



Keep Merseyrail Guards



The first and obvious question is simply why even think of removing guards?

- In a report produced for Merseytravel by Passengerfocus in April 2014, 'Future Merseyrail Rolling Stock – what passengers want' the factor which emerged as by far the most important to improve from the passenger perspective was personal security on the train, which reached an index of 180 (compared to 100 which signifies the average relative importance).
- It also showed passenger satisfaction with personal security whilst on the train was high (86 per cent) and the report said "this aspect is a strength upon which it is important to maintain focus and development". It went on to state "As passenger perception of personal security is currently a strength, this indicates that there is no need for drastic change, just careful consideration to maintain and develop this in the future, since the importance of this measure to passengers suggests that if satisfaction with personal security were to decrease in future, this would likely have a severe negative effect on overall satisfaction with the service as a whole"
- An RMT-commissioned survey from independent polling company Opinium Research Ltd, published in January 2016, showed that 78 per cent of regular passengers opposed the removal of guards.
- Among women passengers, 84 per cent in the same survey said they would feel less safe without a guard, and
- Among over-55s, 85 per cent said they would feel less safe without guards.

78%
Of regular customers are opposed to the removal of the guard

- RMT has been working with disabled groups and individuals throughout the campaign against D00. They have, above all others, expressed the gravest reservations about the proposal to remove the guard. While they and RMT welcome some of the design improvements contained in the new trains, disabled passengers rely heavily both upon the reassuring presence of a second member of staff on all services and the practical assistance afforded by the guard when there are no station staff available for whatever reason

Safety

The safety role of guards is far more than just giving passengers a perception of security, important though that is.

- There are currently 35 safety competencies involved in the guard's job, ranging from routine despatch to dealing with emergencies such as fires, accidents and train evacuations.
- On Merseyrail, following a collision between a train and a road vehicle at Crescent Road level crossing in Southport on August 25, 2016, the guard placed isolating equipment on the track, isolated the electric rail and evacuated passengers to safety, while the driver remained in his cab leading the communications with the signallers. This team work highlighted the vital importance of having two people on the train.
- In the Watford landslide derailment on September 16, 2016, the driver was effectively trapped in his cab and it was the guard who played the crucial role in dealing with the emergency, including evacuating passengers.
- On December 6, 2016 a Merseyrail Northern Line guard faced down a sex attacker who had just assaulted a female passenger and attempted to rob her. The guard remained between the attacker and the victim despite severe threats. He liaised with other rail staff and then escorted her to the ticket office where the station staff took over who ensured that the victim was able to get home safely.

- On January 6, 2017 a guard on a Trans-Pennine Express service from Manchester Airport assisted a passenger who had been assaulted, helping her report the incident to police, who launched a criminal investigation into a serious sexual assault. The victim praised the guard's "unbelievably kind and compassionate manner" and said she did not know what would have happened had there not been a guard on the train

- The introduction of D00 elsewhere on the national railway network and on London Underground has resulted in a significant increase in the number in incidents involving passengers being caught in doors or falling under trains.

- This is also true of London Underground, even though LU is classed as a 'light rail' system while Merseyrail is a 'heavy rail' system which also, for example, has a large number of level crossings and other structures that are not present on LU.

- All three rail unions oppose D00. Aslef and RMT have signed a joint declaration opposing any form of operation that removes the safety role of the guard, and calling for existing D00 to be scrapped.

- The heightened state of alert surrounding the threat of terrorist attacks is another factor which underlines the short-sightedness of further moves to D00.

Under the Merseytravel/Merseyrail plan, emergencies such as those above would be dealt with by controllers up to 20 miles away speaking to passengers via intercom. It cannot conceivably be argued that this is safer.

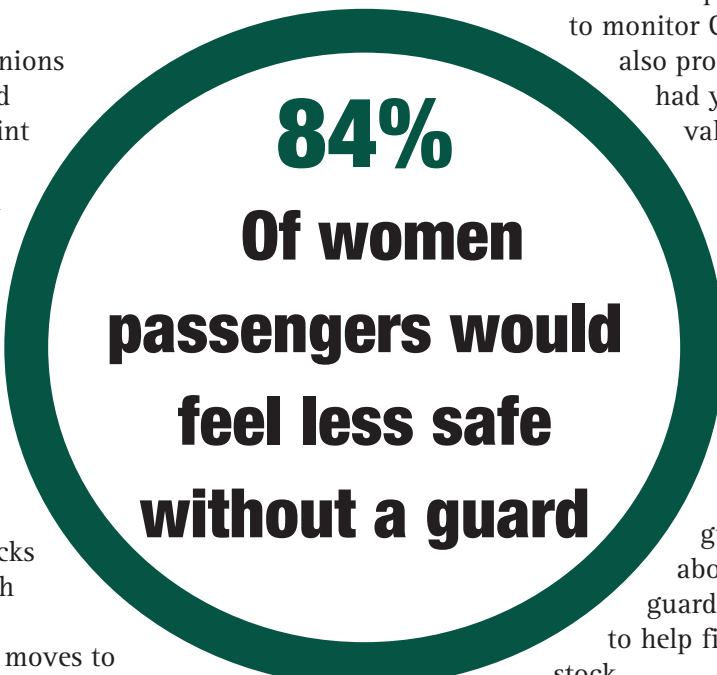
Merseyrail has said that its D00 plans are to comply with recommendation No1 of the official report on the fatal accident at James Street station.

