



## **The Office of Rail Regulation**

### *Data Portal Enhancements Research*

### Research Report – July 2013

***Prepared for:***

*Folusho Amusan  
Kwesi Abrampah  
Office of Rail Regulation*

***Prepared by:***

*Research Works Limited  
Regency House  
The Quadrant  
219a Hatfield Road  
St Albans, Herts  
AL1 4TB*

*all@researchworks.co.uk  
Tel: 01727 893 159*

## CONTENTS

<b>1. MANAGEMENT SUMMARY</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3. METHOD AND SAMPLE</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>4. MAIN FINDINGS</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>APPENDIX: Pre-task, Topic Guide, Worksheets</b>	<b>35</b>

## 1. MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

### Background, Objectives and Sample Structure

- The aim of the research was to provide feedback from the general public on the re-designed NRT Data Portal. This feedback, along with existing feedback from more specialist users and stakeholders, will be used by the Webteam to create a firm technical specification to brief ORR's external web developers.
- A series of eight focus groups were conducted with members of the general public who had never previously used the NRT Portal. During the groups respondents surfed the wireframes on laptops, compared them with the current Portal and discussed their views and suggestions for improvements.
- The overall sample comprised respondents aged 15 years and above (split into homogenous groups to ensure smooth group dynamics), and the full range of socio-economic grades (A, B, C1, C2, D and E). The fieldwork was conducted in St Albans, Manchester and Birmingham between 24<sup>th</sup> June and 4<sup>th</sup> July 2013.
- These focus groups were supplemented with a series of six depth interviews with visually impaired respondents to ascertain their experiences of using the wireframes.

### Main Findings

- While respondents are interested in information relating to timetables, prices and journey planning, there is little appetite or envisaged use for data or statistics around safety, service satisfaction, performance, network capability and assets or official statistics, such as the kind provided by ORR's NRT Portal. The detailed provision of this data, combined with the presence of industry terminology and acronyms, indicates to respondents that the Portal is a source of information for those who work in the rail industry, academics or journalists with a special interest in this sector. This is a significant barrier to usage of the Portal – members of the public simply do not perceive that it is for them.
- There are several aspects of the Portal that are thought to work well. It is deemed easy to navigate (even for the first-time user) and therefore easy to use, content-rich, easy to read, clear and uncluttered. Furthermore, it is considered to offer significant improvements on the existing Portal in all of these areas.

- However, there is still room for significant improvement. The Portal is consistently described as boring, bland, dull and dry (both in content and design); this, combined with the immediate lack of interest in the content, means that the Portal must work hard to engage any general public visitors who may reach it.
- Despite this, respondents spontaneously state their recognition that a highly data-driven Portal such as this is primarily a functional destination site, rather than one for 'leisure browsing', and as such the appearance is not of the highest significance; the ease of navigation and the content are of greater importance, and these currently work well. However, there are elements which, if improved, may potentially contribute to an overall more interesting user experience, without necessarily detracting from the overall purpose of the Portal.
- Improvements must focus on two key areas. Firstly, the appearance of the Portal, which could be made more interesting and appealing to the general public user. Secondly, the tone of the Portal could be adjusted to speak more directly to the non-expert user. While these amendments may never lead to full engagement with general public audiences, it is likely that they will enhance the user experience should visitors reach the Portal.
- Although its simplicity makes it easy to navigate, the visually impaired respondents found the Portal rather difficult to read, mostly due to the small font and blue and white colour scheme (which lacks sufficient contrast, and can be too glaring). This, combined with a lack of interest in the content, meant they had little interest in spending time navigating the Portal. Significant improvements would have to be made to the design to make the Portal more user-friendly for the visually impaired.

## 2. BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The Office of Rail Regulation's (ORR) Business Intelligence Team manages the National Rail Trends Portal, an online interface for ORR's database of data and statistics. The Portal contains information on safety, service satisfaction, rail usage, performance, network capability and assets and official statistics, amongst other things. While anybody can access the Portal and view pre-created reports, registration is currently required in order to create a personalised, ad-hoc report.

In September 2011, an online survey of users and stakeholders of the NRT Portal was conducted. The recommendations from this study included a need to make overall improvements to the 'user-friendliness' of the site, the signposting and dataset labelling and the search facility as well as enhancements to how datasets and reporting are treated. Recommendations were also made around improving user information relating to aspects such as timelines, methodology notes and the need to register in order to access information.

This feedback provided a starting point for re-design of the Portal. Draft re-designed mock-ups (or wireframes) were created, tested amongst stakeholders and existing users, and subsequently refined; research was then required to gauge the reactions to the wireframes of non-expert users of the system – i.e. the general public.

This feedback from the wider public, along with existing feedback from more specialist users and stakeholders, will be used by the Webteam to create a firm technical specification to brief ORR's external web developers.

The specific objectives for this research were to review specific aspects of the proposed improvements to the Portal, namely:

- The layout and signposting
- The ease of use and navigation
- The use of naming protocols across the site
- The clarity of language and terminology
- Response to the notifications and subscriptions features
- The use of web and accessibility standards

- The extent to which the re-design improves the user experience
- The extent to which the re-design feels personalised to registered users
- How each element described above can be improved and refined further
- The appropriateness of the Portal as a method for dissemination for rail data and statistics

### **3. METHOD AND SAMPLE**

#### **3.1 Methodology**

The brief stated that there was a requirement for a series of focus groups, and Research Works concurred that focus groups would provide a dynamic and creative environment in which respondents could share their ideas and debate and discuss potential areas of improvement. Each focus group comprised 6-9 people. This allowed for an initial plenary discussion, followed by individual mini 'break-out' groups comprising 2-3 respondents within each session. These mini-groups were tasked with reviewing the wireframes and comparing and contrasting them with the existing site. The group then came together as a whole to discuss their opinions of the new website. A full breakdown of the structure of the group sessions, as well as the tasks conducted by the mini-groups, can be found in the Appendix.

To ensure that the groups ran smoothly and the mini-groups executed the tasks required of them, and to provide any technical assistance that may be required, two moderators were present to facilitate each group discussion.

The groups were conducted either in Research Works' viewing studio in St Albans, or in hotel meeting rooms. Members of the ORR project team were present at each group discussion. Some sessions in St Albans were also streamed over the internet to ORR team members who were unable to attend in person. When streaming was not available for technical reasons, audio/visual recordings of each session were provided to ORR.

These groups were supplemented with a series of depth interviews with visually impaired respondents. Depth interviews were conducted with this audience to ensure that each individual interview was tailored to each individual respondent's needs. These interviews lasted for one hour and were conducted at the respondents' homes.

All respondents were pre-tasked with considering websites they particularly liked and disliked, in order to 'warm them up' to the subject of website design and development.

### 3.2 Sample Structure

Eight group discussions were conducted as follows:

Date	Group Profile	Location
24 <sup>th</sup> June	Males and Females, Aged 30-49, ABC1	St Albans
	Males and Females, Aged 50+, C2DE	
25 <sup>th</sup> June	Males and Females, Aged 18-29, C2DE*	Manchester
	Males and Females, Aged 50+, ABC1	
27 <sup>th</sup> June	Males and Females, Aged 15-17, BC1C2	St Albans
	Males and Females, Aged 30-49, C2DE	
1 <sup>st</sup> July	Males and Females, Aged 18-29, ABC1	Birmingham
4 <sup>th</sup> July	Males and Females, Aged 18-29, C2DE	St Albans

- \* Turnout at this group in Manchester was unsatisfactory (only 6 respondents) and the group was late starting and therefore cut short; as a result, one additional group was conducted in St Albans on 4<sup>th</sup> July.

Six face to face depth interviews with visually impaired respondents were conducted as follows:

Depth Profile	Location
Female, Severe Visual Impairment	London / Hertfordshire
Female, Mild Visual Impairment	
Female, Mild Visual Impairment	
Male, Mild Visual Impairment	
Male, Severe Visual Impairment	Manchester
Male, Moderate Visual Impairment	Birmingham



The following criteria were also applied to the sample:

- All respondents used the internet at least once a week (whether at home or at work)
- No respondents had previously used or registered with the NRT Portal
- All respondents were rail users, either for leisure, commuting or business (a mix of usage was achieved within each group)
- The sample included ethnic representation, although this was allowed to fall out naturally by location and setting, rather than by setting specific quotas.

All respondents were provided with a cash incentive for their participation.

In keeping with the MRS Code of Conduct, parental consent was obtained before interviewing any respondents under the age of 16.

## 4. MAIN FINDINGS

### 4.1 Usage of Rail Information and Statistics

All respondents sought information about rail travel on a regular basis. The information of most interest was limited to that directly relating to journeys, such as timetables and journey planners, prices, connections and planned engineering works or service disruptions.

