

# [Collision with a tree and derailment at Balderton](#)

News story

Collision with a tree and derailment at Balderton, Cheshire, 26 November 2021.



The derailed train following the collision (image courtesy of Network Rail)

At around 23:15 hrs on 26 November 2021, an empty coaching stock train travelling between Wrexham General and Chester collided with part of a fallen tree on the approach to Balderton level crossing. The collision caused the train to derail its leading axle. At the time of the collision, the train was travelling at 50 mph (80 km/h). No injuries resulted from the collision, but there was some damage caused to the train and to local signalling equipment.

We have undertaken a [preliminary examination](#) into the circumstances surrounding this incident. Having assessed the evidence which has been gathered to date, we have decided to publish a [safety digest](#).

The safety digest will be made available on our website in the near future.

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## [New research shows 70% of international audiences view British](#)

# film and TV as high-quality

- Two-thirds of tourists to the UK are influenced by locations and landmarks from British made films and TV programmes
- £1.32 million from the UK Global Screen Fund will be shared between nine more international co-productions, helping to increase their reach abroad

Research commissioned by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport's UK Global Screen Fund has shown that UK film and TV play a vital role in influencing positive international opinion of the country and attracting global viewers to visit our world-famous locations and landmarks.

Nearly three-quarters (70%) of global audiences recognise "Britishness" as a mark of high-quality, with a third (30%) of adults saying that British film and television influences their view of the UK which is a testament to the sector's ability to showcase British talent with international success.

The research across 15 international territories also showed the positive impact of producing films and TV series in the UK. Two-thirds (66%) of people who have previously visited the country said that seeing British locations and landmarks in film or TV influenced their decision, showing the huge indirect impact of the UK screen sectors on other parts of our economy, including tourism and hospitality.

This valuable research comes as nine more co-productions are set to receive a share of £1.32 million from the £7 million UK Global Screen Fund, administered by the BFI. Supporting UK producers to become partners in international feature films, animations and documentaries, this funding is increasing their ability to reach international audiences, creating more skilled jobs, and boosting the long-term reach of UK content on a global scale.

Minister for the Creative Industries, Julia Lopez, said:

The UK independent production industry is world-leading, consistently serving up innovative, creative and inspirational content for big and small screens that wow audiences across the globe.

Thanks to our brilliant UK Global Screen Fund, we are helping to create skilled jobs and boosting the UK's international influence, which has a positive knock-on impact on tourism and the wider economy.

The nine productions benefitting from the UK Global Screen Fund awards include The Miracle Club, a UK/Ireland official co-production starring Maggie Smith, Kathy Bates and Laura Linney, The Tutor, a UK/Germany official co-production, and Ghastly Ghouls, a UK/Ireland TV animation.

Previously announced grant recipients include My Happy Ending, a UK/Israel official co-production, starring Miriam Margolyes and Andie MacDowell, which has recently wrapped production in Wales, and The Coop Troop, a UK/China/France animated co-production, which is now in the principal animation stage in Northern Ireland.

To further boost the international impact of UK film, television and video games, the UK Global Screen Fund has also supported the development of new branding to promote screen content around the world.

ScreenUK is an eye-catching and distinctive new brand to showcase and celebrate UK screen talent which will launch as a digital campaign, rolling out internationally over the coming months. Aiming to highlight high quality UK film, television and video games under a single brand banner, it will help distinguish and promote British content to international audiences.

Neil Peplow, Director of International, BFI said:

This extensive global research shaped how the new brand ScreenUK was developed, giving us valuable insights into how people around the world see us. When it comes to creativity and storytelling, the UK consistently produces outstanding talent and content and this report underlines how influential the UK film, tv and games sectors are on the global stage. We now have a huge opportunity to build on this reputation and show the full breadth, diversity and innovation we can offer to audiences, and support our screen businesses to succeed internationally.

