

Transport Salaried Staffs' Association

2nd Floor, 17 Devonshire Square, London EC2M 4SQ

t 020 7387 2101

f 020 7383 0656

e enquiries@tssa.org.uk

Via Email Only

Nick Pascazio
Head of Industrial Relations (Interim)
Network Rail
The Quadrant
Milton Keynes
MK9 1EN

Date: 24th September 2020

Dear Nick,

RE: Coronavirus response

I am writing to you in relation to Network Rail's ongoing response to the deepening Coronavirus crisis.

In this letter I will outline the concerns our union has in relation to the health, safety and wellbeing of our members, and all Network Rail staff, and propose a number of measures that I believe are vital in the fight to mitigate risk for all whilst ensuring vital transport services are maintained throughout the pandemic. As the incidence of the virus rises across the UK and local lockdowns are imposed, Network Rail needs to act swiftly to avoid preventable harm to its staff. We reiterate our commitment to work with the Company and our sister unions to achieve this and will outline the ways in which we propose to do so below.

Firstly, for a company to fulfil its duty of care it is imperative that advice from the employer is consistent, especially during this uncertain time. Yet our members and Reps continue to feed back that this is still not the case in Network Rail, with incidents of distinctly different sets of advice being created and issued by routes and regions being reported to us on an almost daily basis. Clearly, this is unacceptable, and we ask for clarity on how the Company plans to urgently address this problem.

To help rectify this situation, the TSSA seeks a firm commitment that official Network Rail policy meetings and interviews should not be held face-to-face and that this instruction, alongside that of our union's for the entire pandemic: to work from home where possible, is communicated clearly to all. For staff who cannot work from home - because it is not possible to carry out their duties from elsewhere, or for health or personal reasons - we demand that a consistent level of protection is in place in all workplaces.

We are also hearing from our Reps and members that a number of locations are looking to expand capacity beyond what has been agreed a safe level, primarily by looking to introduce one metre plus social distancing. Again, this is not acceptable. Although we accept that certain tasks can only be carried out through close proximity working, in all other instances a social distance of at least two

www.tssa.org.uk

members' helpdesk **0800 3282673**
General Secretary **Manuel Cortes**



Transport Salaried Staffs' Association

2nd Floor, 17 Devonshire Square, London EC2M 4SQ

t 020 7387 2101

f 020 7383 0656

e enquiries@tssa.org.uk

metres should be in place. This information needs disseminating to all Network Rail staff in a clear and easily accessible format without delay.

Furthermore, we are calling for Network Rail to reinstate all Covid-19 policies that our union helped to negotiate in April with immediate effect and indefinitely throughout the crisis. This is crucial for ensuring the safety of our members, their colleagues, their families and those in our community who are most vulnerable, particularly those instructed to shield - either for their own safety or that of family members. Moreover, we request that schemes implemented in Spring to prevent the transmission of Covid-19 by encouraging key workers who cannot do their jobs remotely to use private transport to reach workplaces, such as the mileage scheme, be extended beyond their current imminent endpoints.

Additionally, in order to keep track of the emerging national picture throughout the wide variety of workplaces Network Rail operates in, we request that the Company sets up a single internal point of escalation for any Covid-19 concerns, potentially via a webpage. This would allow all staff members to raise issues swiftly and confidentially with the confidence that they would be dealt with by an appropriate forum, and would enable better oversight by both Network Rail and the unions as to staff health and safety nationally. Our national Organisers and Reps would be happy to work with the Company to help create this mechanism which we envisage would be available to all.

Finally, in order to ensure greater consistency going forward, we are calling for a single national forum (i.e. a separate temporary council) that encompasses Industrial, Health, Wellbeing & Safety and Equality Representatives from all recognised unions to work with the Company on its Covid-19 response for the duration of the pandemic. We will be writing to our sister unions forthwith to make the same proposal to them.

I look forward to your response and to working with Network Rail to ensure the safety of all involved in continuing to keep the railways moving at this crucial time.

Yours sincerely



Manuel Cortes
TSSA General Secretary

www.tssa.org.uk

members' helpdesk **0800 3282673**
General Secretary **Manuel Cortes**

