

# Guidance Document

## Management of Correspondence Work Items

Doc Ref: 2020-GN-CORRESPONDENCE-Rev 1.0

Prepared by: Assurance Working Group

### 1. Introduction and Context

There are approximately 8,000 outside party owned assets over or adjacent to Network Rail's railway infrastructure. Despite not being the asset owner, Network Rail has a duty under health and safety legislation to:

- Undertake a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to health and safety (undertake risk assessment).
- The risk assessment must be regularly reviewed
- Any measures required to adequately mitigate new risks must be actioned.

The process of managing correspondence work items contributes to Network Rail's management of safety risk associated with outside party assets and evidence that it is sufficiently discharging its responsibilities under health and safety legislation.

Correspondence work items have traditionally been used to:

- Advise an Outside Party of the condition of their asset observed during (typically) a Visual Examination.
- Request information from an Outside Party (e.g. pertaining to the Outside Party's management regime for their asset)
- Advise other functions within Network Rail of a defect to an asset that the Structures RAM is not responsible for – e.g. a signal post.

Prior to this guidance the process for managing correspondence WIs has been to change their status to 'complete' once the correspondence has been issued to the outside/third party. This process prevents NR from having visibility of whether the outside/third party has undertaken any intervention to make their asset safe.

There have been multiple failures of outside party owned assets and it is apparent that the current process for managing correspondence work items (as per the CARRS user manual) is insufficient in:

- Providing an indication of whether an outside party has undertaken any intervention in

response to correspondence from Network Rail

- Identifying which assets could present a material risk to the railway that Network Rail may need to act upon
- Providing an evidence base for escalating issues either internally or externally.

### 2. Purpose

This document provides guidance to those involved in managing safety risk associated with outside party structures assets. It introduces an improved process for managing correspondence work items that better identifies outside party assets that could present a risk to the safety of those on or about the railway.

The guidance also sets out a framework for escalation where there is evidence that safety risk is not being sufficiently managed by an outside party.

Lastly, the guidance establishes rules for cleansing historic data within CARRS, such that there is no conflicting data in CARRS following the introduction of the new process.

This guidance is considered to be best practice for adoption by Routes. Application and effectiveness of the guidance will be monitored by the Assurance Working Group and associated risk will be tracked through the national structures assurance pack.

### 3. Scope

This guidance applies to correspondence associated with outside party owned assets, including correspondence associated with the structural capacity of outside party owned overline bridges.

This guidance does not relate to the management of risk associated to modification to outside party assets, managed through ASPRO.

This guidance does not relate directly to internal correspondence used within Network Rail.

### 4. Current Position (CARRS Data), P4 2020

There are circa 450 open correspondence WIs in CARRS associated with outside party owned assets that have a risk score of 12 or higher (Figure 1). The majority of these WIs have been 'open' for two years or more (shown in red and purple in the figure). For

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comparison, the CRI measure tracks the number of open maintenance work items of the same risk score and there are around 1,000 WIs open nationally. Approximately 70 of the CRI WIs have been open two years or more. This implies a difference in NR’s management or tolerance of risk between assets inside or outside of NR ownership.

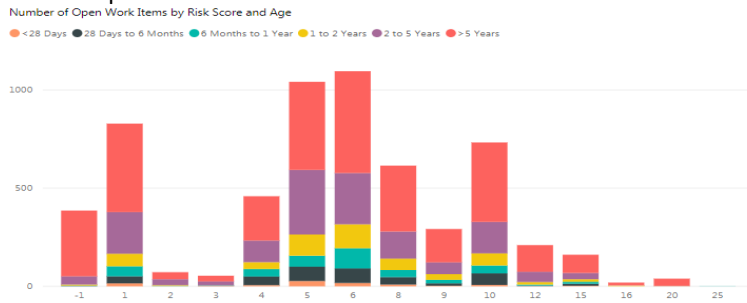


Figure 1. (Source: Power BI Structures Assurance Pack)

### 5. Improved Process for Managing Correspondence Work Items

Figure 2 sets out the new process for managing correspondence work items. The process relates to new work items that are generated primarily through Network Rail’s examination of an outside party’s assets, or any other activity undertaken by Network Rail that may identify a defect or issue associated with an outside party asset or its management.

