Nobody took charge

An EasyRead report from the House of Commons Transport Committee, looking at: what went wrong with the railway timetable changes in May 2018 and how to make sure the next changes work properly.

EasyRead version of: Rail timetable changes: May 2018, Seventh Report of the Transport Committee, Session 2017–19, HC 1163
Who we are and what we are looking at

We are the House of Commons Transport Committee, our job is to check how well transport is working.

This is our report about the problems the huge changes to railway timetables caused in May 2018.

It caused chaos which lasted for months all over the country but especially to services in London and the North of England.

A lot of passengers had problems, lost money and were late for work or getting home.
Disabled passengers had it even worse and were left without help.

Now customers who had all those problems are going to have to pay even more next year for their tickets. This does not seem fair.
Who is who on the railways?

Chris Grayling, the Secretary of State for Transport (Minister) is in charge.

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) is the independent organisation that checks on how well the railways are working.

Network Rail owns the rails the trains run on. It is owned by the public. Mr Haines is in charge.

Private train companies are the organisations that run the trains themselves in their own areas. These ones had the most problems:

Northern, TransPennine Express, Thameslink, and Great Northern.
What went wrong

2018 was meant to be the year when there were lots of good changes for passengers.

It went horribly wrong, and passengers were let down.

Some disabled passengers had it worse. Northern Rail did not give any extra help to people caught in the problems, even though they knew there would be problems.

Everyone involved knew the changes were huge. But they did not follow the usual system for making changes.
This meant there was not enough time to do the changes properly.

Having so many different private train companies and one public network made things very complicated.

The train companies compete against each other.

The Secretary of State is in overall charge of the railways.

Only he could have stopped the changes from happening, but he was not told how bad it was looking.
He should have made sure he was told about all the problems.

The ORR said “Nobody took charge”. We agree.

This cannot be allowed to happen again.
What must be done as soon as possible:

- Understand what went wrong and put it right straight away.

- The Government and railways should look at how to keep fare rises as small as possible.

- Season ticket passengers with the companies that had the worst problems should not have to pay more for their tickets next year.

- Rail companies must have proper plans to help disabled passengers when things go wrong. ORR should check they have good enough ones and fine companies if they do not.
• Passengers should be able to easily get some ticket money back when delayed. It should really happen automatically. The work done on this so far has not been good enough.

• Passengers do not feel they are listened to. The Government must make sure people are asked about changes before they happen. Some train companies do have good ways to listen to people, they should be copied by the rest of them.

• Make sure the next changes in 2018 and 2019 are done properly and more slowly if they need to be.

• Have Mr Haines, the boss of Network Rail in charge of these changes.
● After that, we think there should be someone more independent checking on how timetable changes are done.

● The Government, the train companies, Network Rail and the ORR should not wait until the William’s review of the railways is finished before something is done about these problems, they are urgent.

Passengers must not be let down like this again.
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This paper has been designed and produced by the EasyRead service at Inspired Services Publishing Ltd. Ref ISL192 18. December 2018

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