

# Dangerous roll call of items thrown at trains and left on the track in the last 12 months laid bare by Northern

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Trains operated by Northern were the target of almost 70 dangerous attacks in the last 12 months.

Since August 2021, its services across the North of England were struck by 42 bricks, stones and rocks thrown from bridges and railway embankments.

Its carriages also collided with 27 'substantial items' including shopping trolleys, pushchairs and bikes deliberately placed on the track.

The train operator has released the information – including a map showing the location of each incident – as part of an on-going appeal to raise awareness of how dangerous this criminal activity is.

Tricia Williams, chief operating officer at Northern, said: "It's bewildering to think some people find targeting trains in this way is some kind of 'sport' – and the fact it's happening more than once a week is shocking.

“Whilst the 69 affected services represent less than 0.01 per cent of our annual fleet movements, the impact on those caught up in one of these events is significant.”

In February, one of Northern’s drivers (Ian Birch) was left covered in blood after his cab window was shattered by a brick thrown in Clifton, Greater Manchester; and in June, a 15-week-old baby (Esme Emmerson) was showered with glass after the train she was travelling on with her parents was attacked on approach to Hull, East Yorkshire.

Tricia Williams added: “We know these attacks are rarely carried out by a ‘lone wolf’ and are more often the action of a group – where peer pressure and ‘group mob mentality’ can be a contributing factor.

“Our message to them is simple: this behaviour is reckless, it’s dangerous and it must stop.”

As part of Northern’s ongoing fleet upgrade, high-definition CCTV that can be monitored in real time by British Transport Police is being installed on its trains. They are also making use of the ‘what3words’ system to identify the exact location of this activity. Footage and geographical data will be supplied by Northern to the police to assist with any criminal prosecutions.

Acting Supt Lorna McEwan said: “This photograph provides a startling visual which brings to life the danger involved in throwing things onto the tracks.

“Obstructing the railway is a stupid, reckless and mindless act. Placing items on the line or throwing rocks and stones at passing trains risks the lives of passengers and rail staff.

“Safety on the railway is our priority. This is not a harmless prank – it is criminal, it is dangerous, and we will prosecute those responsible.”

Anyone who witnesses items being thrown at trains or sees someone placing items on the track should contact British Transport Police immediately by texting 61016 or by calling 0800 40 50 40. Alternatively, people can call Crimestoppers, anonymously, on 0800 555 111.

Northern operates nearly 2,000 services a day to more than 500 stations across the North of England.