



Audio transcript

Heritage level crossings animation

The Office of Rail and Road is the independent economic and safety regulator for Britain's railway.

Level crossings are where a railway line is crossed on the level without a tunnel or bridge, such as by a road or footpath.

Great Britain's level crossings, although amongst the safest in Europe, still pose a significant safety risk to the public.

The Office of Rail and Road has produced guidance to help people who carry out level crossing risk assessments, this case study shows the guidance in use at a heritage railway.

A heritage railway plans to reopen a station as part of reopening a line, to allow passengers to cross between the two platforms. The railway is considering building a foot crossing.

Before the line was closed, there had been a foot crossing at this location, but that was 50 years ago. The railway operator should identify the foreseeable hazards of the crossing, assess the risks, and identify any reasonably practicable alternatives.

This is done by undertaking a suitable and sufficient risk assessment and recording the findings. Before starting, they should also talk to the Office of Rail and Road about their ideas.

One risk identified is people's behaviour. Passengers may be tempted to use the level crossing when it is not safe to do so, rushing to catch their train or to get a better view of an arriving steam train.

There is also a risk that people will go on to the level crossing to do things they should not, like photographing trains or taking selfies.

The railway also has to think about how the surroundings might influence people's behaviour. For example, if the crossing is near to shops, or pub. These are just some of the factors that might be relevant to this crossing if it is built.

After completing the risk assessment with the assistance of the Office of Rail and Road's 'Principles for Managing Level Crossing Safety' guidance, the railway operator identifies alternative ways that the railway could be crossed.

In line with the principles of prevention, each alternative is considered in turn, to decide how the risks can be managed.

The railway operator could eliminate the risk by not providing any way to cross the railway at this location. But at this site, this is not a suitable solution, as users will need to cross the tracks in order to access both of the platforms once the line reopens.

The next option could be an engineering solution, such as providing an underpass or a ramped bridge over the railway line. A ramped bridge does not fit into the footprint of the site and cannot be accommodated. The ground conditions also make an underpass unsuitable. A smaller steps bridge, however, could be suitable for this site.

In this example, providing a level crossing for disabled users and those with reduced mobility and a bridge for other uses is a reasonably practicable solution.

The railway operator needs to record these findings. The Heritage Railway decides that it will provide a level crossing, but for the exclusive use of disabled people and people with reduced mobility.

The gates will be locked, and the crossing manned by an attendant. This addresses many of the risks identified in the risk assessment, but all other users will cross using the footbridge.

The railway operator will need to regularly review these controls to make sure they are still working, and if any changes or new risk assessment are needed.

The guidance and more information about level crossings is available at our website.



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