Information about journeys was sourced from a number of sources: direct from the TOC; National Rail Enquiries; the Trainline; TFL Journey Planner; Red Spotted Hanky. Typically, this information was found via websites or mobile apps, with a handful of respondents across the sample stating that they would also ask in the station or phone for information (depending on personal channel preference).

There was no apparent appetite for data and statistics beyond these parameters. Respondents had never sought out such information, and when prompted, they struggled to envisage situations where they would require information other than that relating directly to journey logistics.

*"I just don't see how it could be useful...the only thing we use it [information] for is to help our journey run more smoothly" (15-17, BC1C2, St Albans)*

*"The only time you're going to look at rail information is if you want to know the time of the next train into town" (18-29, C2DE, Manchester)*

The possible exception to this is if they were to make complaints about punctuality, in which case they might wish to research a TOCs punctuality record.

*"I would find it useful because I've had cancellations a number of times and because I'm putting my claims through the company I work for I might want to use that evidence of why I had to take two days to do a trip that should be done in one"*  
*(50+, ABC1, Manchester)*

There was no real spontaneous awareness of sources of such statistical information other than from the TOCs directly; the majority of respondents claimed that if they could not find what they needed from the TOC, they would simply search via Google.

*"I wouldn't know where to look for that information; I'd just Google it"*  
(30-49, ABC1, St Albans)

*"I have no idea [where to look]. I wouldn't want to know anyway"*  
(50+, ABC1, Manchester)

Several potential sources of information were explored with respondents:

TOCs were the most familiar to them, and therefore the most likely first port of call if statistics were required. However there was some cynicism that the information presented may not always be entirely credible, because TOCs may be reluctant to report information about failings in their own performance.

While most respondents (with the exception of the teenagers) were aware of the Department for Transport, they did not have a particularly clear idea of DfT's remit or what information might be available from this source. It was envisaged that the data available might comprise policy information, investment and funding, safety, infrastructure and passenger numbers.

There was no awareness of Passenger Focus. Respondents envisaged that Passenger Focus would champion passenger rights or advise on complaints with regards to rail travel.

There was no awareness of ORR, with the exception of one or two respondents, who thought they'd heard the name, but knew nothing about the organisation. At the outset of the group, and prior to exploring the Portal, respondents imagined that ORR is the regulatory body responsible for railways and rail travel; that their remit would be to set the rules and regulate operation. It was also thought that ORR would provide data and statistics around safety standards, performance, passenger numbers and punctuality. It was assumed from the name and the crown in the logo that ORR

is a government department or public body; for this reason, the data provided would be considered independent, accurate and credible.

*"It is like Ofwat but for trains?" (50+, C2DE, St Albans)*

*"It's like a government body where you can make complaints or find out different information about different rail companies, I would have thought"*  
*(30-49, ABC1, St Albans)*

*"They might tell you who's been fined and who's been rewarded. Like the good, the bad and the ugly of trains" (18-29, C2DE, Birmingham)*

When asked to envisage a website that would offer rail data and statistics, respondents imagined that such a site would contain punctuality data, targets and performance against them and comparisons with previous years' data. They could see no real need or usage for such a site, given their lack of appetite for this kind of information. As a result, the concept was unappealing and of little interest. In addition, upon hearing 'statistics' and 'data', their immediate expectations were of something that would be boring and dull.

*"I'd think it would have to be something very specific you were looking for to go there because most people are wanting times...that wouldn't be covered by something like that" (15-17, BC1C2, St Albans)*

*"I think it would be boring, official...I don't think you can jazz up how many times the trains have been late" (18-29, C2DE, Birmingham)*

*"I'd expect it to be sort of mathematical and full of information that would make your mind boggle" (50+, ABC1, Manchester)*

## **4.2 Requirements from Websites**

Prior to attending the focus groups, respondents were pre-tasked with noting down websites that they did and did not like. This was explored in the groups before visiting the wireframes and current Portal. Although the specific websites that were liked and

disliked clearly differed according to personal preference, a clear set of criteria emerged with regards to the characteristics of a great website:

- ✓ Easy to navigate to the required information
- ✓ Intuitive – clear where to go for what information, no need to ‘think’ about the process
- ✓ Consistency of layout (e.g. menus / ‘anchor points’ on the same place on each page)
- ✓ Appropriate use of colours and imagery – not so much as to be overwhelming, but enough to provide interest, personality and break up the pages
- ✓ Not too text-heavy
- ✓ No pop-ups, adverts or flashing areas
- ✓ Ability to personalise the site, and ability to remember the user and their previous preferences
- ✓ Speedy to load pages
- ✓ Auto fill functions
- ✓ A prominent ‘contact us’ section with clear contact details
- ✓ Live chat / callback request functions to enable interactivity if required

### **4.3 Overall Evaluation of the New Portal**

#### **First Impressions**

Spontaneous impressions of the new Portal were mixed. Respondents generally stated that the Portal seemed easy to use, full of content, easy to read, clear, uncluttered and straightforward.

*“It seems quite user-friendly. Even if you didn’t know anything about the site, you could get on there and pull off a report relatively easily”*

*(50+, C2DE, St Albans)*

*“The job it is supposed to be doing, which is providing a lot of statistics; it does that job very well” (30-49, C2DE, St Albans)*

The vast majority of respondents immediately stated spontaneously that the new Portal was an improvement on the current site. The new site was thought immediately clearer and easier to navigate, and also more aesthetically pleasing, less cluttered and less wordy. Only one or two preferred the current Portal, claiming that the 'alphabetical list' approach to presenting the reports appealed to them.

*"There's no comparison. Obviously the new one is much better"*

*(30-49, C2DE, St Albans)*

*"The new one is a lot better than the old one. The old one looks really complicated and wordy. The new one is easier to get around"*

*(18-29, C2DE, Manchester)*

*"I like it a bit better than the old site, because the old site had too much on it"*

*(50+, ABC1, Manchester)*

*"The current site is too much. It all just merges into one; you'd really have to know what you were looking for. The new approach is laid out a bit better"* (30-49, ABC1, St Albans)

However, although the revised Portal represents a step forward, there is still much room for improvement. While it was recognised that the site is businesslike and deals with serious information, and therefore expectations would never be for a highly stylised approach, the appearance and design of the new Portal were widely criticised. Respondents consistently described it as boring, official, dry, bland, staid, formal, flat, dull, cluttered, functional, serious, basic and static.

*"It's quite serious, but then I'd expect it to be serious because of the nature of the content...you can't go too jazzy, you're not going to expect funny pictures when you're trying to get serious information"* (30-49, ABC1, St Albans)

*"It looks a bit staid, but if you wanted to find something, I think you probably could"* (30-49, ABC1, St Albans)

*"It's a bit bland...it's just 'here it is'. But that's in line with what you'd expect"  
(50+, C2DE, St Albans)*

*"It doesn't look good, but it does the job" (18-29, Birmingham, C2DE)*

In addition, there was an immediate conclusion that the content and information provided in the Portal was not, and never would be, for them. The target audience was perceived as those who work in the rail industry, journalists, academics and 'trainspotters'.

*"Is this designed for the average person to use? Or is it for trainspotters? Because it's definitely not for the general public" (30-49, ABC1, St Albans)*

*"Without being horrible, not many people would want to know the things that are on this website" (30-49, ABC1, St Albans)*

*"You'd have to be going for something specific. In the unlikely event you were just surfing around and you saw that website, you'd get straight off"  
(50+, ABC1, Manchester)*

*"It seems more of a website for train operators and people who work for a train operator" (18-29, C2DE, Manchester)*

### **Is the Portal the most appropriate means of dissemination?**

Respondents were unanimous in their agreement that an online channel was the best possible way of disseminating this information due to the high volume and complexity of the data, and they could not see a more suitable alternative.

They did not differentiate between a Portal and a website.

### **Aesthetics, Design and Navigation**

Navigation was spontaneously mentioned as being easy and user-friendly. The omnipresent navigation tabs along the top of the site and links to Reports and Data on the left side were welcomed; these help the user greatly with navigation and make it very difficult to get 'lost' in the site.

*"The top banner is good...the tabs remain with you. I liked the tabs along the top"*  
*(15-17, BC1C2, St Albans)*

While the 'Search' box was welcomed, several respondents commented that this should be fixed in the top right hand corner of the site; this is considered the 'standard' location for the search function, and where it is generally expected to be found; therefore, some respondents miss it in its current location on the left hand side.

The Portal was also considered clear and easy to read due to the simplistic, uncluttered design. However, this perhaps overly simplistic design is also at the root of most of the negative perceptions of the Portal.

