

# FREIGHT

JOURNAL

Summer 2009

**SPEEDING UP  
ON HIGH SPEED ONE**

**PAYING UP  
£220M FOR FREIGHT**

**CATCHING UP  
COMPANY NEWS**



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*I'm delighted to be writing a few lines to introduce this issue of the union's Freight Journal. I remember when I first became general secretary I was frequently button-holed by freight drivers complaining that this side of our industry didn't get the coverage it deserved.*

*I'm still not sure if this was the case, or if it was just a perception – but either way, I was anxious to remedy the situation. Our Freight Journal is just one concrete example of the efforts we've made.*

*The campaign against 'monster trucks' has shown ASLEF at its most persistent. Along with the Freight On Rail group which we co-founded, we engaged researchers to produce a water-tight case and then we used the material to lobby ministers and politicians at Westminster and Brussels. We have pressed on with our efforts to improve cab conditions in freight, exposing and agitating on the problem even if we have not yet been as successful as we would like.*

*We've had meetings with all kinds of opinion-formers about the down-turn in freight traffic, and all sections of the union have sought solutions that would avoid threats to our members' livelihoods. And we argue strongly for a freight-only line running the length of the country.*

*We are committed to freight because we want to defend our members' jobs and improve their working conditions – and our arguments are strengthened by the fact that rail freight makes a real contribution to a cleaner and greener Britain.*

*Our central message is that freight plays as much of a public service role as any other section of our industry.*

**Keith Norman General Secretary**

## **FREIGHT TRAINS SET TO USE HIGH SPEED 1 FROM 2010**



Freight Trains will be able to operate on High Speed 1 by early 2010. DB Schenker and HS1 Ltd (who own the infrastructure) have signed an agreement to develop software modifications which will enable Class 92 electronic locomotives to operate on the line which links up London to the Channel Tunnel.

The two companies have also managed to come to an agreement on outline terms for a track access agreement. The modifications which will enable the locos to run on the high speed line will be available to all Class 92 owners who wish to operate the line.

There are however concerns that the Government will price freight off the line with access charges that are six times that of the conventional railway. There are also issues regarding the lack of freight going through the Channel Tunnel. Currently on average, less than four trains a day go through.



## **MORE INVESTMENT NEEDED**

Whilst the industry has to cope with the negative effects of Network Rail's deferred track renewal, there has been a small dose of good news from the infrastructure company as they have earmarked around £220m on schemes to develop the Strategic Freight Network.

The Control Period 4 Delivery Plan explains that, "The objective of this fund is to enhance the network used by freight trains and reduce conflict between freight and passenger traffic." Works will take place to deliver improved capacity between Ipswich and Peterborough, improve gauge clearance between Southampton and Basingstoke, further operation of freight trains south of London; and



## **EVEN MORE C LHV TRIAL GE**

Concerns over LHVs being pushed on to British roads through European legislation have grown following the announcement that France will be allowing Longer Heavy Vehicles on the roads as part of a trial.

On 25th March, Dominique Bussereau, the French Secretary of State for Transport announced the trial which will allow vehicles up to 25.25 metres in length and 60 tonnes in weight.



## CONCERN FROM EUROPE AS LHVS GO-AHEAD IN FRANCE

a variety of infill gauge and train lengthening schemes on the network. However there are some concerns over the lack of funding for freight considering that Crossrail alone is costing over 70 times as much as the £220 million freight budget. Crossrail is estimated at £16 billion. Whilst the project will have great benefits, it is important not to neglect the enormous benefits that investment on rail freight will bring to business, passengers and the environment.

Network Rail is also committed to a 20% reduction in freight delay minutes over the next five year period which will assist with FOC reliability. There will also be steps made towards making the freight network a truly 7 day a week

still unknown. France now joins the list of EU countries expressing favourable views on the "mega-trucks" alongside Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany.

This creates even greater concern over British hauliers claiming that Britain's restrictions prevent them being competitive and attempt to allow LHVs on to British roads through the European Union.

On 30th March a working group met to consider how to implement the trial and considered three profiles:

carrier with 2 axles + dolly + semi-trailer

carrier with 3 axles + dolly + semi-trailer

tractor + semi-trailer + trailer with double central axle.

