

Oliver Stewart
RAIB Recommendation Handling Manager



7 February 2024

Mr Andy Lewis
Deputy Chief Inspector of Rail Accidents

Dear Andy,

RAIB Report: Track damage between Pencoed and Llanharan on 6 March 2021

I write to provide an update¹ on the action taken in respect of recommendation 1 addressed to ORR in the above report, published on 22 February 2023.

The annex to this letter provides details of actions taken in response to the recommendation 1 and the status decided by ORR. The status of recommendation 1 is **'Open'**.

ORR will advise RAIB when further information is available regarding actions being taken to address this recommendation.

We will publish this response on the ORR website.

Yours sincerely,

Oliver Stewart

¹ In accordance with Regulation 12(2)(b) of the Railways (Accident Investigation and Reporting) Regulations 2005

Initial consideration by ORR

The recommendation was addressed to ORR when the report was published on 22 February 2023.

1. After considering the recommendation ORR passed the recommendation to Network Rail asking them to consider and where appropriate act upon them and advise ORR of its conclusions. The consideration given to each recommendation is included below.
2. ORR also brought the recommendation to the attention of other Infrastructure Managers as it was concluded that that there are equally important lessons for them. ORR did not ask these organisations to provide a reply.
3. This annex identifies the correspondence with end implementers on which ORR's decision has been based.

Recommendation 1

The intent of this recommendation is to ensure that adequate levels of wheel/rail adhesion are available to allow the safe operation of trains.

Network Rail should review the guidance provided by the Adhesion Working Group and other industry good practice to identify all occasions outside the leaf fall season which could result in very low levels of wheel/rail adhesion. Following its review, Network Rail should revise its existing processes and standards to acceptably control the risks associated with very low levels of wheel/rail adhesion. Network Rail should appropriately brief those staff responsible for implementing these processes and standards on any changes made.

ORR decision

4. Having reviewed the Network Rail action plan, it was unclear if the actions described would address the recommendation. We have asked Network Rail for a copy of the review carried out in response to the recommendation, in order to understand how the outputs from it informed the proposed actions. We have also asked Network Rail why the action plan does not refer to NR/L2/MTC/CP008 module 04 (reopening old lines) and this would be an important part of addressing the recommendation.
5. We have challenged Network Rail and the wider industry to take a more coordinated approach to the risk of low adhesion, taking into account the findings of the Pencoed and Llanharan RAIB report, as well as Llangennech, Petteril Bridge and Salisbury tunnel. We recognise the risks associated with low adhesion and continue to monitor industry progress.
6. After reviewing the information provided ORR has concluded that, in accordance with the Railways (Accident Investigation and Reporting) Regulations 2005, Network Rail has:
 - taken the recommendation into consideration; and

- is taking action to close it

Status: Open.

Information in support of ORR decision

7. On 11 July 2023 Network Rail provided the following initial response:

Action Plan

Please provide milestones with dates

Network Rail have changed their 'Autumn Working Arrangements' to 'Adhesion Working Arrangements' altering the document's purpose to indicate that control measures may be used outside of the typically defined leaf fall period, between 1st October – 13th December, where required.

In June 2024, the NR/L3/OPS/021 01 *Autumn Management* standard will also be changed to *Adhesion Management* to reflect the risks associated with adhesion outside of the leaf fall period. Amendments will be made to the standard's purpose, which similarly reflect those in the Working Arrangements.

Network Rail will also embed any changes from the RIS-3708-TOM *Arrangements Concerning the Non-Operation of Track Circuits During the Leaf Fall Contamination Period* five-year review in September 2023 and any resulting amendments to NR/L3/OPS/045/3.17 *Weather Arrangements*.

Briefing material for the Network Rail standards updates will be completed 6-8 weeks before the standards are published and will be reviewed by the Operations Standards and Controls Steering Group. Once reviewed, the changes will be briefed to stakeholders, with each receiving either a 'technical' or 'awareness' briefing, as defined on the Briefing Implementation Plan. This will also then be submitted to the Operations Standards and Controls Steering Group.

Evidence required to support closure of recommendation

Amendments to NR/L3/OPS/021/01 (June 2024)