

Press release: Report 15/2017: Serious irregularity at Cardiff East Junction

Summary

Over the Christmas and New Year period from 24 December 2016 to 2 January 2017, Network Rail carried out extensive resignalling and track remodelling work in and around Cardiff Central station. This was the final stage of the Cardiff area signalling renewal scheme, a project which has been in progress for several years. This stage involved the closure of the power signal box at Cardiff, with control of the signalling in the area moving to the Wales Railway Operating Centre (WROC), and changes to the track layout and signalling on the east side of Cardiff Central station.

Some of the new layout was brought into use on 29 December. At 08:37 hrs on that day, the driver of a train from Cardiff Central to Treherbert, which had just left platform 7, noticed that points in the route his train was about to take were not set in the correct position, and stopped the train just before reaching them.

The points at which the train stopped were redundant in the new layout, and should have been secured in readiness for their complete removal at a later date. The project works required eight sets of points in two separate locations to be secured. In the event only six of the eight points were secured, and the line was re-opened to traffic without the omission having been identified by the testing team through the normal checking processes which should take place as part of this type of work. The two sets of points which were missed were left in a condition in which they were unsecured and not detected by the signalling system, and the points at which the train stopped were set for the diverging route. If the driver had not noticed the position of these points and stopped, the train would have been diverted on to a line which was open to traffic, on which trains can run in either direction, and on which another train passed over about three minutes after the train involved in the incident came to a stop. The new signalling system uses axle counters for train detection, and in this situation the system would not have immediately identified that the train was in the wrong place.

The points had been left in this unsafe condition because they had not been identified as requiring securing by the team securing points during the works. Furthermore, no one had checked that all the points that needed to be secured during the works over the Christmas period had been. Route proving trains, a performance and reliability tool used to ensure the system was working correctly before running passenger services, had been cancelled.

The investigation also found that a work group culture had developed between long standing members of the project team that led to insular thinking about methods of work and operational risk. This meant that team members relied on verbal communications and assurances. An underlying factor was insufficiently thorough project governance and a possible underlying factor was ineffective

fatigue management.

In this case, no-one was injured and no damage was caused by the event, and Network Rail acted quickly to secure both sets of points.

Recommendations

RAIB has identified four learning points and made three recommendations. The learning points relate to the need for testers in charge to be able to confirm that all redundant wiring and equipment has been checked; the need for each intermediate state in which the railway is to operate before completion of the scheme to have an up to date and correct signalling scheme plan reflecting the true state of the layout; the need to mitigate the effect of cancelling route proving trains at the end of commissioning works; and the need to carefully consider the value and purpose of team briefings relating to large scale works to avoid people being overloaded with superfluous information.

Three recommendations have been made, all directed to Network Rail. The first relates to the need for good project governance to ensure a project complies with guidance, procedures and processes to enable the railway to be handed back after works are completed in a safe state in order to resume operational service. The second is concerned with document management systems, and the third recommendation deals with fatigue management for people working on projects and commissioning, recognising that fatigue in the workplace needs to be managed and mitigated, not just the risk of workers suffering fatigue while travelling to and from their place of work.

Simon French, Chief Inspector of Rail Accidents said:

This alarming incident, in which a train came close to travelling down a track that would have put it on an unprotected collision course with other trains, serves as a timely reminder of how easily things can go wrong when railway infrastructure is being upgraded and renewed.

It happened very close to the end of a huge engineering project, to renew the track, signals and train control systems over a large area of south Wales. Thousands of people worked hard on that project, many of them over the Christmas and New Year period at the end of 2016, and they delivered the renewed railway on time – a great achievement. But over the years that the project had been in progress, some bad habits had crept in. Well-meaning people were taking each other's word that things had been done, instead of insisting on seeing the proof. The end result, in this case, was that no-one checked that redundant points, due to be removed altogether in a few days or weeks, had been locked in the correct position. Good project governance includes making sure that the right procedures are in place and that people follow them, at all levels, all the time. We have concluded that the project governance arrangements, and the processes that should provide Network Rail

with assurance that these are being followed, need a thorough review in the light of what happened at Cardiff.

It is also important, when organising intensive periods of commissioning work, to properly manage the working hours of the people doing the job. Back in 1988, the disastrous collision at Clapham Junction happened in part because working for weeks on end without any days off was part of the culture in some areas of the railway. Rightly, things have changed a lot since then. However, the events at Cardiff showed how easy it is to forget the lessons of Clapham and slip back into those habits under the time pressures of a big commissioning.

RAIB is now investigating the collision at Waterloo on 15 August this year, which also took place during the commissioning stage of a large and high-profile project involving track and signalling changes. We will again be looking closely at how such projects are managed, and whether the lessons learned from the tragedies of the past are still being applied effectively on today's railway.

Notes to editors

1. The sole purpose of RAIB investigations is to prevent future accidents and incidents and improve railway safety. RAIB does not establish blame, liability or carry out prosecutions.
2. RAIB operates, as far as possible, in an open and transparent manner. While our investigations are completely independent of the railway industry, we do maintain close liaison with railway companies and if we discover matters that may affect the safety of the railway, we make sure that information about them is circulated to the right people as soon as possible, and certainly long before publication of our final report.
3. For media enquiries, please call 01932 440015.

