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Anger as Network Rail boss requests bumper bonus just 48 hours after apologising for teenagers' deaths

Feb 2 2012 (<http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/2012/02/02/>) Exclusive by Torcuil Crichton



THE boss of shambolic Network Rail has asked for a £336,000 bonus – days after apologising for the deaths of two teenagers at a level crossing.

Sir David Higgins – who earns £560,000 a year – and two

other chiefs will seek the 60 per cent pot at a special meeting of the £4billion state-funded company next week.

Last night, former transport minister Tom Harris said it would “outrageous and insulting” for Sir David – who picked up his knighthood last Thursday – to profit while the firm face criminal charges over the deaths of passengers and poor management.

- On Tuesday, Sir David was forced to apologise after Network Rail admitted health and safety breaches over the deaths of Olivia Bazlinton, 14, and Charlotte Thompson, 13.
- Last month, criminal proceedings started over the derailment of a Virgin train in Cumbria, in which 84-year-old Scot Margaret Masson died and 28 people were seriously injured.
- In December, the family of Angus MacKay and his wife Margaret, both 81, from Inverness, sued for negligence after the couple died on a level crossing. Angus’s brother Donald also died.

- Last year, overcrowded and delayed trains forced the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) to rule Network Rail were in breach of their licence.

Incredibly, Network Rail officials tried to justify the 60 per cent bonus – claiming that it was down from last year's 100 per cent.

Harris led the calls for Australian Sir David, 56, to give up his bonus – just as RBS boss Stephen Hester had to abandon his £1million payment.

The entirely taxpayer-funded private company have no shareholders and pay no dividends. They only have 90 members of the public as “shareholders” who are meant to hold directors to account.

Harris, MP for Glasgow South East, said: “Passengers and freight are getting a raw deal because of Network Rail incompetence.

“Just days after the company admitted liability in the deaths of two Essex schoolgirls at a level crossing, it is outrageous and insulting for Network Rail directors to award themselves a six-figure bonus.

“How bad does Network Rail performance have to get before their chief executive has to settle for just his basic salary of more than half a million pounds?”

Harris last night tabled a motion in the Commons demanding that the executives give up their attempts to secure a bonus this year.

To qualify for the annual bonus, directors must meet objectives relating to train punctuality and the condition of the infrastructure.

But in 2011, Network Rail were found by the ORR to be in breach of their licence.

According to the ORR, “major asset failures, congested routes and poor management of track condition” contributed to poor performance on the UK rail network last year.

While bonuses are paid to all 34,000 people working for Network Rail, it is the six-figure payouts to senior executives which have generated the most anger in the past.

On Tuesday, the company admitted three health and safety charges over the deaths of Olivia and Charlotte at a railway crossing in 2005.

They were hit by a high-speed train as they went Christmas shopping.

At the time, Network Rail insisted the route was safe, but failed to disclose the existence of a 2002 risk assessment recommending the gates should lock automatically when trains approached.

The company are now facing an unlimited fine after magistrates said the £30,000 penalty they could impose was insufficient.

Higgins – who took over as chief executive last February – apologised in person to the families of Olivia and Charlotte last year. They have waged a six-year battle for justice.

The company also face prosecution for the Grayrigg train crash that killed Margaret Masson and injured 86. Network Rail accepted they were at fault with the infrastructure that caused the accident and have apologised to her family.

Last year, the rail maintenance company suspended directors' annual bonuses and put the executive bonus scheme under review after controversy involving last chief executive, Iain Croucher.

Croucher became the highest paid public servant in Britain, earning £1.2million in 2010, before having to resign because of the row over his lavish pay and conditions and accusations of harassment.

Network Rail last night insisted that no replacement bonus scheme was in place and that no decisions had been taken.

Officials confirmed that the public members would be asked to consider approving 60 per cent bonuses for top staff but that this was down from the 100 per cent bonuses previously allowed under the discredited scheme.

The new company rules stated that Network Rail bonuses will be subject to “tough targets” and will reward “clear, unequivocal success and outstanding performance”.

