



National Policy Forum consultation on a greener Britain

June 2018

1. The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) is the UK's largest train driver's union representing approximately 20,000 members in train operating companies and freight companies as well as London Underground and light rail systems.
2. ASLEF is pleased to have this opportunity to respond to the Labour Party's consultation on the environment, energy and culture because the UK needs stronger transport policy based on improving the sustainability of the public transport sector and moving more freight transport from road to rail.
3. The UK has signed up to meeting legally binding climate change targets and has a responsibility to do everything possible to fulfil its commitments. Our vision is for everyone to have access to affordable transport options that protect the environment, improve commuters' quality of life and offer a genuine alternative to the use of private cars and HGV lorries. Also investing in sustainable transport would create jobs and establish new industries in low carbon transport, clean energy and renewables.
4. ASLEF was deeply disappointed at the government's decision to make short-term savings by scrapping plans such as the electrification of the 60-mile stretch between Cardiff and Swansea even though electric trains are better for the climate, better for our health and better for passengers. Electrification is cleaner, greener, faster and more reliable than diesel operation and while other new technology may eventually offer cost-efficient alternatives to electrification, these are still in development.
5. As a union we are concerned about freight carriers being pushed from rail to road for the benefit for passenger trains, because rail freight offers environmental benefits that road freight cannot match. Transport is responsible for a quarter of the UK's greenhouse gas emissions but

rail freight produces 76% less CO2 emissions than the equivalent HGV journey so if anything we should be moving more freight from roads to rail. In terms of fuel consumption, a tonne of goods can travel 246 miles by rail as opposed to 88 miles by road on a gallon of fuel.

6. Rail freight is an essential part of our economy and it serves markets as diverse as waste management and finished vehicles. An average freight train can remove 76 HGVs journeys from our roads, so rail freight can improve productivity and generate savings in road congestion costs across the whole economy. A reduction in the number of HGVs on roads would also mean fewer cyclist deaths, and could encourage more people to cycle instead of driving.
7. Freight services are set to grow, carrying consumer goods to distribution centres, goods for export, stone from quarries, steel and steel products but pressures on infrastructure capacity could make it difficult to accommodate rising demand for freight traffic. ASLEF calls for franchise specifications to include incentives for protecting routes for the movement of freight on rail. Labour should continue to support investment in the Strategic Freight Network to electrify key routes as well as ensuring gauge clearance to allow higher capacity and longer trains on paths to key ports and diversionary routes. In urban areas we also support the development of cross modal consolidation and distribution centres capable of being rail served and from where goods can be delivered by low emissions road vehicles including electric vans and e-bikes.
8. Another part of Labour's strategy going forward must be the building of new homes, and the railways are an extremely convenient way of delivering construction materials, removing waste, and reducing congestion. An aggregates train can remove up to 136 HGVs from our roads and each freight train can deliver enough materials to build 30 houses.
9. ASLEF believes that the entire rail network should be brought into public ownership, including the rail freight sector. Rail freight services are more exposed to the free market than franchise passenger services and they have very tight margins. Growth is only possible if more rail freight capacity can be guaranteed on key corridors and unfortunately declines in infrastructure cannot be quickly reversed and training up drivers is a long process too. Rail operators need to be able to rely on long-term planning and the current uncertainties around rail freight's future is causing many problems but this could be solved if Labour were to bring the entire rail network - both passenger services and rail freight - into public ownership.

10. Finally, better timetabling between rail passenger services and other forms of onward transport (trams, buses, etc) would ensure that connections with other modes of transport are integrated, and the provision of facilities such as bike hubs at stations could encourage commuters to cycle part of their journey. Our transport system performs an important social and economic function, connecting people and businesses, and deserves proper investment and recognition for its role as a public service and not a business enterprise for investors.

Mick Whelan  
General Secretary  
77 St John Street  
London EC1M 4NN