Comment

The Rail Safety and Standards Board has now uttered its final words, at least as a formal report, on the unhappy Ufton Nervet collision last November. Seven people lost their lives when an HST hit a car, which was apparently in the charge of a suicidal motorist. We won’t get confirmation of that until the inquest can be completed later this year, but there seems to be little evidence to the contrary.

It is about the only conclusion which is (rightly) missing from the RSSB document. Once upon a time, after an accident there was just one report, from Her Majesty’s Railway Inspectorate. The gentlemen of the Inspectorate were not to be rushed. They said nothing in public while they meditated on causes and effects, and commissioned detailed drawings of track layouts.

In due course, a solemn and carefully written document in blue covers would go on sale at Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, and that was that — until the next time.

Regrettably, railway accidents still happen, but no longer can we wait for the HMRI to tell us about it after a decent pause for deliberation. Now, within days, the HSE (soon to be the ORR) must issue a ‘preliminary’ or ‘interim’ report. The RSSB, too, now publishes its own ruminations, again in serial form.

There is nothing wrong with the intention, which is to run as safe a railway as is practicable. It is an admirable policy.

It is in the execution of the task that we start to waver. The amount of research which the RSSB is now proposing will not come cheap. Indeed, it includes a plea for more funding for the Level Crossings Group, which it is going to need.

But the reality (sorry about that word) is that Ufton was a very rare event. When one train crashed into the back of another at Harrow & Wealdstone in 1952 (and was then hit by a third), it was plain that some form of ATC was desperately needed on all main lines. It duly came to pass, and although AWS was not perfect it has probably saved a lot of lives.

But it is hard not to detect a faint note of hysteria in the latest RSSB report. Should window hammers have clearer instructions? Should the front ends of HSTs be rebuilt? Should we all hide under the bed until the wicked train has gone by? Should...? Should...? It is as if the railway, which is the innocent party if ever there was one, must still atone for a guilt which isn’t there. Drivers (that is to say, motorists) are responsible too. But they cannot be trusted to stop at bright, flashing red lights. The railway must spend billions to save them from their own folly. Even Ufton crossing itself might now be closed, simply because one man decided to end his life on it (we think).

The ultimate solution will be to bring back the legendary man with the red flag. But if this guilt trip goes much further, this time he will be walking in front of the train.

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How links work

You can navigate quickly around RM by clicking on links. Links may take you to another page or to an external website. In some cases, a link may open a multimedia file, such as a video clip. These are usually downloaded from a website: they are not included in RMOL to keep the file size down.

Of course, other websites will not be available if your computer is not connected to the internet, but internal links will still work.

We maintain all links under our control for at least a month after publication.
Plea Balfour Beatty today admitted charges of breaching Health and Safety regulations before the Hatfield train crash. The case for the defence was due to begin today, but Ronald Thwaites QC for Balfour Beatty entered a plea of guilty. The plea, read out in court, did not accept all the allegations brought by the prosecution at the start of the case five months ago. ‘The company pleads guilty on the basis that there was no one single cause of the derailment, but an aggregation of causes,’ said Mr Thwaites. <MORE>

Ufton report considers seatbelts Crossing The RSSB’s final report into the collision between an HST and a car at Ufton Nervet last November has made a number of recommendations, including more level crossing closures, wider use of deflectors, a possible system to warn train drivers of obstructions at AHB crossings, and more research into seatbelts on trains. The RSSB warns that a certain level of usage of belts would be need to be achieved and maintained to justify the cost. But the report concludes that the derailment, which killed six people on the train as well as the car driver involved, was caused by factors outside the direct control of the railway industry. <MORE>

Byers admits untruth in court Admission Former Transport Secretary Stephen Byers has admitted that he made ‘an untruthful statement’ to Parliament, specifically the Transport Select sub-Committee, in connection with the placing of Railtrack in Railway Administration in 2001. Mr Byers was giving evidence in the Railtrack shareholders case. For most of his three days in the witness box, the MP for North Tyneside was said to be the picture of coolness, but he was forced to admit that he had lied to the Transport Select sub-Committee in November 2001, a month after Railtrack had been put into administration. <MORE>

NR to sue graffiti vandal Graffiti A young man who defaced railways in south west London over a ten year period, causing damage costing £74 000, was sent to prison on 15 July at Middlesex Guildhall Crown Court. Robert Lee, 23, of Kennington, was sentenced to three and a half years in prison after pleading guilty to nine charges of criminal damage. The jury was also asked to take another 51 offences into consideration. Network Rail said it will shortly be launching a civil action against Mr Lee to recover the costs of cleaning up and removing his ‘tag’ from railway property. <MORE>

And also... Bonds Network Rail issued bonds on 13 July in Sterling and Australian dollars worth a total of £1.345bn. The ‘not for profit’ company issued A$800m (£345m) in so-called ‘kangaroo bonds’ until 2010, the largest single-tranche kangaroo bond with a Triple A rating since 1998. Meanwhile, Network Rail’s 2020 Sterling issue amounted to £1bn after bids totalled £1.4bn. <MORE>

