

[Report 15/2020: Near miss between a passenger train and cars at Norwich Road level crossing](#)

Press release

RAIB has today released its report into a near miss between a passenger train and cars at Norwich Road level crossing, New Rackheath, Norfolk, 24 November 2019.



View of Norwich Road level crossing about four seconds before the train reached the crossing (train forward-facing CCTV courtesy of Greater Anglia)

[R152020_201214_Norwich_Road](#)

PDF, 6.69MB, 41 pages

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Summary

On 24 November 2019, the barriers at Norwich Road level crossing, near New Rackheath, Norfolk, lifted as a passenger train from Norwich to Sheringham was approaching. Two road vehicles crossed the railway in front of the train, which reached the crossing less than half a second after the second road vehicle was clear.

The investigation found that there was contamination of the railhead in the area caused by leaf-fall and atmospheric conditions. This contamination had

not been removed because there were no railhead treatment trains on the Norwich to Sheringham line at weekends. The narrow band on which trains' wheels were running on the contaminated railhead, which was a consequence of the introduction of new trains, left the wheel-rail interface vulnerable to a poor electrical contact in the event of contamination. This caused the level crossing equipment to misinterpret the position of the train, and consequently it opened the crossing to road traffic while the train was closely approaching.

Recommendations

RAIB has made three recommendations addressed to Network Rail regarding the planning of autumn railhead treatment, guidance on the introduction of new trains and the configuration control of signalling equipment. RAIB also identified two learning points concerning the investigation of incidents and the signalling design process.

Simon French, Chief Inspector of Rail Accidents said:

"All too often the interaction between road users and the railway at level crossings leads to incidents and accidents. In many cases the actions of the road user are the immediate cause, but in this alarming event, deficiencies in the way the railway equipment operated placed two car drivers, and the people on a passenger train, in deadly danger through no fault of their own.

"Our investigation found that the installation at Norwich Road level crossing was a poor piece of engineering which had been in use for several years, and only luck had previously prevented an accident. A change in the type of train using the line exposed a weakness in the way that the crossing's electronic control equipment was configured. This meant that the system lost sight of the approaching train and commanded the barriers to rise. Lessons from the trial of the crossing equipment in other locations, and from incidents involving the same equipment in service, had not been applied to the crossing at Norwich Road. It is important that the railway industry learns from this incident, and makes sure that it has effective processes in place to transfer such learning to where it is needed."

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 07814 812293.

Newsdate: 14 December 2020

Published 14 December 2020

[Review on barriers to online and on-screen assessment published](#)

News story

An Ofqual review has found IT provision, security and staffing issues are some of the barriers to the adoption of online and on-screen assessments in England.



An [Ofqual review published today](#) has identified the key barriers to greater adoption of online and on-screen assessments in high stakes qualifications such as GCSEs and A Levels.

The review, commenced prior to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, focused on the operational barriers to delivery.

The evidence came from 3 sources: a review of research literature, a workshop with informed stakeholders, and interviews both with experts and with leaders who have introduced on-screen or online assessments elsewhere – New Zealand, Finland and Israel.

This work is particularly timely, with and increasing interest in online assessment in the wake of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The review, however, found five major barriers associated with taking this approach. None are insurmountable, given the will, but together they do confirm that we could not move large-scale standardised tests (such as A levels) on line in the immediate future.

1. IT provision in schools and colleges: current provision and the ability to prepare, at pace, varies widely. Different devices and browsers/operating systems could lead to compatibility issues with the tests and differences in performance, disadvantaging some students. The cost of additional IT provision would be significant.
2. Insufficient or unreliable internet and local network capabilities: substantial local differences (and issues in rural areas) were a major concern.
3. Staffing: a lack of specialist IT staff and issues around training other staff (teachers, examinations officers) were raised by schools and colleges.
4. Security: school and college experience was often limited to managing security for paper-based examinations and variability in IT infrastructure would make security risks difficult to manage consistently.
5. Planning: the most effective approaches to introducing online/on-screen testing depended on large-scale, collaborative efforts, with clear system leadership, investment, piloting and a well-considered appetite for risk. Robust risk management plans and mitigations and robust disaster recovery were needed. This would be highly challenging to implement in the timescales available.

The review also examined measures which might be taken to overcome the main barriers. While these must address the unique context of each jurisdiction, key themes include the importance of political support for any transition, commitment to a vision for the role that assessing on-screen or online plays in wider societal changes and a well-considered approach to addressing the inevitable risks of implementation.

While the barriers to on-screen assessment at scale in 2021 are significant and likely insurmountable, this report is intended to stimulate wider discussion on the future role that the use of technology may play in improving the validity and security of high stakes assessments taken in schools and colleges.