**And what don't you like about it?**

*It is very plain*

*font, colour scheme, static*

*Boring, no pictures, don't like font.*

*(Source: Respondent Worksheets)*

Several issues were identified with the overall aesthetics and design of the Portal. While addressing these issues might not ultimately overcome the barrier around the perceived relevance of the content, it may help to engage a general public audience more, and encourage them to spend more time exploring the site. The key issues raised by respondents were as follows:

- The Portal was criticised for being boring, dull and uninspiring. This was driven by the uniformity of the colours across the pages, the predominantly white background, and a lack of imagery. The font was also considered boring and too small and compact. The prevalence of blue and white and the consistency of the font type and size create an impression of a site which is flat and static, rather than interactive and dynamic – this does not draw the visitor into the site.



*"If it was more colourful, you would be more interested to go on and see what it is about. You'd be more engaged when you were on it"*

*(18-29, C2DE, Birmingham)*

*"It's like they're going out of their way to be as bland as possible"*

*(30-49, C2DE, St Albans)*

*"You know how sometimes you meet a person and they talk in a really boring, monotone voice? This is the website equivalent of that"*

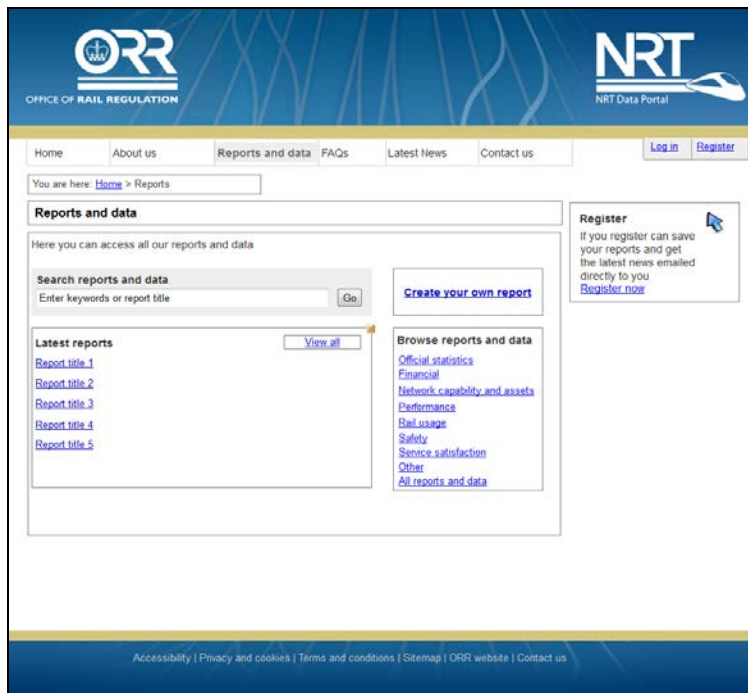
*(Depth, 18-29, London)*

*"It seemed very dry. It needs images and things" (30-49, ABC1, St Albans)*

*"I thought the whole thing could be brighter...introduce another colour"*

*(50+, C2DE, St Albans)*

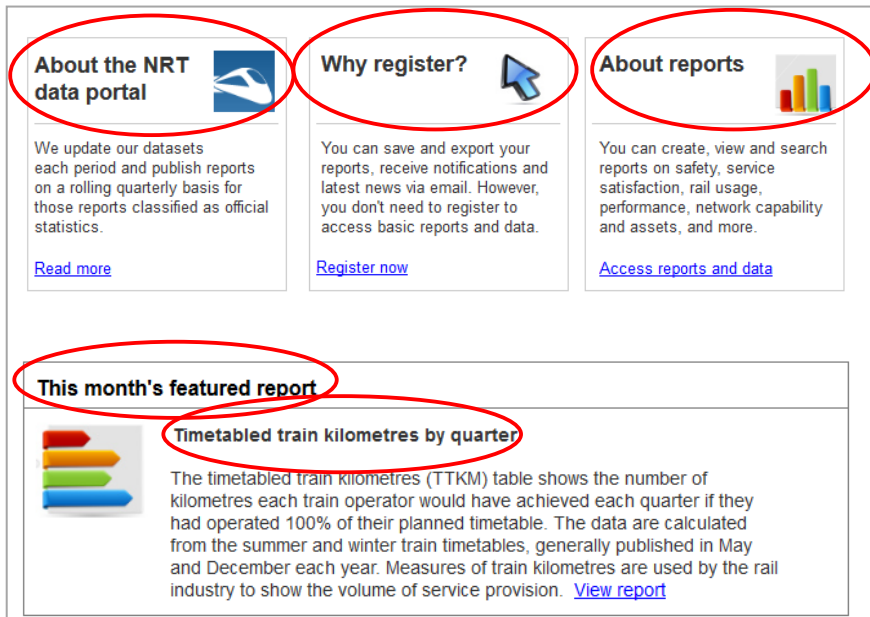
- While respondents expect websites to provide them with clear anchor points to guide them through the site (e.g. menu bars in a consistent location), and the Portal does deliver in this respect, it was thought to look a little too uniform from page to page. This does not create an interesting user experience, and enhances the sense that the site is flat and one-dimensional.
- There is a prevalence of white space which makes the site appear sparse and incomplete, and fails to engage the viewer. This is particularly noticeable on the Reports and Data homepage, as shown below:



- The number of images on the Portal is minimal; this is a strong criticism. Respondents expect websites to provide them with some sort of visual stimulation; images are the logical way to provide this interest. The images that are present are criticised for being unclear, boring (sticking largely to the blue and white theme), 'clip art-like' (and therefore unprofessional) and have no functionality (there is a natural assumption and expectation that images are also hyperlinks).
- The lack of design features such as graphics, flash text, rounded or shaped boxes and little use of colour creates an 'amateurish' and unsophisticated impression, and is reminiscent of early websites, before such features were available. The Portal does not feel 'designed' by web professionals.

*"It looks old, like it was made in the 90s. You wouldn't think it was a professional, well-established website, not done like that. It looks like a PowerPoint slide"*  
*(18-29, C2DE, Birmingham)*

- There are too many 'false' hyperlinks on the site – in other words, text or boxes where respondents naturally assume they can click for further information, but cannot. Examples of such links are highlighted below:



In addition, the proportion of unused, blank space on the right hand side of the screen appears excessive. Respondents question why all this space has not been used to incorporate further design features such as images into the Portal. This perceived 'wasted space' also leads to a need for frequent scrolling, which is considered annoying.



In summary, the current perceived lack of attention to design and aesthetics contributes to respondents' belief that the site is purely functional, a destination tool for those who have a specific interest in rail data and statistics, and not a site that would be browsed for interest, pleasure or on an ad-hoc basis.

Some differences did emerge in attitudes towards the Portal across the various focus groups. Older respondents (aged 50+) seemed less concerned overall with the aesthetics of the Portal. While they agreed with other respondents that the site was plain and uninteresting, this was less off-putting to them than it was to younger respondents (under 30 years in particular). This is perhaps because younger respondents have higher expectations of being 'entertained' by websites, and are more familiar with the technology that can be used to enhance websites.

Similarly, respondents with office-based or professional jobs which required them to source or research data in their own roles were a little more accepting of the site than those who never used such tools. These professional workers often drew comparisons with data-generating or information sites that they use, and claimed that these sites, like the Portal, tend to offer little of visual interest; however, this was not necessarily considered a negative, as the primary aim of the user is to find the required information as quickly as possible. The new Portal was regarded in the same light – in other words, the uninspiring appearance was often traded off as being of secondary importance against the ease of navigation. Some such respondents, however, were more critical of the Portal. They have more purchase on business world, in which they believe the Portal belongs, and as such some have higher expectations and are less forgiving of what they perceive as a lack of effort in presentation.

Finally, those from the lower socio-economic grades appeared less comfortable with the Portal overall. The content overwhelmed them and for some, was difficult to interpret, leading them to quickly disengage from the site.

### **Language and Terminology**

While there were some acronyms and terms that respondents did not understand, it was generally felt that the Portal was fairly comprehensible in terms of language and terminology. Most recognised that the key users of the site would certainly be familiar with the acronyms and terminology used, and that they would require no further

explanation; however, for the general public user, a 'hover button' or glossary of terms could potentially help to facilitate understanding.

#### **4.4 The Homepage**

Clearly, the Homepage is of significant importance in drawing in visitors to the site. Given the inherent lack of interest in the data contained within the Portal, the Homepage must work hard to capture the visitor's attention. Currently, the Homepage currently works well in drawing respondents' eyes to the three central boxes; however, interest quickly wanes when the text in the boxes as well as elsewhere on the page does not capture their attention. Respondents want these boxes to work harder to draw them in, and 'sell' the Portal to them.

