



Mr Paul Larner

By email: [request-497559-845644f6@whatdotheyknow.com](mailto:request-497559-845644f6@whatdotheyknow.com)

Network Rail  
Freedom of Information  
The Quadrant  
Elder Gate  
Milton Keynes  
MK9 1EN

T 01908 782405

E [FOI@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:FOI@networkrail.co.uk)

9<sup>th</sup> August 2018

Dear Mr Larner

**Information request**

**Reference number:** FOI2018/00934

Thank you for your email of 16 July 2018, in which you requested the following information:

*'I was subject to a delay of an hour due to various train delays/cancellation on 16 July 2018. I understand the cause was a signalling failure in the Portsmouth Harbour area overnight.*

*I would like to know:*

- 1. The root cause of the failure*
- 2. Whether the potential for this failure was pre-emptively identified?*
- 3. If so, what proactive maintenance was undertaken to minimise the risk of this failure occurring?*
- 4. What steps will National Rail be taking to reduce the risk of the same failure occurring again?'*

I have processed your request under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and I can confirm that we hold the information you requested.

**1. The root cause of the failure**

There were two different failures on 16 July 2018 which led to delays during morning peak time. One was an operational error within the Fratton Depot and the other a faulty cable. The signalling system controlling the Portsmouth area has a unique facility whereby if it detects such a failure in a lineside cable, then it automatically

shuts down the effected systems whilst the faulting teams are mobilised to make the repairs and reset the system. This is a safety feature that ensures the safety integrity of the signalling system is maintained and ensures the operators are unable to inadvertently cause other issues.

***2. Whether the potential for this failure was pre-emptively identified?***

We are unable to pre-empt cable failures because they can be caused by things outside of our control such as acts of vandalism, theft, rodent damage or damage from other disciplines / project work adjacent to them. The operational error in Fratton was due to human error. Please note the relevant Train Operating Company (TOC) is responsible for managing their staff within Fratton depot.

***3. If so, what proactive maintenance was undertaken to minimise the risk of this failure occurring?***

No proactive maintenance was undertaken because, as explained above, cable faults are hard to predict as are cases of human error. We do, however, brief all the disciplines about ensuring their actions do not inadvertently cause damage to lineside equipment.

***4. What steps will National Rail be taking to reduce the risk of the same failure occurring again?'***

Network Rail will be working closely with the relevant TOC to learn lessons from the failures on this day to ensure we can jointly manage the impact to our customers during times of perturbation.

If you have any enquiries about this response, please contact me in the first instance at [FOI@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:FOI@networkrail.co.uk) or on 01908 782405. Details of your appeal rights are below.

Please remember to quote the reference number at the top of this letter in all future communications.

Yours sincerely

**Anisha Pandya**  
**Information Officer**

The information supplied to you continues to be protected by copyright. You are free to use it for your own purposes, including for private study and non-commercial research, and for any other purpose authorised by an exception in current copyright

law. Documents (except photographs) can also be used in the UK without requiring permission for the purposes of news reporting. Any other re-use, for example commercial publication, would require the permission of the copyright holder. Please contact me if you wish to re-use the information and need to seek the permission of the copyright holder.

### **Appeal Rights**

If you are unhappy with the way your request has been handled and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, please write to the FOI Compliance and Appeals Manager at Network Rail, Freedom of Information, The Quadrant, Elder Gate, Milton Keynes, MK9 1EN, or by email at [foi@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:foi@networkrail.co.uk). Your request must be submitted within 40 working days of receipt of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire SK9 5AF