

Residents warned after young children reported misusing level crossing

November 14, 2022



Following a number of concerning incidents on a on a level crossing, including the heart-stopping moment a six-year-old playing got his foot stuck in tracks in the path of an oncoming train, Network Rail and the British Transport Police (BTP) have issued a safety warning to residents of a Devon village.

Together, Network Rail and the British Transport Police (BTP) issued the statement to residents of Topsham in Devon after a number of reports of young children deliberately misusing the Toffles foot crossing in recent weeks.

The most alarming of these involved two young boys – believed to be around six years old – playing on the crossing on their bicycles when one of boys got their foot stuck. Thankfully a member of the public was able to free the boy’s foot so they could move out of the way of an oncoming train which needed to have the emergency brakes applied. The reckless behaviour of these boys not only placed themselves in danger, but also the member of public who helped them.

Alison Kramer, Network Rail community safety manager, said: “The railway is a very dangerous place and level crossings are not playgrounds. Incidents of level crossing misuse can lead to life-changing injuries

and in the worst-case scenario, loss of life.

“The irresponsible behaviour of these two young boys and of other children deliberately misusing this level crossing is really disappointing when we work so hard to educate parents and young people on how to behave safely when near the railway.

“We have installed extra signage at Toffles foot crossing to remind people that trains travel frequently in both directions and it’s vital that you take extra care and stop, look and listen. If you’re distracted, you won’t notice an approaching train until it’s too late, so make sure you stay alert at all times when near the railway.”

The foot crossing is used by approximately 250 people each day and sees two trains every half hour traversing in opposite directions on their way to and from Topsham station. Most of the near misses this year – of which there have been seven reported – have involved people who were either distracted or not paying attention to the safety instructions of stop, look and listen.

Several children have been spotted playing on or around the tracks, prompting Network Rail to organise an awareness day at the local school and the BTP to visit the parents of the two boys to explain the dangers of playing on the level crossing.

BTP Inspector Rebecca Warren, said: “Deliberately misusing level crossings is extremely dangerous and can have disastrous consequences.

“Unfortunately, we see hundreds of people taking risks on and around the railway every year.

“Have a little patience and wait until it’s safe to cross – it really isn’t worth risking yours and others’ lives to save a few minutes.

“We ask anyone who witnesses such incidents to report it to us by texting 61016 or calling 0800 40 50 40.”

To further enhance safety, Network Rail will soon also be installing gates either side of the railway line to remind people that they need to stay alert when using the foot crossing.

A safety event is planned for Tuesday 15 November from 10am, where Network Rail staff will be on hand at Toffles foot crossing to talk through safe level crossing use with members of the public.