Published 14 December 2020

The DBS Conference for 2021 has been announced!



The Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) is pleased to announce its second conference! The event, which will be held virtually, will take place on 24th and 25th March 2021, and the theme of this year's conference is **Making Recruitment Safer – Looking to the Future**.

Registration is now open. Find out how to register below.

The conference will bring together a broad mix of knowledge, experience and expertise to look to the future, and explore how we can all play our part in making recruitment safer.

The event will be an opportunity to:

- Learn about the ways in which DBS is developing its services to meet your needs, and how you can contribute to this
- Hear from experts who have lived experience of abuse and harm
- Connect with colleagues from across the safeguarding community
- Share experiences and best practices
- Collaborate with others to develop and build successful practices

To register for the conference, or find out more about the programme and speakers, [visit the DBS Conference website](#).

Published 14 December 2020

Last updated 27 February 2021 [+ show all updates](#)

1. 27 February 2021

Registration for the DBS Conference is now open. Link to the Conference website added.

2. 14 December 2020

First published.

Government sets out plans for clean energy system and green jobs boom to build back greener

- Government sets out historic plans to clean up our energy system and keep bills affordable as we transition to net zero
- Energy White Paper will unleash a green economic recovery by supporting up to 220,000 jobs over the next decade across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
- keeping consumer bills affordable, especially for the vulnerable and lowest income households, at the centre of plans

The UK government today set out ambitious plans to clean up our energy system, support up to 220,000 British jobs, and keep bills affordable as we transition to net zero by 2050.

Building on the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, the Energy White Paper sets out specific steps the government will take over the next decade to cut emissions from industry, transport, and buildings by 230 million metric tonnes – equivalent to taking 7.5 million petrol cars off the road permanently – while supporting hundreds of thousands of new green jobs.

We will put affordability at the heart of the UK's decisive shift away from fossil fuels by boosting competition in the energy retail market to tackle the 'loyalty penalty' – longstanding customers who pay more than new ones – and by providing at least £6.7 billion in support to the fuel poor and most vulnerable over the next 6 years.

Business and Energy Secretary Alok Sharma said:

Today's plan establishes a decisive and permanent shift away from our dependence on fossil fuels, towards cleaner energy sources that will put our country at the forefront of the global green industrial revolution.

Through a major programme of investment and reform, we are determined to both decarbonise our economy in the most cost-effective way, while creating new sunrise industries and revitalising our industrial heartlands that will support new green jobs for generations to come.

At every step of the way, we will place affordability and fairness at the heart of our reforms – unleashing a wave of competition so consumers get the best deals possible on their bills, while protecting the vulnerable and fuel poor with additional financial support.

With this long-term plan, we are turning climate ambition into climate action – putting the UK firmly on the course to net zero to end our contribution to climate change as we build back greener.

Alongside the Energy White Paper, the government has also confirmed that it is to enter negotiations with EDF in relation to the Sizewell C project in Suffolk as it considers options to enable investment in at least one nuclear power station by the end of this Parliament. If the project proceeds, it could create thousands of new jobs during construction and operation.

This is the next step in considering the Sizewell C project, and negotiations will be subject to reaching a value for money deal and all other relevant approvals, before any final decision is taken on whether to proceed. The successful conclusion of these negotiations will be subject to thorough scrutiny and needs to satisfy the government's robust legal, regulatory and national security requirements.

Emma Pinchbeck, Chief Executive at Energy UK, said:

Today's White Paper reveals the scale and opportunity of the energy transition, with aims in it to at least double the amount of clean electricity produced today, start making our homes warmer and greener, and help the switch to electric vehicles.

The energy industry will do our bit to innovate, supporting our customers so that they benefit from the net zero transition and investing in the green infrastructure we need – but clear policies from government help us do that. This is what the White Paper – and other publications over the next year – should provide.

Rain Newton-Smith, Chief Economist at the Confederation of British Industry, said:

The Energy White Paper is an important next step in our plans to reach our net zero emissions target. Action is needed now, and the welcome focus on job creation around the country, developing sustainable low-carbon industries, and ensuring the transition is fair for consumers will all help us achieve our ambitious climate goals.

Business stands ready to deliver the investment and innovation needed to turn ambition into reality, and the proposals outlined in the Energy White Paper will give business further confidence to deliver new infrastructure, including electric vehicle charging, renewable power generation and low-carbon upgrades to people's homes.

