



Gareth Davies
Comptroller and Auditor General
National Audit Office
157-197 Buckingham Palace Road
London
SW1W 9SP

26th August 2026

Dear Mr Davies,

Re: Oxford Station Enhancement Programme and Botley Road, Oxford

I am writing to call on the National Audit Office to investigate the delivery of Network Rail's Oxford Station Enhancement Programme, and in particular the prolonged closure of Botley Road; one of the main routes into Oxford.

This case raises issues that go well beyond a single project. It speaks to a broader set of questions about infrastructure governance, programme delivery and public accountability.

The figures speak for themselves. Botley Road has been closed continuously since April 2023 and will not reopen until 20 September 2026 - almost three and a half years. That is not what was proposed to my constituents. The original scheme provided for two six-month closures separated by a six-month period in which the road would be open. Instead they have endured a continuous three-and-a-half-year closure.

The reopening date has moved repeatedly - from October 2024, to indefinite postponement in the summer of that year, to August 2026 following a programme review in January 2025, and now to September 2026. The programme's budget has risen from £161 million to a January 2026 estimate of £237 million, which will have risen further with recent delays. Delivery has required Network Rail, utility providers, Oxfordshire County Council and other bodies to exercise separate statutory responsibilities alongside one another, and the cost of the resulting disruption has fallen on residents, businesses and the wider transport network.

The impact on many businesses was little short of disastrous, with the Government eventually conceding and granting £850,000 of 'goodwill' payments to local businesses most impacted by the delayed works.

Correspondence I have received from the organisations involved confirms that:

- Network Rail holds overall responsibility for project delivery;
- the project has required coordination between multiple infrastructure providers and public bodies; and
- the prolonged closure has had implications beyond the works themselves, affecting wider transport planning and network management across Oxford.

Layla Moran MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The concerns now being raised by my constituents go beyond the immediate causes of individual delays. They speak to more fundamental questions of governance and accountability, including:

- how risks are identified and managed where multiple organisations contribute to delivery;
- whether accountability remains sufficiently clear when responsibilities are shared across a number of bodies;
- whether contractors and delivery partners are appointed with sufficient scrutiny of their capability, and whether "unforeseen" site conditions are too often accepted as an explanation for failures of survey and risk management;
- how the cumulative impact on communities and local economies is assessed and mitigated;
- whether existing assurance arrangements provide adequate scrutiny for projects that fall outside the Government Major Projects Portfolio but nevertheless carry substantial public impact; and
- whether the lessons of programmes that overrun on this scale are genuinely acted upon or merely recorded - and who is held to account when the same failures recur on the next scheme.

I recognise that the Oxford project is not classified as a Government Major Project. It nonetheless raises issues with wider relevance to the delivery and oversight of rail and infrastructure programmes involving multiple delivery partners, and I do not think its scale should place it beyond scrutiny.

I am therefore asking that you consider whether these matters should inform current or future NAO work on infrastructure delivery, programme governance, value for money and accountability in the transport sector. It is through this kind of scrutiny that the public can have confidence that shared responsibility does not become an excuse for reduced accountability.

I will look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Layla Moran', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Layla Moran MP

Liberal Democrat Member of Parliament for Oxford West & Abingdon