



ASLEF Response to the Transport Select Committee Inquiry into Rail Safety – October 2016

1. The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) is the UK's largest train driver's union representing approximately 20,000 members in train operating companies and freight companies as well as London Underground and light rail systems.
2. We believe progress has been made by the Department for Transport and Network Rail on the issue level crossing safety but we would argue that more needs to be done. The 2015 RSSB annual safety report stated that the total level of harm at level crossings in 2015/16 had decreased compared with the previous year. In addition the number of level crossing fatalities was at the lowest since 1996/97.
3. The Committee will be aware of the amount of time it is taking to implement the legal recommendations of the Law Commissions inquiry into level crossing safety. A draft Level Crossings Bill and a set of Level Crossing Plans were drawn up in 2013 but have still not been enacted. Implementing these recommendations would formalise the legislative position with regard to level crossings, not least over the question of the provisions over when they should be closed.

4. ASLEF acknowledges the progress made by the DfT, the British Transport Police and the British Transport Police Authority in implementing the recommendations made by the previous Transport Committee on security on the railways, the effectiveness of current measures to reduce violent crime and the appropriateness of the BTP's current priorities.
5. We welcome the figures from the 2015 RSSB report which show that GBH and more serious cases of violence and actual bodily harm both reduced slightly. Yet, we are concerned that incidents of common assault increased by 21% from 1,508 events to 1,832 and that instances of harassment increased by 67% from 620 events in 2014/15 to 1,037 events in 2015/16. We believe these figures demonstrate the need for trains to be appropriately staffed.
6. We acknowledge that assaults on staff and passengers have increased in recent years and would contend that they are exacerbated by the absence of ticket office staff, platform staff, guards and ticket collectors. Drivers on trains which are driver only operated face the threat of verbal abuse and assault on a daily basis and a second person would provide much needed "mutual security".
7. ASLEF opposes the Scottish Government's plans to merge the BTP in Scotland into Police Scotland.
8. ASLEF believes there has been a good level of co-ordination across the rail industry including engagement with trade unions on the matter of safety. We note there were no passenger or workforce fatalities in train accidents in the

last year. This is the ninth year in succession with no such fatalities which is the longest period on record. The average rate of train accidents with on-board fatalities over the last 10 years remains at its lowest level of 0.1 per year. It is also notable that there were 277 SPADs in 2015/16, compared with 298 during the previous year. In total, there were 45 accidental fatalities, 483 major injuries, 12,603 minor injuries and 958 cases of shock/trauma. The total level of harm (excluding suicide) was 116.4 fatalities and weighted injuries (FWI) compared with 121.6 FWI recorded in 2014/15.

9. It is not currently clear what Brexit will mean for UK rail safety and security. At an operational level Brexit creates considerable uncertainty for the many European state railways and their subsidiaries and other international rail companies who operate in the UK rail industry. Their business models will be susceptible to the volatilities of the finance sector and exchange rate fluctuations.
10. It is possible that Brexit will increase costs, restrictions and bureaucratic requirements for the rail freight industry and may also wider disrupt supply and logistics chains which could have an impact on safety and security. The rail freight sector plays a key role in the renewal of the UK's rail infrastructure.
11. ASLEF considers it probable that the UK will want to retain the EU's Technical Specifications for Interoperability. TSIs are internationally recognised as creating a useful standard for rolling stock.
12. ASLEF believes it likely that any new regulations passed during between February 2017 and the UK's departure from the EU in 2019 will become

applicable to the UK rail industry. This will include regulations associated with the 4th Rail Package which have not yet come into force. Any directives which require transposition before the end of the two-year period have to be transposed into domestic law. These will include the three directives of the 4th rail package.

13. The union takes the view that the chaotic events at London Bridge in 2015 showed that the growing passenger numbers alongside poorly managed infrastructure upgrades and major projects can have a serious impact on passenger safety. In one example, overcrowding at London Bridge saw passengers having to leap over barriers to escape the crush.

14. ASLEF notes that the rail industry has started to take poor weather conditions, and the problem of global warming, more seriously. The RSSB report "Tomorrow's Railway and Climate Change Adaptation" found "unequivocal evidence that Britain's railway will, as our natural environment and our socio-economic systems, be affected by changes in weather conditions caused by climate change". The report made a number of recommendations but stated that the industry "cannot do this on its own and greater investment and support is required to maintain an effective rail system".

15. On rail worker fatigue, ASLEF has been fully engaged with three recent RSSB projects into fatigue; T1082 - Research into fitness for duty checks and predicting the likelihood of experiencing fatigue; T1083 - Preparing rail

industry guidance on bio-mathematical fatigue models; and T1084 - Rail guidance on first night shifts.

16. ASLEF believes that the way forward in dealing with fatigue in the rail industry is to set limits by agreement. This corresponds to both ASLEF policy and Regulation 25 of The Railways and Other Guided Transport Systems (Safety) Regulations 2006 (ROGS). In addition lessons must be learned from RSSB research and RAIB recommendations.

17. ASLEF is deeply concerned about the adequacy of measures to protect persons at the platform-train interface across the British railways. Irrespective of rolling stock and technology that interface is stretched to the maximum by the volume of passengers in the peaks, particularly on commuter services. We're concerned about the increase in the number of 'trap and drag' incidents which have occurred in recent times such as the accident at Hayes and Harlington. In addition we don't see how reducing staff responsible for the platform-train interface is a responsible thing to do. The union has consistently raised the platform-train interface with the ORR and the industry and requested that a meeting be set up with all parties within the industry to discuss train dispatch. This recently took place under Chatham House rules.

18. ASLEF believes the integration of technology into the driving cab increases the workload (and subsequent distraction) for the driver and puts at risk the safe monitoring of the platform train interface (PTI) during DOO dispatch process. This is why we argue that these duties should remain with (or return to) the guard.

19. We are also aware that our members are at risk if they become incapacitated on DOO services especially in the absence of trained staff to arrange for first aid and arrange emergency services to help drivers who have fallen ill.

20. ASLEF opposes the further introduction Driver Only Operation and will continue to campaign to have it removed from our industry altogether and recognises that only with industry-wide provision of staff on trains, platforms and ticket offices will we be able to fully ensure that safety, security and accessibility is successfully delivered to the travelling public.

21. ASLEF believes that the rail industry has made significant progress in developing effective measures to prevent trespass and fatalities on the railways and other approaches which could reduce the numbers of fatalities and injuries

22. Network Rail's partnership with the BTP and the Samaritans recently won an award for its good work. The partnership was formed in 2010, and since then the Samaritans has trained more than 10,500 rail staff to intervene to help vulnerable people who may be considering taking their own lives. Since April last year, 1,137 potentially life-saving interventions have been carried out.

23. The RSSB reported recently that suicides and suspected suicides on the UK's railways dropped from 287 to 252 last year, a fall of 12 per cent. The Samaritans report that since 2007, there has been a general increase and suicide in the UK is now at its highest rate since 2004. So, the 12% fall in railway suicides, in the context of a rising national trend must be commended.

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