*"It's not selling why you'd be interested in the content"  
(30-49, ABC1, St Albans)*

It should be made clear to them on the Homepage:

- Not only what the Portal is for, but what they, as individuals can get out of using it:
  - How can they use it? What can they do with the data?
  - Perhaps illustrated with examples
- Why they should be interested: Respondents claim that grabbing their attention with brief facts and figures, 'News Headlines' (in a journalistic style) or 'Did You Know...' statements may intrigue them and make the site seem more 'public-friendly', e.g.
  - *"Did you know that... 141,000 passengers arrive in London Bridge each morning between 7 and 9am?"*
  - *"Did you know that... UK passengers travelled 19 billion km by train last year?"*
- The benefits of registering – how will registering enhance their experience

*"They need to give you some information to entice you in, like who was the safest this month" (30-49, C2DE, St Albans)*

The Homepage must also make better use of images and graphics as described earlier; at the very least, the imagery that currently exists should become more functional i.e. respondents expected to be able to click on the train, the arrow or the coloured bar chart, or the bold font next to them, to be taken to the relevant section.

There is also an expectation that the Latest News could be effective in engaging respondents if presented on the Homepage; respondents are familiar with this approach from other websites, and in addition, this would be likely to catch their eye and draw them into the site, if presented in an interesting way (see Section 4.5 below).

#### **4.5 Latest News**

The presence of a Latest News section is welcome, and its addition is viewed as a positive improvement on the current Portal.

*"It's always good to keep updated. Most sites have a latest news page"  
(18-29, C2DE, Birmingham)*

Respondents are naturally drawn here to try to ascertain what the Portal is for and who it is aimed at.

On reaching the page, their eyes are immediately drawn to the coloured bar chart in the absence of any other colour or visual interest. This can result in some disappointment on reaching the reports, as some believe that the reports will be presented in a colourful, chart style as per the graphic.

The 'Next Scheduled Report' is also considered a useful area; however, it was thought that a fuller explanation of what the report contains (in a similar way to the description provided under 'This month's featured report') would be more engaging.

Information about Newsletters was considered important, and should be given a more prominent position, either on Latest News or even on the Home Page; those who did not scroll down to the bottom of the page missed this altogether. Newsletters are generally appealing, as they offer 'bite-sized chunks' of information, an approach which may be more palatable to the general public.

*"I would have looked at that [newsletter] if I'd seen it"*

*(18-29, C2DE, Birmingham)*

*"A newsletter might have a more general appeal. Some people might want to digest more general snippets of information as opposed to a full report"*

*(30-49, ABC1, St Albans)*

*"The newsletter should be a bit more upfront – maybe on the home page?"*

*(15-17, BC1C2, St Albans)*

In summary, the Latest News page is thought to lack impact, and could be developed much further in order to engage the non-expert user.

*"I expected something completely different to what they displayed. Latest news, you expect a big deal. The latest news of any website is a big deal. You can judge the website by the latest news. This just isn't enough. Is that all they do?"*

*(30-49, C2DE, St Albans)*

**And what don't you like about it?**

*not enough news, not news  
I-expected*

*(Source: Respondent Worksheets)*

#### **4.6 Reports and Data**

As described above, the Reports and Data homepage was considered particularly bland and unengaging, due to the high degree of white space.

*"The page was a bit empty. There wasn't much on it"*

*(18-29, C2DE, Birmingham)*

However, the boxed and sectioned layout was considered more user-friendly than the long lists displayed on the current version. The prominence of the latest reports, and the search box, were also welcome improvements.

*“On the other one [current site] when we clicked on Reports and Data it just came up with a load of reports and the page went down and down and down, and on the new one it’s just like a few bullet points and it’s all sectioned off so that’s better”*

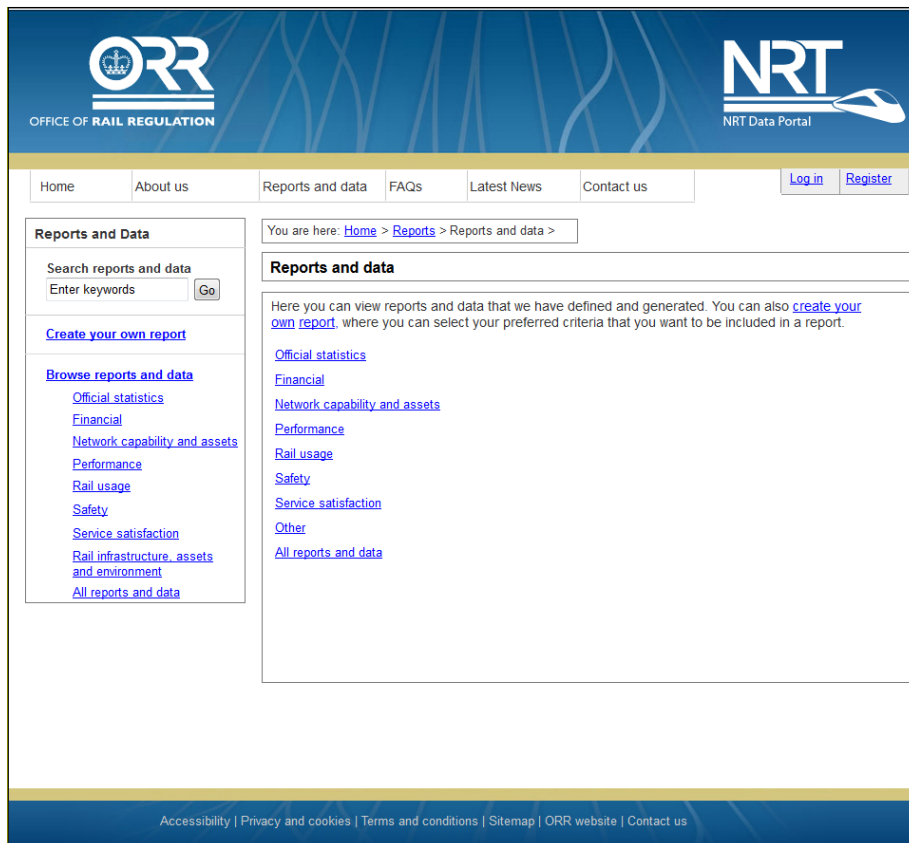
*(18-29, C2DE, Manchester)*

It was thought that the page would benefit from some more design elements to draw in the viewer (such as the use of colour or different fonts as described throughout). In addition, a short summary of the content of each report listed under ‘latest reports’ would be considered useful; it would highlight what the report is about, as well as encouraging the visitor to look further. This could be done via a short summary below each heading or via a hover function when the report title was moused over.

### **Browse Reports and Data**

There was some confusion over the apparent repetition of the Reports and Data menus on this page – the menu is shown on the left, and also in the centre of the screen, leading to an unfinished and unprofessional feel.





The categorisation of the reports was liked; however, it would be considered useful to show a short synopsis of what was covered in each category. To the lay user, it is not always immediately apparent what is contained within each category, therefore underpinning the perception that the Portal is primarily for those who are knowledgeable of the rail industry. For example, a member of the general public may not understand what is covered by 'Network capability and assets', or how this differs from 'Rail infrastructure, assets and environment'.

*"Maybe they could enlarge a bit on what sort of content is within the reports so you can see if any take your fancy" (50+, C2DE, St Albans)*

The heading 'Official Statistics' also caused some confusion, as respondents expected that all statistics contained within the site would be 'official' – therefore, they were confused as to why one category in particular had been labelled in this way.

Once a particular category was selected, the way the reports were laid out was thought to be a significant improvement on the current Portal.

*"The lists are broken down so that is easier to look at and it's shorter which again is easier" (50+, ABC1, Manchester)*

*"I prefer the new site....the old one is just like a list that goes on forever. It's a bit like a telephone directory; useful if you want to go through it, but a slog"*  
*(50+, ABC1, Manchester)*

It was also thought that engagement with this area of the Portal could be improved by suggesting reports of interest, or highlighting the most popular or most viewed reports, so the visitor can see what others have been interested in.

*"They could make it more interactive so it grabs you a bit more....maybe some explanations of how you might use it – like 'did you see this?' or 'have you tried this?'" (18-29, C2DE, Birmingham)*

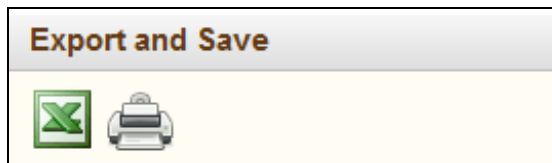
### **Create Your Own Report**

While respondents did not feel that the ability to create their own reports held much relevance to them personally, they recognised this as an extremely important feature for the 'professional' user.

The drop-down menu approach is familiar from other websites and seems like a practical way of dealing with the information, and the page seemed clearly laid out and user-friendly. The simple addition of the blue background meant that the page was less heavily criticised for its layout and appearance than other pages.

The 'Print / PDF / Excel / CSV' function was thought extremely important once the report had been generated; this is what makes it into a truly useful tool. Several respondents, however, had not noticed this function bar; they claimed that the icons used on the current site were more familiar, standard and eye-catching, and would help to draw their eye to this functionality.