Hugh McNeal, Chief Executive at Renewable UK, said:

Today's white paper provides greater clarity to the companies investing across the UK to deliver our net zero emissions target. Wind and renewable energy will be at the centre of our future energy system, providing the clean electricity and green hydrogen we need to decarbonise our economy. The next generation of onshore and offshore wind farms will bring tens of billions of pounds of investment to support a green recovery and create thousands of jobs across the country as we transition away from fossil fuels. To meet the goals set out in the white paper, it's clear that we have to double-down on renewables as the main source of energy for our homes, transport and industry.

Core parts of the Energy White Paper backing our ambitious plans include:

1. Supporting up to 220,000 jobs in the next 10 years. This includes long-term jobs in major infrastructure projects for power generation, carbon capture storage and hydrogen, as well as a major programme of retrofitting homes for improved energy efficiency and clean heat.
2. Transforming the UK's energy system from one that was historically based on fossil fuels to one that is fit for a net zero economy, changing how we heat our homes and travel, doubling our electricity use, and harnessing renewable energy supplies.
3. Keeping bills affordable for consumers by making the energy retail market truly competitive. This will include offering people a simple method of switching to a cheaper energy tariff, and testing automatically switching consumers to fairer deals to tackle "loyalty penalties".
4. Generating emission-free electricity by 2050 with a trajectory that will see us have overwhelmingly decarbonised power in the 2030s. Low carbon electricity will be a key enabler of our transition to a net zero economy with demand expected to double due to transport and low carbon heat.
5. Establishing a UK Emissions Trading Scheme (UK ETS) from 1 January 2021 to replace the current EU ETS at the end of the Transition Period. It increases ambition on reducing emissions, and provides continuation of emissions trading for UK businesses and certainty on how they operate.
6. Continuing to explore a range of financing options for new nuclear with developers including the Regulated Asset Base (RAB) funding model, which could help secure private investment and cost consumers less in the long run. Given the scale of the financing challenge, we will also consider

the potential role of government finance during construction, provided there is clear value for money for consumers and taxpayers.

7. Delivering ambitious electricity commitments through our world-beating commitment to deliver 40GW of offshore wind by 2030, including 1GW of floating wind, enough to power every home in the country – while attracting new offshore wind manufacturers to the UK.
8. Investing £1 billion in state-of-the-art carbon capture storage in four industrial clusters by 2030 – sucking carbon out of industrial processes to stop emissions escaping to the air. Four low carbon clusters will be set up by 2030, and at least one fully net zero cluster by 2040, stimulating the market to attract new investors and manufacturers to reinvigorate our industrial heartlands.
9. Kick-starting the hydrogen economy by working with industry to aim for 5GW of production by 2030, backed up by a new £240m net zero Hydrogen Fund for low carbon hydrogen production.
10. Investing £1.3 billion to accelerate the rollout of charge points for electric vehicles in homes, streets and on motorways as well as up to £1 billion to support the electrification of cars, including for the mass-production of the batteries needed for electric vehicles. The rollout has levelling up at its heart, and will support economic growth across the UK – including in our strong manufacturing bases in the Midlands and the North East – while supporting the 169,000 jobs in our world-leading automotive sector.
11. Supporting the lowest paid with their bills through a £6.7 billion package of measures that could save families in old inefficient homes up to £400. This includes extending the Warm Home Discount Scheme to 2026 to cover an extra three quarters of a million households and giving eligible households £150 off their electricity bills each winter. The £2 billion Green Homes Grant announced by the Chancellor has been extended for a further year in the Ten Point Plan.
12. Moving away from fossil fuel boilers, helping to make people's homes warmer, whilst keeping bills low. By the mid-2030s we expect all newly installed heating systems to be low carbon or to be appliances that we are confident can be converted to a clean fuel supply.
13. Supporting North Sea oil and gas transition for the people and communities most affected by the move away from oil and gas production, ensuring that the expertise of the oil and gas sector be drawn on in developing carbon capture and storage and hydrogen production to provide new green jobs.

Plans to create jobs through the Energy White Paper build on the unprecedented £280 billion support package that has been provided as part of the government's Plan for Jobs to safeguard jobs in every region and nation of the UK, with support now extended until March 2021. This builds on the nine million jobs already protected through the furlough scheme, £13 billion provided for the self-employed, and billions of pounds in tax deferrals and grants for businesses.

Kick-starting the process of ensuring fairness and affordability for bill-payers will be a series of consultations in spring 2021 to create the framework to introduce opt-in switching, consider reforms to the current

roll-over tariff arrangements, and a call for evidence to begin a strategic dialogue between government, consumers and industry on affordability and fairness.

