

Oliver Stewart
RAIB Recommendation Handling Manager



29 July 2026

Mr Andy Lewis
Deputy Chief Inspector of Rail Accidents

Dear Andy,

RAIB Report: Collision between passenger trains at Salisbury Tunnel Junction, Wiltshire on 31 October 2021

I write to provide an update¹ on the action taken in respect of recommendation 2 addressed to ORR in the above report, published on 24 October 2023.

The annex to this letter provides details of actions taken in response to the recommendation and the status decided by ORR. The status of recommendation 2 is **'Closed'**.

We do not propose to take any further action in respect of the recommendation, unless we become aware that any of the information provided has become inaccurate, in which case I will write to you again.

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

Recommendation 2

The intent of this recommendation is for Network Rail to have seasons delivery specialists that are more effective in managing Network Rail's seasonal risk.

Network Rail, building on the work that has already started in this area, should develop an appropriate competency framework for the role of the seasons delivery specialist. This framework should include:

- a. a job description that accurately reflects the responsibilities of the role
- b. the necessary technical skills required to undertake the role effectively
- c. the necessary non-technical and management skills needed to undertake the communication and co-ordination required of this role
- d. appropriate training material
- e. arrangements to confirm that staff have achieved, and continue to have, the required level of competence.

Network Rail is to arrange for provision of the necessary staff to fulfil the roles and develop a time-bound programme for implementation of the associated training, supported by suitably qualified assessment staff

ORR decision

1. As reported in our initial response of 23 October 2024, Network Rail issued the Seasonal Development Specialist (SDS) competence framework and was working to develop the associated competence management arrangements and eLearning. Network Rail has since introduced a Professional Development Framework for the SDS role.
2. Our principal challenge to Network Rail concerned resourcing. In response, Network Rail explained the assessment of SDS numbers was done within the routes. Although this did not identify that any further posts were required, it meets the requirement of the recommendation. Network Rail have described, in broad terms, the means by which the development plans apply to new entrants, as well as more detail of the timescales required to work through it.
3. 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
 - taken action to close it.

Status: Closed.

Previously reported to RAIB

4. On 23 October 2024 ORR reported the following:

Network Rail has issued the Seasonal Development Specialist (SDS) competence framework and is developing the associated competence management arrangements and eLearning. We have requested confirmation of the completion date for the actions outlined and how they will align with Slingo rec 5. Significant number of staff will need to be in post, or recruitment sufficiently advanced, before we consider closure of the recommendation.

Update

5. On 17 February 2026 Network Rail provided the following closure statement:



[N249-11] Salisbury
Rec 2.docx

6. On 24 March 2026 Network Rail provided the following supporting evidence to the closure statement:

How many individuals should achieve these competencies? How many have been assessed and closed for all training/competency gaps? Of those who aren't yet competent, when will they be trained – time-bound plan by financial year of remaining SDS achieving full competence? How will Network Rail monitor that plan?

As of 19th March 2026, there are eleven Seasons Delivery Specialists (SDS) in post.

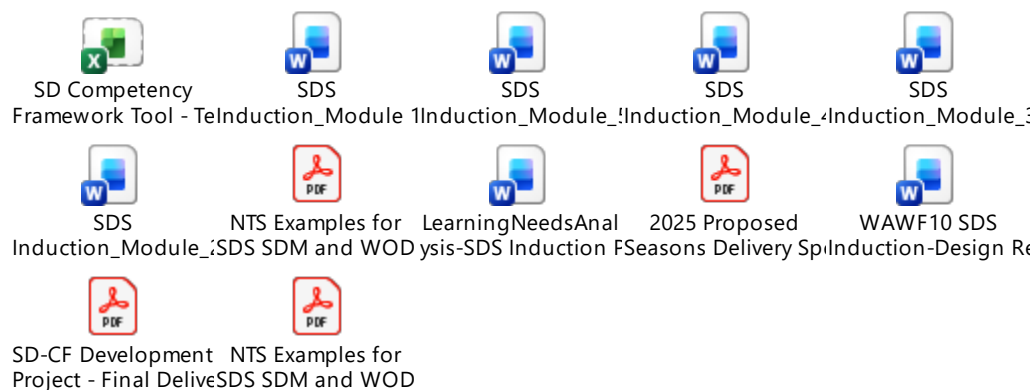
While the SDS role is not subject to a legally regulated assessment that grants a formal 'Competence' to perform tasks, unlike the safety-critical roles defined by ROGS (such as signallers or controllers), SDSs are expected to be competent to perform their role. Our current SDS team meets this standard, as their ability is confirmed through the selection and interview process which checks they have the right experience to fulfil the role. Additionally, our SDSs are supported by eight Seasons Delivery Managers distributed across the regions. These managers, along with the SDSs and the National Weather Team, meet on a biweekly basis to discuss key role-related challenges.

