



Crispin Oliver
Senior Assistant Coroner for County Durham and
Darlington
HM Coroners Office

By email only to: hmcoroner@durham.gov.uk

22 August 2025

Re: Regulation 28 Report – Jody Lee Robb

Dear Sir,

I refer to your report dated 1 July 2025 made under paragraph 7, Schedule 5, of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009 and regulations 28 and 29 of the Coroners (Investigations) Regulations 2013.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere condolences to the family of Ms Robb. Please be assured that we take all incidents of this nature on the railway incredibly seriously and have carefully considered the matters raised in your report.

Network Rail Infrastructure Limited ("Network Rail") owns, operates and maintains the railway infrastructure in England, Scotland and Wales. At Durham Station, as infrastructure owner, Network Rail is responsible for the railway track and the viaduct. London North Eastern Railway Limited ("LNER") is the Station Facility Owner and responsible for the operational running of the station, including staffing and CCTV.

Your report identifies a number of matters of concern on which you request Network Rail's response. I have taken each of these matters in turn.

(1) Access to the viaduct from the platform.

Your report suggests that access is not sufficiently barred or impeded to the public, and that the main resource preventing access is human by means of station staff intervention.

We understand that Ms Robb accessed the viaduct from the platform. Over the last 6 years or so, the station and the viaduct have been the subject of significant investment, introducing multiple anti-suicide and trespass measures.

At various points throughout the station, there is Samaritans signage to encourage individuals to seek help, if needed.

The end of the platform is fitted with a locked gate, and beyond this, there is a drop off the edge of the platform to track level, to deter individuals from walking beyond the platform's edge and onto the track. Access via the locked gate is granted only for authorised personnel. The gate is the standard design and has pointed tops, to make it difficult for individuals to climb over the gate. The gate does not extend to the platform edge, as this is in compliance with Network Rail's national standards.

Near the end of the platform and at the side of the gate referred to above there are anti-trespass rubber pyramid mats ("witches hats") which extend along the edge of the railway track onto the viaduct for approximately 60 metres, on each side of the station platform. This is beyond what is required by Network Rail's standards. The intention of the witches hats is to make access difficult for anyone intending to trespass by acting as both a physical and visual deterrent.

There is an automatic voice message released from a speaker, when individuals get within 14 metres of the end of the platform. This tells people to move away from the platform end.

Near the end of the platform, there is also a yellow cross-hatched box. The main intention is to deter individuals from going within the box, as well as making anyone within the box more visible.

Network Rail has also funded training for station staff, led by the Samaritans, to help them engage with persons presenting at the station in distress. This training is offered not just for employees of LNER, but also employees of businesses within the station.

(2) The railings on the viaduct

You have suggested that the railings are not designed to prevent, impede or discourage attempts at suicide by means of jumping.

As the viaduct is a Grade 2 listed structure, Network Rail is required to submit a listed building consent application and prior approval planning application before it can undertake any work to physically alter the existing viaduct structure. Without the Council's approval, we would be unable to carry out any works to the existing viaduct structure which alter its appearance

Prior to the incident taking place, Network Rail submitted an application to improve the parapet across the full length of the viaduct on both sides by putting in place mesh safety panels. We have received the approved listed building consent from the Council, but there is one final planning approval that is required before final permission is granted (prior approval). We expect a further update on this application in August 2025.

Should permission be granted, the planned works intend to increase the height of the parapet, which will also be curved inwards, by installing the safety barrier to make it harder to climb. The aim of this barrier is to deter individuals from climbing, and even if they did try, it would be much more difficult to climb over and sit on the parapet.

Whilst we do not have a confirmed start date for the physical works, the design stage is underway and it is hoped that the works can be completed by the end of this financial year, subject to planning permission being forthcoming.

(3) Lighting on the viaduct

Finally, you indicate that eleven trains passed by Ms Robb whilst she was on the viaduct, and that no reports were made by any train crew of her presence. You have offered that Ms Robb may have been visible with even moderately enhanced lighting on the viaduct.

Network Rail cannot comment on the actions of the drivers of trains who passed the area in question.

In respect of the lighting on the viaduct, I can confirm that temporary lighting is only used where works to the railway are taking place; however, it is not usual to permanently light the railway. There are various safety reasons for this, including lighting potentially inhibiting driver's vision and ability to see signals.

In addition, there are concerns that lighting the structure may increase trespassing incidents as access may become more visible. As such, whilst we do not consider it appropriate to install lighting on the viaduct, we remain committed to restricting trespassing on the railway infrastructure as far as reasonably practicable, and will therefore continue to monitor the steps which have been implemented as described above.

I hope that this response answers your concerns, but if I can be of any further assistance, or if you would like further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Route Director, East Coast Route