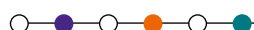


Safety, health and environmental compliance committee report



Mike Putnam



Chair, safety, health and environmental compliance committee
14 July 2026

I am pleased to report on the work of the safety, health and environmental compliance committee during 2025/26 a year in which Network Rail continued to strengthen the adequacy and effectiveness of its safety, health and environmental arrangements.

In fulfilling the responsibilities set out in our terms of reference, the committee oversaw significant safety and health strategies, systems, policies and practices that support the delivery of Network Rail's business objectives, together with compliance with environmental legal and regulatory requirements. We remain committed to providing effective oversight and challenge in support of a safe, reliable and sustainable railway for passengers, the workforce and communities across Great Britain. Running a safe railway remains our priority, with clear focus on ensuring that people feel safe whether they are working on, living near or travelling on the railway.

Committee attendees

The chair of the committee served as the acting chair of the Network Rail Board until 1 February, when the current Network Rail Board chair was appointed. Attendance at subsequent committee meetings was by invitation of the committee. The chief executive and other executive directors attend meetings by invitation of the committee. The group safety and engineering director and the chief health, safety and wellbeing officer attend meetings regularly to support the committee's work. The director of risk and internal audit attends each meeting to provide updates on the safety, health and environmental audit plan, including audit findings, overdue actions and emerging themes.

The general secretary of National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT), is invited to attend committee meetings to support transparency and independent challenge. HM chief inspector of railways of the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) attends meetings by invitation and provides six-monthly updates on safety performance and regulatory developments.

Roles and responsibilities of the committee

The committee supports the Board by reviewing the adequacy and effectiveness of the organisation's safety, health and environmental strategies,

systems, policies and practices, and by promoting a culture of continuous improvement across the group. In accordance with its terms of reference, the committee's responsibilities include:

- reviewing safety and health strategies, systems, policies and practices, and compliance with environmental legal and regulatory requirements
- considering areas of significant corporate and individual safety, health and environmental risks, and assessing whether these risks are managed effectively
- reviewing the safety, health and environmental governance and managerial structures across the group
- reviewing the scope and results of internal and external safety, health and environmental audits, including assessments of their effectiveness, independence and cost-efficiency
- reviewing environmental legal and regulatory compliance audits
- considering major findings from internal and external investigations and monitoring management's response
- making recommendations to the nominations and remuneration committee on relevant performance outcomes
- reporting key matters to the Board after each meeting
- operating with no executive powers in respect of its recommendations
- commissioning external professional advice where required to support fulfilment of its responsibilities.

Principal activities during the year

Safety, health and environmental performance

Throughout the year, the committee reviewed safety, health and environmental performance at each meeting. Some members of the committee also undertook a site visit to Milton Keynes to gain first-hand insight into occupational health practice. These reviews included detailed consideration of workforce safety trends, train accident precursor indicators, public safety at level crossings and operational safety events across regions. The committee examined how effectively the organisation's systems, standards and controls were being applied and whether they continued to support a safe and reliable railway.

A significant element of performance oversight related to occupational health, where the committee received updates on clinical capacity, triage arrangements and work-related mental ill health trends, particularly where these affected safety-critical roles and operational resilience.

Significant incidents and emerging risks

The committee reviewed a range of operational safety risks, including those affecting infrastructure, assets and railway operations, and considered the adequacy of controls and the organisation's readiness to manage evolving risks. This included scrutiny of risks linked to climate impacts, asset degradation and operational behaviours. The committee also reviewed passenger and public safety risks, while monitoring progress in strengthening risk controls, improving user awareness and enhancing collaboration with industry partners.

Governance and organisational structure

The committee reviewed the condition of infrastructure assets including structures, tunnels, earthworks, buildings and electrification systems. This included oversight of progress with building and fire safety programmes, the consistency of examination and inspection regimes, and the organisation's ability to identify and address defects promptly.

Environmental performance and compliance were also monitored, including regulatory requirements, incident management, environmental assurance of supply-chain partners and leadership behaviours influencing compliance. The committee reviewed preparatory work relating to asset and environmental resilience under future weather and climate scenarios.

Audit and assurance oversight

The committee scrutinised the findings of internal and external audits covering compliance, environmental management, occupational health, asset management, signalling, switches and crossings, maintenance planning and product acceptance. Through its review of audit outcomes, the committee sought assurance regarding the effectiveness of key controls, the adequacy of management responses and the timely implementation of corrective actions. We also reviewed the effectiveness, independence and the assurance arrangements in place. We maintained

oversight of assurance improvement plans, including actions to strengthen inspection quality, improve verification processes, clarify accountability for actions arising from investigations and embed audit recommendations into routine management practice.

The committee reviewed major findings from investigations. We monitored the organisation's engagement with the ORR and RAIB, including the timeliness and effectiveness of responses to regulatory recommendations. We reviewed these findings, monitored the timely closure of actions and approved the internal audit plan for 2026.

Environmental compliance

The committee reviewed compliance with environmental legal and regulatory compliance, including the management of environmental incidents, the effectiveness of controls, and the assurance applied to supply chain partners. We also considered the role of leadership behaviours and organisational culture in maintaining environmental compliance.

During the year, the committee received updates on pollution-related risks and performance, including actions to strengthen prevention, response and learning. We monitored the effectiveness of controls in mitigating environmental impacts and sought assurance that lessons identified were applied consistently across the organisation.

Throughout the year, the committee-maintained oversight of the organisation's preparedness for

GBR, including developments in safety reporting, data integration and readiness for whole-system safety governance.

Annual site visit

During the year, some members visited the Milton Keynes Occupational Health Centre to take a first-hand look at occupational health practice, and members also visited the National Operations Centre and Euston station, gaining insight into operational delivery, workforce health arrangements and passenger risks. These visits supported the committee's understanding of how policies and standards are applied in practice and informed committee discussions.

Performance related pay

During the year, the committee considered safety performance outcomes, including performance against the Fatalities and Weighted Index (FWI) at both national and regional level. Following consideration by correspondence, the committee endorsed the executive committee's recommendation to the nominations and remuneration committee that zero performance-related pay should apply in respect of the FWI measure in the national scorecard for the 2025 performance year. The committee also endorsed the executive committee's recommendation that zero performance-related pay in respect of the FWI measure for Eastern, reflecting the seriousness with which the committee considered safety outcomes. These recommendations were made as a matter of committee judgement, notwithstanding that no scorecard adjustment was otherwise required.

Planned activities for 2026/27

The committee will focus on:

- embedding the assurance framework
- strengthening workforce safety arrangements
- overseeing building and fire safety frameworks
- monitoring environmental compliance
- tracking progress against key recommendations
- improving structures, earthworks and weather-related risk management
- supporting preparations for GBR.