The French Government hopes to trial the vehicles this autumn. The length of the trial and the routes to be taken are



## AAD SUPPORT FREIGHT DRIVERS

The message to Freight Drivers from this year's AAD was of complete solidarity and support as the industry goes through it's most turbulent time since privatisation. This was demonstrated during the debate on plans for a dedicated freight line.

The plans for the line have been presented by ASLEF MP Kelvin Hopkins on several occasions and have featured in the ASLEF Journal. The proposed Eurorail Freight Route would link the Channel Tunnel to Glasgow via all the main economic and population centres up the backbone of the UK. It requires only 14 miles of new track of which 9.5 miles would be in tunnels. The plan would cost less £4 billion.

The line would not only increase freight capacity but would also free up passenger capacity on existing lines and allow for faster services.

Following the debate, AAD passed a resolution to campaign for the dedicated route. General Secretary Keith Norman explained, "During these tough times for the rail freight industry it is important we show support for freight drivers. The dedicated line does this but also it would leave a host of long term benefits for the industry, the environment business and passengers. It's a win win situation and we will campaign to get MPs and the industry to see that."



## NEW TESCO SERVICE TO REMOVE 13,000 LORRY JOURNEYS A YEAR

A new service between Grangemouth and Inverness run by DRS is due to remove as many as 13,000 lorry journeys a year from Scottish roads. That is the equivalent of 1.67 million miles.

The service which will run 6 days a week on behalf of Tesco is supported by a new rail terminal in Needlefield Depot in Inverness. The service will bring great benefits to local motorists who will find far less congestion on the A9 and additionally the environment will benefit from 827,000 litres of fuel being left in the pump.

The service which is part of DRS' growth strategy for Scotland has been supported by the Scottish Executive. It is expected that Scotland will see further services to both Inverness and the existing intermodal terminal in Aberdeen.

# RAIL FREIGHT CAN MEET CHALLENGES DOWN THE



Philippa Edmunds of Freight on Rail explains the challenges that face us over the next year and the work that we must pursue to ensure that more freight comes on to rail.

**O**ur campaign against longer and heavier lorries (LHVs) is in its fourth year now, and we will need to remain vigilant at a European level over the coming 18 months. There is huge pressure to allow LHVs from European road haulage interests, supported by a key official at the European Commission. They will exploit every opportunity to allow LHVs onto our roads.

The period before the European elections on June 4 was a crucial opportunity for us all to lobby our local candidates (as explained in detail in the May issue of the main Journal). Our European colleagues opposing LHVs lobbied candidates in their own national states.

## FLAWED EC RESEARCH

Freight on Rail has exposed crucial faults in the latest research issued by the EC in January 09. It showed that the calculations the consultants made were wrong – resulting in significantly inflated figures of vehicle kilometre reduction with LHVs.

This fundamental error, acknowledged by the EC consultants, has the effect of seriously exaggerating the reductions in lorry traffic from LHVs. The mistake seriously undermines the consultant's justification for LHVs as the EC extensive analysis concludes that LHVs will be more dangerous and possibly polluting, but that this will be balanced by significant reductions in the overall traffic from heavy goods vehicles.

This significant error shows that the reduction in lorry traffic from LHVs is considerably lower than estimated in the report. It falsely states that because the carrying capacity of an LHVs is 50% greater than an HGV, this would translate into only one-and-a-half LHVs being needed to replace 3 HGVs – instead of the correct figure which is that a 50% increase in payload means that three

HGVs at the current limit could be replaced by two LHVs.

No formal revision to this significant error which creates a significant bias in favour of LHVs, and which was acknowledged by the EC on 2 March, has so far been issued by the European Commission.

It has also failed to clarify a further potentially distorting research error which Freight on Rail raised on 9 March.

Brian Simpson MEP is planning to highlight these unsatisfactory practices in a European Parliamentary question shortly. The underlying question is why the European Commission is issuing flawed research with basic errors and omissions.

## INCOMPATIBILITY OF SAFETY FINDINGS BETWEEN EC RESEARCH UK GOVERNMENT REPORT

The consultants have ignored the TRL research which the UK government commissioned last year to evaluate whether to allow trials of LHVs – despite a DfT official drawing attention to it at the EC workshop in July last year.