Adeel Akhtar, star of Ali and Ava, said:

British independent film, unlike any other independent film from around the world (...) feels like it does act as a window into reality. Whether you're watching a Ken Loach film, or a Mike Leigh film, a Clio Barnard film, it's almost like you can open up a window in those places, actually open a window, and experience what it's like to be living in those areas in those parts of Britain.

Gugu Mbatha-Raw, star of Belle, said:

There's so much heart and authenticity in British films because they're often passion projects, they're labours of love. There's such a rich culture here, and such a deep culture of storytelling.

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Notes to Editors:

For more information on the UK Global Screen Fund, please visit the [BFI](#)

[website](#).

To see the UK Global Screen Fund commissioned research 'International Perceptions of and Engagement with UK Screen Content' from by the BFI please see the [report](#) on the BFI website.

Full list of funded co-productions:

- The Miracle Club, an Ireland/UK co-production starring Maggie Smith, Kathy Bates and Laura Linney. The feature film is produced by Chris Curling/Zephyr Films with Irish producer ShinAwil Limited and funding from Screen Ireland. It is being Executive Produced by Embankment Films.
- The Tutor, a Germany/UK co-production directed by acclaimed British television director Alice Troughton in her feature film debut. The film is produced by Camille Gatin/Poison Chef and Cassandra Sigsgaard/Jeva Films with German producer Judy Tossell / Egoli Tossell Pictures and funding from German regional funds, in association with Film Constellation.
- Drift, a UK/France co-production by Fortyninesixty Films and La Cinéfactory with Greek producer Heretic Films participating as a third party co-producer, as well as Cor Cordium in the US. It will be directed by Anthony Chen and will start principal photography in the UK in March 2022.
- The Ghastly Ghoul, co-produced by UK producer Lupus Films and Irish producer Dream Logic Animation Studios. This animated Halloween special is written by Emma Hogan and based on a story by Kealan O'Rourke. It will be directed by Kealan O'Rourke and Maurizio Parimbelli with assistant director Corinne Ladeinde. It will start principal animation at the end of January 2022.
- The Settlers, produced by Quiddity Films/Emily Morgan in the UK, is a co-production with Quijote Films in Chile, Rei Cine in Argentina, Cine-Sud in France and Snowglobe in Denmark. The feature film has funding secured from INCAA, CNCA and CNC Cinema Du Monde, and is also supported by IBERMEDIA and the Torino Film Lab. The project, directed by Felipe Gálvez, is joined by casting director Jessie Frost and will be sold by MK2 Films.
- Merkel, a co-production between the UK, Germany, and Denmark. The UK producers are Passion Pictures, Odd Girl Out Productions and the Scottish production company Sonja Henrici Creates. The German producer is LOOKSfilm and the Danish producer is Sigrid Jonsson Dyekjær p.g.a.. This feature documentary about the outgoing German chancellor Angela Merkel is directed by Eva Weber.
- Elephant Mother, a documentary co-production between the UK and Canada. Bungalow Town Productions is the majority co-producer with Canadian Inigo Films.
- Stolen, a co-production between the UK and South Africa. The feature film is co-produced by the UK producer Shantelle Rochester of Ida Rose with South African Uzanenkosi Mahlangu of Ants Multimedia. Michael Landes and Marsha Thomason are attached for the lead roles and it will be directed by Sheridan De Myers. The film is in receipt of funding from the South African fund Kwazulu Natal Film Commission.

- Bring them Down, a co-production between the UK, Belgium and Ireland. The feature film is co-produced by Stray Bear Productions, Frakas and Tailored and will be directed by Chris Andrews. MUBI, Screen Ireland and BAI (Broadcasting Authority Ireland) are all contributing to the finance of the film.
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## [Ofqual publishes NRT results and contextual analysis 2021](#)

Ofqual has today (9 December) published the results of the National Reference Test (NRT) in 2021. The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) Results Digest shows the 2021 results alongside results from previous years. In April and May 2021, more than 8,000 students from 216 schools took part in the fifth annual National Reference Test (NRT), administered by NFER. We are grateful to all those schools and students who took part. Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, fewer schools and students took part this year, but analysis by NFER and Ofqual suggests we can be confident that the 2021 results can be meaningfully compared with those in previous years. The tests are designed to provide evidence about the performance of 16-year-old students in English language and maths. The first live NRT, in 2017, was benchmarked against the first awards of the reformed GCSEs in English language and maths, and subsequent tests compare the performance of students with those in previous years.

