

# Railway Level Crossings

**a personal journey**

Tina Hughes MBE

# Charlie and Olivia



Died 3 December 2005 at Elsenham level crossing





Red STOP  
Green GO AHEAD  
IF NO LIGHT -  
BEWARE

INSTRUCTIONS  
1. Cross only when green  
light shows  
2. Cross quickly

CCTV  
IN OPERATION



WARNING AND INFORMATION: THE  
AREA COVERED BY THIS CAMERA WILL BE  
RECORDED BY THE POLICE  
AND WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE TO  
THE POLICE

**“It’s a perfectly  
safe crossing  
when used  
correctly”**

**“The two girls did not react to the red miniature warning light and yodel alarm, which visually and audibly indicated that it was not safe to open the wicket gate and use the station footpath crossing.”**

*RSSB accident report June 2006*

**“the girls’ focus of attention on a train to Cambridge and the failure to perceive the risk from trains in the opposite direction”**

**“an erroneous belief that the audible alarm related only to the train that was passing ahead of them”**

*RAIB - Rail Accident Report Dec 2006*



# But Elsenham was not safe

- Poorly risk assessed
- No ticket machine on the other platform
- No second train coming or 'hurry' alarm
- High numbers of children who used it
- Inaccurate numbers and speed of trains



and now

# Subsequently...?

- Independent report into Elsenham and level crossing risk
- Discussion of risk not allowed at Inquest
- Network Rail described the girls as trespassers
- Civil Case

# 6 years later

- Discovery of risk assessments and other documents not previously disclosed
- Media attention
- Campaign against families
- New CEO
- 'Level Crossing User Champion'

“What makes the whole set up **undesirably risky** is the large number of users, including a lot of **schoolchildren**.”

“There is a lot of to-ing and fro-ing. The car park on the down side and papershop on the up side mean that many

**commuters cross twice.**

Similarly those travelling up have to cross from the village side to buy a ticket and back again.”

“A **ticket machine** on the up platform would have a considerable impact on the reduction of risk”.



“The Platforms are staggered, so if you need to catch a train from the far platform when one has just run over the crossing, then the temptation to cross behind the train (even though the lights may still be red for another train approaching) are, to many, irresistible.”

*May 2001*

# Office of Rail Regulation prosecution



# The Judge's remarks...

“**systemic** as opposed to operational **failure**, falling substantially below the standard expected”

“**culpable corporate blindness**”

“complacency going beyond the merely inefficient, sub optimal or even occasionally incompetent but entering the realm of criminal failure as the guilty pleas concede”

It's about the

**impact**  
**on people**



- Train driver
- Railway staff
- Emergency services
- Everyone involved in risk assessments
- School and community
- Friends and family

Risk assessment processes

Level Crossing Managers

Education

Communications

Enforcement

New technology



**Stop  
Look  
Listen**

**Beware  
of trains**

**Warning  
Do not trespass  
on the Railway  
Penalty £1000**

**6,000+**

Things have changed but...

**How long is corporate  
memory?**