The significant changes between the new process and the historic process are:

- The introduction of a decision step where the asset engineer determines whether there is a material safety risk to the railway associated with the outside party asset.
- The use of a new CARRS work item status (Sent – Response Required) which enables these safety related correspondence work items to be identified and tracked until such time that Network Rail has confirmation that suitable action is taken by the outside party.

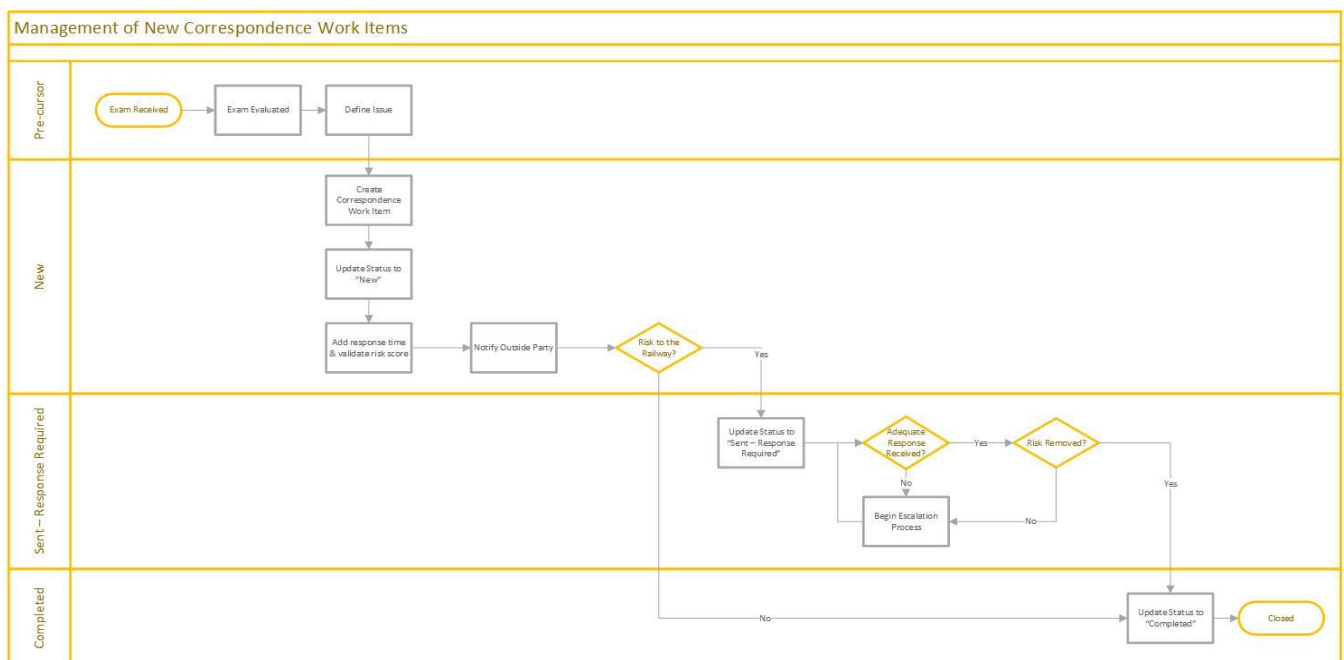


Figure 2. New process for managing correspondence work items

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The below provides more detail around some of the key steps in the process.

### Creating Correspondence work items

During review and acceptance of an examination report, a correspondence work item should be raised for any appropriate proposed recommendations (as agreed by the sign-off engineer) relating to an outside party asset.

Once a correspondence work item is created in CARRS, the status should be updated to “New”, the risk score should be validated, and a response time given. The relevant external party or NR department should be notified of the defect or issue and subsequent recommendation.

### Criteria for Identifying Defects for Tracking (Risk to the Railway)

The status of ‘Sent - response required’ will always be assigned, if:

1. The work item risk score is 12 or higher (following review by the asset engineer), and
2. Failure of the asset component would cause disruption to train operations, endanger the safety of the workforce or public or increase trespass or vandalism risk.

Note: Where risk is present to public only (outside the railway corridor), the work item could be closed out once acknowledgement of receipt has been received.