Class act A Virgin CrossCountry service will run with an unusual Class 9 reporting number on 18 August, to test railway systems between Cornwall and Scotland. The trial is part of a Virgin proposal to give XC trains a unique identity, because they are especially vulnerable to delays at pinch points. Virgin, Network Rail and other operators will then assess the effects of the trial before any decision can be taken on introducing the 9xxx series generally on CrossCountry. <MORE>

Restored Trains on the Northern and Victoria lines of London Underground began calling at King’s Cross again this morning, for the first time since Thursday 7 July. But the Piccadilly line will remain closed between Arnos Grove and Hyde-Park Corner ‘for the foreseeable future’, warned LUL, while damage to the tunnel between Russia Square and King’s Cross is assessed. Also still closed are the Hammersmith & City line east of Paddington, the Metropolitan line between Moorgate and Aldgate, and the District line between High Street Kensington and Edgware Road. No Circle line trains can run (because of the explosions near Edgware Road and Aldgate), and neither is there a Piccadilly line service west of Rayners Lane. London has remained on a heightened security alert, and the Metropolitan Police has moved to quell fears of another attack, after emails circulated in the capital towards the end of last week. <MORE>

Bombers named by police Bombers Police have named the young men, mainly from West Yorkshire, who it is believed carried bombs into central London on 7 July, and all of whom died in the explosions they caused. It is now known that at least 56 people died in the explosions at three locations on the Underground and on the top deck of a bus. Police have raided addresses in Leeds and also Aylesbury, which is some 30km from Luton where two cars, one with explosives, were found last Tuesday in the main station’s car park. CCTV tapes show some of the men at Luton, from where they travelled to London by train in the early morning rush hour. <MORE> Bombers named (BBC)

‘Awful, but there was no delay’ Explosions The Managing Director of London Underground, Tim O’Toole, has been speaking about the reactions of LUL in the first hours after the explosions of 7 July. He has praised LUL staff, who reacted ‘magnificently’ on an ‘awful day’. ‘We had staff at Edgware Road walking people out within two minutes. We had reports of off-duty drivers on their way to work, who saw what was going on and immediately ran into tunnels to help. People generally do the right thing...’ Mr O’Toole was also highly critical of reports of delay following the explosions. ‘In my mind it is so outrageous that reports speak of delay. There was no delay – people in the field reacted immediately – they acted as planned.’ <MORE>

Network disruption continued Alerts Thameslink and Midland Mainline services were disrupted when two cars, believed to be linked to London’s terror attacks, were discovered at Luton. Police closed the station and its car park at around 14.45 on Tuesday 12 July, and imposed a 100 metre cordon around the area. The evening rush hour was seriously disrupted; trains were not allowed past Leagrave to the north, nor Luton Airport Parkway to the south. Passengers were told to disembark at these stations and wait, or make alternative arrangements. The alert, although the most serious, was one of many. Other areas affected have included the West Midlands and Cornwall. Much of Birmingham’s city centre was evacuated on 9 July, while disablity. Newquay station was closed and cordoned off for several hours during the afternoon of the same day, and holiday services were delayed, after a passenger left a rucksack unattended. Further problems arose on Tuesday, the same day as the Luton incident, when a pair of old trains was left in an unmarked box on a CrossCountry train from Bournemouth to Edinburgh. Virgin calculated that 125 other trains and tens of thousands of passengers were delayed as a result. <MORE>
Heightened alert continued after alleged bombers were identified
Disruptions occurred in days after London attacks as a number of suspicious items were found on trains and stations.

The railways have suffered disruption in many places in the days after the London bombing attacks, with security alerts delaying many trains.

Police believe they have identified the men who were responsible for the attacks. The bombers had travelled from Leeds to Luton, where they laid final plans and travelled onwards to London.

CCTV images have been retrieved showing some of the men as they travelled en route to London in the early rush hour on 7 July.

The focus of attention moved to Luton last week (left) when two cars, one containing explosives, were found parked at the town’s main station. The discovery led to a major security alert, and train services could not resume until the following day.

But alerts have occurred at many other stations, usually caused by items of luggage abandoned by oblivious travellers.

It has not been possible so far to calculate the total number of delay minutes, but one incident, at Oxford, delayed more than 100 services on Virgin CrossCountry alone. <MORE>

The London Underground network and National Rail stations were among many public places which observed a two minutes’ silence on Thursday, in memory of the victims – now at least 56 in number.

National Rail midday departures were delayed by two minutes wherever possible. Network Rail said it arranged with operators to hold trains for this time at the main London termini. Underground staff also observed the silence as much as they could, and London bus drivers pulled over and stopped wherever traffic conditions allowed.

Transport for London said ‘operational considerations’ made it impossible to halt Underground and light rail services which were en route at midday.

Meanwhile, the level of security has remained high in London, although most of the capital’s transport network quickly returned to normal. However, London Underground remains partially closed, and there are reports of infrastructure damage both on the Piccadilly line and near Edgware Road, where a section of tunnel brickwork dating from the 1860s was shattered. It may be some time before the Circle line service can be re-started, because it passes through two of the three explosion sites.