Results are reported at three grade boundaries – grades 7, 5 and 4 – as expected percentages of students achieving those grades (and above).

In years when exams are taken, the NRT provides an additional source of evidence for exam boards when setting grade boundaries in GCSE English language and maths. In 2021 exams were cancelled, so NRT evidence could not be used as normal. It does, however, still provide important evidence of student performance.

This year, performance in maths showed a statistically significant downward change compared to 2020, but there was no change in English. The NRT in 2020 was unaffected by the pandemic, having taken place prior to the school closures in March 2020.

In maths, results show that the increases in performance since 2017 have reversed, and performance is now closer to the level seen in 2017 – the first year that the reformed 9 to 1 GCSEs were awarded. This is not surprising, given the disruption to students' education caused by the pandemic.

In English, results show no statistically significant difference from previous years. This is a little surprising, given the disruption to education caused by the pandemic, and in light of the changes seen in maths.

It may be that while the disruption meant that students had less practice in maths, they will have continued to use and respond to written and spoken English, in school in English as well as in other subjects, and outside school. These results suggest that the disruption caused by the pandemic might have had less impact on attainment in English than in maths.

More detail is provided in the [Results Digest](#) and in our [contextual analyses](#), and there is more information about the test itself in the [Background Information](#).

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## [Readout of meeting between DIT and DCMS Secretaries of State and US Commerce Secretary](#)

News story

International Trade Secretary Anne-Marie Trevelyan and Nadine Dorries, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, met US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo.



The UK Secretaries of State for International Trade and Digital, Culture, Media and Sport met the US Commerce Secretary in Washington DC.

The Secretary of State for International Trade and the Commerce Secretary discussed finding a way forward to allow both sides to engage in consultations on steel and aluminium early in the New Year, with a view to combating global excess capacity and addressing outstanding concerns on US tariffs and UK rebalancing measures.

The International Trade Secretary expressed her determination to find a solution that would be mutually beneficial for workers and businesses on both sides of the Atlantic, and would remove the need for retaliatory tariffs levied on US goods in the UK. She invited the Commerce Secretary to London

for further discussions in January.

The Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and the Commerce Secretary agreed to deepen the UK-US partnership on data, including promoting the trustworthy use and exchange of data across borders and bringing the benefits of data-driven technology to people and businesses.

The two ministers both recognised the fundamental importance of trusted international data use and transfers for scientific and technological innovation, improving public services, and fighting global challenges such as climate change and the Covid pandemic.

They welcomed the significant progress made by their respective teams to realise these benefits, and committed to continuing to work towards a UK-US adequacy decision – the status which guarantees high standards of protection for data so it can be freely transferred between two countries.

They agreed that the two countries should deepen cooperation on the global challenges and opportunities around data.

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## [Werrington Tunnel opens unlocking faster journeys on the East Coast Main Line](#)

- ground-breaking new tunnel dives under East Coast Main Line unlocking faster, more frequent and reliable journeys
- UK engineering first as 11,000-tonne curved concrete tunnel installed in one go
- opening is a major leap forward for the £1.2 billion East Coast upgrade, which will provide more seats and enable quicker journeys between London, the north of England and Scotland

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris has today (9 December 2021) officially opened the brand-new Werrington Tunnel which carries freight trains underneath the busy East Coast Main Line and ensures that passenger services will no longer be disrupted by freight trains crossing the tracks.

