



Railways: stations

Standard Note: SN/BT/3170
Last updated: 5 October 2009
Author: Louise Butcher
Section: Business and Transport

Over the past few years, there have been a number of concerns expressed in the media and in Parliament about the condition of railway stations across the UK, particularly in Greater London. The London Assembly published a report on the city's railway stations in January 2006 which found that the franchising arrangements for rail services in London had "failed to deliver an adequate standard of station facilities". This was followed by a country-wide report by the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee in February 2006, which had concerns about "poor facilities, vandalism at smaller stations and that many people felt unsafe because of the lack of security". In May 2006 the House of Commons Transport Committee [published oral and written evidence](#) from train operating companies and the Government on station safety.

This note gives information on who owns the country's rail stations and is responsible for their maintenance; station accessibility and safety. For briefings on other rail-related issues, visit the [Railways Page of Parliament website](#).

Contents

1	Ownership and upkeep	2
2	Accessibility	2
3	Safety	3

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties and is not intended to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual. It should not be relied upon as being up to date; the law or policies may have changed since it was last updated; and it should not be relied upon as legal or professional advice or as a substitute for it. A suitably qualified professional should be consulted if specific advice or information is required.

This information is provided subject to [our general terms and conditions](#) which are available online or may be provided on request in hard copy. Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing with Members and their staff, but not with the general public.

1 Ownership and upkeep

[Network Rail](#) (formerly Railtrack) is the freeholder (landlord) for almost all the stations in Great Britain (about 2,500), but they are then usually leased to the [train operating company](#) (TOC) running the most services out of the station. Network Rail retains responsibility for operating the [18 large mainline stations](#) that have potential for commercial trading or property development and has involved private sector operators in developing these stations. Information about individual stations can be found on the [National Rail Enquiries website](#).

There is a [Stations Code](#) which sets out various responsibilities between the freeholder and the landlord as regards maintenance etc. This was revised and updated in July 2006.

Particular requirements as to station improvements, safety and accessibility are set out in the [individual franchise agreements](#) signed by the relevant TOCs when they win a rail franchise.

2 Accessibility

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1995*, as amended by the *Disability Discrimination Act 2005*, contains provisions for increased access to transport and transport infrastructure by disabled people. The 1995 Act established a general right of access to railway stations from 1 October 2004, subject to a test of 'reasonableness'. The structure of the rail industry is such, however, that specific responsibilities remain unclear due to ownership and management of the stations residing for the most part in different hands.

Post-privatisation the responsibility for ensuring Railtrack and the TOCs gave regard to the needs of disabled passengers lay with the Rail Regulator. Under section 70 of the *Railways Act 1993*, the Regulator was required to prepare and from time to time revise a Code of Practice for protecting the interests of disabled rail users. He issued a code, [Meeting the needs of disabled passengers](#), in July 1994. In addition both Railtrack and the TOCs had to produce a disabled people's protection policy (DPPP) – which is required as a condition of the operating licence – outlining the provisions made for disabled passengers, and future plans for improvements. Following the *Transport Act 2000*, responsibility for disabled people and the adoption and implementation of the Code of Practice passed to the now-defunct Strategic Rail Authority (SRA). In February 2002 the SRA published a revised Code, *Train and station services for disabled passengers*. All operators had to review their DPPP and were invited to prepare an analysis of the infrastructure changes that might be required to comply with the legislation. At 26 May 2004, 20 DPPPs had been approved.¹

The responsibility for revising the Code now resides with the Secretary of State for Transport (following the *Railways Act 2005*). The Code has since been updated and [Accessible Train and Station Design for Disabled People: A Code of Practice](#) was published in July 2008. The new Code takes account of changes introduced by European standards for accessible railway infrastructure which were adopted by the UK on 1 July 2008: [Directive, 2008/164/EC](#) created a technical specification for 'persons of reduced mobility' (PRMs) to apply to the trans-European conventional and high speed rail system.²

¹ [HC Deb 26 May 2004, c1629W](#)

² more information on the Directive can be found in [HC Library Note SN/BT/601](#)

Small scheme funding is available for less busy or rural stations as part of the *Railways for All* strategy; TOCs, local authorities and other parties must bid for this funding.³

3 Safety

The Secure Stations Scheme was launched in 1998. The Scheme provides an incentive to station operators to improve security and provide reassurance to passengers and staff. The Scheme covers all rail and underground networks which are policed by the [British Transport Police \(BTP\)](#). It establishes standards of good practice and accredits individual stations which have worked with the BTP and other local partners to implement security measures. The Scheme is directed by the Department for Transport and the BTP.

There are four accreditation criteria:

1. the **design of the station** must conform to standards judged by the local BTP Crime Reduction Officer to prevent and reduce crime and improve passenger perceptions;
2. the **management of the station** must enable you to take steps to prevent crimes, respond to incidents, and communicate effectively with passengers;
3. crime statistics for the station over the twelve months prior to the inspection must show that you are **managing crime**; and
4. a survey of users must show that, on the whole, **passengers feel secure** when using the station.

