



Barbara Cahill
RIAC Secretariat
Health and Safety Commission
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Dear Ms. Cahill,

On behalf of the Scottish Countryside Access Network I attended the Rail Industry Advisory Committee meeting in Edinburgh in July last year, at which the issue of level crossings was debated. Since that time I appreciate that Network Rail have introduced a pilot scheme to assess the use of and incidents at 20 crossings north of Perth. While we at SCAN welcome this initiative it is only of very limited value to the majority of users of level crossings in Scotland.

The thing which should be driving this forward is a strong overview of the overall risks to walkers, horse riders and cyclists using Scotland's outdoors, including the relative risks of using level crossings or busy roads. SCAN strongly believes that the HSE have the major role to play here. At the meeting in July 2004 Allan Sefton said that he acknowledged that role and yet there seems to be no overview being taken.

The risks of forcing people to take alternative routes, often involving busy roads with no footways are considerable. This is especially true for horse riders, cyclists and family groups.

Access Officers across Scotland are currently embarking on a programme of Core Path Planning under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. What guidelines for risk assessment can we use to help choose the most sensible routes to promote for public use, including rail crossings and/ or links on or beside busy roads?

It is time to take a much broader view of the level crossing problem. Network Rail is being villanised as the preventers of access, while they are in fact being driven by a very narrow interpretation of Health and Safety responsibilities. It cannot make sense to have more people killed and injured on Scotland's roads for the largely theoretical benefit of keeping recreational users off currently statistically safe level crossings.

Non-motorised recreational use of level crossings is inherently safe and this should be acknowledged. We are writing to ask that HSE are far more proactive in trying to reach a sensible and safe conclusion to this argument.

Yours sincerely,

Alison Irvine, SCAN committee