The tunnel will bring significant improvements to passenger journeys on the East Coast Main Line as it passes through Peterborough. By easing congestion on existing tracks, the project will unlock the potential to shave time off journeys, allow more passenger trains through, and will see improved reliability for journeys using the line daily.

This is another successful step in the £1.2 billion East Coast upgrade, which will provide more seats and enable quicker journeys between London, the north of England and Scotland.

The completed project will help pave the way for the massive infrastructure roll out across the north and Midlands recently announced in the [Integrated rail plan](#) (IRP). The IRP sets out £96 billion worth of investment into the railways that will deliver real and meaningful improvements to communities, supporting economic growth by transforming both east-west and north-south links. The IRP will bring benefits more quickly to more places, many of which would have gained little under previous plans.

Rail Minister, Chris Heaton-Harris said:

This country's railways have long been home to marvels of engineering and the new Werrington Tunnel shows that we are continuing that proud tradition.

Opening this new section of railway marks the end of a project which saw Network Rail engineers deliver an incredible feat installing an 11,000-tonne concrete tunnel, freeing up tracks and unlocking new opportunities for rail freight.

Our investment in the railways, including the unprecedented £96 billion we are spending through the integrated rail plan, means there are even more opportunities to move goods by rails, taking HGVs off the road.

The engineering needed to install the tunnel saw a UK-first, as the 11,000-tonne curved concrete tunnel, 1,000 tonnes heavier than the Eiffel Tower, was slid into place under the existing railway in January this year. The 'curved box' was built next to the East Coast Main Line in 9, interconnected sections. The structure is 155 metres long, 9.5 metres wide and 5.1 metres high, with 1 metre thick walls.

In July, the new track installed inside the tunnel was connected to the existing lines. Work continued to install the signalling system which was commissioned over a single weekend in September. Vital testing of the new tunnel then took place to enable trains to start using the infrastructure.

Rob McIntosh, Managing Director for Network Rail's Eastern region, said:

From building the huge concrete tunnel onsite next to the East Coast Main Line, to pushing it into place in a UK first for engineering, to installing new track and signalling equipment to connect it to the existing lines – it's been amazing to see the progress our teams have made on this ground-breaking project.

Passengers travelling between London, Peterborough, the north of England and Scotland will benefit from faster, more reliable



journeys as longer freight trains can now dive underneath the famous passenger route.

I'm proud of our team's brilliant response to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and how they reached major milestones on the project when it was at its peak. Using innovative methods, we've also been able to avoid major disruption for passengers, as services have continued running throughout the majority of the work. We want to thank passengers as well as people in the community for their continued patience.

The reforms in the [Williams-Shapps plan for rail](#) will set up rail freight for the future, investing in projects which boost capacity, improve performance and cut carbon emissions, as the government levels up the country and builds back greener.

Rail freight offers real benefits to the economy and environment – adding £2.5 billion to the UK economy per annum, removing over 7 million lorry journeys from our roads each year and emitting a quarter of the carbon dioxide of lorries per tonne kilometre travelled.

John Smith, CEO of GB Railfreight said:

The Werrington tunnel is a win for both consumers and the rail freight industry. It will not only improve passenger journeys, but also crucially unlock much-needed extra capacity on the network for freight services. This is an important investment by the government and furthers our industry's efforts to create a more efficient supply chain across the UK, whilst making crucial environmental and regional investment progress at the same time.

David Horne, Managing Director at LNER said:

This unique project has seen huge cross-industry collaboration, with Network Rail working together with train operators and project partners to deliver this essential part of the East Coast upgrade. The completion of this project will reduce delays and create capacity to enable more LNER services to be launched in our new timetable.

Simon Smith, Managing Director for Morgan Sindall Infrastructure, principal contractor on the project said:

We're incredibly proud to have worked closely with Network Rail and our supply chain to deliver the UK's first curved portal push on the East Coast Main Line upgrade at Werrington. The portal is a great example of the UK's leading engineering and innovation

expertise, harnessing these skills to enhance passengers' experiences between London and the north of England.