

Ms Caroline Topping
HM Assistant Coroner
HM Coroner's Court
Station Approach
Woking
Surrey
GU22 7AP

22 May 2020

Email: [REDACTED]

Dear Ms Topping

I write for and on behalf of First MTR South Western Trains Limited, which brands its services as South Western Railway (SWR). I refer to your Regulation 28 Report of 30th of March 2020 in relation to the inquest into the death of Jordan Michael AIRA to which you have requested a response from SWR by the 25th of May 2020.

The purpose of this letter is to respond to and address the matters of concern raised in the Report as point three in the list of "Matters of Concern". Network Rail (NR) will provide a response to the "Matters of Concern" under points one and two.

On behalf of SWR, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere condolences to the family of Mr Aira.

Details of signage at Ashford station

At the time of the incident, the following signage was in place at Ashford station:

- (a) Signs at the end of each platform, at or near the top end of platform ramp, which state that passengers must not pass those points. They also show the warning "*Danger: Do not touch the live rail*". These signs also contain symbols denoting "*do not enter*" and "*danger – electrical hazard*" and are designed to be visible at or near the top end of each ramp i.e. the point at which trespass may occur.
- (b) Red signs saying "*Warning – do not trespass on the railway*" outside the entrance on platform two and the out of hours gate on platform two. Two signs have been added to the entrance of platform one since the incident.
- (c) Yellow signs saying, "*Please keep behind the yellow line until the train has stopped*". Four signs are placed along platform two and there are five signs along platform one. Platform one is busier in the morning with services going towards London.
- (d) Samaritans signs at all four of the platforms ends and station entrance(s). These are similar to the design in place at other stations across the network.

Passengers are therefore required to pass close to signs warning them not to trespass, and of the dangers of trespass, at the station entrances and on the platforms in the ordinary course of accessing the station and when waiting for trains.

The signage in place at Ashford station conforms with the Station Infrastructure Standard (Rail Industry Standards 7700-INS – Issue 3, June 2018) which is applied nationally by the wider rail industry.

In addition to SWR's response to point three, I would like to provide you with an overview of the initiatives we take to educate pupils about the risks posed by the live rail, which may be relevant to point four in the list of "Matters of Concern".

SWR works very closely with NR to deliver Safety Awareness sessions at schools located near stations on our network. These educational sessions have been ongoing since 2017 and are delivered to pupils from Reception Year to Year 11. The focus of the sessions is to make the pupils aware of the dangers of the railway including the third rail, and how to behave without putting themselves and others in danger when on a station or near a level crossing.

These sessions are delivered by NR's Community Safety Manager with the support of SWR's Rail Community Officers and since 2017 have been delivered to 136 schools located on our network and reached 52,499 pupils.

Additionally, in 2018 the "**You vs Train**" campaign was launched to the public using social media channels, targeting a younger audience making them aware of the dangers of the railway through Virtual Digital sessions delivered to primary and secondary schools as well as colleges. The campaign's effectiveness is enhanced by the use of video accounts of survivors who came into contact with the third rail. The aim of this campaign was to:

- Raise awareness about the dangers of trespassing, including the risk of electrocution
- Evolve attitudes towards trespassing.
- Reduce the likelihood of future trespassing and harm.

Since 2018, on a national scale, the Virtual Digital sessions have been delivered to approximately 4.5 million students and the "You vs Train" campaign has had approximately 2.8 million hits on YouTube. In addition to this, the number of incidents involving young people trespassing on the railways has since fallen by 31.25%.

To complement the classroom and online learning, live operations occur such as the Trespass Awareness week (23-27 March 2020), led by Network Rail, British Transport Police and the wider industry enhancing the public's awareness around the dangers linked to trespassing on the railway. This was achieved through the use of our social media channels, pledging our support to the campaign and spreading the "You vs Train" safety message.

Locally to SWR, we have Rail Safety Accredited Security Officers (Rail Community Officers) whose core activities include the following:

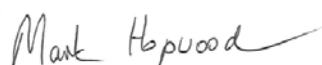
- Hi-vis uniform patrols to deter trespass and anti-social behaviour
- Working with the BTP and Network Rail to target hotspot locations

In conclusion, the signage in place at Ashford station at the time of the incident was in line with the approach taken by the wider rail industry and is visible throughout the station, except for the entrance to platform one. The red sign saying "*Warning – do not trespass on the railway*" was subsequently installed. In light of this, SWR does not consider that any further action is required to be taken further to the Report.

However, as an active member of the National Suicide Prevention Working Group and the Trespass Risk Group, SWR will continue to engage with the wider rail group from which consideration will be taken in relation to warning signage.

I hope that this response addresses your concerns.

Yours Sincerely,



Mark Hopwood
Managing Director