*"I think if it had a printer symbol, or an email symbol, that would be better. The words just merge into the background" (30-49, ABC1, St Albans)*



However, there was some confusion around the Create Your Own Report function. Firstly, some claimed that they would find it difficult to create a report as a lay user, because their unfamiliarity with the rail industry would make it difficult to choose parameters for the report. Secondly, a minority of respondents were confused by the label 'create your own report'. To them, this implied that they would be required to enter raw data or information themselves; this was not something they were interested in doing. To them, labelling the section 'Build', 'Filter' or simply 'Search' would feel more appropriate and representative of the function.

#### **4.7 Registering, Logging In and My Account**

##### **Registering and logging in**

Although respondents did not register during the focus group sessions, and were able to log in without entering any details, the registration and log in process appeared simple and straightforward.

The fact that registration is not required to access reports and data on the new site is thought to be a significant improvement on the current site - this makes the site much more accessible and user friendly to the visitor.

*"You don't have to give them all your details; you can create a report just out of interest" (18-29, C2DE, Manchester)*

Most claimed that they would personally be put off by the need to register before any data can be accessed, particularly if they were only browsing, although they recognised that if they were visiting the site, it would probably be in a professional capacity, in which case logging in and creating an account would seem less burdensome, because they would be using the site frequently and for a specific purpose.

*"It would put me off to have to log in if I just wanted to check something on this site, because it's likely it would be a one-off. However, as a regular user I can see the benefits of having an account and tailoring it to your needs" (50+, ABC1, Manchester)*

A key objection to registering with websites is that respondents believe this will trigger an avalanche of spam and junk mail; it was not envisaged that this would be the case with an official site such as the NRT Portal.

It was not spontaneously noticed by most respondents that registration and log-in was required in order to save reports once they had been created – there is perhaps scope to highlight this more prominently. Once demonstrated to them, this feature was welcomed. Those who were less keen on registering with the site did not see the subsequent inability to save reports as a barrier, as reports can still be exported into Excel and saved if required.

Once logged in, the home page that appears was positively received. It was thought helpful to have all one's previously saved reports in one place, although again, the page itself was thought somewhat bland and uninteresting in its design.

*"I like 'welcome back' – it's friendly" (30-49, C2DE, St Albans)*

*"It's useful to have everything you've looked at and saved listed...especially if you wanted to check a report on a regular basis, you wouldn't have to look for it"*  
*(18-29, C2DE, Birmingham)*

*"I thought it was good that you could see your previous reports. If it's something you're interested in on a regular basis, you could build them all up over time"*  
*(30-49, ABC1, St Albans)*

## **My Account**

The ability to manage subscriptions and subscribe to newsletters and report alerts was welcomed, and seen as a significant improvement on the current site. The ability to tailor, particularly when there is potentially a wide range of data available, is considered useful and user-friendly.

*"I like that 'my account' bit and that you can manage your subscriptions"*

(30-49, C2DE, St Albans)

*"It's good that you can update your preferences" (50+, C2DE, St Albans)*

One or two respondents were put off by the term 'subscriptions', assuming this would mean a service they would have to pay for; as such, they had not clicked on the Subscriptions tab.

#### **4.8 Visually Impaired Respondents**

##### **Context**

The respondents in the sample relied on a variety of means to help them read and navigate websites, depending on the severity of their impairments:

- Those with the most severe impairments relied on specialist equipment or software to help them while online. This included screen-reading software<sup>1</sup> used with headphones, 56" TV screens (rather than standard monitors) and glare filters (to eliminate bright white and blue light, which can be painful to look at). For these respondents, surfing unfamiliar websites is often time consuming, laborious and frustrating; therefore, unless a particular site is considered relatively easy to use, or the content is of high importance, the internet is often avoided in favour of alternative methods (e.g. telephone).
- Those with more moderate impairments also relied on 56" TV screens, used in conjunction with magnifying glasses held in close proximity to the screen.
- Those with less severe impairments tend to modify their PCs and laptops by enlarging the font to the maximum size, changing the colour schemes on their PCs to avoid colours they found difficult to look at, or through the use of iPads, where the screen can easily be expanded or magnified. These respondents also

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<sup>1</sup> A screen reader is a software application that attempts to identify and interpret what is being displayed on the screen. This interpretation is then re-presented to the user with text-to-speech, sound icons, or a Braille output device. Screen readers are a form of assistive technology (AT) potentially useful to people who are blind, visually impaired, illiterate or learning disabled, often in combination with other AT, such as screen magnifiers (*Wikipedia*)

stated that apps, when available, are generally preferable, as by their nature they tend to be more simplistic than full-content websites.

### **Reactions to the NRT Portal**

The views of the visually impaired respondents were in keeping with those of the respondents in the focus groups with regards to the overall relevance, appeal and content of the site.

It should be noted that the requirements of visually impaired respondents vary depending on the severity and individual nature of their impairments; however, some common themes emerged across the sample:

With regards to the navigation, design and styling, the simplicity of the Portal was beneficial to visually impaired respondents and appeared to lend itself well to navigation on a very large screen.

*"It's a basic layout – that's good for me, because all the main links are in tabs at the top, I can easily find them" (Moderate Impairment, Birmingham)*

*"It's easy to navigate on a large screen, and the key information is in the centre which is helpful from a site like this" (Severe Impairment, Manchester)*

The predominance of blue and white was not particularly easy to manage, as the contrast between these colours is not thought easy to read. The amount of blue and white was somewhat overwhelming, and caused some to give up on the site as it became too tiring or even painful to read. There was a general statement that light fonts on darker backgrounds are usually easier to manage, although this of course depends on the individual.

Those with the most severe impairments have the least interest in the aesthetics of sites – their main concern is with the functionality and ease of reading. The respondent who relied entirely on her screen-reading software was unable to view the site at all. Neither the wireframe or the existing site were recognised by her software; she was unable to make out anything other than the odd word without it.

Registering and logging in is a potential barrier unless absolutely necessary, as all non-essential activity is usually curtailed; processes such as this can take a visually impaired person a long time and therefore put them off using a site.

Overall, given the predominantly blue and white colour scheme, and small fonts, the Portal was not overly user friendly for those with visual impairments. This, combined with the low level of interest in the content, meant that respondents were not predisposed to spending much time trying to decode the content of the site.

## 5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- While respondents are interested in information relating to timetables, prices and journey planning, there is little appetite or envisaged use for data or statistics around safety, service satisfaction, performance, network capability and assets or official statistics, such as the kind provided by ORR's NRT Portal. The detailed provision of this data, combined with the presence of industry terminology and acronyms, indicates to respondents that the Portal is a source of information for those who work in the rail industry, academics or journalists with a special interest in this sector. This is a significant barrier to usage of the Portal – members of the public simply do not perceive that it is for them.
- There are several aspects of the Portal that are thought to work well. It is deemed easy to navigate (even for the first-time user) and therefore easy to use, content-rich, easy to read, clear and uncluttered. Furthermore, it is considered to offer significant improvements on the existing Portal in all of these areas.
- However, there is still room for significant improvement. The Portal is consistently described as boring, bland, dull and dry (both in content and design); this, combined with the immediate lack of interest in the content, means that the Portal must work hard to engage any general public visitors who may reach it.
- Despite this, respondents spontaneously state their recognition that a highly data-driven Portal such as this is primarily a functional destination site, rather than one for 'leisure browsing', and as such the appearance is not of the highest significance; the ease of navigation and the content are of greater importance, and these currently work well. However, there are elements which, if improved, may potentially contribute to an overall more interesting user experience, without necessarily detracting from the overall purpose of the Portal.
- Improvements must focus on two key areas. Firstly, the appearance of the Portal, which could be made more interesting and appealing to the general public user. Secondly, the tone of the Portal could be adjusted to speak more directly to the non-expert user. While these amendments may never lead to full engagement



with general public audiences, it is likely that they will enhance the user experience should visitors reach the Portal.