Services on the Hammersmith & City line are still restricted to the Hammersmith–Paddington section, and the Piccadilly line has been bisected indefinitely by the closure between Russell Square and King’s Cross. Recovery of the train which was damaged here has proved especially difficult, reviving memories of the London Underground’s last major incident involving tube stock, the Moorgate accident of 1975.

In spite of Moorgate, and a collision on the Central line between two trains in a tube tunnel near Stratford in 1953, Transport for London has officially described the London bombs as the Underground network’s ‘worst ever’ incident – at least in formal peacetime.
Underground chief reveals chain of events after the bombs went off in London on Thursday 7 July

‘... at 0859, the Group Station Manager at Edgware Road called to say that we might have a person under a train, we might have a derailed train, that a train might have hit the tunnel wall …’

The Managing Director of London Underground has painted the most detailed picture yet of what happened inside the company’s stations, control rooms and offices in the tense minutes after the bombs went off on the morning of Thursday 7 July.

Tim O’Toole’s statement goes a long way to explain the initial, but misleading reports that power surges were somehow to blame.

‘As we now know there were three virtually simultaneous bombs that exploded on the LU network at around 08.50. There was an outer rail Circle line train going eastbound between Liverpool Street and Aldgate, train 204; a westbound inner rail Circle train going between Edgware Road and Paddington; and a Piccadilly line train (Train 331) going between Kings Cross and Russell Square.’

Mr O’Toole told how a call was recorded at 0850 from a station supervisor at Aldgate reporting an explosion or loud bang: ‘At 0851 a shift engineer – so this is at power control centre – reported that traction current had failed on one part of the network that was being fed by a particular box supply. You will recall at this point we had been through this before, we had a rather traumatic experience two years ago, 28 August, where we had to deal with a loss of power on a major part of the network.’

‘At 0851 again, one minute from the incident, the Central line control centre called to say a large bang had been reported near Liverpool Street. Also at 0851 there was another call from the Metropolitan line control centre, reporting the sound of an explosion near train 204 in the area of Aldgate. At 0853 a call was recorded saying a tunnel telephone line had been activated at Russell Square, thereby discharging traction current westbound between Holloway Road and Russell Square.

‘At 0859 the Group Station Manager at Edgware Road called to say we might have a person under a train, we might have a derailed train, that a train might have hit the tunnel wall. At this time a call went to London Fire Brigade and then to the London Ambulance Service to dispatch units to all three sites. At 09.03 the London Ambulance Service called back to confirm they were on route.’

‘At 09.11 the Piccadilly line controller called again to report the sound of a bang in the area of Russell Square.

‘At 0915 we declared a Code Amber for the rest of the network: beginning a controlled evacuation. Over the next hour we moved over 200,000 people off the network without a single injury, confining the damage to the three sites.

‘There was a complete misunderstanding by some members of the media as to the significance and timing of calling a Code Amber – Code Amber is completely irrelevant to rushing assistance to the three sites.

‘Calling a Code Amber had relevance to all the other trains on the network – it was completely irrelevant to dealing with sites where there had been blasts. It was not a decision you reach lightly. If we called a Code Amber every time we had a dramatic incident on this old network, which needs to be rebuilt as we all know too well, we would be throwing people out on the streets on a weekly basis. Plus when you do it, it is a very difficult thing to do – to move that many people without injury, if you look at any study that the military conducts over the likelihood of injury when you move that many people; you can see that this is a decision you only take when you know you are confronting a very difficult situation.

‘Following initial reports, we had one team concentrating on getting emergency resources to the sites and getting further reports, and we split another part of management to think about what we would be doing later, four hours and 24 hours later, because at that time of course, shortly after the bomb exploded on the bus we knew we were dealing with crime scenes.

‘We knew we would not be given those parts of the railway, so we immediately began planning alternative timetables, and operation plans, to see what we could return to service, because our thoughts from the beginning were to get the network running.

‘What would we do with the drivers? We had drivers about to timeout from early shift, would we bring in drivers from late shift? How were we going to get them to work? We were dealing with a London that had bus services withdrawn – we weren’t providing a service.

‘Mike Brown, the Chief Operating Officer, and his group performed brilliantly. Mike immediately split off his command. He took all responsibility from running part of the network from Howard Collins who is service director of SSL and instead put him in charge of service recovery.

‘But of course the story is not about management. It’s really about the professionalism of people in the field which is why in my mind it is so outrageous that reports speak of delay. There was no delay – people in the field reacted immediately – they acted as planned.

‘We had staff at Edgware Road walking people out within two minutes. We had reports of off-duty drivers on their way to work, who saw what was going on and immediately ran into tunnels to help. People generally do the right thing and it is absolutely edifying.

‘In short it was an awful day and the staff did a magnificent job.’
Many lines, stations affected by security alerts after items were abandoned

Thameslink and Midland Mainline services were disrupted when a car, believed to be linked to London’s terror attacks, was discovered at Luton.

Police closed the station and its car park around 14.45 on Tuesday 12 July, and imposed a 100 metre cordon around the area.

The evening rush hour was seriously disrupted: trains were not allowed past Leagrave to the north, nor Luton Airport Parkway to the south. Passengers were told to disembark at these stations and wait, or make alternative arrangements.

