

Final Recommendations from the Train Horns Steering Group

These recommendations have been developed by the Train Horns Steering Group, taking account of

- *the input from its members and the industry parties they represent,*
- *the work that has been undertaken by a number of consultants and the reports that they have submitted (including the views of a number of neighbours of the railway)*
- *input from the Noise Abatement Society, regular meetings with an All Party group of MPs, and people that have complained to the various railway companies participating in the review*
- *analysis developed by RSSB*
- *the judgement and expertise of members of the steering group.*

The Steering group has met on eight occasions during 2006 and directed all of the work on which these recommendations are based. It has considered the reports and other sources of information and analysis and debated these recommendations at the last two group meetings in November and December. The recommendations are to the relevant industry parties, as identified below, and are the unanimous recommendation of all members of the steering group. They were concluded at the meeting on 12 December 2006.

Stage One – for consideration for implementation by April 2007

To the Traffic Operation and Management Standards Committee¹ and Network Rail:

1. Change the Rule Book to require that where rolling stock is capable of separately sounding the two tone horn, only the low tone horn is used for all whistle boards, and

2. Change the Rule Book to introduce a night time quiet period (between 2300 and 0700) nationally for all whistle boards – for implementation at a date to be agreed by NR/TOCs, recognising that a strategy is required to ensure the implementation of this recommendation coincides with delivery of all communications. The quiet period not to prevent drivers from using the horns when they see people on or about the track. In parallel with this Network Rail will initiate a prioritised programme of risk assessments to identify those crossings which may have a greater reliance on whistle boards at night and, if and where appropriate, put in place alternative risk controls².

¹ Standards Committees consist of experts nominated or elected by industry members of RSSB and represent a balance of expertise and the different categories of the industry. They decide all standards changes through a consensus in accordance with the Railway Group Standards Code. Recommendations 1 to 3 have already been approved by the relevant standards committees for consultation (which is open to the public) and if this is concluded satisfactorily revised standards could be introduced by April 2007

² Network Rail undertake reviews and risk assessment of Level Crossings on a three year rolling programme – use of the short term reviews set out in 4 below, and the prioritising of higher risk crossings in recommendation 2, together with a review of the overall programme which affects all crossings (whether they have whistle boards or not), should enable all locations with Whistle Boards to be reviewed in less than the full three years

To the Rolling Stock Standards Committee:

3. Amend the standard for the minimum and establish a maximum noise level to be made by horns on trains travelling at up to 160 kph to require all new or modified horns to comply (i.e. not retrospective).

To achieve the level of sound that was typical of the old ('Slam Door' or 'Mark One') rolling stock, the sound level should be set to mandate a minimum Sound Pressure Level of 101dB and a maximum Sound Pressure Level of 106dB³. No requirements relating to sound to the sides will apply. Rolling Stock Standards Committee has already approved in principle the consultation on a revised sound level and the recommendation of the Steering Group to RSSB is that such consultation should be initiated immediately and based on these Sound Pressure Levels

Note that the establishment of the appropriate Sound Pressure Level (Decibel level) within a revised standard is expected to be achieved during the first three months of 2007.

Work is ongoing to develop the definition of the sound characteristics that enable the horn to be distinctively recognisable as a train (thus potentially enabling other technologies to be used) and this will be shared with manufacturers and considered by the Rolling Stock Standards Committee as soon as possible.

To Network Rail

4. Network Rail to continue with its proactive approach to the review of particular problem locations (to consider whether Whistle Boards can be removed prior to any reviews that arise from 6 below) which has to date led to the removal of a number of sets of Whistle Boards

To RSSB and Train Operators

5. Guidance to be issued to Train Operators about good practice in the use of train horns to increase consistency, reflecting the actual implementation of all the recommendations above, in the form of a clear summary of the new requirements and guidance as to what normal operation of train horns involves to be sent to all Train Operators.

Stage Two – work beyond April 2007

To Network Rail

6.a) Network Rail to consider a revision to the All Level Crossing Risk Model taking account of the new information about the impact on neighbours. Implement through its routine assessments of crossings to progressively reduce the number of whistle boards.

³ The current Standards (GM/RT2484) mandates a minimum SPL of 112dB and has a maximum advisory level of 117dB. All figures measured 5m in front of the relevant horn.

When the changes identified in recommendations 1 to 3 are taken into account, the impact of train horns on neighbours is expected to be substantially reduced, and the calibration of any revisions to the risk model can take account of the emerging picture – that is why this recommendation is not part of stage one.

6.b) Where whistle boards are currently required, Network Rail to evaluate whether Whistle Boards can be removed based on attainable train speeds rather than the current Railway Safety Principles and Guidance (RSPG) which recommends using maximum permissible speed to assess the crossing sighting times.

To RSSB

8. The specification that is adopted for GB train horns should be input to the European Railway Agency drafting process for the Conventional Rolling Stock and Locomotives Technical Specifications for Interoperability (TSIs).

9. Review with a view to eradicating all other routine requirements to sound train horns.

10. Following the introduction of the changes in recommendations 1. to 5. (Particularly including the rate of change of train horns and feedback from the affected public, if any) review the suitability of the changes and their long term sustainability. In particular, further consider whether these changes have made a significant difference to the industry's neighbours or to footpath safety.

The cross industry Steering Group consisted of representatives from: Rail Safety and Standards Board, Network Rail, Passenger Train Operators, ATOC, Freight Train Operators, ORR, and was supported by RSSB's technical and risk expertise.