- Our recommendations for how these issues can be addressed through specific improvements are detailed below:
  - Make greater use of colour, varied fonts, images, diagrams and flash elements on the site. This would make the Portal appear more visually interesting, engaging and modern, and mitigate the current sense that design elements have been overlooked in favour of content (thus propagating the perception that the site is for expert, industry users and not the general public).
  - Minimise the amount of blank, white space on the site. This would help to make the Portal feel more 'designed' and less functional.
  - Moving the Search function to the top right hand corner would be more familiar and recognisable, again conveying that the Portal is for general use and not a specialist function.
  - Make better use of hyperlinks – ensure respondents can click on bold font, boxes, images or diagrams to go to the relevant pages. This is expected as standard nowadays, would make the site feel more designed and stylish, rather than flat, functional and one-dimensional, and would enhance navigation further.
  - Consider expanding the pages so they fill the entire screen. Currently, the pages do not fill the entire screen; this leads to excessive scrolling, and creates an empty visual experience, again signalling a lack of professionalism and design.
  - The Homepage could be more effective in maximising first impressions. The use of colour, images and graphics is particularly important here in order to attract the visitor's attention. Additionally, the introductory text must make clear to visitors:

- What the Portal is for, how to use it, and what they can get out of using it
  - Why they should be interested in the content
  - The benefits of registering and how it would enhance their experience
- The Latest News page is often one of the main pages visited when initially surfing the site – respondents go to this page to try to establish what the site is about and how it might be relevant to them. Currently, it does not sufficiently meet their needs and capture or hold their attention. The Latest News page could be developed further to be more ‘newsy’ by providing interesting facts and figures or updates about rail-related matter which the general public could relate to (e.g. latest updates on HS2). The page could be more attention-grabbling through the use of moving headlines or a ‘ticker tape’ approach. The Newsletter could also be given more prominence, as it provides an easily digestible level of information which may appeal to the general public; it is currently lost at the bottom of the page.
  - Promoting and developing the Latest News on the Homepage may also help to engage respondents.
  - Offering suggested reports of interest based on previous search history, highlighting ‘hot topics’ or listing the ‘most viewed’ reports would encourage the user to interact more with the site; such features provide a more human face, and would suggest to the visitor that ORR wishes them to make the most of the site. Currently, the Portal appears very one dimensional and aimed solely at those who know exactly what they are looking for – it is not thought to be aimed at casual browsers.
  - Short summaries, synopses or ‘hover over’ explanations of the content of the wider categories and individual reports in Reports and Data would potentially capture the interest of the general public user. Currently, some of the individual category headings and many of the individual report titles are fairly meaningless to the layman; providing a short explanation of what is contained within may prove useful.

- Similarly, explanations of what reports are saying would help the lay user – short interpretations of the reports and explanations of why shifts in data might have occurred would help the general public visitor to understand, and therefore interact and engage with, the data.
- The Print / PDF / Excel / CSV function was thought extremely important, however on the new Portal, the text merges somewhat into the background. The use of symbols or icons would be more eye catching, familiar and user-friendly, thus enhancing the usability of the data.
- Although its simplicity makes it easy to navigate, the visually impaired respondents found the Portal rather difficult to read, mostly due to the small font and blue and white colour scheme (which lacks sufficient contrast, and can be too glaring). This, combined with a lack of interest in the content, meant they had little interest in spending time navigating the Portal. Significant improvements would have to be made to the design to make the Portal more user-friendly for the visually impaired:
  - The site must make less use of blue and white colour schemes
  - Icons to increase the size of the font would be useful
  - The site must be compatible with screen-reading software to enable the most severely impaired visitors to interpret the content of the site

**APPENDICES:**  
**RESPONDENT PRE-TASKS**  
**TOPIC GUIDES**  
**RESPONDENT WORKSHEETS**

## **APPENDIX A – PRE-TASK EXERCISES**

### **The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) Website Development Research**

Dear Respondent,

Thank you for agreeing to take part in our survey about some new developments that are being made to part of the Office of Rail Regulation's website.

When we meet, we will be discussing the development of their website, and what makes for a good or bad website. So, before you come along to the group, we'd like you to undertake a simple exercise for us. This is just to give us some food for thought when we meet up to talk to you!

We'd like you think about websites you particularly like, and websites you don't like, and why. Please try to think about not just the content, but the ease of finding your way around these sites, their layout and design, and how easy they are to use.

Please can you write your thoughts on the following page, and bring this along to our discussion. We've put an example so you know the kind of information we're looking for.

Many thanks, and we look forward to meeting you!

**Stephanie Carnachan**

Project Director

<b>Websites I like</b>	<b>Why I like them</b>
<i>Example: ABC.co.uk</i>	<i>Clear and easy to read; nice colours; lots of photos; interactive</i>

<b>Websites I don't like</b>	<b>Why I don't like them</b>
<i>Example: XYZ.co.uk</i>	<i>Too cluttered; dark colours; too many pages to click on</i>

## **APPENDIX B – TOPIC GUIDE – GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

### **OFFICE OF RAIL REGULATION - DATA PORTAL ENHANCEMENTS RESEARCH TOPIC GUIDE – 2 HOUR GROUPS FINAL VERSION**

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#### **BEGINNING AS A WHOLE GROUP TOGETHER:**

##### **1. Introductions and Explanations: (5 mins)**

- Introduce self and Research Works Limited, an independent research agency
- The purpose of the session is to get your opinions on some developments ORR have made to part of their website; explain no right or wrong answers, just interested in their views
- Explain confidentiality (MRS Code of Conduct), audio and video recording / web-streaming and observers

##### **2. Respondent Introductions (10 mins)**

- Name, age, occupation, family situation
- Please describe your typical rail journeys – why / where / when / who with etc.

##### **3. Usage of Rail Information and Statistics (10 mins)**

- Where would you go if you wanted to find out about rail data or statistics? (*write on flipchart*)
- How would you access this information? (e.g. online v other method?) Why?
- What kind of information would be of interest, and why?
- Has anyone ever accessed information about rail statistics / data?
  - If yes: Please describe the situation – what were you looking for, where did you go, ease of finding etc.
  - If no: in what circumstances can you envisage seeking such information?
- If you were to look for such information online, where would you go?
- What would you ideally expect from a website which would provide such information?
  - Probe in depth around: content, style, personalisation, ease of navigation
  - =

##### **4. Providers of Rail Information and Statistics (10 mins)**

**Referring back to the organisation(s) they would go to if they wanted to find out about rail data or statistics:**

- For each mentioned: why would you choose that source? What would you expect to find there?
- If not already mentioned, probe (*using showcards*):

- Individual Train Operating Companies (e.g. First Capital Connect, East Midlands Trains, Northern Rail etc.)
- The Office of Rail Regulation
- Passenger Focus
- Department for Transport
- Any others?

- For each of the above, ask:
  - Are you aware of this organisation?
  - What information do you think they would provide?
  - How would you access information from them? (online etc)
  - Benefits / disadvantages of sourcing information from this source?
  - Perceptions around accuracy, credibility and trustworthiness, and why?
- Overall, which would you be most likely to use, and why?

**5. Surfing the Wireframes (25 mins)**

**MODERATOR TO EXPLAIN THE MINI GROUP ACTIVITY IN DETAIL – THAT RESPONDENTS WILL NOW BE SPLIT INTO SMALL GROUPS SO THEY CAN VIEW A LIVE WEBSITE WHICH IS CURRENTLY UNDER DEVELOPMENT. THEY WILL BE ASKED TO WORK THROUGH THE WORKSHEET PROVIDED AND NOTE DOWN THEIR THOUGHTS AS THEY GO ALONG. MODERATOR TO ENSURE RESPONDENTS UNDERSTAND THAT THE WEBPAGES THEY ARE ABOUT TO VIEW ARE UNDER DEVELOPMENT AND NOT THE FINISHED ARTICLE; THERE IS NOT FULL FUNCTIONALITY AT THIS STAGE AND MOST OF THE LINKS ARE NOT LIVE. RESPONDENTS SHOULD BEAR THIS IN MIND WHILE EXPLORING THE PAGES.**



**EACH RESPONDENT WILL THEN BE HANDED A WORKSHEET. THE MODERATOR WILL TALK THEM THROUGH EXACTLY WHAT IS REQUIRED, USING THE WORKSHEET AS A PROMPT. (SEE SEPARATE DOCUMENT)**

**RESPONDENTS WILL THEN BE SPLIT BY THE MODERATOR INTO MINI GROUPS OF 2 OR 3. EACH MINI GROUP WILL BE PROVIDED WITH A LAPTOP.**

**RESPONDENTS WILL UNDERTAKE THE TASK. THROUGHOUT, THE MODERATOR AND SUPPORT MODERATOR WILL CIRCULATE THE ROOM, ENSURING THAT RESPONDENTS ARE CLEAR ABOUT THE TASK IN HAND, THAT THEY ARE ALL PARTICIPATING IN THE TASK, AND ANSWERING ANY QUESTIONS THEY MAY HAVE.**

**6. Evaluation of the Wireframes (45 mins)**

**RESPONDENTS TO RECONVENE AS A WHOLE GROUP WITH THEIR WORKSHEETS. MODERATOR WILL PRESENT THE WIREFRAME ON AN OVERHEAD PROJECTOR SO ALL RESPONDENTS CAN VIEW SIMULTANEOUSLY:**

- What were your first impressions when you looked at the website?
- What words would you use to describe it?
- What caught your eye / what areas were you drawn to, and why?
- What did you particularly like about the site? Why?
- And what didn't you like? Why?
- Who do you think this was aimed at? Who would be using a site like this?
- How relevant does it feel to you as individuals? Why / why not?
- Probe specifically around (asking respondents to illustrate their comments with examples):
  - Content – relevance, usefulness
  - Layout / design, look and feel

- Ease of navigation
- Use of language and terminology – how clear was it to understand?
- Tone
- Do you think you would use a site like this? Why / why not?
- What would you use it for?
- Overall, how does the new site compare to the existing site?
- What is better about the new site? (probe in depth)
- What is better about the existing site? (probe in depth)
- How appropriate is a website like this for providing information about rail statistics? Why do you say that?
- Are there better alternatives for disseminating rail statistics? (e.g. a dedicated website, via email etc.)
  - For each: why would this be better / worse than the portal?
  - Would you be more likely to use the data if it was delivered in this way?

