



Communication from Train Horns Steering Group

The cross industry Train Horns Steering Group met on 16th May 2006 and considered what has been done to date, the emerging findings, and what we are going to do in the immediate future.

1. What we have done since second steering group

- Met with all party group of MPs (15 March)
- Confirmed through the Noise Abatement Society (31 March) that we are going to take the evaluation of Broadband Horn technology to the next stage and commenced that stage
- Shared a list of 35 problem sites compiled from cross industry database from 27 companies (Train Operators, Network Rail and RSSB) relating to complaints, with the Noise Abatement Society and refined our understanding of the nature of the problem through feedback on this
- Established coordination amongst train operators to ensure that technical lessons that are learned (about detuning train horns) are available to all operators
- Commenced the detailed work to update and enhance our knowledge of the risk at footpath crossings and begun to establish a framework to balance the risk to crossing users with the nuisance to neighbours
- Following publication of an e-mail address for the chair of the Steering Group, we have received substantial correspondence from affected neighbours detailing their experiences and seeking answers and actions
- Met with and briefed the Department for Transport
- Met on 16th May to review progress, actions and way forward
- Completed consultation on some 'good housekeeping' changes to the current group standard on train horns
- To enhance the focus on delivery of the work that is being done to resolve the train horns issue, RSSB has appointed a project manager to support the steering group
- Network Rail and Train Operators have continued with their programme of local meetings with residents, councils and MPs and a list of changes made or in prospect are attached to this communication.

2. What we have found to date

- Most of the work we are doing is in the middle of its production so there are no interim results at this stage. However, members of the public and the Noise Abatement Society have expressed scepticism about our timescales and commitment to action. Many have questioned whether the work to value the noise nuisance is feasible and some have suggested that it is a smokescreen to avoid taking any action at all. We believe that this work is central to providing the right balance between the safety benefit of train horns – which has always been recognised, and the noise nuisance – which has not. This is why we are keen to

establish as early as possible (July) an estimate of how this can be done. We believe that this work will enable consideration to be given to

- the removal of some 'whistle boards'
- reducing the volume from train horns
- potential night time bans on the use of horns (apart from emergencies)

and for the first time, for weight to be given to the impact on neighbours.

- We found when talking to MPs, and through sharing the list of 35 sites identified in March with the Noise Abatement Society, that there are more sites that cause a nuisance to neighbours than were recorded on the database of complaints to the industry. This was probably because of the way the data was sorted (all locations that were identified as having at least 2 complaints – to any railway company – in the 6 months to 31 December 2005). Having shared the list and received feedback, we now estimate that the number of locations at which there remains a potentially significant train horn problem is between 50 and 100, most, but not all, of which are within the London and South East region.

3. What we are now going to do

- To address the concerns about the commitment and timescales we are going to publish a summary programme, showing all of the actions we are taking and the potential delivery dates. This will be published in early June
- We are going to update the database of problem locations by collecting data for complaints in the 6 months to the end of June 2006
- Local Issues - Network Rail and local Train Operating Companies will continue to respond to local issues
- Industry handling - Steering Group continues as the focus for review and industry action and will be
 - Meeting again in early July
 - Briefing MPs in mid July
 - Focus immediate efforts on local issues
 - Further collating all industry complaints
- Timescales
 - A project plan will be published in June

List of locations reviewed by Network Rail and actions arising

Constituency	Date of Meeting Where held	Result
Arundel and South Downs		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistle boards removed at Warning Camp, Arun Valley. • Options at Peppering re: whistle boards are still being investigated and discussed locally, such as diversion of the footpath.
Rochford and Southend East		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whistle boards removed at Woodgrange Close, Essex after extensive vegetation clearance.
Sittingbourne and Sheppey	3 March 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The whistle-boards at Church Street (Newington) and Bobbing where visits were undertaken have been removed after vegetation removal. • Frogna Farm (Tonge) boards also removed. • Bax and Teynham FP need some minor vegetation or other work undertaken before they too can go – is

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> currently being scheduled. Goodhews, London side of the one at Bobbing, was also recently assessed and boards now removed.
Basildon	10 March 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removed whistle boards at Stanford-Le-Hope on 21 May after sensitive discussions with local resident, vegetation removal and new risk assessment.
Wokingham	21 April 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set of whistle boards removed between Sandhurst station and Crowthorne station.
Canterbury	5 May 2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visited nine locations Sturry FP, Milner Court, Park Alley and Deanery and Tonford B all removed. Folly Farm to have foliage cleared before removal. Kent CC is looking in to the closure of Sanpit footpath crossing. .
Romsey		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crampmoor to be removed by the middle of June.
Guildford		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pinks Hill will soon be removed.
Bexhill and Battle		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forge, Etchingam - Removed
North East Hampshire		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whistle boards removed at Rooksdown, Isington, Hants Bentley, Hants. Removal of set of whistle boards and amendment to working practise with SWT so trains no longer whistling when leaving the station.
Surrey South West		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shutters, Haslemere. Whistle boards removed after consultation with neighbours and removal of foliage from their property.
Hampshire East		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liss Forest, Hants. Whistle boards removed after sighting improved by removal of vegetation and old TP hut.
Thanet North		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brookend, Birchington - Removed

The cross industry Steering Group consists of representatives from: Rail Safety and Standards Board, Network Rail, Passenger Train Operators, ATOC, Freight Train operators, Office of Rail Regulation, and is supported by RSSB's technical and risk expertise. If you want to communicate directly with the steering group you can do so through the Chairman, Anson Jack, who is director, standards at the Rail Safety and Standards Board – e-mail anson.jack@rssb.co.uk