

OP (Mr Kay)

MANAGING LEVEL CROSSINGS: GUIDE FOR MANAGERS, DESIGNERS AND OPERATORS

RSSB'S RESPONSE TO ORR'S CONSULTATION: JULY 2010

GENERAL

Note

In reviewing the new draft against the existing guidance the opportunity has been taken to comment on issues in the original document which have been transferred unchanged to the new version but which do not seem to be appropriate either because they may have been wrong or arguable in the first place, or because of new information or research.

There are many cross-references to paragraph or section numbers which appear to be taken from the old guidance but which have not been updated. In general this response has not listed all these discrepancies.

In general the requirements of DDA legislation do not seem to have been taken fully into account and it should be noted that research project T650 'Improving safety and accessibility at level crossings for disabled pedestrians' is expected to provide evidence based guidance in this area later in 2010.

WHISTLE BOARDS and TRAIN HORNS

We suggest that some words are inserted into the text to explain whistle boards – which have been installed at locations where there is limited sighting. The generic Rule Book requirement relating to Whistle Boards is to sound the train horn routinely when passing all WBs between the hours of 23.00 and 07.00, and where the technology in the train permits, to sound the low tone only. However, the Rule Book also states that where the driver of a train sees people on or about the track at any time, then a full application of the train horn should be made.

Where horns are routinely used at WBs, there is a possibility that the harm that will be caused to neighbours from the regular sounding of horns will be greater than the potential safety benefit of sounding the horns every time a train passes. Therefore, the decision to install a Whistle Board should not be taken lightly. Although WBs should always be present where there is limited sighting time, the previous RSPG requirement to have WBs in both directions at footpath crossings should be modified to take account of the research and subsequent revised policy adopted by the industry. That is to say that where there is sufficient sighting time, it should not generally be the case that WBs are provided. In light of the research, (results published by RSSB under Research brief T668) Network Rail has adopted the following approach:

- when undertaking level crossing risk assessments, consider the possibility/value of:

- removing the WBs
- removing one WB where there are two WBs but good visibility in one direction: ONLY WHERE PEOPLE LIVING WITHIN EARSHOT
- re-instating/installing a new WB in the single direction where there is good visibility and where there is a WB for the other direction: ONLY WHERE NO PEOPLE LIVING WITHIN EARSHOT
- repositioning WBs in situ that are ineffective in their current location
- removing WBs that cannot be made effective by repositioning

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- removing other redundant WBs
- installing a new WB: as an absolute last resort, where no practicable alternatives exist AND where a site-specific risk assessment identifies the need - requires HQ approval (based on review of the risk assessment)
- NB: For each possibility above, and aside from rail safety aspects, detailed consideration is required of the costs and practicability of any alternatives, and principally, the impact upon lineside neighbours.

[Source – Steve Constantine, Network Rail, 23 June 2009]

In paragraph 132 the reference to drivers sounding their horns is so general as to be unhelpful. We would suggest that it is deleted.

Paragraph 161 is helpful but we feel should be aligned to the NR approach outlined above. In paragraph 162 we would suggest that the first and second lines be reworded to:

Where WB's are provided on more than one railway approach, the difference in warning times should be 3 seconds or less.

If the NR approach is identified in 161 then the final sentence of 162 is not necessary.

EMERGENCY TELEPHONES

Section 17: Telephones and telephone signs

Paragraphs 248 – 261

This section does not appear to have taken cognisance of the findings of research project T818 'Optimising public communication with signallers in emergencies at level crossings' which did originally include representatives from ORR but who were not replaced when they retired. The research was commissioned as a direct result of recommendations following the accidents at Ufton Nervet (2004) and Marston-on-Dove (2008). Rather than spell out the details, it is suggested that the report be read and then discussed further with RSSB and Network Rail. It can be found on the RSSB website at <http://www.rssb.co.uk/Search/Results.aspx?k=T818>.

INCONSISTENCIES

Page 3 indicates that the guide is intended for authorised operators of user-operated crossings but does not highlight their duties under the Health and Safety at Work Act on page 7. See later note on specific points – page 3.

The term '**authorised operators of user-worked crossings**' is an unusual term, 'authorised user' being more usual, and could cause confusion since it tends to imply in paragraph 8 that 'such operators' would have responsibility to ensure that crossing orders for private roads are complied with. Is this the intention?

Pages 18 and 19

Red/green light crossings are mentioned in section 11 (footpath and bridleway) of table 1 but not in section 10 (User-worked). In the current guidance (page 8) the equivalent table has a paragraph which appears to have been omitted from the new table.