A limited bus service was run between the two neighbouring stations and also to St Albans, where services were running to and from London. Services between Leagrave and Bedford continued.

Passengers were not allowed to collect their cars until the cordon was lifted at 01.00 the following morning. Officers were deployed to help passengers, and in Luton community centres were opened to provide refreshments for stranded people.

Nine controlled explosions were carried out on the car, which was taken away for further forensic analysis at 04.30 on Wednesday. No damage was done to the surrounding area.

Services were running again by 01.30 on Wednesday. MML reported some delays and had to cancel five early trains, but otherwise ran normally.

Thameslink said: ‘We are now running a through service, but with delays, cancellations and short formations, as stock and drivers are displaced.’

Bedfordshire Deputy Chief Constable Martin Stuart thanked everyone involved: ‘A great number of people suffered great inconvenience as a result of the operation to make the scene safe and recover the car,’ he said. ‘We had invaluable help and co-operation.’

There have also been multiple alerts and disruption in many other areas, including the West Midlands and Cornwall. Much of Birmingham’s city centre was evacuated on Saturday evening (9 July), including Virgin’s West Coast and CrossCountry controls. These moved to a standby location at Birmingham International.

Meanwhile, Newquay station was closed and cordoned off for several hours during the the afternoon of the same day, and holiday services were delayed, after a passenger left a rucksack unattended.

The Bomb Squad was summoned from Plymouth, and part of the adjacent town centre, including the police station, was also evacuated and sealed off. The owner of the rucksack, which was harmless, returned to recover it later in the afternoon.

Further problems arose on Tuesday, the same day as the Luton incident, when a pair of old train cars was left in an unmarked box in a toilet on a CrossCountry train from Bournemouth to Edinburgh.

The train was halted at Oxford for prolonged examination.

Virgin calculated that 125 other trains and tens of thousands of passengers were delayed as a result. ‘We think it is probable that someone bought some new trainers, and simply dumped the old ones,’ said the company.

The police and railway operators made renewed pleas to users of the network not to leave any items unattended on trains and stations.

Balfour Beatty pleads guilty to Health and Safety charges, as Hatfield derailment trial continues

Engineering firm Balfour Beatty today admitted to charges of breaching Health and Safety regulations before the Hatfield train crash.

The case for the defence was due to begin today, but Ronald Thwaites QC for Balfour Beatty entered a plea of guilty.

The plea, read out in court, did not accept all of the allegations brought by the prosecution at the start of the case five months ago.

The company pleads guilty on the basis that there was no one single cause of the derailment, but an aggregation of causes. The breaches admitted were significant when aggregated with failures on the part of others and/or with systemic failure in the railway industry, it said.

Richard Lissack QC, prosecuting, told the court: ‘We continue to maintain that in the totality of the indictment this company is guilty.’

‘That is not an issue with which you are now concerned in any way,’ Mr Justice Mackay told jurors. ‘It will be, or may have to be, resolved by me at a later date.’

He instructed the jury to formally convict the company.

‘Today’s development comes less than a week after corporate Manslaughter charges against Balfour Beatty, Railtrack (now Network Rail), and five rail executives were thrown out at the Old Bailey on Thursday.

After reviewing evidence and considering issues that had arisen, the judge ordered the jury to find the defendants not guilty.

Mr Justice Mackay told jurors, ‘It is not open to you to convict any of the six defendants on charges of manslaughter. The trial will proceed on the health and safety charges faced by all the defendants.’ The judge said he was not permitted to give any reason for his decision.

‘I must ask you to accept my ruling, which does not affect one way or the other the important decisions you will have to make when considering verdicts on the health and safety counts.’

Four people were killed and 102 injured in the Hatfield crash on 17 October 2000.

Prosecutors had alleged that the crash was ‘a disaster waiting to happen’, which could have been avoided if proper safety measures had been followed.

The remaining defendants, three from Railtrack, along with their employer, and two from Balfour Beatty, still face personal charges brought under the Health and Safety Act.

The case continues.

Virgin gains priority trial for CrossCountry

When the 0825 Virgin CrossCountry service from Penzance to Dundee starts its journey on 18 August it will, in a small way, be making railway history — although passengers are unlikely to notice.

The 0825 will have a new reporting number – 9S66 — which suggests to the initiated that it is either an unlisted freight train with out fully braked vehicles, or else a Eurostar. In fact, this service, normally known to signallers between Cornwall and Scotland as 1S66, is the trial for a plan to renumber all CrossCountry services in the 9xx series. Virgin has been pushing for this development since 2003 at least, the aim being to identify XC services as the important intercity trains that they are, with especial vulnerability to delays. The trial will test software across the system, and it will be fully assessed before any change can be agreed.
Many lines and stations are affected by security alerts

Thameslink and Midland Mainline services were disrupted when a car, believed to be linked to London’s terror attacks, was discovered at Luton. Police closed the station and its car park at around 14.45 on Tuesday 12 July, and imposed a 100 metre cordon around the area. The evening rush hour was seriously disrupted: trains were not allowed past Leagrave to the north, nor Luton Airport Parkway to the south. Passengers were told to disembark at these stations and wait, or make alternative arrangements.