**Moderator: I'd now like to talk through the tasks you completed in your mini-groups (Moderator to show the relevant pages on projector while discussing)**

- ❖ Latest News (*new feature – not on current site*)
- ❖ Reports and Data – not logged in (*Browse Reports and Data on current site*)
- ❖ Login and Register (*Login and Register on current site*)
- ❖ My Account
- ❖ Creating Reports (*Report Wizard on current site*)

- For each area, probe in depth around: (*these questions will be asked of each page, with some relevant supplementary questions as appropriate, outlined below*):
  - Likes and dislikes
  - Content – relevance, usefulness to you
  - Specific features available
  - Layout / design, look and feel
  - Ease of use / navigation
  - Use of language and terminology – how clear was it to understand?
  - Tone

- Would you use this page? What would you use this page for?
- Improvements (probe in depth)
  - o Moderator: write on post-its for later use
- Comparison with existing page (where applicable)
  - o Is the new page an improvement? Why / why not?
  - o What makes it better / worse than the current page?
- For 'Reports and Data' specifically:
  - What were the key differences between the two sites?
  - Which did you prefer?

*(If not already mentioned, highlight to respondents that the new site enables the user to create reports without logging in, and the old site does not)*

  - Which approach do they prefer and why?
- For 'Login and Register' specifically:
  - Perceptions of what's available once logged in – how is this different to not being logged in? Which do you prefer and why?
  - What are the benefits of being logged in? (Probe re personalised features e.g. ability to save reports, subscribe to newsletters, alerts to data updates) – are these features of interest?
  - How would the ability to log in and personalise your account influence your likelihood to use the site? Why do you say that?
  - How do you feel about registering / logging in to access or save personalised reports you have created? Why?
  - Is this something you'd be likely to do? Why / why not?
- For 'My Account' specifically:
  - How useful is it to be able to manage your subscriptions? (choose category updates, set up alerts for saved reports etc). Why?
- For 'Create Your Own Reports' specifically:
  - How easy or difficult was this to do on the new site?
  - How did this compare to creating a report on the existing site?
  - What did you prefer, and why?

## **7. Improvements to the Portal (10 mins)**

- Overall, what are the key improvements you would suggest to the new pages?
- For each improvement suggested ask:

- Why is that important?
  - How would that improve the portal / the experience of using the portal
- Using the post-its gathered in previous section, ask respondents to work as a group to sort these into categories:
  - Must definitely improve these aspects (then probe why)
  - Would be nice to improve these aspects (then probe why)
  - Not that important to improve these aspects (then probe why)

**8. Summing Up (5 mins)**

- Key likes and dislikes of the new portal?
- Likelihood of using the NRT portal?
- What is the single, most important improvements that could be made?
- If you worked at ORR and were responsible for developing this portal, what would be the **one key thing** you would focus on, and why?

**THANK RESPONDENTS AND CLOSE**

## **APPENDIX C – TOPIC GUIDE – GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

### **OFFICE OF RAIL REGULATION - DATA PORTAL ENHANCEMENTS RESEARCH TOPIC GUIDE – 1 HOUR DEPTHS FINAL VERSION**

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#### **1. Introductions and Explanations: (5 mins)**

- Introduce self and Research Works Limited, an independent research agency
- The purpose of the session is to get your opinions on some developments ORR have made to part of their website; explain no right or wrong answers, just interested in their views
- Explain confidentiality (MRS Code of Conduct), audio and video recording

#### **2. Usage of Rail Information and Statistics (5 mins)**

- Where would you go if you wanted to find out about rail data or statistics? (*write on flipchart*)
- How would you access this information? (e.g. online v other method?) Why?
- What kind of information about rail data or statistics would be of interest, and why?
- Have you ever accessed information about rail statistics / data?
  - If yes: Please describe the situation – what were you looking for, where did you go, ease of finding etc.
  - If no: in what circumstances can you envisage seeking such information?
- If you were to look for such information online, where would you go?
- What would you ideally expect from a website which would provide such information?
  - Probe in depth around: content, style, personalisation, ease of navigation

#### **3. Providers of Rail Information and Statistics (5 mins)**

**Referring back to the organisation(s) they would go to if they wanted to find out about rail data or statistics:**

- For each mentioned: why would you choose that source? What would you expect

to find there?

- If not already mentioned, probe (*using showcards*):

- Individual Train Operating Companies (e.g. First Capital Connect, East Midlands Trains, Northern Rail etc.)
- The Office of Rail Regulation
- Passenger Focus
- Department for Transport
- Any others?

- For each of the above, ask:
  - Are you aware of this organisation?
  - What information do you think they would provide?
  - How would you access information from them? (online etc)
  - Benefits / disadvantages of sourcing information from this source?
  - Perceptions around accuracy, credibility and trustworthiness, and why?
- Overall, which would you be most likely to use, and why?

#### 4. Surfing the Wireframes

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**MODERATOR TO EXPLAIN THAT WE ARE NOW GOING TO VIEW A LIVE WEBSITE WHICH IS CURRENTLY UNDER DEVELOPMENT.**

**MODERATOR TO ENSURE RESPONDENTS UNDERSTAND THAT THE WEBPAGES THEY ARE ABOUT TO VIEW ARE UNDER DEVELOPMENT AND NOT THE FINISHED ARTICLE; THERE IS NOT FULL FUNCTIONALITY AT THIS STAGE AND MOST OF THE LINKS ARE NOT LIVE. RESPONDENTS SHOULD BEAR THIS IN MIND WHILE EXPLORING THE PAGES.**

**THE RESPONDENT WILL BE ASKED TO SPEND SOME TIME SURFING THE WEBSITE FREELY AS THEY WOULD IF THE MODERATOR WAS NOT PRESENT – MODERATOR TO OBSERVE WHAT THEY LOOK AT, APPARENT EASE OF NAVIGATION, AREAS OF DIFFICULTY ETC.**

**MODERATOR TO ENSURE THAT AFTER A PERIOD OF FREE SURFING, THE RESPONDENT IS DIRECTED TO VISIT ALL PAGES OF THE WEBSITE, IF THEY HAVEN'T ALREADY DONE SO. THE RESPONDENT WILL ALSO BE ASKED TO HAVE A GENERAL LOOK AT THE EXISTING SITE.**

#### 5. Evaluation of the Wireframes (35 mins)

**Together, the moderator and respondent will look at the website and discuss:**

- What were your first impressions when you looked at the new website?
- What words would you use to describe it?
- What caught your eye / what areas were you drawn to, and why?
- What did you particularly like about the site? Why?
- And what didn't you like? Why?
- Who do you think this was aimed at? Who would be using a site like this?
- How relevant does it feel to you as an individual? Why / why not?
- Probe specifically around (asking respondents to illustrate their comments with examples):
  - Content – relevance, usefulness

- Layout / design, look and feel
- Ease of navigation
- Use of language and terminology – how clear was it to understand?
- Tone
- Do you think you would use a site like this? Why / why not?
- What would you use it for?
- Overall, how does the new site compare to the existing site?
- What is better about the new site? (probe in depth)
- What is better about the existing site? (probe in depth)
  
- How appropriate is a website like this for providing information about rail statistics? Why do you say that?
- Are there better alternatives for disseminating rail statistics? (e.g. a dedicated website, via email etc.)
  - For each: why would this be better / worse than the portal?
  - Would you be more likely to use the data if it was delivered in this way?

**Moderator: I'd now like to ask you to visit some particular areas of the site / conduct some specific activities. NB: The respondent will not fill in the worksheet; however, the moderator will verbally use the worksheet as a guide to task the respondent with visiting relevant pages and undertaking certain tasks:**

- ❖ Latest News (*new feature – not on current site*)
- ❖ Reports and Data – not logged in (*Browse Reports and Data on current site*)
- ❖ Login and Register (*Login and Register on current site*)
- ❖ My Account
- ❖ Creating Reports (*Report Wizard on current site*)

- For each area, probe in depth around: (*these questions will be asked of each page, with some relevant supplementary questions as appropriate, outlined below*):
  - Likes and dislikes
  - Content – relevance, usefulness to you
  - Specific features available



- Layout / design, look and feel
- Ease of use / navigation
- Use of language and terminology – how clear was it to understand?
- Tone
- Would you use this page? What would you use this page for?
- Improvements (probe in depth)
  - o Moderator: write on post-its for later use
- Comparison with existing page (where applicable)
  - o Is the new page an improvement? Why / why not?
  - o What makes it better / worse than the current page?
- For 'Reports and Data' specifically:
  - What were the key differences between the two sites?
  - Which did you prefer?

