of its regulation which are similar to those that have been put in place for Highways England.

5. Future Engagement (Questions set out in Chapter 6 of the consultation).

The suggested environmental obligations and performance measures could be considered as part of the specific working groups or ad hoc workshops described in paragraph 6.16. Similar events have already been held by the ORR to discuss Highways England's performance in relation to its environmental commitments and plans. This might perhaps involve the relevant government departments (Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Department for Culture, Media and Sport), the statutory environmental bodies (Historic England, Natural England, Environment Agency, Forestry Commission) together with other key bodies and organisations.

Historic England would welcome the opportunity to discuss the content of this submission in further detail if this would be helpful and looks forward to working with the ORR and Network Rail in developing the outputs for Control Period 6.

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10 August 2016



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