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The police and railway operators made renewed pleas to users of the network not to leave any items unattended on trains and stations. Virgin gains priority trial for CrossCountry service next month

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In fact, this service, normally known to signallers as 1S66, is the trial for a plan to renumber all XC services in the 9xxx series. Virgin has been pushing for this development for almost two years, the aim being to identify XC services as the important intercity trains that they are, with especial vulnerability to delays.

However, Virgin and Network Rail are keen to see how this 9xxx train is recognised. If 9566 is interpreted at Derby as an unbriddled freight, for example, it will not be displayed on the platform describers. The trial will test software across the system, and it will be fully assessed before any widespread change can be agreed.

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The case continues.
Network Rail to sue jailed graffiti vandal

A graffiti vandal was sent to prison on 15 July at Middlesex Guildhall Crown Court, after he conducted a ten-year campaign defacing railway property in south west London.

Robert Lee, 23, of Kennington, was sentenced to three and a half years in prison after pleading guilty to nine charges of criminal damage. The jury was also asked to take another 51 offences into consideration.

On release Lee will be issued with an ASBO banning him from railway property for five years.

Commenting on the sentencing, Superintendent Mark Newton from the British Transport Police said: ‘The scourge of graffiti is something that the British Transport Police and our partners in the rail industry are determined to eradicate. This case involved a persistent offender who was captured following a BTP investigation in partnership with Network Rail and train operators. This should be a warning to all those who deface railway property that the BTP and the rail industry are not prepared to tolerate this criminality and we will continue to do all we can to bring you to justice.’

Lee was caught following a joint operation between the British Transport Police and Network Rail. He caused damage costing £74 000 to Network Rail property by scrawling his ‘tag’ across stations, bridges and railway equipment along the route from London Waterloo to Barnes. On many occasions he would have had to trespass on the railway, crossing electrified tracks and scaling walls or fencing, said Network Rail.

Network Rail Route Director, David Pape welcomed the sentence, saying: ‘Graffiti is an anti-social crime that affects both railway passengers and staff. We will continue to work with the British Transport Police to catch and bring to justice those responsible.’

Network Rail said it will shortly be launching a civil action against Robert Lee to recover the costs of cleaning up and removing his tag from railway property.

The Rail Safety and Standards Board has completed its inquiry into the collision between a train and car at Ufton Nervet level crossing in November last year, in which seven people died.

They included the train driver and five passengers, as well as the driver of the car, which had been driven on to the crossing and parked across the line.

The Board says ‘the underlying cause was beyond the direct control of the railway’ and that although the derailment ‘was caused by the presence of a car on the fully functional level crossing, the inquiry revealed a number of issues relating to road risks for the industry to consider with other authorities’.

The inquiry has made a number of recommendations for the industry to consider to reduce the risk of derailments and to mitigate the consequences if they do occur.

The main recommendations

LEVEL CROSSINGS
- Consider crossing closures with Network Rail and highway authorities
- Where considerable safety expenditure is justified, consider bridges
- Investigate closure of Ufton LC

RISK ASSESSMENT
- Include local track features in the assessment of level crossings, where these could make a derailment worse

ORGANISATION AND FUNDING
- The National LC Safety Group should be supported vigorously, and given high priority for funding and resources

TRAINING FOR RESCUE/RECOVERY
- Review on-train staff responses to an accident, with particular emphasis on the evacuation of the passengers and the protection of the line. Lessons learned should be used in training programmes, exercises and briefings
- Give consideration to including, in the training of staff, the opportunity of experiencing the conditions inside a coach that has rolled over
- Decide if there are elements of First Great Western’s emergency training that could be used by other passenger train operators

POST-ACCIDENT PROCEDURES
- Review arrangements for the attendance of specialist investigation organisations, derailment and crash worthiness specialists at an accident
- Review the emergency command structure for major rail accidents

Seatbelts to be researched further, says RSSB

Final RSSB report into Ufton crash also recommends fewer crossings and better training

The initial derailment occurred as a result of the train colliding with a motor car, causing the flange of the left hand wheel of the leading bogie of the front power car to climb over the left hand rail … the derailment of all the vehicles occurred when the train shortly afterwards reached facing points which caused the derailed left hand wheel to follow the left hand stock rail of the points pulling the trailing axle of the leading bogie, and then the bogies of all following vehicles, into derailment’—RSSB

Among the proposals are reductions in the number of level crossings (with replacement by bridges where the expenditure is justified), improved training of staff both on and off the railway into how to deal with major incidents, a critical look at track features near crossings, better lighting including possible wider use of lightsticks (above), and more research into whether the installation of seatbelts would be ‘reasonably practicable’.

Ufton Crossing itself is also now being considered for closure; the RSSB says it is on a minor road with a nearby alternative route.

The full version of the report was released only within the industry initially, and just an abstract was published. However, the RSSB said following numerous requests it was placing the whole report on its website today.  RSSB report (pdf)  RSSB report (pdf)
Bridges  Transport for London is holding a public exhibition to give details of the scheme to replace two of the bridges carrying the A40 over the GWML at Wales Farm Road and Perryn Road in Acton. Wales Farm bridge has been designed to allow future expansion of the rail network.