*(If not already mentioned, highlight to respondents that the new site enables the user to create reports without logging in, and the old site does not)*

  - Which approach do they prefer and why?
- For 'Login and Register' specifically:
  - Perceptions of what's available once logged in – how is this different to not being logged in? Which do you prefer and why?
  - What are the benefits of being logged in? (Probe re personalised features e.g. ability to save reports, subscribe to newsletters, alerts to data updates) – are these features of interest?
  - How would the ability to log in and personalise your account influence your likelihood to use the site? Why do you say that?
  - How do you feel about registering / logging in to access or save personalised reports you have created? Why?
  - Is this something you'd be likely to do? Why / why not?
- For 'My Account' specifically:
  - How useful is it to be able to manage your subscriptions? (choose category updates, set up alerts for saved reports etc). Why?
- For 'Create Your Own Reports' specifically:
  - How easy or difficult was this to do on the new site?
  - How did this compare to creating a report on the existing site?
  - What did you prefer, and why?

## 6. Improvements to the Portal (5 mins)

- Overall, what are the key improvements you would suggest to the new pages?
- For each improvement suggested ask:
  - Why is that important?
  - How would that improve the portal / the experience of using the portal
- Using the post-its gathered in previous section, ask respondents to sort these into categories:
  - Must definitely improve these aspects (then probe why)
  - Would be nice to improve these aspects (then probe why)
  - Not that important to improve these aspects (then probe why)

## 7. Summing Up (5 mins)

- Key likes and dislikes of the new portal?
- Likelihood of using the NRT portal?
- What is the single, most important improvements that could be made?
- If you worked at ORR and were responsible for developing this portal, what would be the **one key thing** you would focus on, and why?

**THANK RESPONDENTS AND CLOSE**

**The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR)  
Website Development Research  
WORKSHEET (FINAL)**

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**Below are a number of activities we would like you to carry out online:**

- ✓ Please work your way through these in the order shown here
- ✓ Please make sure that everyone in your group has a chance to contribute
- ✓ Please take the time to read the content on the pages – we're interested in how clear and easy it is to understand
- ✓ Make sure you scroll down the pages to ensure you see all the content
- ✓ The moderator will tell you how long you should spend on each task
- ✓ If you have any questions at all, just ask one of the moderators for help
- ✓ **Please remember, one of the websites you will be looking at is still under development, so some of the features do not have full functionality**

**REMINDER: THIS IS THE NEW SITE**

The screenshot shows the new NRT Data Portal website. At the top, there are logos for the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) and the NRT Data Portal. A navigation menu includes Home, About us, Reports and data, FAQs, Latest News, Contact us, Log in, and Register. The main content area is titled 'Reports and Data' and features a search box, a 'Create your own report' link, and a list of report categories: Official statistics, Financial, Network capability and assets, Performance, Rail usage, Safety, Service satisfaction, Rail infrastructure, assets and environment, and All reports and data. A central section titled 'About the NRT data portal' explains that datasets are updated quarterly and provides a 'Read more' link. To the right, a 'Why register?' section states that users can save and export reports and receive email notifications, with a 'Register now' link. Further right, an 'About reports' section describes the ability to create, view, and search reports, with an 'Access reports and data' link. A 'Release dates' section notes that rail usage data for 2012-13 Q3 is scheduled for release on 14th March 2013. A 'Latest reports' section lists 'Timetabled Train Kilometres by quarter' in both table and chart formats. The footer contains links for Accessibility, Privacy and cookies, Terms and conditions, Sitemap, ORR website, and Contact us.

**REMINDER: THIS IS THE EXISTING SITE**

The screenshot shows the existing NRT Data Portal website. The layout is different from the new site. On the left, there is a 'Create your own report' section with a 'Report Wizard' icon and a description: 'Create reports using our NRT Portal report wizard'. Below this is a 'Browse reports / data' section with a list of categories: Official Statistics, Financial, Network capability and assets, Performance, Rail usage, Health and Safety, Service Satisfaction, Other, and All Reports / Data. A 'Search for report / data' section includes a search box and a 'Search' button. The main content area on the right has a navigation menu with Home, Help, Login, and Register. The 'Home' page text explains that the portal provides access to up-to-date statistics and that registration is free and simple. It mentions a quality assurance process and identifies issues with comparability between London TravelWatch and Passenger Focus data, leading to the publication of 'Appeals opened by Passenger Focus or London TravelWatch' and 'Complaints received by Passenger Focus or London TravelWatch' tables. A notice states that the 2012-13 Q4 update to the Passenger Focus or London TravelWatch tables will not be published on Thursday 20th June. The page also mentions an investigation into data quality issues and provides contact information for the statistics Head of Profession, Jay Lindop. A final section states the next scheduled reports to be added on 20th June 2013.

**TASK ONE: Getting to know the new site**

- ❖ To begin with, please spend a few minutes looking around the **new website** – you can go to any pages you want to, and click on anything you want to
- ❖ We are interested in your overall impressions of the site when you first look at it

**What are your first impressions – what words would you use to describe the site?**

**Is it what you expected? Why / why not?**

**Overall, what do you like about the site?**

**And what don't you like about it?**

**How interesting does it seem to you?**

**Is it easy to navigate around, is it clear and easy to read and understand?**

**Which pages have you clicked on, and why?**

## TASK TWO: Latest News - New Site

- ❖ Now please go to the page 'Latest News' page on the **new site** and have a good look at it. You may click on anything that you want to. Please do not log in at this stage.

**What are your first impressions – what words would you use to describe this page?**

**What do you like about the page?**

**And what don't you like about it?**

**Which information is interesting to you? What would you like to explore further?**

**Which links did you click on, and why?**

### **TASK THREE: Reports and Data - New Site**

- ❖ Now please go to the page 'Reports and Data' on the **new site** and have a good look at it. You may click on anything that you want to. Please do not log in at this stage.

**What are your first impressions – what words would you use to describe this page?**

**What do you like about the page?**

**And what don't you like about it?**

**Which information is interesting to you? What would you like to explore further?**

**Which links did you click on, and why?**

**If you haven't already, please go to 'Create Your Own Report'. How useful / interesting would this function be to you? Does it look clear and easy to use?**

**And now please go to 'Browse Reports and Data' and explore this page. How useful / interesting would this content be to you? Does it look clear and easy to use?**

## **TASK FOUR: Reports and Data – Existing Site**

- ❖ Now please go to 'Reports and Data' on the existing site and have a good look at it. You may click on anything that you want to.

**What are your first impressions – what words would you use to describe this page?**

**What do you like about the page?**

**And what don't you like about it?**

**Which information is interesting to you? What would you like to explore further?**

**Which links did you click on, and why?**

**If you haven't already, please go to 'Create Your Own Report'. How useful / interesting would this function be to you? Does it look clear and easy to use?**



## **TASK FIVE: Login – New Site**

### **On the new site:**

- ❖ Now please click on 'Login'
- ❖ You may log in to the site simply by clicking on the 'Login' button – you do not need to enter an email address or password.

**What are your first impressions – what words would you use to describe this page?**

**What do you like about the page?**

**And what don't you like about it?**

**Which information is interesting to you? What would you like to explore further?**

**Which links did you click on, and why?**

## **TASK SIX: Login - Existing Site**

- ❖ Now please login to the **existing site**
- ❖ We will provide you with login details for this site – you do not need to register or enter your own details.

**What are your first impressions?**

**What is different now that you are logged in?**

**What do you like / what is interesting about logging into this site?**

**What do you dislike about logging into this site?**

**Which links did you click on, and why?**

## **TASK SEVEN: My Account**

- ❖ Now please click on 'My Account' on the new site.
- ❖ Now please click on 'My Account' on the existing site

**What are your first impressions of the new site – what words would you use to describe this page?**

**What do you like about the page?**

**And what don't you like about it?**

**Which information is interesting to you? What would you like to explore further?**

**Which links did you click on, and why?**

**And now the existing site – what do you like / dislike about this page?**

**Is it better or worse than the new site?**

**Why do you say that?**

## **TASK EIGHT: Creating Reports**

❖ Now please click on 'Create Your Own Report' on the new site.

**What do you like about the page?**

**And what don't you like about it?**

**Which information is interesting to you? What would you like to explore further?**

**Which links did you click on, and why?**

❖ We would now like you to go to the current site and create the same report:  
Private Investment in Rolling Stock

**How easy or difficult was this to do?**

**What do you like about the process?**

**And what don't you like about it?**