



Network Rail
Freedom of Information
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E FOI@networkrail.co.uk

Mr Michael Everett

By email: request-744052-b2da257f@whatdotheyknow.com

29 April 2021

Dear Mr Everett

Information request

Reference number: FOI2021/00520

Thank you for your email of 3 April 2021, in which you requested the following information:

Please could you provide me with the details of the number of people that have ended their life to Suicide on the railway line within the last 3 years to the nearest railway station.

Please only provide the details for stations within 30 miles of Bristol city centre.

I have processed your request under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

I can confirm that we hold the information you requested. In direct response to your question regarding the total number of people, I can confirm that the total number of suicides recorded in the areas captured by your request over the time period specified was 17.

I am not providing any more detailed location information since to do so would not be consistent with maintaining safety on the railway. In the remainder of this letter I will explain a little about the search methodology we have used in reaching the answer above and explain the legal basis for withholding the location information.

How we conducted our searches

In order to respond to your request, we have conducted a search for any suicides recorded for the period of 1 April 2018 to present, capturing the following areas and railway lines that we identified as being within a 30 mile radius of Bristol city centre (from Bristol Temple Meads Station):

- The main line beyond Swindon to Bristol Temple Meads, and Bristol Temple Meads to Bridgwater;
- The South Wales Mainline from Bristol to just beyond Cardiff Central;
- The railway line between Gloucester and Cardiff;
- The line between Bristol Parkway and Swindon;
- The Bradford on Avon branch line between Westbury and Bath Spa;
- The line between Chippenham and Bristol Temple Meads.

To explain in more detail, we are unable to do a search in the Safety Management Intelligence System (commonly known as SMIS, this is a database recording all safety incidents on the rail network) for a “30 mile radius” as requested but we have identified as many of the lines and locations captured by your request so far as we are reasonably able. I hope that the areas we have identified captured all of the locations of interest to you but if not then please confirm which further locations you require and I can log this as a new request for you.

I should also add that SMIS does not always record incidents according to the nearest station but instead according to the nearest railway location, such as a level crossing, junction, railway station etc.

Releasing information which endangers health and safety

Under s.38(1) of the FOIA information is potentially exempt from disclosure if its release would, or would be likely to:

- (a) endanger the physical or mental health of any individual, or
- (b) endanger the safety of any individual.

It is my belief that disclosure of the specific recorded locations for these incidents makes it more likely that individuals would attempt to trespass on the railway at these locations, believing that the railway is more accessible in these places, which could potentially cause themselves and others potential harm.

It is important to remember that disclosures under FOI are disclosures to the world at large: publicly disclosing more detailed information about these suicide incidents would be likely to cause similar acts of trespass to take place at these locations, as well as causing

distress and anxiety to the surviving family members of the individuals who were involved in these tragic incidents.

While we are committed to openness and transparency and to disclosing information in response to requests where possible, in this instance I am of the view that disclosure of the total number of suicide incidents on the lines specified earlier in this letter for the last three years is sufficient to satisfy the public interest. Any further disclosure of more granular detail into the public domain, even if we were to identify the closest stations in each case, would be likely to either put other members of the public in danger on our railway, specifically at these locations or in the general vicinity, or to cause distress to living relatives of those who have previously died at these sites. We have to be mindful of the impact of releasing information that gives specific details about the location and taking a more cautious approach accords with the advice given and published by the Samaritans; to find out more please see the link below:

<https://www.samaritans.org/about-samaritans/media-guidelines/guidance-reporting-rail-suicides/>

I therefore consider that the strongest public interest lies in protecting the location details held on each of these incidents and I am therefore withholding this aspect of the information you are seeking.

I am sorry that I am unable to supply all of the details you are seeking but hope that the information and explanations I have provided in this letter are helpful. If you have any enquiries about this response, please contact me in the first instance at FOI@networkrail.co.uk. 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

Emma Meadows
Information Officer

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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 Head of Freedom of Information at Network Rail, Freedom of Information, The Quadrant, Elder Gate, Milton Keynes, MK9 1EN, or by email at 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 (ICO) can be contacted at Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire, SK9 5AF or you can contact the ICO through the 'Make a Complaint' section of their website on this link: <https://ico.org.uk/make-a-complaint/>

The relevant section to select will be "Official or Public Information".