Stations that participate in the Scheme work in close partnership with local BTP Crime Reduction Officers (CROs) who can advise where a station is achieving recognised standards and, conversely, where it is not. Local CROs provide station managers with on-going support and guidance until such time as they judge that the station has reached the standards required. An independent BTP officer then formally assesses the station to decide whether it conforms to the stipulated criteria and can be recommended for accreditation. If successful, the application is sent to the Department for Transport to endorse the application and award the station with a certificate signed by the Chief Constable of the BTP. The certificate is valid for two years from the date of issue. A certificate can be withdrawn during this time if there is a clear breach of the standard. After the two years the operator may apply for a new certificate, following the same procedure. [Full Scheme guidance](#) is available on the DfT website. In February 2008 over 600 stations were accredited under the scheme.⁴

By March 2006, approximately one third of the 2,500 stations across the country and half of the 300 national rail stations in London had been fitted with CCTV;⁵ by February 2008 Ministers categorised the number of stations with CCTV as “over a third”.⁶ The Government’s general view is that this is something that should be considered on a “station by station” basis.⁷

In recent years there have been a number of concerns expressed by Members of Parliament and in the media about the general safety of railway stations, particularly those which are

³ [HC Deb 23 March 2006, cc39-40WS](#); the [strategy and associated documents](#) are available on the Department for Transport’s website as is [a list of the stations that have received Access for All](#) funding under this scheme

⁴ [HC Deb 21 February 2008, c885W](#)

⁵ [HC Deb 16 March 2006, c2405W](#)

⁶ [HC Deb 21 February 2008, c885W](#)

⁷ [HC Deb 21 March 2006, c150](#)

unmanned after dark. Probably the most well-known campaign in recent years was by the *London Evening Standard* which launched its 'Make our rail stations safe' campaign following the murder of City lawyer Tom ap Rhys Pryce at Kensal Green Tube Station in North London on 12 January 2006. This was supported in Parliament by [Early Day Motion 1636](#), put down in February 2006, which gained 63 signatories. The paper ran a number of stories on station safety between January and March 2006⁸ which culminated in the support of both the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair⁹ and the then Secretary of State for Transport, Alistair Darling.¹⁰

The London Assembly's cross-party Transport Committee published a report on crime and safety at the capital's suburban rail stations in January 2006. The Committee found that the franchising arrangements for rail services in London had "failed to deliver an adequate standard of station facilities". This report criticised the "fractured nature of management" on the railways, outlined what standards Londoners should expect from their train stations and how best to achieve these standards. The Committee recommended significant changes within franchise agreements for train companies, with a much greater emphasis on passenger safety.¹¹

The House of Commons Public Accounts Committee published its report into maintaining and improving the country's railways stations in February 2006. On station safety the Committee reported that:

Many passengers feel unsafe at smaller stations. Research for the Department for Transport in 1996 and 2002 suggested that improvements in personal safety would result in 11% more journeys by public transport. The presence of staff, good lighting and CCTV surveillance at stations were the three most important factors reassuring passengers about their personal safety when they waited for a train. The installation of CCTV cameras had been a priority for TOCs, and Network Rail had allocated £50 million a year for enhancements which included station security measures. Passengers felt least secure at small, often unstaffed stations, many of which lack CCTV security systems. Few TOCs had sought accreditation under the Secure Station Scheme and Safer Parking Award Scheme run by the Department, the Home Office, the police and other stakeholders, which promoted good practice in station and car park security. The improvements needed to gain accreditation, such as the installation of CCTV cameras, improved lighting and the removal of hiding places, created a safer environment for passengers and helped to allay passengers' fears about their own personal safety. The Department was looking to identify the 100 station car parks with the highest crime levels with a view to negotiating improvements from TOCs and Network Rail so that they met the standards of the Safer Parking Award scheme.¹²

⁸ e.g. "Mayor attacks rail firms over unmanned stations", 17 January 2006; "Danger in the unmanned stations", 18 January; "Make stations safe at night say commuters", 20 January; "MPs join fight to make stations safe at night", 23 January; "Hope over 'ghost stations'", 24 January; "Rail watchdog confirms lack of station staff is a major fear", 25 January; "Danger stations named", 30 January; "Knife checks at tube stations", 7 February; "£4 million – that's all it would cost for our safety", 9 February; "Commons watchdog to probe rail safety", 10 February; "Violent assaults at rail and Tube stations rocket 38%", 13 February; "Minister tells firms to do more on safety", 14 February; "Inspector reveals the violent stations where staff are scared to go", 14 February; "A major triumph for rail safety", and "Standard made me put guards at our stations, says rail boss", 20 February; "The north-south divide over safety at stations", 22 February 2006; "Willesden safety deal lead way for night-time patrols", 2 March; "Silverlink in breakthrough deal to make stations safer", 6 March; "Rail operator in pledge to pay for more police", 8 March; and "Dangerous stations? It's all a case of media hype, says rail firm chief", 13 March

⁹ "Train firm told: Put guards on stations or lose your franchise", *London Evening Standard*, 24 February 2006

¹⁰ "What I will do to make stations safer for passengers", *London Evening Standard*, 16 February 2006

¹¹ London Transport Committee, [Crime and safety at London's suburban railway stations](#), January 2006

¹² PAC, [Maintaining and improving Britain's railway stations](#) (twenty-second report of session 2005-06), HC 535, 2 February 2006, para 7

It recommended that “the Department should work with the Association of Train Operating Companies and British Transport Police to promote national schemes with station operators and passengers. It should also consider making participation a franchise requirement”.¹³

¹³ *ibid.*, p4