

Stonehaven report sets out measures to boost rail resilience

- final report sets out how railways can be protected from climate change and extreme weather
- Transport Secretary commissioned review immediately after Stonehaven tragedy in August 2020
- report informed by 2 taskforces – one on weather and one on earthworks management

The government has today (17 March 2021) published Network Rail's final report on [how the resilience of the UK's rail network can be improved](#), in light of the [Stonehaven tragedy](#) last year.

The report was commissioned by Transport Secretary Grant Shapps immediately after the incident, in which 3 people died when a passenger train hit a landslide and derailed while travelling through bad weather near Carmont, Aberdeenshire.

The document is informed by the work of 2 independent taskforces – one which looks at weather conditions and the other at earthworks management – and includes a range of recommendations to further safeguard railways from extreme weather.

Network Rail has already started implementing some of these recommendations, building on an acceleration of works and investment in the resilience of the UK's railways over the last decade.

Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said:

The accident at Stonehaven in August was devastating, and my thoughts remain with the families of Brett McCullough, Donald Dinnie and Christopher Stuchbury, who tragically lost their lives.

We must do everything we can to keep our railways safe, and I immediately commissioned this report so that lessons would be learnt without delay.

These findings will inform our work as we push ahead with measures to make our railway more resilient in future and less vulnerable to sudden tragedies like that near Stonehaven.

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said:

Safety is our absolute priority, which is why we have instructed Network Rail to publish regular updates on how it will deliver these recommendations to give passengers confidence.

These reports underline the importance of investing in our railway, to keep passengers and staff safe both now and in the future.

Between 2019 and 2024, Network Rail will make a record investment of £1.3 billion in strengthening the railway's resilience to extreme weather.

Network Rail's operations, maintenance and renewals budgets continue to be ringfenced, with the Spending Review committing over £40 billion as part of efforts to increase investment in rail infrastructure.

The final report examines all available evidence about the Stonehaven tragedy, the immediate steps taken afterwards and the current challenges of managing 200,000 earthwork sites over 20,000 miles of track across the UK.

Martin Frobisher, Network Rail's safety and engineering director, said:

The UK's railway is one of the safest in Europe, but something went tragically wrong at Stonehaven last summer, and our thoughts remain with the families and friends of Brett McCullough, Donald Dinnie and Christopher Stuchbury.

Heavy rain caused ground slips on many occasions across the entire network last year. Although tragic accidents are, thankfully, incredibly rare and none other than Stonehaven caused injuries, it is clear that extreme weather presents a significant challenge to the way we safely and reliably manage railway infrastructure.

We do a vast amount to tackle the effects of climate change already, but there is more to do. We established 2 independent, expert taskforces led by world-class specialists to investigate the problems we face and, crucially, to guide us as we make substantial improvements.

We will carefully consider every single recommendation and develop a science-backed improvement plan to target available money and technology in the best possible way. This is a real breakthrough.

The document builds upon the [Resilience of Rail Infrastructure interim report](#), which was also commissioned by the Transport Secretary immediately after the Stonehaven incident and published in September 2020.

Neither the final nor interim reports pre-empt the outcome of the independent investigation by the Rail Accident Investigation Branch (RAIB) into the Stonehaven incident. RAIB is due to publish its findings later this year.