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***Our new 2007/08 Season Starts - High Management Feature***

This slightly delayed issue opens with an editorial comment based on a recent topical report:

“You will all have heard of the £200,000 Fine imposed on ICL Plastics Ltd at the High Court in Glasgow following the explosion at the Maryhill Site in May 2004. There are other places for obtaining information about this disaster, but one comment that emerged from the HSE recommendations which would appear very relevant to our own cause – also not new to our research is: “HSE have stated that the question must be asked that where metal sections of LPG pipe work are buried - are they protected?”

This is to my mind is just common sense. It does however; echo so many other shortfalls we have seen in studies of other disasters, including comment on “The Herald”, “Rowan Point” and “BP in the US” on this Site. Why do decision makers not see these shortfalls before hand?” Our Features this month may help. Ed

This month:

**1 of 2 - St Pancras - an orphan of Roman times who knew his station in life**  
He died in AD304, but is remembered by most of us as a railway station. The recent conversion to a . . . . .

*Appendix 1 attached*

**2 of 2 The High Management Feature (second of three parts)**

Our long awaited follow up to *NEWSLETTER No 16* is now hot off the press and it is hoped well worth. . . .

*Appendix 2 attached*

Well that concludes this issue, except to say that my article on communication, written on behalf of the SIG, is scheduled to appear in **StraticRISK** Magazine November issue which should be out just before our next *NEWSLETTER* (If you do not see this magazine, let me know and I can send you a copy of the article). Probably a good time for us to focus on **organisational communication** - so any comments please send them in for inclusion in *NEWSLETTER no 21* - **deadline is Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> October.**

Bruce Widdowson  
Secretary

E-mail [bruce.writer@btinternet.com](mailto:bruce.writer@btinternet.com) Tel. 0115 986 3254

## *Appendices*

### **1 of 2 - St Pancras - an orphan of Roman times who knew his station in life**

He died in AD 304, but is remembered by most of us as a railway station. The recent conversion to a new (state of the art?) international terminus has been much heralded.

Back to the beginning of our story. The orphaned 14 year old son of a Phrygian nobleman, St. Pancras was executed on 12<sup>th</sup> May 304 AD for refusing to give up his Christian beliefs. Today he is remembered by most of us as a railway station which was built during the era of another great empire within the London parish that took his name - the present church, now overshadowed by the station, is itself imposing, being designed in 1848 by William Inwood and Son.

This historic tale was on your editor's mind when he arrived at the station one recent evening to return to Nottingham from the **IRM** examiners' meeting. Having pre-booked a cheap reserved seat (£9-00 London to Nottingham - not bad!) a stay of around 45 minutes was necessary in the waiting area prior to being called to the Platform for boarding - it turned out that a number of others were in a similar position of missing an earlier train for the cheap late rate.

For readers not familiar with the new international station at St. Pancras, there is a new, very wide and low, rather nondescript shed type building, under a small bay north light roof, abutting the original station (effectively reducing the length of the railway from the Midland Main Line- and the distance that passengers (sorry customers) are expected to walk to and from the exit by a trains length.) The platforms to the left hand side (looking north out of the station) serve the Midland Main Line and to the right are the *Euro star* trains to France, which sharply turn right on a new line by the Regents Canal eventually through 180° in familiar British railway style to head south to the Channel.

Anyway, back to the story. A train that appeared not to be in service, was at Platform 3 with the engine left running, which it did for the entire 45 minutes belching noxious diesel fumes which were conducted by the roof design into the waiting area! Some customers including me left our seats and made our way back to the stainless steel rail by the escalators and half sat on this to keep away from the fumes. When the call was made to enter the platform, we did so, but were now at the back of the queue rather than the front - not a good thing for any who had not reserved seats.

### *Editorial Comment*

I spent a lot of my waiting time cursing the incompetence of railway engineers who could not design a building that would allow diesel fumes to

escape, let alone funnel them into human areas. It then dawned on – the whole station is designed to work with electric traction, the fully weather proof north light roof no doubt being a precaution against the overhead cables overheating in bright sunlight. BUT, whilst the new international station has been a high profile priority project, the long awaited electrification of the Midland Main Line is in fact the opposite and an entirely separate matter – the old diesels may be with us for years yet! In the meantime there is a problem that will not go away (although why engines have to be left running in stations I know not).

