

Briefing Note**Points Maintenance****Introduction**

A new suite of multifunctional switch and crossing maintenance standards is being prepared aimed at improving performance. The documentation aims to provide generic requirements for switch and crossings as a complete sub system. Specific detailed maintenance variations or test sequences for specific types of equipment, e.g. an HW point machine, will support this at a component level. The approach is to produce a pilot suite of standards consistent with Railtrack's strategy for Line Standards - "Project Release".

Maintenance requirement - Generic and Enhanced

The maintenance of permanent way, switch heaters and associated signalling and telecommunications equipment is all included. The documents are intended to generically cover all types of operating device other than lever operated mechanical switches. Current best practice and standards have been drawn together to form a default maintenance requirement. This will identify the mandatory safety checks and performance related activities.

A separate Code of Practice details maintenance enhancements that may be selected and applied where justified, for example at key points or poor performing points with high failure impact. The enhancements may be additional checks or tests, more frequent or detailed checks or tests and tighter tolerances demanding priority remedial action. They are all aimed at preventing failure and implemented in addition to the default maintenance programme. This approach has been tested successfully on East Anglia Zone.

Supporting the maintenance requirements are guidelines on the expected base condition of the switch and crossing system and suggested enhancements, e.g. hardware options such as the fitting of switch rollers, to enhance performance. Infrastructure enhancement may be necessary to initially raise the standard of equipment to maximise the benefit from the application of enhanced maintenance. Additional guidelines to assist rapid response when failures are reported will complete the documentation suite.

Development process

The documents have been developed with input from Zonal Points Champions, representation from maintainers and others involved with switch and crossing maintenance requirements. The Railtrack 'Winning Ways' initiative has highlighted effective points maintenance as a high priority and endorsed the approach taken.

The documentation has been developed on the basis of leaving current maintenance requirements unchanged, minimising safety approval implications. The documents will, however, offer the basis for consideration of limited

RAILTRACK

Assurance & Safety

maintenance requirements for low usage situations and defining any minimum safety (backstop) maintenance frequencies.

Implementation and benefits

The potential will exist to benefit through a more focussed switch and crossing maintenance regime. It will enable Railtrack Zones to agree contract variations on a local site-specific basis where contract managers and suppliers can justify extra maintenance costs against expected performance benefits.

To enable maximum benefit to be gained, it is aimed to have the new enhanced maintenance requirements available for use within new and existing maintenance contracts by the new financial year, i.e. April 1999. The remaining documentation is scheduled to be available for use from June 1999.

It is intended that the generic switch and crossing maintenance approach pilots and sets the style for other infrastructure system maintenance standards. Existing Signalling Maintenance Specifications and Track Maintenance Standards are not overtaken by the new Points Maintenance Standards as the new standards are fully compatible with the requirements of the existing documents.