A spokesman for the Transport and Salaried Staffs Association – one of the rail unions – said the bonuses would be totally unjustified.

He added: “There is simply no way that Network Rail executives should be taking six-figure bonuses while passengers continue to see service levels decline.

“Sir David Higgins is trying to persuade public members of the board that he should be given a 60 per cent bonus. This is a nationalised industry and we think the £600,000 is enough – we don't see the need for public servants to get huge bonuses.

“They are facing criminal charges over two incidents and are facing criticism over their performance but still they want more money.

“It's time for the Network Rail directors to live in the real world.”

A spokesman for Justine Greening, the Tory Secretary of State for Transport, said last night: “The Transport Secretary has made it clear that bonuses should only be awarded for exceptional performance.

“Passengers would be extremely surprised if Network Rail attempted to award bonuses next year especially after the ORR ruled that company were in breach of their licence over declining punctuality levels.”

Higgins was knighted for his work on the London Olympic venues. He oversaw the huge construction project during his time as chief executive of Britain’s Olympic Delivery Authority.

Last year, Network Rail were also fined £3million by a court for failings over the Potters Bar train crash, in which seven people died.

They admitted breaching safety regulations that led to the train from London to King’s Lynn derailing just outside the Hertfordshire station in May 2002. Seventy were injured.

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MASONBOYNE41 (<http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/community/profile/?UID=288013-ncms&plckUserId=288013-ncms>) wrote:

lets get this straight tho- yes he shouldnt get a bonus as NR is a shambles- a friend works for them and he is always going on about them cutting costs

(<http://www.pluck.c>

<http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/community/profile/?UID=288013-ncms&plckUserId=288013-ncms>)

Second- Network Rail didnt cause the deaths of these teenage girls - the only negligence was that they hadnt installed an automatic pedestrian gate which automatically locked- these girls were reckless i.e

Train 1 approaches and the alarms and lights are on?
Train 2 about to approach, and alarms and lights remain on?
Girls decide to unlock a gate (whilst alarms and lights are still on) and stupidly decide its safe to cross
Train 2 hits girls because THEY opened the gate

these girls chose to walk across- Network Rail can build fences and gates but cannot legislate for stupidity

2/2/2012 7:54 AM GMT on dailyrecord.co.uk

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(<http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/2012/02/02/anger-as-network-rail-boss-requests-bumper-bonus-just-48-hours-after-apologising-for-teenagers-deaths-86908-23731999/?plckFindCommentKey=Comm-d77d-4082-812f-9f62ff8d0a5c>)

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FLINT (<http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/community/profile/?UID=292673-ncms&plckUserId=292673-ncms>) wrote:

WHY HAVE THESE PEOPLE NOT BEEN PROSECUTED AND CHARGE WITH THOSE DEATHS DUE TO NETWORK RAIL INCOMPETENCE

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[tombro](#) (<http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/community/profile/?UID=111084-ncms&plckUserId=111084-ncms>) wrote:



Those who have money earn more and more ...

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[ncms&plckUserId=111084-ncms\)](http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/community/profile/?UID=111084-ncms&plckUserId=111084-ncms)
I'm taking my kick whether things are going good or not !
How sad in our modern, very needy society ?

Tombro

Tombr

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[GreenLantern](#) (<http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/community/profile/?UID=289261-ncms&plckUserId=289261-ncms>) wrote:



Bonus it should be the sack for this Numpty. Rail prices are far too expensive and a 3rd class service compared to Europe. We don't even have High speed trains in

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thrunthru (<http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/community/profile/?UID=298664-ncms&plckUserId=298664-ncms>) wrote:

What a piece of scum you are MasonBoyne, having a go at two dead wee lassies.

"The only negligence was that they hadn't installed an automatic pedestrian gate

(<http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/community/profile/?UID=298664-ncms&plckUserId=298664-ncms>)

for, an automatic gate that would have saved the lives of these 13 and 14 yr old

= "reckless" kids.

[Shame on you](http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/community/profile/?UID=298664-ncms&plckUserId=298664-ncms)

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