To support SDS career growth, Network Rail has developed a suite of 15 e-learning courses, including but not limited to: Seasons Delivery Specialist Induction; Weather Fundamentals; and Weather Management e-Learnings. These e-learning courses have been undertaken by three SDSs to date. Additionally, a Weather Workshop and a Seasons Delivery Non-Technical Skills Workshop have been attended by nine of the eleven SDSs.

Network Rail has also created a Professional Development Framework to add structure, professionalise, and standardise SDS development. The framework has been designed to support the development of key knowledge and skill requirements

pertinent to the role, including seasonal planning and response, industry collaboration and interfaces, and seasonal risk management. Completion of the e-learning modules above is a fundamental component of this framework and is intended to drive SDS completion rates. The framework was undertaken by the Operational Competence & Development Team with support from the Weather Academy and National Weather Team. Each module within the framework is expected to take an SDS 2-3 months to complete, with some units prioritised for completion in the first couple of months of a new SDS starting their role (e.g., induction programme). The whole framework is expected to take 12-18 months to complete. However, this is a dynamic framework which ensures SDSs continuously build evidence and progress against the assessment criteria through rolling yearly reviews led by their line manager. This assessment criteria allows line managers to assess SDS abilities with reduced bias or subjectivity.

The framework will transition into the online RailSmart Employee Development System (EDS) to support central monitoring, mirroring the approach for other roles. This monitoring will be managed by the Operational Competence Development Team, who currently oversee control and signaller training, ensuring a consistent and robust approach to skill development across operational roles. This enables the team to maintain a centralised view of progress, completions, and any identified development needs.



7. On 12 June 2026 Network Rail provided the following additional information in response to the points ORR made following a meeting with Network Rail on 20 May 2026 to review the closure statement received on 17 February 2026 and some additional info received on 24 March 2026:

- **The rec requires an assessment by NR of the number of SDS needed. Please can you provide evidence of this?**
 - The intent of this recommendation is for Network Rail to have seasons delivery specialists that are more effective in managing Network Rail's seasonal risk, and the recommendation closure statement (plus the response to ORRs questions) sets out how this is being addressed – primarily via the toolkit to help our SDSs to become more effective.

- In response to the request for evidence of an assessment of the number of Season Delivery Specialist (SDS) roles required, the recommendation requires that Network Rail “arrange for provision of the necessary staff to fulfil the roles.” The SDS role is a standard, templated role within Network Rail’s operating model, with SDS capability embedded within each Route structure.
 - As part of the Management Efficiencies Programme (MEP), Routes completed a structured review of organisational design and resource requirements. This included assessment of the capacity and capability required to deliver operations and maintenance activities, including those undertaken by SDS roles. This assessment concluded that there will not be an increase in existing SDS provision.
- **How does the development plan apply to new entrants as well as those already in the role?**
 - *The Seasons Delivery Professional Development Framework applies to all members of the Seasons Delivery Community, regardless of experience.*
 - *The framework is set and monitored by Line Managers and overseen by the Operational Capability Team, who are responsible for wider competence and professional development frameworks (including Controllers and Signallers), ensuring alignment with established approaches across Network Rail.*
 - *It is structured as a continuous professional development framework, where individuals assess themselves against defined criteria and build evidence over time. As such:*
 - *New entrants are likely to assess at a lower level initially, using the framework to build foundational knowledge and capability.*
 - *More experienced individuals may assess at a higher level, focusing on strengthening specific areas and evidencing capability against the same criteria.*
 - *All individuals are expected to develop and evidence competence over time, with progression based on practical application rather than one-off assessment.*
 - *This ensures a consistent standard of capability, while recognising that individuals start from different levels and develop progressively in role.*
- **Please can you provide a more detailed timebound programme, rather than just a timescale (12-18 months)**
 - *We have provided the framework and supporting guidance, which set out expectations for timescales and progression in more detail. In practice:*
 - *The framework consists of modular components, each typically taking 3–4 months to complete.*
 - *Modules can be completed in any order, allowing alignment to seasonal priorities and operational context.*

