Safety, health and environment committee report

I am pleased to present the committee's report on its activities over the past year, alongside its anticipated activities for 2019/20, which show another year of overall improvements in safety performance on the railway network in England, Scotland and Wales.

While our targets for corporate safety were met, the strong performance on close calls raised actually represented a decrease on the previous year and was split across the functions of the business. This reduction did not necessarily represent poorer performance: as close call reporting behaviour has become established, we would have expected to see improved quality and less short-term focus on numbers.

While we saw fewer close calls raised, an improved close calls close-out rate was achieved. Approximately 90 per cent of close calls were closed within 90 days compared to a target of 85 per cent and last year's year-end figure of 82.2 per cent. It is important for the business to continue to check that close calls are only closed-out when the corrective action has been completed rather than simply planned.

The work and improvements on train accident risk continued the approach in earlier years focusing on proactive work and we significantly exceeded our targets for the year. Nine of the top-10 milestones to reduce level crossing risk were delivered by year end, and routes reduced the number of missing narrative risk assessments from 450 to 21 and improved timely reviews. Two accidental level crossing deaths were reported, fewer than in any other previous year.

Sadly, two workforce fatalities were recorded during the year interrupting a ten-year trend in which there had been none. One occurred at Bearsden station (Scotland) and the other at Stoat's Nest Junction (Surrey). Other safety events included a member of staff sustaining third degree burns at Godinton substation (Kent) and two other members of staff who sustained serious injuries in a rail vehicle collision at Cholmondeston (Cheshire).

Tragically, since the end of the 2019 financial year two of our colleagues in South Wales lost their lives while working on the track near Port Talbot. We are undertaking our own investigation and cooperating fully with the investigations under way by the British Transport Police and Rail Accident Investigation Branch.

We extend our sympathies to the relatives and friends of those who died, to those who were injured and their relatives and friends, and to all colleagues who were affected.

This year saw an increase in the number of high potential incidents involving workforce safety. October experienced the most recorded in one period since records began in 2016. The year also saw an increase in near-misses with staff, and two separate periods of the year recorded eight near-misses. The causes ranged from signaller error in simple line blockages with no additional protection, to ineffective or ad hoc systems of work being used by site staff.

On a more positive note, improvements in the workforce safety environment included a decrease of 18 per cent in the lost time injury frequency rate (LTIFR) from the previous year. Additionally, Hand Arm Vibration Syndrome compliance improved notably in relation to completion of the annual questionnaire, assessment by an occupational nurse, and referral to an occupational health physician, if required. All of these have improved significantly over the past two years.

Although trespass event numbers declined slightly during the year, the number of accidental trespasser deaths did not achieve the target we had set. Separately, the number of suicides on our infrastructure remained at similar levels to the previous year, falling from 204 to 203.

The Committee met four times in 2018/19, including a site visit to Eastleigh Delivery Unit and Long Welded Rail Depot, Eastleigh, Hampshire.

Chris Gibb,
Chair, Safety, health and environment committee

15 July 2019

Safety, health and environment committee report continued

Committee members	Formal appointment to the committee	Number of meetings attended during the year
Chris Gibb	Nov 2013	6/6
Rob Brighouse	Jan 2016	6/6
Sir Peter Hendy CBE	Oct 2015	6/6
Mike Putnam	Feb 2018	5/6
David Noyes*	Dec 2018	2/2

*David Noyes was appointed to the Board on 6 July 2018.

❯ Committee attendees

The chief executive, the director of health and safety, the chief engineer for systems assurance, the managing director for Infrastructure Projects, the director of Risk and Assurance, the group general counsel or his nominee, the managing director Strategic Operations, and the director for Safety, Technical and Engineering and some of his direct reports attend meetings by invitation.

Mick Cash, general secretary of the RMT Union is invited to attend committee meetings and participates in discussions. This aids scrutiny and challenge and enhances transparency of the work of the committee.