TRL exposed that there are significant tensions between low speed manoeuvrability, particularly turning movements, and higher speed stability, particularly on motorways and dual carriageways when cruising with LHVs. For example, a double articulation, with a tractor unit and two trailers, is better at turning corners, but if the tractor makes a relatively small movement to right or left, the trailers will tend to swing out of alignment and continue to oscillate. Overall weight increases would increase the forces involved and thus the strength of these outswinging movements.

Similarly, no study has been undertaken to investigate lack of compliance with existing road regulations by HGVs which puts other road users at extra risk, despite the fact that we highlighted the omission in April 08. In the UK, over 82% of HGVs exceeded their speed limit of 50 mph on dual carriageways and almost three-quarters exceeded the 40 mph limit on single carriageway non-built up roads in 2007. VOSA spot checks in October 2008 found that half of UK registered HGVs stopped were breaking the law according to



# GET THE LINE



Parliament in 2010.

While the current Transport Commissioner has stated his opposition to LHV, the likely appointment of a new transport commissioner in September 09 is another challenge over which we have no control.

Trials of LHVs have also been sanctioned in France, Belgium Netherlands and Denmark. At the moment, the German federal Government is firmly opposed to LHVs - but the German general election in September could change that.

From September onwards we need to lobby the new MEPs on the Environment and Transport committees and the new Transport Commissioner as well as the Permanent representative at the EU. Freight on Rail is hoping to host a reception in October with Brian Simpson, the North West MEP and leader of the Socialist transport group at the EU.

Freight on Rail is also working closely with the NO Mega Trucks group and has got 22 NGOs and union organisations to sign up so that the UK comes in at number 2 for opponent bodies on the European site. So please watch this space and be ready to lobby the new MEPs in September when we brief you.

## GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR RAIL FREIGHT

Freight access charges were reduced to 35% from April 2009 so hopefully this will help stimulate demand. We are also pressing the Government to stand firm on its commitments to rail freight as part of the low carbon economy and not to de-scope projects. The budget has reconfirmed Government commitment to the Strategic Rail Freight Network (SFN) for the period 09-14 which is crucial in the current economic climate.

## PROJECTS COMPLETED

Gospel Oak to Barking gauge clearance completed with capacity upgrades by mid 2009 costing £18.5m.

Wrawby Junction line speed improvements and the Brigg line upgrades completed, both part of the Humber Ports capacity scheme.

Olive Mount Chord completed Fratton goods yard Portsmouth operational and connected to DB service at Eastleigh.

DRS opened new Inverness terminal with six day weekly service for Tesco from Grangemouth.

## WORK IN PROGRESS

Settle Carlisle signalling

Humber Ports Hull Docks branch due for completion imminently

Southampton West coast gauge due for completion during 2011

Industry has agreed on the prioritisation for the infill gauge enhancements which were allocated £40m from SFN funds. These include West Midlands cross country to NE, Southampton to Yorkshire as well as ECML south from Peterborough and north to the border.

Peterborough – Nuneaton gauge clearance will be completed by March 2011

including Nuneaton North Chord and Bury-Kennet signalling elements

Ipswich – WCML capacity scheme being developed with £50m allocated in CP4

Another key new projects benefiting rail freight is the £230m for the upgrade of the GN/GE Joint Line via Lincoln, which provides an alternative route for freight between Peterborough and Doncaster, ensuring that there is long-term capacity for growth in freight (particularly containers from SE ports) on this key route; This work will give Southampton Port clearance to ECML

## THE SPATIAL PLANNING AGENDA AND SAFEGUARDING RAIL CORRIDORS

Spatial planning might sound dull but it is absolutely crucial in setting the framework for rail freight. Freight on Rail is pressing the Government to take rail freight fully into account in its National Policy Statements, as part of the new planning structures. As part of this exercise, Freight on Rail is highlighting the need for national long term safeguarding of rail corridors for potential rail use. We believe that National Policy Statements (NPSs) for national networks and ports represent opportunity to integrate land use and planning policy to avoid some of the errors of the past such as the decision to close the East-West rail line being made the week that the development of Milton Keynes was announced.

The issue is not "hard" safeguarding where need has been identified in principle and there's a firm option for a scheme – the existing legislation is adequate for that, as recent consultations on Cross rail have shown ie GDPO General Development Procedure order 1995 article 14. High Speed line HS2 will be able to use this.

