

Heritage railways react positively to improving safety and the coronavirus pandemic

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The rail regulator says it supports the action the Heritage Railway Association (HRA) is taking in developing a strategic approach to increasing its capabilities. There has been significant improvements in its leadership to the sector, most visibly by developing and promoting proportionate ways to manage safety risk.

This includes plans to develop a Heritage Safety and Standards Board aimed at increasing cross sector cooperation, sharing safety related information, and delivering an important role in developing, reviewing and promoting proportionate ways to manage safety risk.

Heritage railway companies and ORR have worked well together during the coronavirus pandemic, with the regulator providing advice and guidance. This, along with the sector stepping up its health and safety work has helped to re-open the railways safely.

However, the sector has areas to improve. Although the quality of safety management systems is improving, significant gaps remain in capability to demonstrate how risk is controlled. Consequently, lack of incidents in the past at those railways is not necessarily a reliable indicator of how well risk is managed,

or what may occur in the future.

The ORR has intervened where it has discovered it was necessary to address such issues and evidence from ORR inspections and investigations indicate that the capability and maturity of the heritage sector is varied; some are very good and others require work.

To help improve, the ORR engaged with the sector in delivering six Risk Management Maturity Model (RM3) and safety update workshops across Great Britain to provide practical guidance in how to use RM3 in a heritage environment to improve safety management capability. There was a high level of engagement across all the seminars and a real enthusiasm for how RM3 could help the sector enhance their own capabilities to assess and improve SMS implementation.

HM Chief Inspector of Railways Ian Prosser CBE said: “The HRA has taken a significant and important role in providing, amongst other things, safety leadership to the sector, most visibly by developing and promoting proportionate ways to manage safety risk.

“ORR issued advice and guidance to the industry to help them through the coronavirus pandemic. We’re pleased that they have listened and used this guidance to safely re-open its railways for the public to enjoy.”

“In the last year we have also seen some good approaches to improving safety. These often used technology to promote a system approach; digital platforms to share information and to deliver a system approach to assets, information, and competence management.

“Heritage operators continue to show enthusiasm to learn and manage their operations safely, and have responded appropriately to inspector advice. It remains a growing sector but significant challenges must be addressed to ensure it remains safe in the 21st century.”

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