The status of ‘Sent - response required’ may also be used, if:

3. The criteria (in bullet point step 2, above) for assigning a status of ‘Sent- Response Required’ are met, but the risk score is appraised to be 9 or 10, and
4. There is a need for intervention within the coming 12 months based on our own (NR) tolerance for risk, or
5. There is a high level of uncertainty about the condition, location or ownership of the asset (e.g. if gained through a VE), and there would be a safety/performance

consequence if the asset component were to fail

Note. NR has little direct control over the completion of works to outside party assets. Hence, a more conservative approach to identifying defects that are prone to ongoing deterioration may be appropriate for outside party assets.

Where there is doubt the asset engineer should seek advice from the senior engineer.

### Criteria for Managing Defects that are not considered a Risk to the Railway

Where a work item does not meet the criteria for ‘Sent - response required’, we will:

- Risk score the WI as per normal process
- Issue correspondence to the Outside Party
- Keep a record of the correspondence issued and record what/when in CARRS
- Update the status of the correspondence WI to ‘complete’ once correspondence is issued.

### Work Item Statuses

Status	Criteria
New	When a correspondence item is created the status is automatically set to 'New'.
Sent - Response Required	Once an outside party has been notified and a risk to the railway identified, the status should be changed to 'Sent - Response Required'. This status should remain until the risk has been removed.
Completed	The status should be changed to 'Completed' if either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the work item is not associated with a material risk to the railway and correspondence has been sent</li> <li>• the work item is associated with a material risk to the railway and activities to remove the</li> </ul>

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	risk have been completed.
Historic*	Existing 'Historic' statuses and statuses that have been changed to 'Historic' as part of a data cleansing activity.
Cancelled	Existing 'Cancelled' items or WIs cancelled as correspondence to an outside party is no longer appropriate or sent in error, etc.

\*Historic status will remain for existing correspondence work items but will not be used in the new BAU process.

### 6. Timescales and Assurance of Outside Party Mitigation Measures

CARRS enables work items with a status of 'Sent – response required' to be tracked through measuring:

- The time elapsed since the work item was created
- Whether a response time associated with the correspondence WI has been exceeded.

#### Technical Authority Assurance

*Intent: to identify indicators of unacceptable, unmitigated risk to the railway.*

For the purpose of undertaking national assurance, the time lapsed since the creation of the WI will be used to indicate assets that present a material risk to the safe operation of the railway. For this purpose a duration exceeding 1 year since the creation of a work item with a status of 'Sent – response required' is likely to imply that an unacceptable risk to the railway has not been sufficiently mitigated within an appropriate timescale.

#### Route or Regional Assurance

*Intent: to gain assurance that outside parties are positively progressing the mitigation of risks to the railway in advance of the timescale becoming unacceptable.*

Regions and Routes should seek to gain assurance of an outside party's progress in undertaking mitigating actions at a more granular level than by using only

the duration since the work item was created. It is recommended that work item response times are used incrementally for this purpose. Routes may develop their own process, but good practice is suggested as follows:

Incrementally set a response time for receipt from an outside party of:

1. Automatic acknowledgement of the correspondence
2. Confirmation that the outside party accepts ownership of the asset and acknowledgement of the risk associated with the defect/issue.
3. Confirmation that the outside party is making / has made arrangements to address the risk
4. Confirmation that works are completed and that the risk to the railway has been sufficiently mitigated or removed.

No prescriptive guidance is provided for the response time that should be set for each of the above, however in setting response times the asset engineer should consider:

- An overall acceptable timescale for the risk to be mitigated by the outside party which should not be exceeded. Note that for NR maintenance work items with a risk score  $\geq 12$ , this would be 12 months, hence similarly risk scored outside party defects should be treated consistently.
- Network Rail is far less able to control the implementation of measures to mitigate outside party risk. There is therefore much less certainty that any response time suggested to the outside party will be met. Shorter duration response times may therefore be appropriate so that there is early warning if the overall acceptable timescale is unlikely to be met.
- Response times and an overall acceptable timescale are likely to be used as a trigger for escalation where there is insufficient evidence of progress by the outside party. In the event that the correspondence process and follow on escalation do not result in the risk to the railway being sufficiently mitigated, Network Rail may be required to act to address any immediate safety concerns.

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The correspondence work item and response times would likely provide an audit trail of Network Rail's decision making up to that point to support any commercial implications associated.