The issue is really about the case for "soft" safeguarding, where work by the industry and others, has identified potential need and options may be developed at some point in the future. East-West Rail, Skipton-Colne or Stratford-Cheltenham are examples here.

A mechanism is needed to give powers to the holder of the rail network licence to require councils to inform them when planning applications are received for property within a particular corridor/alignments, so that NR can take a view on the application and object or negotiate with promoters if it considers this necessary to safeguard future potential. Then we can hopefully avoid alignments being built on for non rail use.

Freight on Rail believes that the railways need to be given the same powers as the Highways Agency which can scrutinise plans and applications to look at the impact on its network from surrounding development so that low carbon rail interchanges can be built for example in the right places. There is a danger that if there is not a mechanism to protect land for the railways corridor processes we will get safeguarded alignments for roads but not for rail. Essentially, the railways and Network Rail ought to be put on the same basis as the Highways Agency. Up until now, safeguarding has relied on local authorities but this does not allow a wider vision for the low carbon economy.

International Freighting Weekly on 21 October 2008.

We note also that the EC's consultants have dismissed MTRU's research for Freight on Rail as irrelevant on the grounds that the UK is a special case. This is surprising as every country has different market and network conditions. Throughout the process the officials in favour of LHVs at the EC have failed to answer our objections properly about the flawed research and is now apparently commissioning more research with the aim of preparing a case for the Swedish Presidency in July. This is a considerable danger as Sweden already has LHVs and appears sympathetic to their introduction in other member states.

Procedurally, any Directorate of Transport & Energy (DGTREN) recommendation in favour of LHVs, would have to go to other EC departments before going before the Parliament, where MEPs on the Transport committee would vote before the motion goes before the whole Parliament and Council of Ministers. This means that legislation could go before European

**FREIGHTLINER HEAVY HAUL REPORT**

**COMPANY COUNCIL SECRETARY TONY VENSON REPORTS**

The recent economic turmoil has changed the outlook in the rail freight industry and how FLHH goes forward. We have seen the drastic changes that have affected our competitors and forced the spectre of live and actual redundancies in the Driving grade.

As a company we found ourselves sold by our owners to Arcapita who, despite facing the downturn in the economy, are still prepared (for now at least) to match our efforts to ride this financial storm.

Following the Business Council meeting in Feb 2009 management said that at present there would be no decline in Driver grade numbers, currently standing at 379.

At the same time the Business Council still finds itself in protracted negotiations with management on the issue of the Driver Mobility Scheme - which is a type of PTR.

The EC instructed the General Secretary and Lead Officer to meet Senior Management to try and move the situation forward as the Council was deadlocked



on the issue of suitability over seniority – which is current ASLEF Policy.

We hope to finalise this item to the benefit of all as soon as possible.

We have finally started the Driver Assurance scheme. Everyone wishing to enter should by now have received joining instructions. Please contact HR at Crewe if you have not received this or wish to join at a later date.

Should you have any problems please remember to raise issues first with you Local or Health and Safety representative.

Some other positive news is that the new Genesis loco should arrive in November. This loco has had input from ASLEF as part of the Squash campaign – and should be a great improvement for freight train driving.



**DRS REPORT**

**COMPANY COUNCIL SECRETARY TAM MCKENDRICK REPORTS**

DRS is feeling the effects of the economic downturn in the same way as our colleagues in other freight operating companies. The company has been forced to suspend a couple of contracts which were linked to the construction industry, allied with this the intermodal market has slowed markedly as the recession bites. DRS could also possibly lose prospective work for Network Rail due to NR's decision to cut back on their programme of track renewal in 2009.

On train crew issues at this moment there are the ongoing concerns with the agreed pay rise for this year. Negotiations are still ongoing and we continue to seek a kind of compromise which suits all parties.

All in all the latest news bulletin has been gloomy, but I hear you ask, "Isn't there any good news out there?" Well apart from the fact that I'm slightly deluded and hearing voices in my head there has been some movement on cab ergonomics. One of our Class 66s has now been modified to include proper cab cooling equipment, air ride seating and noise suppression gear. Alongside this I have also approached Virgin Trains with an eye to attaining some form of unilateral staff travel agreement. The early indications received from Virgin are quite promising and further dialogue is due to take place soon. So in the midst of all the doom there are some reasons to be cheerful. Our main aim right now is to keep everyone gainfully employed until this economic climate improves.

