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Dear Marcus,

The trespasser incident at Leeds Station on May 30 was tremendously challenging for everybody caught up in it. And, as you point out, caused significant and widespread disruption for passengers. As with all such incidents, it's right important that we carefully review what happened and learn for the future. I welcome the opportunity to share with you some of the work we are carrying out.

In incidents such as this, our ultimate objective will always be to preserve life and prioritise safety. During rush hour peak at Leeds Station, we would expect 30,000-40,000 passengers to be passing through the station. Leeds is also one of the most crucial rail hubs in the country, with nearly 450 services caught up in the disruption caused by the trespass, and destinations as far afield as Plymouth and Aberdeen affected.

With such a complex and challenging picture facing Network Rail and the train operators (TOCs), emerging from this operation without injury or loss of life must be regarded as very successful. We were able to control overcrowding and protect safety by selectively evacuating passengers from the station and swiftly closing off entrances.

However, as you rightly point out, every challenging incident of this nature must come with lessons learned if we are to improve in future. My station management and operations team and the TOCs share this view. Reviews were booked immediately after the event concluded and have already identified a number of areas for development.

Passenger information is crucial in any event of this type. The trespass incident was identified at 07.05am and the information was immediately shared with our colleagues in the TOCs, in line with standard procedure. This was followed by the first communication to passengers at 07.10am of disruption at the station – five minutes after the incident was identified. Following frequent collaboration with train operator colleagues, the message to passengers was upgraded to a firm do not travel communication, which was issued at 09.23am. The industry, rightly, only uses such a firm advisory to passengers when it is absolutely required. It is our view that this communication was carried out at a time appropriate to the incident.

This work was delivered in accordance with our station licence requirement to cooperate with TOCs to enable them to meet their obligations to provide information to passengers, and our major disruption plan which I attach as requested.

But simply providing information is not enough – especially considering the growing numbers of passengers on the railway and the key importance of hubs like Leeds. My team, along with the TOCs, have identified the need to formally develop and record a broader and more holistic passenger plan as part of our process to deal with disruption. This will obviously include communications, but will also extend to how we manage passengers on platforms, outside the station and those stranded on trains. In future, we will have a single point of command on all matters relating to passenger movement and experience during an incident of serious disruption.

My team started the process of developing this plan with an operational exercise on Friday. We will share information with your team as it develops and also provide it to you in its final form.

I want also to touch upon balance and proportionality as we weigh safety against passenger experience. As I said, protecting life and prioritising the safety of passengers and our response teams must always be our fundamental responsibility. Reflecting upon this incident, we are considering proportionality including: whether it was appropriate to close the station when the trespass was limited to a specific area; whether turning off all power – and therefore extending the period of disruption – was the correct response in this case; and whether the safety of passengers left stranded in trains was given appropriate balance to the wellbeing of the passenger.

These are difficult questions, and we may well conclude that the balance we struck was the most appropriate one in the circumstances. But we will be asking those questions of ourselves, the TOCs and the police as we continue the work to examine the aftermath of this regrettable incident.

I started this letter by saying this was a successful operation. I look forward to working with the industry to make our future response more successful still.

Yours Sincerely,

[Redacted]
Managing Director, Eastern
Network Rail Infrastructure Limited