

RSSB marks 20 years since the Hatfield train accident

October 17, 2020



Today marks 20 years since the tragic train crash at Hatfield. 4 people died, and over 70 were seriously injured.

Mark Phillips, Chief Executive of RSSB, said: “Today, we remember the Hatfield train derailment, 20 years to the day that it happened.

“At about 12:23 on Tuesday 17 October, a train from London Kings Cross to Leeds, travelling at about 115mph, derailed south of Hatfield station. Over 70 were injured, including 2 members of on-board staff, and tragically, 4 passengers died.

“Our thoughts are with the families and friends of those who died, those who were injured, and those who survived and live with the memory. We also remember the many people in the rail industry, the British Transport Police, emergency and rescue services, who played a part in the response on the day.

“Back then I was based at Railtrack’s East Anglia region, and along with others, I supported the initial response by going to the site that day. To bear witness to the aftermath of a major derailment, which had

caused loss of life, was chilling and saddening. But then what follows is a sense of focussed determination to get to the bottom of what went wrong.

“Key lessons from Hatfield have been learned and re-learned. Broken rails have fallen from a 40-year average of 750 a year to an 8-year average of around 150. Asset data is monitored closely and risk-based interventions can be made by infrastructure managers.

“Significant progress has been made in making the railways safer than they were 20 years ago. This includes better crashworthiness of rolling stock, improvements to operational safety, signalling and control systems.

“Additionally, there have been big improvements in the way the rail industry works collaboratively across company boundaries to improve safety performance—a common uniting goal. There is a shared commitment to monitor the risk, to use research and analysis to get to the underlying causes of problems and identify solutions.

“Today we remember the tragedy, its impact on human life, the lessons that we learned, and our ongoing determination to improve safety on our railways together.”

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