**DB SCHENKER REPORT**

**COMPANY COUNCIL REP BERNARD KENNEDY REPORTS**

The union held a number of meetings at the end of last year to discuss the effects of the economic downturn on DB Schenker. Led by Nick Whitehead, we sought details of the impact of the anticipated traffic and revenue reductions in steel, scrap metals, petroleum, construction, building related materials, short notice coal orders, minerals, intermodal and automotive markets.

All business segments – Industrial Business, Network and Energy – have been hit, with additional problems for construction caused by the traffic for the 2012 London Olympic Games failing to materialise as forecast. It seems that much of this traffic is going by road!

On DBS Industrial, Corus have taken a

decision to shut down a blast furnace due to the global drop in demand for steel. It would take almost a year to re-activate this furnace - if it happens at all. South Wales, North East and South Yorkshire depots have been badly affected, while Corus on Teesside has also lost major contracts, further affecting North East depots.

DBS Network has been affected by loss of intermodal traffic. Network Rail have also cancelled or postponed many major and minor infrastructure projects and planned ballast sites. Originally Network Rail wanted to reduce ballast site trains by 50% from 2008 numbers. Some services have now been replaced following negotiations by the company.

Surplus drivers have been avoided in this segment by agreement to bring forward rest days from the end of the

contract at the depots effected.

DBS Energy has lost traffic in Scotland where the performance is described as 'flat'. There are concerns that if gas prices drop significantly, power generators may switch away from burning coal. Otherwise DBS Energy appears to continue operating on an even keel.

A total of 527 posts were declared 'at risk' by DBS. These consist of 159 drivers, 175 groundstaff, 93 engineers, and 100-plus white collar grade posts.

ASLEF DBS TCCC's response to this terrible news was to endeavour to reduce the drivers' 'positions at risk' from 159 to zero. We are pleased to announce that we have now achieved this goal.

From the 4 December 2008 until now the DBS TCCC has been working tirelessly to mitigate the driver surpluses

**FREIGHTLINER INTERMODAL REPORT****COMPANY COUNCIL SECRETARY  
JAMIE FALLON REPORTS**

The economic downturn has affected the freight sector considerably and as a result Freightliner's main customer has decided to move some of its ships that dock at Southampton to Felixtowe, which will have a big impact at our depot at Eastleigh. It was therefore important that our new agreement for annual leave be put in place.

This new leave system will start on a trial basis in 2010. Crewe & Eastleigh branches asked the Company Council to ensure all Freightliner drivers got their guaranteed 20 days leave. Previously some annual leave would fall on a group of free days at some depots. After two years of talks we have secured a guarantee that all drivers will receive all their leave entitlements. This concludes an issue that had been ongoing since 1998. The agreement guarantees a four-day week averaged over the yearly cycle,

so we would not lose free days even if depots lose work.

ASLEF submitted our pay claim in early September and would normally meet management within a couple of weeks. In October 2008, inflation was at 4.2%, but by the time of our first meeting with management on 22 December it has decreased to 1% and was predicted to drop to 0% or below in the coming months. Management excused the delay by saying the financial director had been on holiday. The more cynical amongst us would perhaps have thought the delay might be a ploy.

At this initial meeting we were asked to accept a £500 payment (which was less than 2%) and a commitment that there would be no compulsory redundancies. We rejected this and were presented with a revised offer of £700 (just about a 2% rise in salary) and again a commitment to no compulsory redundancies. A matter of days later all offers were withdrawn.

As a responsible Company Council

safeguarding our members' interests and seeking to advance negotiations, we proposed a compromise including reducing the working week to 34 hrs. After some number crunching management said that would cost £53,000 which they were not willing to pay. We pointed out that their figure was based purely on last year's overtime and that if - as management stated - there were less trains and more drivers sitting around (their words) the figure of £53,000 would be far less.

At a third meeting attended by the Deputy Managing Director, in order to take things forward, the Company Council offered not to implement the 34 hour week until Jan 2010. This was rejected and management made a counter proposal of 0.25% above inflation (if there is any) in 2010. This would amount to all of £88 over 2 years!

