

Further information received from Network Rail on 29 October 2018

Please accept my apologies for the delay in sending this through; by way of explanation, a lot of the key people involved in these decisions are on annual leave hence the delay in ascertaining as much information as possible.

I can confirm that for Wk. 23 the request was made by the GWep programme team and this request was signed off internally by NR's Director of Route Sponsorship. By way of background, a large volume of access has been agreed for between Didcot and Swindon for timetable years 2016, 2017 and 2018. In the 2017 timetable year, 30 sets of midweeks nights between Didcot and Swindon for electrification construction were agreed and in 2018, twenty weeks up to the end of September were agreed. We had requested as much access as possible but owing to construction overrunning, more access was required.

To expand, the above access was required to hit the commitments required for testing of the route sections from Didcot to Swindon and allow for entry into service in time for the Hendy dates and ultimately ahead of the them, an aspiration of the programme and GWR.

This work was required because throughout the summer, mainly due to possessions across other route sections, access in RS5 had been significantly reduced to Saturday nights only between Weeks 11 & 19. Delivery of work within these Saturday nights had not met the forecast levels for many reasons, some of which included late possessions due to late running trains etc. It was envisaged that the access in Weeks 20 & 21 would cover these losses.

The access provided in Weeks 20 & 21 did not result in enough work taking place to allow for electrical testing to take place on the weekend of Week 24. Following this date there were no further mid week nights available to complete registration works and this put the dynamic testing at significant risk. Failure to meet this milestone would have led to late notice replanning of not only RS5 works but also other route sections, creating significant operator disruption across the entire English commissioning programme in RS6D, RS6P and RS2.

To hold as much of the plan as possible, minimising the late disruption, the Electrification team were left with little alternative but to request this access at very short notice to hold the entire programme of commissioning. Failure to have met this commissioning plan would have led not only to us failing to meet the Hendy dates but also not being able to provide GWR with access for Class 387's to Cocklebury sidings in January 2019. This would have meant that GWR would have had no stabling facilities for their 387 fleet following the need to depart the Crossrail sidings at Maidenhead in January 2019.

The decision was taken as the only sensible approach to facilitate NR and GWRs requirements of the 31 December 2018 and seen at the time as the least worst strategic option for the industry at the time.

For Wk. 24, there was a number of issues with possessions in Wk. 23:

Monday night's isolation was cancelled as the amended isolation process with the new electrical sections (brought into use on the Saturday night) had not been completed or signed by ATC (Alstom, TSO, and Costain) and we were unable to bring the isolation into force.

Tuesday night's isolation was offered from NR to ATC right time; however Romford Control advised they had not received paperwork for any isolation from ATC and the isolation was subsequently cancelled.

Wednesday night's isolation was cancelled as confusion arose around agreement from our side on block to electric traction arrangements at Westbourne Park; we had previously agreed to use route bar arrangements and BTET (Blocked to electric traction) arrangements in place for pointwork to protect the work; however this was not properly passed over from one shift to the next and we could not fix it at the isolation time.

A verbal instruction was given to take the access for Wk. 24 by our Chief Operating Officer, and the acting Head of Planning confirmed receiving this instruction to the Chief Operating Officer by email. At the time of this decision being made, NR was committed to undertaking this work as per dates committed to TfL.

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