

Near miss at Farnborough North footpath level crossing, 19 May 2022

On publication of RAIB's report concerning a near miss at Farnborough North footpath level crossing, 19 May 2022, Andrew Hall, Chief Inspector of Rail Accidents said:

“This incident was particularly serious because it involved large numbers of school and college students crossing the railway on a footpath crossing, ahead of a train travelling at speed. A serious accident was probably avoided due to the quick thinking of the crossing attendant who, on realising the danger, ran to intervene directly by closing a crossing gate that the students were holding open for each other.

“Behind the incident was an issue of the type RAIB has seen before. Historically the railway knew of the risks at this crossing and ongoing efforts were being made to replace it with a footbridge. This was proving time consuming and difficult, as is sometimes the case when planning decisions are involved. In the meantime, additional warning lights were installed, and a crossing attendant was provided to remotely control electromagnetic locks on the gates, thereby reducing risk. However, a known residual risk was that the crossing's users might not respond correctly when the audible alarm and warning lights were activated by an approaching train. In this case people held open the gates for each other as the train approached, meaning the attempted application of the gate locks by the attendant had no effect.

“If a known level of residual risk is allowed to persist for a long time, the chances of it manifesting itself as an accident or serious incident will inevitably rise. This is what happened at Farnborough North and is why the incident holds a powerful lesson.”