At all these meetings management refused to put a figure on its profit levels. We independently discovered that Freightliner - which had recently been bought for £350 million - had posted profits of £9.25m. In view of this, surely the least our members could expect is something costing less than £53,000.

Ever since privatisation we have never been in a position like this. As a Company Council we felt nothing could be gained from further negotiations. The EC agreed and felt there was no alternative to calling a ballot for industrial action. Our final contact with Freightliner prior to this report was an assurance that the union was always ready to talk but this we have heard nothing from the company.

**GBRF REPORT****COMPANY COUNCIL SECRETARY  
JIM CLARK REPORTS**

There are three main items to report on. Firstly the final part of the 2007 pay deal, was concluded in April, bringing drivers up to £44,715, other grades pro rata. The next pay deal starts April 2010, subject to a satisfactory conclusion. Watch this space!

Secondly the rest day working agreement has been extended until March 2010, subject to monitoring by our reps. Finally, the Royal Mail contract expires 31st May 2010 and will see a severe drop-off in workload at some depots, namely Shieldmuir, Warrington and Willesden. We will be meeting with management shortly along with affected traincrew, to discuss the options. Again watch this space.



with some success. All surpluses have now been dealt with apart from four new ones at Hereford Depot. The mitigation process has just started at this location. Surpluses have been mitigated through drivers taking voluntary redundancy and transfers of work.

Finally, Aberdeen and Plymouth Depots have been closed and Falkland, Margam Newport and Thornaby Depots have gone onto reduced hours contracts. The depots that went onto reduced hours did so as a temporary measure subject to three monthly reviews. By this means 39 drivers' posts at those locations have been saved.

The ASLEF DB Schenker TCCC look forward to the green shoots of economic recovery, with all depots returning to 35 hours and securing a long-term future for our members' livelihoods.

# Difficult times have led to difficult decisions



The current economic climate has led to difficult decisions. EC member for District 2 Hugh Bradley explains the work the EC have done in ensuring drivers keep their jobs.

**I**N March of this year Thornaby DBS depot voted in favour of a reduced hours contract at their depot to safeguard their colleagues' jobs. Unfortunately this was not replicated at Falkland, Margam and Port Talbot depots where members voted not to have a reduced hours contract. Consequently the EC, after meeting with the DBS Company Council, overturned these decisions. Given that our priority is to safeguard jobs this was the right decision to make. We could not endorse drivers voting other drivers out of a job!

This has been a difficult time for all those involved with DBS. Throughout this process the EC has worked closely with the DBS CC to mitigate the surplus drivers situation. The CC and LLCs have worked closely looking at various and sometimes ingenious ways to lessen the impact during these difficult times.

Some of the Terms & Conditions have been changed temporarily to assist in this process – one of them being that a majority decision would have to stop a reduced hours contract being implemented at a depot rather than by one person being able to stop it by voting against it.

Subsequently it was disappointing when the results of the depot ballots at the above locations were announced particularly given that various well attended open meetings had taken place explaining the situation prior to the vote taking place.

Also it is interesting that during this period management approached the EC seeking agreement that the second year of the two year pay award be 'frozen'. We could not agree to this given the distinct possibility of drivers going on to reduced hours contracts. This was a signed up agreement made in good faith at the time and which we felt strongly should be honoured. Also, this would have sent out the wrong signal to the other rail companies!

During this time the General Secretary has written to all TOCs & FOCs to give first refusal to qualified train drivers when recruiting new drivers. In many respects this has been successful with CCs up and down the country assisting our DBS members by 'deviating' from their PT&R agreements to allow DB drivers to take up positions within their companies. The EC appreciates their co-operation in this matter.

There was some frustration at the depots concerned after the EC made their decision. So much so that Ayr (Falkland) Branch sought the Appeals Committee to overturn the EC decision. However this was not in line with the ASLEF Rule Book. Nevertheless, the EC did forward it for consideration as an emergency item at the AAD where the delegates there would give it their deliberations as they are, in effect, the EC that week. This item was discussed and subsequently 'fell' at Conference with delegates vindicating the EC's decision.

Since the privatisation of the railways these are undoubtedly the most difficult and unparalleled times that we have faced in the Freight Industry. Only by working together and in some cases making sacrifices and difficult decisions can we safeguard jobs and secure conditions to see us through this economic downturn.