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News story: Environment Secretary opens £40 million fund to boost farm productivity

Farmers will get a £40 million productivity boost today as the Environment Secretary Michael Gove announces the opening of a new grants scheme for investment in cutting edge technology and new equipment.

Speaking at the 2017 World Dairy Summit in Belfast, the Secretary of State will invite farmers and food processors to apply for grants under the Countryside Productivity scheme.

Under the scheme, grants are available to help livestock, dairy, arable and horticultural farmers improve farm productivity through investing in new technology, such as robotics, to reduce cost or improve product quality. The funding can be used on diverse investments, from robotic milking machines to green technology.

The scheme also offers funds for farmers and food processors to invest in new equipment and machinery to improve the processing of milk, meat and fruit.

Speaking ahead of the summit, Environment Secretary Michael Gove said:

Farmers truly are the backbone of our rural economy and as the original friends of the earth, we want to support them to grow more, sell more and export more great British produce – all while doing good for our environment.

This new funding is a wonderful opportunity for our farmers and food processors to invest in the technology they need to boost productivity, competition and, of course, sustainability as a key factor in future proofing our world leading food and farming industry.

The Countryside Productivity scheme is part of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) and this latest announcement is the second phase of the [Large Grants scheme](#) announced in July 2017.

The first phase of the scheme included a £6 million fund for Improving Forestry Productivity and a £14 million scheme for Water Resource Management.

The Government also recently announced a £30 million [Rural Broadband Infrastructure grant](#) and a new [Bovine TB Advisory Service](#) supported by more than £1 million of RDPE funding.

[Press release: Chemical disposal update – Sunday 29 October](#)

Work to safely dispose of chemicals at Sellafield continued this weekend and will continue tomorrow.

Any disposals will take place during daylight hours, may be audible off-site and will be in line with best practice and chemical disposal regulations.

We have provided updates directly to staff and stakeholders in the immediate vicinity of the site.

With the exception of the laboratory where the chemicals are being retrieved from, the site will continue to operate as normal.

Key facts

- The chemicals are in sealed glass bottles of good condition.
- The chemicals are being disposed of appropriately.
- The materials involved are solvents which are widely used in industry.
- The Explosive Ordnance Disposal team deal with hundreds of these issues every year, recovering chemicals from science laboratories in places like schools, universities and hospitals.
- Because this is happening on the Sellafield site we exercise extreme caution and leave nothing to chance.

[News story: Fundraising Event to End Polio in Afghanistan](#)

To mark World Polio Day, and to raise money for this worthy cause, the UK Humanitarian Team and The Rotary Club held a cultural event at the British Embassy.

The slogan of this year's Polio Eradication Campaign is "We are so close to eradicating Polio forever"

Speaking at the event, the Afghan Minister of Public Health Dr. Ferozuddin Feroz said:

We have worked very hard to reach every child, wherever he or she

lives. I would like to thank my frontline workers and our partners, who have worked tirelessly to eradicate this cruel disease.

The money collected by The Rotary Club of Kabul City will help vaccinate as many as 32,000 children in Afghanistan and will also assist with Polio Awareness Campaigns which will be launched across the country to raise awareness of the measures needed to tackle this horrendous disease in remote districts and villages.

Afghan Handicrafts

Afghan Artwork

The British Ambassador, Sir Nicholas Kay said:

The UK is donating £400 million of support, for eradicating polio in the final three countries where this disease is present – Nigeria, Pakistan and of course Afghanistan. I'm extremely pleased that today's event is focused on such an important challenge of our time –eradicating the cruel disease of polio, that just has no place in the 21st century.

There are still seven cases of Polio in Afghanistan, reduced from 13 in 2016.

Press release: Clampdown on child maintenance cheats

New powers to stop parents avoiding paying child maintenance that they owe have been announced.

If a parent owes child maintenance, deductions to recover that debt can currently only be made from a bank or building society account held solely by them. So a small minority of parents are cheating their way out of supporting their children by putting their money into a joint account with a partner.

New laws will be brought in to allow deductions to be made from joint accounts in order to recover child maintenance arrears.

It is believed closing this loophole could stop a number of parents getting away with not paying their child maintenance each year – leading to more than £390,000 additional child maintenance being collected.

Minister for Family Support, Housing and Child Maintenance Caroline Dinenage

said:

Our priority is for children to get the support they need. Only a small minority of parents try to cheat their way out of paying towards their children and this new power will be another tool to tackle those who do.

The government's response to a public consultation on joint account deductions has been published today. This sets out how deduction orders against joint accounts will work and the safeguards that will be in place to protect the other holder of the joint account.

These include:

- a deduction order only being imposed on a joint account when the paying parent does not have their own account, or there is not enough money in their own account
- only funds belonging to the paying parent being targeted, as before a deduction order is made on a joint account, data on that bank account will be collected and bank statements examined to establish which money in the account belongs to the paying parent
- existing safeguards already in place for deduction orders for child maintenance will apply to this new power, including the maximum deduction rate on regular orders being set at 40% of the paying parent's weekly income
- both account holders will be given the right to make their case before a deduction order is made

The new power will come into effect early next year.

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5130

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