Mk3s  Operator One is following up the announcement of its £25m rolling stock upgrading by holding a series of customer roadshows. The roadshow visited Norwich on Friday and was at Diss today. It will then visit Stowmarket, Ipswich, Manningtree and Colchester on successive days until 22 July.

Museum  Underground maintenance firm Metronet has donated £400,000 to London’s Transport Museum. The Museum is to close successive days until 22 July.

ScotRail busier during bus strike today

ScotRail reported more business than usual on Edinburgh Crossrail this morning, after the city lost more than half its buses because of an industrial dispute.

Drivers at Lothian Buses walked out after pay talks broke down. Extra buses were run by First where possible, but some people used trains instead. ‘We were busier at Newcraighall today,’ said ScotRail, ‘but with such a limited suburban network in Edinburgh we could not do a great deal to help.’ Some reports suggested that many people simply walked.

Yes – it really was a cow on the line

Virgin CrossCountry passengers were delayed for seven hours last night after their Voyager hit a cow. The unfortunate bovine damaged the train’s suspension and air brakes, causing them to lock just outside Oxford. 220 passengers on the Edinburgh to Bournemouth service were stranded while engineers carried out repairs. The recovery took time because of the remote nature of the area, said Virgin: ‘There was no road access or civilisation of any kind.’

SET back after fire

South Eastern services from Paddock Wood to Maidstone were restored on Wednesday after a major fire in a warehouse at Paddock Wood damaged signalling and track, causing a nine day closure.

A team of more than 20 Network Rail engineers worked throughout the week replacing track components and signalling equipment.

Meanwhile, Midland Mainline services suffered severe disruption on Saturday when a woodland caught fire near Cricklewood.

HS1s were forced to terminate at Luton, and Meridians at Bedford and Kettering. Road closures in the area included the M1, which meant that rail replacement buses could not be provided.

People reported seeing smoke from as far away as Chelsea. The lines were partially open by 1800, and back to normal working by 2100. No one was hurt.
The first six RMOLs have produced a large amount of feedback, so much so that we have taken longer than first planned to consider it all. Thank you to everyone who has given an opinion: we are most grateful, and the various views have been very useful. We also appreciate the many complimentary remarks.

There were two main areas which caused some discussion. One is the page size of the magazine, and the other is how it should be distributed.

Page size and orientation
At the moment, RMOL is A4 portrait – the same size and orientation as its printed predecessor. A number of correspondents, like those on the right, suggested that what is suitable for a printed document is not necessarily the best choice for one which is designed primarily to be read on a screen. However, some readers want to be able to print hard copies. Since a hard copy is no longer interactive, is ease of printing a factor which should seriously influence our page size?

This week’s issue contains a landscape page (still standard A4). Should all RMOL look like that? Should it be landscape, but not A4?

To express a view on page size, please click here.

Distribution method: attachment or link?
We email all our readers when each weekly edition is ready, but should we attach the magazine file to the email? It is certainly how we started with Edition 1, but some readers, usually not on broadband, complained that the attachment was taking a long time to download, and couldn’t we simply send a website link? So we tried that...

Given that computer screens are landscape format, it would make it easier to read if the pdf was landscape, rather than portrait. Indeed, as print isn’t involved, it could be the optimum shape to be easily read in a standard-sized window. (Mel Holley)

A rough approximation on my PC screen shows that 1/2 an A4 page is visible at any one time. If you were to divide the A4 page into 2 sections, these effectively being 2 landscape A5 pages, on top of each other then it may be possible to satisfy both the hard copy and environmentally friendly screen only readers. (Graham Taylor)

The electronic publishing of Rail Manager is a great step forward – allowing topical news stories to be read and analysed on a just-in-time basis. However, the decision to invite readers to download the latest edition from the web is shortsighted, as it assumes the reader is on-line when reading your e-journal. Perhaps you should invite readers to select how they would wish to receive RMOL. With this information you would be able to identify those whose preference it is to receive the full-strength version whilst those with busy mail boxes (or IT Departments) could of course request the light, or URL, version. In this way, hopefully, all subscribers may be satisfied. (Rupert Brennan Brown: railpr.com)

In fact, when we analysed the objectors to attachments (who were well outnumbered by supporters of them), it seemed that they were usually people who live or work in a non-broadband area – and such areas are steadily diminishing. Compiling more than one list is perfectly possible, but we fear fresh confusion could arise, and the number of people who might benefit seems to be very small. We might, of course, be wrong. If you would like RMOL to be an attachment, or a link (in other words, if you have strong views either way), please tell us by clicking here. (All recent RMOLs are downloadable from www.keepingtrack.co.uk/railmanager, by the way.)

If there seems to be enough demand, we’ll certainly look again at running two lists (one with a link, the other with an attachment), but for the moment, the attachments win. Thank you again for all your comments: they really have helped us to develop RMOL. Have a look at our landscape page (p6), and please tell us what you think.

