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Dear 

The accessibility of Class 507 vehicles by 2020

We have engaged previously on outlining the Department's proposals for targeting the rail industry's efforts at those features of rail vehicles that have the greatest negative impact on the ability of disabled passengers to use certain vehicles, particularly with a view to their operation past 31 December 2019. I have since written, explaining what would be expected on those vehicles owned by Angel that were previously subject to the Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations 1998.

I assessed unit 507 010 during my visit on 11 November 2010 to Birkenhead depot, for compliance against the RVAR and the Technical Specification for Interoperability - Persons with Reduced Mobility. I was assisted in this by a compliance checklist that Angel had already had completed.

As you are aware, the attached checklist shows the assessed current compliance of that 507 unit against the requirements within both standards. The checklist also sets out the Department's view on which areas of these pre-RVAR vehicles (introduced originally in 1978-80 and thoroughly refurbished in 2002-05) would need to be made more accessible in order for us to allow the use of the units beyond the 1 January 2020 End Date. The 508 fleet also used by Merseyrail are essentially identical. Angel also owns several other 508s which are off-lease and have not been refurbished to the same high standard as those used by Merseyrail.

Based on the Government's stated intention of an accessible rail fleet by at least 1 January 2020 and, following discussions during the site visit, our understanding of some of the engineering challenges on this fleet, the attached checklist shows:

- The areas on the vehicles which are already compliant with either RVAR or the PRM TSI (labelled with green);
- In yellow, those non-compliant areas of the unit which are not expected to be corrected (unless a novel solution arises) as either:

- they deliver only marginal improvements in accessibility: eg. making the existing door warning tone compliant with the PRM TSI; or
 - compliance would involve significant re-engineering of the vehicle.
- Finally, those areas (shown in red) where improvements to accessibility will need to be achieved in order for these vehicles to operate beyond the End Date. Eg
 - fitment of fixing pins to the manual boarding ramp.

As this checklist is also for the use of TOCs and bidders for future franchises, the checklist shows overall what is expected to be delivered on a unit in service. It will be helpful for stakeholders to liaise in future to ensure that updated versions of this checklist are created, in order to record progress made towards greater accessibility.

There are only two areas where further accessibility is expected:

Doorways

A contrasting strip must be provided on the edge of the step-board. It was believed that one had previously been applied but that this had completely worn away.

Boarding Aid

The manual boarding ramp, which is otherwise compliant, must be provided with fixing pins.

I hope this is helpful to you, and would be happy to consider the solutions you propose. We would also welcome a breakdown of indicative costs and your views on the best time(s) to undertake the work.

This position has been agreed with colleagues elsewhere in DfT National Networks and DPTAC. It should not be used as a precedent on other vehicles, unless the surrounding conditions are exactly the same as this fleet. Equally, you understand that the Department's policy of targeted compliance relates only to existing vehicles, and provides no grounds for building new vehicles with similar non-compliances in the future.

In due course, Angel will be able to ask the Department for a formal determination/dispensation under the Railways (Interoperability) Regulations (RIR) for those non-compliances which need not be rectified. This would then allow applicable fleets, if so desired, to operate past the 1 January 2020 date for rail vehicles to be accessible. The RIR are currently being updated and a revised version is expected to come into force in November 2011.

I am copying this to Brian Freemantle and Peter Randall here, and DPTAC. I am also copying to the Office of Rail Regulation, as the body responsible for enforcing the End Date on heavy rail.

Yours sincerely,

John Bengough
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