EPSOM & EWELL TIMES
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Current front page

ISSN 2753-2771

EPSOM & EWELL TIMES

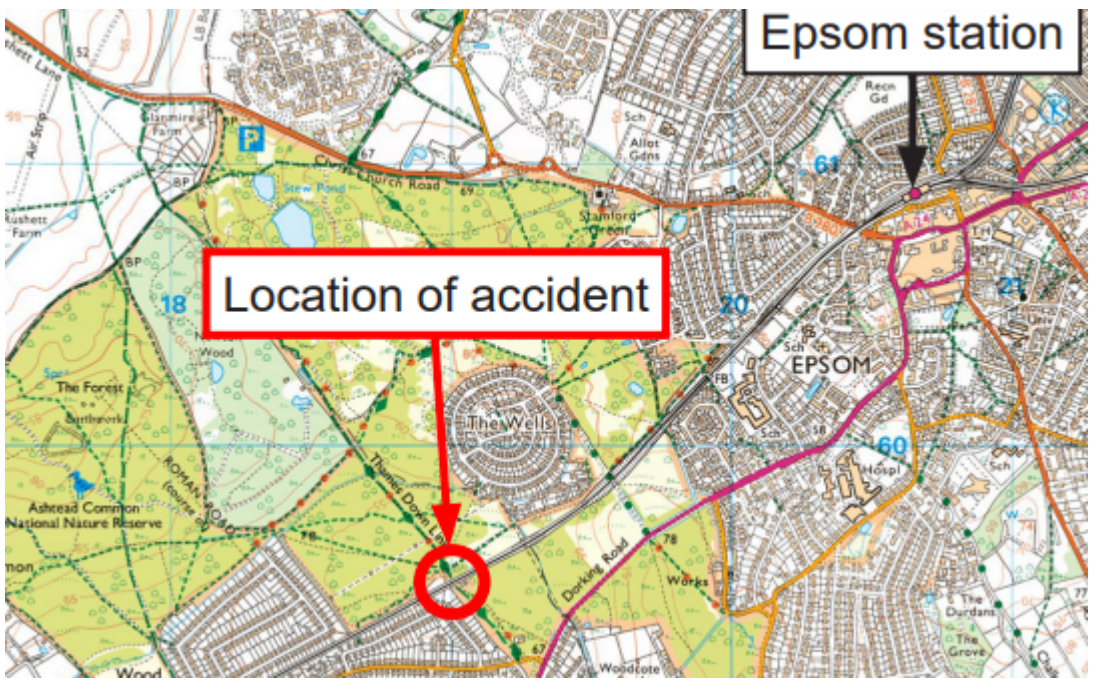
Up to £1 where sold

ISSN 2753-2771

Epsom rail crossing fatal accident lessons

16 February 2023

In the afternoon of 21st April 2022, a pedestrian was struck and fatally injured by an out-of-service passenger train at Lady Howard footpath and bridleway crossing on Epsom Common. The pedestrian, who was walking on the crossing with a dog and pushing a wheeled trolley bag, started to cross the railway tracks shortly after a train had passed. She was struck by a second train, which was travelling in the opposite direction to the first. The driver of the train involved in the accident sounded the train's horn on seeing the pedestrian on the crossing. The pedestrian responded by hurrying forwards towards the exit of the crossing, but was unable to get clear of the path of the train in time to avoid being struck.



The **Rail Accident Investigation Board** (RAIB) carried out an investigation and has just issued its report and findings.

The investigation found that the pedestrian was apparently unaware that the second train was approaching when she made the decision to cross; there is no evidence that she was aware of it and/or had misjudged the time available to cross. This was because, although the pedestrian looked twice in the direction of the second train before starting to cross, the front of this second train was hidden behind the first train, which was moving away on the line nearest to her. RAIB also found it was possible that the pedestrian did not perceive the risk arising from the possibility that the first train was hiding another approaching train.

A probable underlying factor was that Network Rail had not provided any effective additional risk mitigation at the crossing, despite having previously deemed the risk to users to be unacceptable. Network Rail had planned to install miniature stop lights at the crossing, but complexities with the technology required at this location meant that this solution was not ready for implementation before the accident occurred. There is little evidence that Network Rail considered effective options to mitigate the risk on an interim basis while this solution was progressed, although they fitted additional warning signs for users and a camera to monitor crossing use.

Recommendations

As a result of this investigation, RAIB has made two recommendations, both to Network Rail. The first is intended to address the risk to pedestrians at crossings of this type arising from a second approaching train being hidden from view by another train. The second recommendation concerns the implementation of appropriate interim risk mitigations at level crossings that are awaiting long-term solutions.

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