OUR READERS ALSO SAID:

"Although initially sceptical about the value of ‘yet another rail industry publication’ I have found RMOL to be stimulating, informative and much more convenient !. (Patrick Murphy)

"I find this a useful read which would be even better with a bigger section on who has moved where. (Nick Olley)

"Rail Manager OnLine is an excellent source of current information and, being online, is easy to read, easy to scan around and of course easy to file. (Andy Saunders)

"Could you add me to your list of on-line subscribers to “Rail Manager”? Most impressive and a valuable weekly briefing. (Mel Holley)

Many thanks. Very responsive and much more convenient !. (Rupert Brennan Brown: railpr.com)
Network Rail issued bonds on 13 July in Sterling and Australian dollars worth a total of £1.345bn.

On Wednesday the ‘not for profit’ company issued A$800m (£345m) in so-called ‘kangaroo bonds’ until 2010, the largest single-tranche kangaroo bond with a Triple A rating since 1998.

Meanwhile, Network Rail’s 2020 Sterling issue amounted to £1bn after bids totalled £1.4bn.

The company has benefited from a transfer of its financial liabilities from the Strategic Rail Authority to the Department of Transport, lowering its risk weighting from 20% to zero.

The markets have taken due note of the change in status: Network Rail’s credit rating has been improved to Triple A by financial agencies Standard & Poors, Moody’s and Fitch IBCA as a result of the government backing.

Samantha Pitt, Network Rail’s Head of Corporate Finance, said, ‘These transactions represent important further steps in implementing Network Rail’s proven strategy to fund the renewal of Britain’s railway. We were delighted by the high level of interest in the Australian issue, which represents the first time that we have accessed the Australian capital market. The issue was significantly over-subscribed.’

City leaders press for Crossrail to start

City leaders pressed MPs today to ensure fast-track progress for Crossrail, as the key Crossrail hybrid Bill received its second reading.

Leading City figure and Crossrail backer Michael Snyder, who is Chairman of the Corporation of London’s Policy and Resources Committee, said: ‘London needs Crossrail and the UK needs Crossrail so we welcome the second reading as a sign of the Government’s commitment, but now MPs have to ensure that Crossrail is delivered in the right way. The Corporation has backed Crossrail for more than a decade and we will work to make sure construction-disruption is minimised. The City is no stranger to large-scale building projects but we need to ensure the details are right.’ The Corporation is submitting a detailed petition on the Bill which it says will make construction easier and less disruptive to City businesses and residents.

Network Rail awards £58m contracts

Network Rail awarded two contracts worth £58m to Exel and Unipart Rail logistics today. One contract, to Unipart, is for £51m a year, to run for two years with an optional three year extension. A commercial team will negotiate new prices for every product used, buying high volume or high value materials nationally.

Exel has been awarded the other contract, worth £7m a year. This is for a three-year period with an optional extension of two years, to handle the distribution of all NR maintenance materials from a 10 000m2 distribution centre in Worcester. Exel will be responsible for managing 323 Network Rail stores.

This contract also includes the provision of a call centre in West Bromwich to coordinate requests from Network Rail engineers for materials needed at work sites.

Bolton and Wigan are to receive an investment of £11.6m in public transport over the next year.

The Transport Infrastructure Fund was set up in 2001 to improve public transport in areas of the north west not benefiting directly from the Manchester Metrolink tram scheme.

The £11.6m will come in equal parts from GMPTE, Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council, Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council and the government.

A large proportion of the fund will be spent on improving bus routes, although major improvements will be made at a number of railway stations including Bolton Interchange, Hall i’ Th’ Wood, Daisy Hill, Kearsley and Blackrod.

A new ticket office is also being provided at Horwich Parkway, and a car park will be constructed at Hindley station.
Minister’s ‘not truthful’ statement to MPs

Former Transport Secretary Stephen Byers has admitted that he made ‘an untruthful statement’ to Parliament, specifically the Transport Select sub-Committee, in connection with the placing of Railtrack in Railway Administration in 2001.

Mr Byers was giving evidence in the Railtrack shareholders case.

For most of his three days in the witness box, the MP for North Tyneside was said to be the picture of coolness, but he was forced to admit that he had led the Transport Select sub-Committee in November 2001, a month after Railtrack had been put into administration.

MPs on the committee had wanted to examine the government’s claim that administration for Railtrack had only been explored after a meeting on 25 July at which John Robinson, Railtrack’s Chairman, had told Mr Byers the company was in financial difficulty and would need to be bailed out.

Mr Byers had been asked if work was carried out on the administration option before this July meeting. His answer was, ‘Not that I am aware of.’

Keith Rowley QC, for the claimants, pressed him on this answer, and Mr Byers then conceded, ‘It was such a long time ago, I cannot remember, but it is not a truthful statement and I apologise for that, I cannot remember the motives behind it.’

In a series of forceful exchanges in court, Mr Byers also denied misleading ministers into believing that the network operator had no funding options left.

Mr Rowley alleged that Mr Byers had told ministers that Railtrack was in financial difficulty and would need to be bailed out.

Mr Byers had been asked if work was carried out on the administration option before this July meeting. His answer was, ‘Not that I am aware of.’

In a series of forceful exchanges in court, Mr Byers also denied misleading ministers into believing that the network operator had no funding options left.

Mr Byers said that the public interest was best served by this approach.

The former Transport Secretary has said he will make a statement to the Commons once the hearing has concluded. Meanwhile, the Conservatives are demanding a full inquiry.