Well, back to St Pancras – when he walked to his death in AD304, did he smile to himself that one day in over 1500 years time he would be an inspiration to the railways of Victorian times and then to risk managers a hundred and fifty years later? Of course not, anyone can reasonably be expected to foresee these things. But, should the people behind the new international railway station have considered that there was a risk interface with the electrification of the Midland Main Line project? And, should the roof designers have allowed for alternatives forms of traction (even in emergencies with a power failure)? I would argue, YES they should. Still further should they have allowed for the “secondary” risk of knock on effects on queue orders – I think we are starting to see a very common problem and again I would argue YES they should - secondary risk knock on effect is not given the though that it should and I know I am not alone in thinking that this is a failure in existing project management thinking. We will perhaps look at this problem again at another time.

### *Special note*

I put a draft of this feature to one of our members; Jeremy Harrison of Network Rail, for a second opinion – a comment from the reply follows. However, I decided to leave my item above unaltered for reasons which I think will become clear from the **Conclusion** below.

“In regards to the fumes issue, if you do a comparison with Paddington Station they do now close down the power cars on the HST sets nearest the buffers (I am assuming it was not a Meridian Set at St. Pancras that was fuming! (No, Ed *Midland Mainline*.) When they arrive in the station and leave the one at the country end running to power on board services. They can also connect trains to shore supply but this is seldom done for a short stay in the station. (E.g. less than a few hours).” JH

### **Conclusion** (*Editor*)

In *NEWSLETTER No 16* I had argued, using the “Herald” case, that the board of directors could be justified on cost grounds in operating a ship that was of a different type because it was basically sea worthy, and further that placing normal commercial pressure on the captain and crew for a quick turnaround was acceptable. I went on to argue that the skimping on crew numbers and

CCTV safety cover of the bow doors was not acceptable. This argument was made from the benefit of much research, consideration and hindsight!

In the “St. Pancras fumes scenario”, my comments were made as a consumer and were instant and of a “gut feeling” nature – I blamed the building design which was the direct responsibility of high management. On receiving expert advice from Jeremy Harrison and in hindsight – the situation would now appear not dissimilar to the “Herald” case – the critical fault lay at the door of someone at a lower level – the line manager responsible for the power cars running in the station as he should have made sure that drivers switched power from the car at the buffer end of the platform to the car at the country end.

So, what can high (general) management do to ensure that people further down the line operate efficiently and that there is a tight grip on things down the ladder?

Feature 2, which follows, may help:-

### **2 of 2 – The High Management Feature (second of three parts)**

Our long awaited follow up to *NEWSLETTER No 16* is now hot off the press and it is hoped worth waiting for. We had looked very briefly at communicating and interpreting the wishes of the main board by the next level of management down into practical policy – true *general management*. To consider the context a stage further, we must remember that decision making often needs to be taken quickly as well as under cost restraints. We have already looked at the need to work within capital budgets (e.g. the use of a second hand ferry and the rather plain looking railway station) and the view is that this is probably necessary.

The framework used for executing high management directives must be sound as consequences of mistakes can ripple out throughout the entire organisation – so if capital outlay has to be rationed, it is imperative that there are adequate safety controls for operations (e.g. CCTV and adequate crew for ferry doors and train driver actions and supervision of such re running power cars in stations). Your editor puts the case, that it might not be a shortage of funding that is the main problem, rather limitations in the execution and follow up to the original decision making process:

#### **Further editorial comment**

Whilst a group decision process can stimulate creative thinking, the choice process for alternative courses of action looks at the scope, timing and logistics involved – predicted outcomes don’t necessarily allow for knock on effects outside the scope of the strategy, programme or project under review (e.g. the unfair queue placings caused by the fume problems, in turn by the roof design at the station). There needs to be an extension, **one further level** of the consequences of decisions and if the additional context is calculated to be significant, as the CCTV for the ferry doors was and your editor losing his

place in the queue probably wasn't, then allowances must be made and/or directives given with that allow for this addition risk.

In the circumstances, it is felt that all members should have to opportunity to make further input before the concluding, *keynote*; part of this feature is published in the New Year. Contributions from your experiences would be especially welcome in the areas of:

*Agreement or otherwise with what has been said above and further examples of the issue if available*

*Quality of general management interpretation on main board decisions*

*Communication Plans within organisations*

*Specific plans for communication with partners and contractors*

*Risk Committees (and relevant employee groups in general) and Risk Champions*

Look forward to hearing from you