Ian Prosser CBE, both chief inspector of railways and director, Railway Safety at the Office of Road and Rail (ORR), attends committee meetings twice a year to present the regulator's view on Network Rail's safety performance.

❯ Role of the committee

The committee's role is to monitor the integrity of the methods of discharge of the safety, health and environmental responsibilities of Network Rail and to satisfy itself as to the adequacy and effectiveness of the safety, health and environment policies and strategies within the Network Rail group.

The committee's activities include:
- Reviewing the group's safety, health and environment strategies, systems, policies and practices.
- Considering significant corporate and individual safety, health and environment risks and whether management is managing these effectively.
- Reviewing the scope and results of any safety, health and environment audits on the effectiveness of the group's safety, health and environment strategies, systems, policies and practices.
- Considering the major findings of internal and external investigations and management's response to them.

Following each committee meeting, the chair provides a summary of the committee's activity to the next Board meeting and makes recommendations as appropriate.

The committee's terms of reference can be found on our website: **www.networkrail.co.uk**

Matters considered by the committee during the year included:
- Ongoing review of safety, health and environment performance for each of the 13 periods which comprise Network Rail's year.
- Discussion of changes to safety validation of organisational change in general but also specifically in relation to the Putting Passengers First programme, and the significant restructuring of Network Rail and its routes, the first phase of which will start in June 2019.
- The 2018/19 safety, health and environment (SHE) objectives and linkages to Control Period 6 (CP6) SHE objectives.
- SHE related incidents within Network Rail and contractor operations including lessons learned from incidents such as those at Bearsden station, Stoats Nest Junction, Godinton, and Cholmondeston.
- The delivery of infrastructure projects safely and the impact on that scorecard.
- Discussion of improvements to documentation and guidance in relation to safe systems of work which would be tailored to specific tasks, work schemes, roles, and locations.
- Presentations from a number of duty holders and route managing directors to demonstrate and discuss the adequacy and effectiveness of their safety, health and environment systems. These included; South East, London North West, Anglia and Wessex.
- Discussion of the current safety governance and assurance arrangements for the group in respect of safety leadership and close call reporting and close out and delivery of the required outcomes and improvement plans.
- Review of the findings from corporate-level audits and agreed action plans including the close out of overdue actions and the dissemination of issues and solutions across the network.
- Discussion of the social performance strategy and how value is created by Network Rail's business and supply chain managing the railway's impact on customers, lineside neighbours, employees and the general public.

- Deep dive reviews into, amongst other things:
  - > Public safety
  - > Devolution of safety management
  - > Near-miss analysis and action plan
  - > Train accident risk including the impact of human factors
- Discussion of fatigue risk management to reduce the number of fatigue-related accidents and injuries through better planning, improved employee wellbeing, improved understanding and awareness of fatigue, and better management of the associated risks.

- Discussion of the Network Change plan for the eradication of effluent discharge to track which will significantly improve the working environment for our staff.
- Examination and reference to lessons learned from international rail accidents and high potential incidents.

Particular areas of focus for 2019/20 will include:
- Prioritisation and implementation of workstreams to further reduce train accident risk building on work undertaken in 2018/19.
- Assurance that safety management procedures continue to be strengthened particularly in relation to the further devolution to region and route levels, and changes across the company.
- Improved controls to reduce near-misses between trains and track workers.
- Station safety performance and future plans to mitigate the risk of increasing passenger numbers.
- Reducing risk at level crossings through closure, upgrade and implementation of technological solutions.
- Prioritisation of Network Rail's responsibilities and implementation of workstreams for managing environmental matters including those in relation to the vegetation management review by John Varley.
- Ongoing examination of international rail accidents and high potential incidents and the opportunities for applying lessons learned.
- Public safety including measures to reduce accidents through trespass incidents and suicides.
- Presentations from a number of duty holders and route managing directors to demonstrate and discuss the adequacy and effectiveness of their safety, health and environment systems.