Shared Learning

Huddersfield Station - Coal Excavation

Issued to: **All Network Rail line managers, safety professionals and accredited contractors**

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Location: Huddersfield Station, West Yorkshire

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Overview

Over the weekend of Friday to Sunday 27-29 February 2026, works were undertaken by TransPennine Upgrade [TRu]. These works were to excavate an area of ground for a new pedestrian subway at Huddersfield Station. These excavations encountered in-situ coal.

All bedrock **coal** [and other historic coal mining assets e.g. mine shafts/adits] belong to the Mining Remediation Authority (MRA) [formerly the Coal Authority] and can only be excavated, with prior legal agreement.

Permission for excavating and removing coal can be granted by the MRA through obtaining an Incidental Coal Agreement [ICA].

No such agreement was in place for these works.

Huddersfield station had been subject to a several mining risk assessments and evaluations since 2022. These licenced MRA permitted works were in proximity of the excavation location. This included

The project team had not anticipated or considered in their site briefing that there was a distinct possibility that this excavation could encounter shallow coal at this location.

The works were not stopped when coal was encountered.

The project team are now following the standard NR/CIV/191 Mod 9 (Management of Mining Related Incidents) and preparing documentation to allow for the correct application for an ICA.

They are now undertaking an internal safety review of this incident and the site operations.

This Shared Learning highlights good practice for project teams to follow on discovery of coal or other MRA assets while works are being undertaken; to provide safe construction

piling and shallow mine working ground stabilisation works.

operations of plant and personnel within these excavations and MRA ICA legal obligations.

Underlying causes

- The excavation works encountered shallow coal that was potentially foreseeable, but the site team were not expecting.
- These site works should have been stopped when coal was encountered as this changes the risk associated with the work
- The MRA and Network Rail mining team should have been notified of this incident.
- The excavation spoil was not segregated on site to ensure that official disposal to authorised landfill could be completed [incorrect waste transfer records]
- The exposed coal seam within the excavation created a risk of spontaneous combustion and mine-gas release. No initial remedial works were undertaken.

An Incidental Coal Agreement requires the following supporting information.

- Agreed excavation plan with estimation of amount of coal to be extracted.
- Storage and stockpiling of segregated coal spoil on site. On site inspection to ensure no risk from spontaneous combustions can occur.
- Disposal of coal spoil to an appropriate authorised licenced tip.
- Adequate site safety protocols to ensure that there are no coal gas/mine water releases.
- Adequate coal seam seal off design
- Network Rail mining team consultation to ensure that RAMS are appropriate.
- Network Rail Legal review of the proposed ICA documentation
- Signed legal documentation before any work can start.
- Submission of all site records to allow closure of the ICA on completion.

Key message

- Following the processes within NR/L2/CIV/191 “Mining Manual” at early PACE stages will reduce the likelihood of this event occurring.
- If coal is encountered unexpectedly on site, all work should stop and advice sought from competent staff.
- The project should seek to obtain the relevant Mining Remediation Authority Permits.
- Failing to do so causes reputational damage by breaching the Coal Industry Act [1994] and may cause future restrictions on applications.
- Any temporary excavation should be appropriately designed in a safe manner. See EAN 01/ 2026 i.e. with respect to mining related hazards.

The Network Rail Technical Authority Mining Team will support an ICA application process.

For Network Rail employees, there is a suite of training about mining available to enrol on via Oracle. There are four course options available:

- Introduction to mining awareness
- Pathways in mining awareness
- Mining Geology
- Introduction to Mining Hazard for everyone

These can be accessed via NR eLearning https://learn.networkrail.co.uk/login/index.php (search 'mining' in the search box)

All Maintenance, Works Delivery, Capital Delivery and TRUuOperations and Engineering staff should at least familiarise themselves with the Introduction to Mining Awareness course.

For further information please contact Technical Authority National Mining Engineer nationalminingengineer@networkrail.co.uk

Part of our group of Safety Bulletins