The UK ETS will promote cost-effective decarbonisation, allowing businesses to cut carbon where it is cheapest to do so, promoting innovation and growth for UK businesses. It will be the world's first net zero carbon cap and trade market, and a crucial step towards achieving the UK's target for net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

The scheme is more ambitious than the EU system it replaces – from day one the cap on emissions allowed within the system will be reduced by 5%, and we will consult in due course on how to align with net zero. This gives industry the certainty it needs to invest in low carbon technologies.

Notes to editors

1. The Energy White Paper builds further on the Prime Minister's Ten Point Plan for clean energy, transport, nature and innovative technologies, as part of our plans to forge ahead with eradicating its contribution to climate change by 2050, particularly crucial in the run up to the COP26 climate summit in Glasgow next year. In the run up to COP26 we will bring forward a series of sectoral strategies, and our overarching Net Zero Strategy, which will set out more detail on how we will meet our net zero target and ambitious carbon budgets.
 2. The plan – which is part of the PM's mission to level up across the country – will mobilise £12 billion of government investment to create and support up to 250,000 highly-skilled green jobs in the UK, and spur over three times as much private sector investment by 2030.
 3. At the centre of the Ten Point Plan are the UK's industrial heartlands, including in the North East, North West, Yorkshire and the Humber, West Midlands, Scotland and Wales, which will drive forward the green industrial revolution and build green jobs and industries of the future.
 4. The government will also continue to engage with other developers with interest in the UK new nuclear market. This includes by creating an Advanced Nuclear Fund of up to £385 million to support the development of Small Modular Reactors and to support research and development into more advanced nuclear technologies, such as advanced modular reactors, as these technologies progress towards commercialisation.
 5. The government is open to linking the UK ETS internationally in principle and we are considering a range of options, but no decision on our preferred linking partners has yet been made.
 6. The government has already legislated to establish the new UK ETS, and the technical system underpinning the scheme is in final stages of development and on track to be ready on time.
 7. The UK ETS has been designed by the UK government jointly with the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive.
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Landmark change to blood donation criteria

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01 MONDAY 14 DECEMBER

LANDMARK CHANGE TO BLOOD DONATION CRITERIA

New criteria focuses on individual behaviours, and lifts a blanket deferral for men who have had sex with men in the last three months. Policy is based on findings from the 'FAIR' report. Changes will have no impact on the safety of blood donated in the UK.

Men who have sex with men in a long-term relationship will be able to donate blood in England following changes to blood donation criteria announced by Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock today. The move, which will also be implemented in each of the devolved administrations, sees the UK become one of the first countries in the world to adopt a more individualised risk-based approach to donor selection criteria.

Following recommendations from the Advisory Committee for the Safety of Blood Tissues and Organs (SaBTO), donors who have had one sexual partner and who have been with their sexual partner for more than three months, will be eligible to donate regardless of their gender, the gender of their partner, or the type of sex they have.

The 'For Assessment of Individualised Risk' (FAIR) steering group, a collaboration of UK blood services and LGBT charities led by NHSBT and established in 2019, conducted extensive research into the risks associated with more individualised blood donor selection policy. Their report, published today, proposed a move away from a blanket three month deferral for men who have had sex with men, and instead to identifying a wider range of 'highest risk behaviours' which applies to all donors, regardless of sexuality.

This change will be implemented by Summer 2021.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

This landmark change to blood donation is safe and it will allow many more people, who have previously been excluded by donor selection criteria, to take the opportunity to help save lives.

This is a positive step and recognises individuals for the actions they take, rather than their sexual preference.

Minister for Blood Donation, Lord Bethell:

By closely examining the latest evidence relating to blood donation and sexual behaviour, we have been able to bring forward more inclusive policy to allow people to safely donate blood to save lives.

I am grateful to the members of the FAIR steering group, including LGBT charities, for the work they have done over the last 18 months to enable us to bring this policy, which many have called for, to fruition.

In a further step forward for equality in blood donation, under the new selection process, all donors will complete the same donor health check prior to donation, regardless of gender or sexuality, recognising that all donors, including heterosexual men and women, have potential to carry infections.

Anyone who has had the same sexual partner in the last three months will be eligible to donate and men who have sex with men will no longer be asked to declare if they have had sex with another man or their sexuality, making blood donation gender neutral and more inclusive.

Su Brailsford, Associate Medical Director at NHS Blood and Transplant and chair of FAIR said:

Patients rely on the generosity of donors for their lifesaving blood and so we welcome the decision to accept the FAIR recommendations in full. We are proud to have the safest blood supply in the world and I'm pleased to have concluded that these new changes to donor selection will keep blood just as safe.