The case continues.

Railways feature in Commons business this week

Several items of railway business are being considered by the House of Commons this week, before Parliament starts its summer recess.

Monday sees the second reading of the CrossRail hybrid Bill, and also an adjournment debate on the causes and consequences of the Gerrards Cross tunnel collapse, which is currently still obstructing the Chiltern main line.

Then, on Tuesday, Parliament will deal with the second reading of the London Olympics Bill, which has been introduced following the announcement of the 2012 Games on 6 July. This measure will create a special London Olympics Authority, which is to take over transport planning for the Games from TfL.

Mr Byers denied the existence of a plot. ‘These are very serious allegations, without foundation in fact, and are simply wrong.’ He said, ‘Throughout this period, I had regard to the interests of the Railtrack shareholders.’

He said that in light of the ‘poor financial position and deep seated problems in Railtrack’, he had to put the interests of rail passengers and taxpayers first.

He added, ‘At the time, I judged that the public interest was best served by this approach’.

The former Transport Secretary has said he will make a statement to the Commons once the hearing has concluded. Meanwhile, the Conservatives are demanding a full inquiry.

The case continues.

In the Parliaments

London

This week (summary)

Saturday 15 July

Work and Pensions Questions

Tuesday 18 July

Crime Bill Second reading

Wednesday 19 July

Pensions Bill Long Adjournment Debate

Wednesday 26 July

Treasury Committee: Long Adjournment Debate

Thursday 27 July

Commons Bill Second reading

Friday 28 July

The House will not be sitting

Lords

Monday 18 July

Equality Bill Committee stage

Tuesday 19 July

Borough Freedom (F.S.) Bill Comm. stage

Wednesday 20 July

Commons Bill Second reading

Friday 22 July

The House will not be sitting

TWA changes

The Department of Transport launched the next stage in its consultation about changes to the Transport & Works Act on 14 July.

The statutory procedure rules which govern the making of TWA applications, and objections to them, were last revised in October 2000. Revisions have been proposed to make them more efficient and effective, to cut bureaucracy, and to ensure compliance with a new EU Directive on public participation.

The DTI consulted widely on a package of improvement measures in late 2003. The proposals have now been developed into a detailed set of rules, on which the DTI is now consulting again. This latest consultation period ends on 13 October.

The membership of the Transport Select Committee is currently being appointed.

The members of the Committee in the last Parliamentary session were:

- Mrs Gwyneth Butler (Chairman) (Conservative); Mr Jeffrey M Donaldson (Lagan Valley (Democratic Unionist)); Mr Brian H. Donohoe (Constituence South (Labour)); Clive Efford (Eitham (Labour)); Mrs Louise Ellman (Liverpool Riverside (Labour)); Ian Lucas (Wrexham (Labour)); Miss Anne McIntosh (Vale of York (Conservative)); Paul Marsden (Shrewsbury and Atcham (Liberal Democrats)); Mr John Randall (Uxbridge (Conservative)); George Stevenson (Stoke-on-Trent South (Labour)); Mr Graham Stringer (Manchester Blackley (Labour)).

There are currently no sessions planned for the Transport Select Committee.

Recent Committee publications:


Edinburgh

This week (summary)

Monday 18 July

Business Bulletin

The Scottish Parliament is now in Summer recess.

Ron McAulay has been appointed Director of Network Rail, Scotland. The newly created post is a result of the Railways Act, which devolves responsibility for running Scotland’s railways to the Scottish Executive. Mr McAulay will report directly to Network Rail’s Deputy Chief Executive, Iain Coucher. He has plenty of experience on the country’s rail network, having spent the last two years working as Route director in Scotland; Peter Leppard is now to take his place in that role.

National Express Group has recruited David Winder for its Trains Division to be UK Performance Director. Mr Winder has 30 years experience in the rail industry. He joined the group in 2001 and has worked in various NX companies, including WAGN and One, before returning to London Lines in November 2004 as Deputy Operations Director.

Brian Cooke, the current Chair of the London Transport Users Committee, has been appointed to the Board of the new Rail Passengers Council. Mr Cooke has experience in business and consultancy and has a long history in representing passengers’ views to the transport industry. His appointment runs until September 2008.

John Veitch has joined Arriva Trains Wales as Fleet Director. He has seventeen years’ experience in the rail industry, mainly in fleet management. Mr Veitch comes from a post as Head of Fleet Operation at Virgin Trains West Coast. He is to be based in Cardiff.

Dr Harold Mills has accepted an extension of his appointment as Chair of ferry operator Caledonian MacBrayne, Scottish Transport Minister Tavish Scott announced last week. This six month extension means he is to stay until 31 January 2006, remaining in charge during a review of the need to tender CalMac services.
Reading pdf files

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Smoothing

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ψ You need AAR version 5.0 (or later) to see this improvement.
Also, in edit/preferences/smoothing, make sure that all three smoothing options (text, line art and images) have been selected.

Older editions of AAR

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If you would like the latest version of Adobe Acrobat Reader, it may be downloaded without charge from the Adobe website. ψ click here ψ

Newer editions of AAR also include other improvements to elements such as the printing dialogue.

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