- *Progression is evidence-based, requiring individuals to demonstrate competence across real seasonal events.*
 - Modules 1–4 are expected to be completed within the first year, with the final module to be completed following Modules 1-4.

Operations Capability Team are responsible for monitoring progress on a biannual basis.

Previously reported to RAIB

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Network Rail is to arrange for provision of the necessary staff to fulfil the roles and develop a time-bound programme for implementation of the associated training, supported by suitably qualified assessment staff

ORR decision

1. Network Rail has issued the Seasonal Development Specialist (SDS) competence framework and is developing the associated competence management arrangements and eLearning. We have requested confirmation of the completion date for the actions outlined and how they will align with Slingo rec 5. Significant number of staff will need to be in post, or recruitment sufficiently advanced, before we consider closure of the recommendation.

2. 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

3. On 20 December 2023 Network Rail provided the following initial response:

Action Plan

Please provide milestones with dates

We have developed the first version of a Seasons Delivery Specialist (SDS) competence framework launched as a pilot in **November 23**. This will be finalised and published as a National Operations Procedure in **June 24** which will detail the arrangements for initial training, confirming competence and continuous professional development.

Work has also started on developing an associated learning journey for SDS's focussing on a weather fundamentals programme and an SDS induction programme. It is envisaged that the learning journey will be complete by **December 24**.

The review of the JD will form part of a wider organisation design workstream designed to explore what resource and expertise is needed across the business to manage and mitigate the impact of seasonal and weather events. This will start in 2024.

It is proposed that this Recommendation is aligned with Carmont DJS AP19 - Rec 5.

Evidence required to support closure of recommendation

- National Operations Procedure - **June 24**
- Learning Journey - **December 24**.

4. On 29 May 2024 Network Rail provided the following update:

Work Complete To Date

*We have developed the first version of a Seasons Delivery Specialist (SDS) **competence framework** - launched as a pilot in **Nov 23**. This was due to be published as a National Operations Procedure in **Jun 24**. However, initial feedback is that the framework needs additional work and an extensive change management exercise to facilitate uptake of the arrangements. Combined with different management arrangements for SDSs some challenging questions arise about who is competent to assess SDS competence. This links to the actions relating to the organisation design and job.*

To mitigate delay in the first instance we will focus on establishing the learning journey, which is designed around the competence framework, and then agree the competence management arrangements as part of the organisational design work

*Work has started on the SDS Induction. Learning resources have been published including **The Weather Fundamentals Programme** (a suite of e-learning programmes covering how weather works, hazards, forecasting, climate change, resilience)*

A study (undertaken by CAS) to further explore the non-technical skills needed by SDSs – the outputs of which form the basis for a training needs analysis and scope of works for a training delivery supplier.

An SDS job description that accurately reflects the responsibilities of the role.

The work undertaken to define the SDS competence framework is completed and highlighted a number of areas of inconsistency and where clarity was required. This includes the organisational position and competence of the SDS's manager.

Work to do

*Publish the SDS competence framework as a pilot document on the SDS sharepoint page. **June 24***

Continue with review of competence management arrangements. Dec 24

Complete the parts 2 and 3 of the e-learning programme for the weather academy which includes additional modules relevant to the SDS (e.g. How Weather Works in NR, Managing Extreme Weather events, Weather Tools and running effective table top exercises). Sept and Dec 24

Complete SDS Induction. Sept 24

Draft a learning journey. Oct 24

Finalise tender for NTS training for SDSs. Aug 24 (delivery from Dec 24)

Undertake an organisational design activity with key stakeholders from across the Routes Date TBC

Agree revised SDS JD and management arrangements with Routes Date TBC