

Fatal accident near Margam, 3 July 2019

On publication of RAIB's report into the fatal accident near Margam on 3 July 2019, Simon French, Chief Inspector of Rail Accidents, said:

"The death of the two track workers who were struck and killed by a train at Margam was a tragic loss for their families and friends. It has also had a profound effect on all of us at RAIB, and those who died and all those who were close to them, are in our thoughts. The railway is like a family, with a distinct culture all its own, and we all feel deeply the loss of colleagues.

"This accident has reinforced the need to find better ways to enable the safe maintenance of the railway infrastructure. The areas that need to be addressed to improve the safety of track workers have been repeatedly highlighted by 44 investigations carried out by RAIB over the last 14 years. The most obvious need is for smart and accurate planning to reduce the frequency with which trains and workers come into close proximity, while also meeting the need for access to assets on an increasingly busy railway system.

"I believe it is essential that Network Rail addresses the fundamental requirements that have been highlighted by RAIB's investigations over the years.

"These include:

- developing leadership skills and involvement of the site team in the planning process, including the identification of site hazards and the local management of risk
- better management of people who work on the track, including supervision and assurance, that will make sure correct working practices are in use, and to identify areas for improvement
- greater use of technology to control access to the infrastructure, to provide warnings of approaching trains or to protect possession limits

"The railway has a lot to do to cultivate and support a generation of leaders who are able to make a real difference to track safety. In recent years the industry has launched projects intended to achieve this, but they have not always been successful. It is frustrating that the railway has been unable to carry people with it in its attempts to bring about real change.

"I remain hopeful that the rail industry will find a way to address these thorny and persistent issues. There is now a real sense that things must change. We've come a long way since the days when fatal accidents involving track workers were commonplace. However, it's now time for some clear thinking on how best to further reduce the risk to our colleagues who inspect, maintain and renew the railway's infrastructure."