

Passenger train derailment near Carmont, Aberdeenshire

The RAIB is investigating a fatal accident that occurred near Carmont on the national rail network in Scotland.

At around 09:40 hrs on Wednesday 12 August 2020, all six vehicles of a passenger train derailed after striking a landslip around 1.4 miles (2.25 km) north-east of Carmont, Aberdeenshire. There were nine people on the train at the time of the accident; three train crew (the driver, conductor and a second conductor travelling as a passenger on this train) and six passengers. Tragically, the driver of the train, the train's conductor and one passenger suffered fatal injuries in the accident. The remaining passengers and member of train crew were taken to hospital.

The site of the accident was approximately four miles (6.4 km) south-west of Stonehaven and 20 miles (32 km) north of Montrose, on the double track main line which runs between Dundee and Aberdeen. The train, which was operated by Abellio (trading as ScotRail), was a High Speed Train set with a leading power car, four Mark 3 passenger coaches and a rear power car. It had originally been operating as train reporting number 1T08, the 06:38 hrs service from Aberdeen to Glasgow Queen Street. Train 1T08 had departed on time from Aberdeen and then from Stonehaven, its next scheduled stop. After departing Stonehaven, the train continued past Carmont on the up (southbound) line until it was stopped by the signaller at Carmont, using a radio message. This was because the signaller had just received a report from the driver of a train on the down (northbound) line that a landslip was obstructing the up line between Carmont and Laurencekirk.

Google Earth image showing key locations

When it became apparent that train 1T08 could not continue its journey south, the decision was taken to return it to Aberdeen, and it was routed back over a crossover at Carmont onto the down line. After travelling for approximately 1.4 miles (2.25 km), the train struck a landslip covering the down line and derailed. As the track curved to the right, the train continued in a roughly straight line for around 100 yards (90 metres) until it struck a section of bridge parapet, which was destroyed. The leading power car continued over the bridge and then fell from the railway down a wooded embankment, as did the third passenger carriage. The first passenger carriage came to rest on its roof, having rotated to be at right angles to the track. The second passenger carriage also overturned onto its roof and came to rest on the first carriage. The fourth passenger carriage remained upright and attached to the rear power car; it also came to rest on the first carriage. All wheelsets of the rear power car derailed, but it remained upright.

Aerial photograph of derailment site

We are currently collecting evidence needed to identify factors relevant to the cause of the accident and its consequences. The scope of the investigation is likely to include:

- the sequence of events and the actions of those involved
- the operating procedures applied
- the management of earthworks and drainage in this area, including recent inspections and risk assessments
- the general management of earthworks and drainage and associated procedures designed to manage the risk of extreme weather events
- the behaviour of the train during, and following the derailment
- the consequences of the derailment and a review of the damage caused to the rolling stock
- underlying management factors
- actions taken in response to previous safety recommendations

We will publish our findings, including any recommendations to improve safety, at the conclusion of our investigation. This report will be available on our website.

The RAIB's investigation is independent of any investigation by the railway industry, and of the joint investigation instructed by the Lord Advocate to be carried out by British Transport Police, Police Scotland and by the industry's regulator, the [Office of Rail and Road](#).

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