This is breathtakingly dangerous nonsense, which would mean that on the new trains the driver would be required to monitor a set of CCTV screens in the cab until the train has left the station.

That is completely at odds with basic railway safety, which requires the driver to look ahead through the windscreen, watching the signals and scanning the track 'uninterrupted' for obstacles, trespassers or workers.

Nowhere in the RAIB report into the fatal accident at James Street, least of all in the recommendations arising from RAIB's consideration into this tragic fatality, is there any discussion which supports or proposes a change to D00.

In any case, at the short-lived talks held between RMT and Merseyrail on March 20, the company admitted that its proposals for the driver to monitor CCTV screens while also proceeding from a station had yet to be safety validated.



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Finance

Despite the clear safety case, Merseytravel has nonetheless acknowledged publicly that the decision to scrap guards is primarily about money, and that the guards are being sacrificed to help finance the new rolling stock

The new trains, along with the £390 million in debt that goes with the scheme, will be owned by Merseytravel.

Merseyrail is the most profitable UK train-operating company; and will continue to extract £16 million a year in profits – more than three times the annual cost of retaining guards – but will make no capital contribution to the new rolling stock: see table on next page.

The business case for the rolling stock shows that the 'benefit share arrangement' that Merseytravel has with Merseyrail "has grown significantly in recent years and currently contributes £5 million per year to Merseytravel" – the cost quoted by Merseytravel of keeping the guards.

The financial projections in the business case show that the authority expects this dividend benefit to increase significantly as growth and revenue increase from the introduction of new rolling stock and the continued increase in demand.

It is clear that the CRCA can accommodate the cost of retaining guards and that this is financially achievable within the risk and recovery arrangements set out in Merseytravel's business case.

But it is also clear that Merseyrail could itself make a financial contribution to retaining guards.

In 2014 the revenue income of Merseyrail was £51 million, and Merseyrail Electrics Ltd paid out a dividend not far short of £14 million, that means an obscene quarter of passengers' fares ending up in the pockets of privateers Serco & Abellio.

Scotrail, which, like Merseyrail, is operated by

Abellio, has agreed with RMT that new rolling stock to be built for the Scotrail franchise will be configured to be operated by guards and that there will be a guard on every train.

The Greater Anglia franchise, also run by Abellio, has ordered new rolling stock from Stadler, the same manufacturer building the new Merseyrail stock, which will also be configured for guard operation.

The cost of a strike

Finally, Merseyrail has a 'Force Majeure' clause in its franchise agreement that indemnifies it from losses and additional costs arising from industrial action.

This means that the CRCA will be wholly liable for picking up the bill should a strike go ahead. In lost revenue alone this would be some £139,000 per day, plus the additional costs of any contingency arrangements.

In other words the Merseyside council-taxpayers will be footing the bill for every day of strike action. RMT would rather that money be spent on maintaining the current safety standards and customer service we have with two safety trained members of staff on board.

Merseyrail profits and dividends

Year (Jan)	Turnover	Operating Profit	Profit	Dividends (millions)
2016	153,670	16,232	12,898	12,267
2015	150,817	15,580	11,797	11,687
2014	144,853	14,661	11,649	13,965
2013	135,224	13,824	10,770	13,037
2012	131,649	12,246	8,917	8,769
2011	126,264	10,585	7,613	7,252
2010	124,453	10,540	7,264	6,859
Totals (£millions)	966,930	93,668	70,908	73,836 (10,584 average)



Conclusion

Merseyrail is operated at present with two train crew on every train, and the Merseyside travelling public clearly wish to maintain that level of safe operation.

Should a serious incident take place following the introduction of driver-only operation, the focus will immediately be upon the absence of the guard and what may or may not have happened if a guard had been present.





Merseyrail guard 'saved my son's life', mother tells BBC

THE PROMPT action of a train guard at Liverpool South Parkway station on March 7, 2017 saved the life of a diabetic passenger who was slipping into a hypoglycaemic coma, the man's mother claimed.

In a dramatic call to BBC Radio Merseyside's Roger Philips show the following day, the mother, who gave her name as Mary, said that without the guard's actions she believed her son would have died, and called for guards to be kept on all trains.

As he made his way down the train the guard on the Northern Line service had found the man apparently asleep but sweating profusely.

Recognising the signs of a 'hypo', the guard managed to rouse the passenger sufficiently to confirm that he was diabetic and immediately raised the alarm.

Station staff assisted in getting him off the train, contacted the emergency services, enlisted the help of an off-duty nurse, and informed the man's family. The passenger was discharged later that night after treatment.

Merseyrail Myths

Merseyrail has said much to the public about its driver-only plans that does not stand up to scrutiny. While RMT will never stand in the way of new and safer rolling stock being introduced – with the appropriate staffing levels – it is nonetheless important to point out these inconsistencies.

Myth 1 – the new trains will be faster.

They will not. Line speeds on all Merseyrail lines will remain the same. Any time gained through faster acceleration and deceleration will be absorbed as additional 'recovery time' at turnaround stations, so that service levels will remain the same and there will be no additional services.

Myth 2 – the trains will be bigger

They will not. The trains will be more or less the same size as the existing stock

Myth 3 – the new trains will have greater capacity

The new trains will have the same number of seats as the existing trains. All additional capacity will be additional standing room only.

Myth 4 – the absence of guards will be made up for by the fact that passengers will never be more than a few minutes from station staff at the next station

This is also untrue, as the majority of station staff are in ticket offices or on barriers, meaning that station staff at most stations will not be on the platform



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