This is just the beginning. We will keep collaborating with LGBT representatives, patients and donors so when we make these changes our process for getting accurate donor information about sexual behaviours is inclusive and done well. FAIR has also made a recommendation to government that further evidence-based reviews are needed for other deferrals such as how we determine risk based on travel.

New donor criteria will also defer those who have engaged in chem sex, defined as a drug taken immediately before or during sex to enhance sexual interaction, in the last 3 months or been treated for syphilis in the last 12 months.

The Chair of SaBT0, Prof James Neuberger, said:

As SaBT0 Chair, I welcome the announcement made by Ministers to update the donor selection criteria. SaBT0 members during the last meeting unanimously agreed that changes proposed by the FAIR steering group would not negatively impact on the safety of blood supply so it's good to see the government taking positive steps

towards equality, informed by evidence.

Eamonn Ferguson, Professor of Health Psychology at University of Nottingham said:

The FAIR project was novel in that it triangulated epidemiological and behavioural science research to identify the best combination of a question to use for the policy change. The behavioural research contributed by exploring the appropriateness, perceived recall accuracy, reliability and potential for self-deferral of these questions, as well as identifying a subset of questions that reliably predicted self-report sexual risk taking.

This was achieved using a variety of psychometric analyses of donor and non-donor surveys, and interview with donor staff, donors, non-donors, MSM and patients. The results from these analyses triangulated with the epidemiological evidence and provided additional insights into ways to implement the policy changes.

Dr Michael Brady, Medical Director at Terrence Higgins Trust, said:

Our first priority must be to ensure the safety of the blood supply in the UK. We welcome the move to a more individualised risk assessment approach to blood donation. The UK is leading the way in ensuring that blood donation is more inclusive and now will allow many more gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men to donate blood.

There is certainly more work to do and we will continue to work to ensure that our blood donation service is inclusive, evidence based and both maximises the numbers who can donate while ensuring our blood supply is safe.

Ethan Spibey, founder of FreedomToDonate, said:

We have campaigned for over 6 years for the restrictions on men who have sex with men (MSM) donating blood to be updated and warmly welcome this announcement.

This means the UK has one of the world's most progressive blood donation policies and more people than ever will be able to safely donate for those who need it. The work of the FAIR steering group shows that simply being a MSM is not a good enough reason to exclude someone from donating blood.

We've made great progress and look forward to continuing to work with the Government and others to ensure as many people who could

safely donate blood can do so.

Nancy Kelley (she/her), Chief Executive, Stonewall said:

We want to see a blood donation system that allows the greatest number of people to donate safely. This change will help ensure more gay and bi men can donate blood, and represents an important first step towards a donation selection policy entirely based on an individualised assessment of risk. We will continue to work with Government to build on this progress and ensure that more people, including LGBT+ people, can donate blood safely in the future.

While we welcome today's news, we know much more still needs to be done to tackle the challenges that lead to gay and bi men, along with other groups of people including Black African communities, sex workers, and trans communities, being at higher risk of acquiring HIV and other STIs. The recommendations of the HIV Commission set out a clear roadmap for achieving the UK Government's commitment to ending new HIV infections by 2030, and we will continue to work with the Government and other charities to make this a reality.

Deborah Gold, Chief Executive at National AIDS Trust, said:

We welcome this step towards a fairer system of individualised, evidence-based assessment of risk for people who choose to donate blood. It's important that the Government now builds on this to address the remaining inequalities in blood donation policies, such as restrictions for people who have ever injected drugs. In doing so it should prioritise protecting the safety of the blood supply while maximising the potential for people to give blood.

We now need to see action on the endemic health inequalities that lead to the disproportionate impact of HIV on some groups including gay and bisexual men and people from black African communities. This includes the Government meeting its commitment to end new HIV transmissions by 2030 and implementing the findings of the HIV Commission, which set out how this can be achieved.

- The FAIR steering group concluded this updated method of selection criteria will maintain the world-leading safe supply of blood in the UK.
- Blood donation guidelines are set by DHSC and based on recommendations from SaBTO, which advises Health Ministers in all four UK nations, the UK blood services, and the NHS more widely on the most appropriate ways to ensure the safety of blood, cells, tissues and organs for transfusion

or transplantation.

- In the UK there's less than one in a million chance of an unsuitable blood donation being used in patient care.

*Following implementation, monitoring by the UK blood services will ensure new donor selection criteria do not have any unforeseen consequence, any changes in acute and chronic infections in new and regular donors are recorded and the development of methods to monitor overall deferral.

*A post-implementation survey to obtain feedback from donors on the proposed change in pre-donation questions will also be developed.