



The Railway Forum

Press Release

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For immediate use

'DRAFT CORPORATE MANSLAUGHTER BILL A WORRYING DEVELOPMENT', SAYS FORUM

Today's launch by Ministers of a Draft Corporate Manslaughter Bill is a worrying development that could increase complexity in an already complicated area of law and could potentially – and damagingly – increase risk aversion on Britain's railways.

The offence of corporate manslaughter already exists under current law as a criminal offence capable of being committed by an organisation. Given that, it is difficult to understand what the purpose of this proposal is. It runs the risk of causing confusion and encouraging risk averse cultures in all industries.

The railway industry has made great strides in both improving safety and eliminating risk aversion over recent years and in this context the Government's proposals are of significant concern.

If the Government does proceed with its intention to put this Bill before Parliament, we welcome the fact that it is stated that the offence will also apply to Crown bodies. However, we are particularly concerned at the possibility that the application of the Bill to the Crown may be restricted. If this was the case, it could render the inclusion of Crown bodies in the legislation as redundant.

'Whether compared to other countries or to other modes of transport, the railways in Britain are extremely safe', said Adrian Lyons, Director General of The Railway Forum. 'Just at a time when senior management is working hard to encourage a move away from the risk aversion that so damaged the industry in the past, the prospect of new legislation in this complex area is most unwelcome.'

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Notes to Editors

1. Further details on the Draft Corporate Manslaughter Bill launched today can be found at: http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/n_story.asp?item_id=1278.
2. The Railway Forum is an industry-wide body sponsored by and paid for by most of the train operating companies, the rolling stock leasing companies, the Passenger Transport Executives, Network Rail, London Underground, and many manufacturing and infrastructure companies, as well as other businesses connected with the railways. In all we have some sixty members. Our key role is to act as a think tank, information exchange and point of contact for those committed to and interested in our industry.

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