- Response times should be proportionate to the defect, the risk it presents to railway safety/operations and any experience of previous engagement with the specific outside party. A one size fits all approach is unlikely to apply. Where in doubt, consult with the Senior Asset Engineer.
- Being clear in the correspondence with the outside party on:
  - the expected response time and Network Rail's view of an overall acceptable timescale for mitigating the risk to the railway.
  - how the response time will be used by Network Rail. E.g. it may act as the basis for escalation.
  - why the defect/issue presents a risk to the railway. This may not otherwise be apparent to an outside party that has little or no involvement in railway operations.

#### 7. Use of Escalation

A Route or Region may have a defined escalation process that is generic across the Route. This guidance is intended to complement any such guidance within the context of structures management of outside party risk. Where any conflict exists, the principles of this guidance should be applied to fit the Route/Regional process. Escalation may be required where a Route has insufficient evidence that an Outside Party is taking appropriate steps to mitigate safety risk to the operation of the railway. This may be due to either:

- Lack of suitable response or action from an Outside Party within the response times considered appropriate by Network Rail;
- Insufficient assurance that the risk will be mitigated within the overall acceptable timescale.

The outcome sought from instigating escalation is for an outside party to undertake suitable actions to manage unacceptable safety risk to the safe

operation of the railway. In addition, escalation is required to:

- Help Network Rail to demonstrate how it has discharged its legal duty under the health and safety at work act to do all that is reasonably practicable to manage risk to the safe operation of the railway.
- Enable an outside party to identify and prioritise intervention such that they comply with health and safety regulations
- Enable Network Rail to demonstrate due consideration for the outside party prior to undertaking emergency works to make an outside party's asset safe, likely at a cost chargeable to the outside party

It is anticipated that only correspondence work items categorised as 'Sent – response required' are likely to be candidates for escalation.

There will be significant variability between the circumstances of each correspondence work item, meaning that it is not appropriate to set rigid thresholds for when escalation is required, or what the escalation should be. Escalation should be timely, appropriate and proportionate to:

- The likelihood and consequence of failure associated with the specific defect or issue;
- Previous experience with the Outside Party, their asset base, and typical business;
- Evidence of progress by the Outside Party in relation to the response times used;
- Assurance of whether the risk is likely to be mitigated within the overall acceptable timescale;

#### (Likely) stages of escalation

- Initial correspondence to a standard inbox
- Follow-up (informal) email chasing a response from a specific person or role (after consultation with the Network Rail Senior Asset Engineer)
- Written letter by a senior member of the Route/Region (likely a RAM or similar role)
- Written letter by a member of the executive leadership of the Route/Region

Note 1: Liaison with the Route Liabilities Team should be undertaken at the earliest possible stage in escalation.

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Note 2: There may be circumstances where escalation should progress straight to an advanced stage.

#### Good practice

As levels of escalation increase, the escalation should contain:

- Details of the defect or issue
- A copy of the source of information, e.g. an examination report
- What the relevance is to the safe operation of the railway (which may not be obvious to an outside party)
- How it was identified and the date it was identified
- What action Network Rail will take if an insufficient response is received, and the potential commercial implications for the outside party
- Network Rail's view on suitable measures to mitigate safety risk
- What date a response and/or action by the outside party is required by
- Reference to Network Rail's legal duties under the health and safety at work act.
- Reference to any maintenance agreement between Network Rail and the outside part

It may be appropriate to develop templated letters for typical escalation circumstances for each stage of escalation.

#### 8. Cleansing of Existing Correspondence WI Data in CARRS

To support the introduction of the new process for managing emerging correspondence work items, it is important cleanse previous correspondence WI data from CARRS that might otherwise provide misleading information around Network Rail's exposure to risk.

##### Rules for cleansing existing (outside party) correspondence Work Items within CARRS:

WIs <12.

Where the WI is open, change its status to 'historic', regardless of the age of the work item. Note that a Route may wish to change the status to 'complete' if they have evidence that the correspondence has been sent.

WIs >=12.

Where the WI is open, review each WI individually and assign a status appropriate to the new process.

#### 9. Recording Changes in CARRS

As a correspondence WI progresses through stages of interaction with an outside party, involvement from NR Liabilities, or implementation of escalation, the notes field should be used to keep a record of progress and rationale for changes or decisions.

The asset engineer should record their initials and the date associated with any new commentary.

Notes should also be used to capture the decision to cleanse any existing correspondence WIs.