



# FREIGHT

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**More than just a union**



Welcome to the new copy of the Freight Journal. It's been a challenging few years for the freight sector. Freight operating companies continue to plead poverty and try to

erode driver's pay along with terms and conditions. We've got a continued threat from Longer, Heavier Vehicles from European Legislation. Perhaps the biggest concern rearing its head is the ORR's attempts to price coal off of rail. Rest assured that we are fighting every issue that poses any threat to our industry

and our members. It's not all doom and gloom. The future of rail freight still looks positive with forecasts predicting growth. There is to be a £200m investment into the Strategic Freight Network and reports are showing the benefits that HS2 will have on the freight sector.

But that doesn't mean we will be complacent

going forward. We will continue to ensure that the industry has a bright future but also that our members who deliver these services share in any benefits from future growth. We are all aware of the challenges that we face in the Freight Sector, but as a united and strong Trade Union I know we will overcome them and keep jobs safe

and improve pay and T&Cs for the membership. We've shared the pain during the tough times by making difficult decisions in order to save jobs. We were right to do this. But the FOCs must know this. When they make profits, we expect to share in the good times too.  
**Mick Whelan, General Secretary**

## ASLEF welcomes £200m investment in the Strategic Freight Network

**A** SLEF has welcomed the £200 million that has been committed to the Strategic Freight Network as part of the proposed package of investment for Control Period 5. The money will enable key freight schemes to be developed including the upgrade of major container routes from the deep-sea ports.

Much of the work will be focused on creating an electric spine which will run from Southampton to South Yorkshire. This creates the prospect of electrically hauled rail freight becoming a reality in the medium term. This will further reduce the carbon emissions of rail freight making it an even greener alternative to road haulage. It will also bring the other benefits of electrifications such as reduced maintenance costs and increased reliability.

Other schemes due to benefit include works at Ely North Junction, Leicester area capacity work and additional capacity for rail freight on the Felixstowe to Nuneaton corridor.



The money is in addition to previous funds of £30 million which have been made available for rail freight by the Scottish Government.

General Secretary Mick Whelan welcomed the investment but expressed a note of caution saying, "This is obviously fantastic news for the rail freight industry. However increasing capacity which is greatly needed is only effective whilst the Government is doing

what it can to promote more goods on to rail." He explained "We need to be expanding rail freight capacity but with measure such as trials for longer HGVs and new access charges for rail freight on the horizon the government is in danger of pushing goods off of rail and giving an even bigger advantage to road. For the benefit of the country this work must go ahead but so should measures to promote more freight on to rail."

## ASLEF fighting to stop the ORR attacking rail freight

ASLEF is taking on the fight to stop the ORR intentionally trying to reduce the amount of freight taken on rail. As you will see in depth in the article by Freight on Rail's Philippa Edmunds, Rail Freight is under attack by the very body that is supposed to support it. ASLEF responded to the consultation in the strongest possible terms concluding, "It seems illogical to reduce a successful, green and progressive sector which is forecast to have a bright future in order to pay for the mistakes of the financial sector. It is by investing and

promoting industries such as rail freight that we can grow our economy and realign it to be more diversified and solid. Creating the circumstances that would see it reduce is therefore not only bad for the industry itself, but for the British economy as a whole." The full consultation response can be found on the ASLEF website in the submissions section.

In addition, ASLEF wrote a joint letter to the ORR from the four transport unions (ourselves, RMT, TSSA and Unite) asking what impact assessment has been undertaken regarding

potential job losses should the proposed measures be enforced. The union received a response suggesting that an assessment has yet to be made.

The union has raised this issue at the Labour Party Conference and among members of the ASLEF Parliamentary Group. ASLEF believes that the Office of the Rail Regulator exists to promote and support the rail industry and not to attack it and we will be using all levers at our disposal to ensure goods and commodities are not priced off rail.

# ASLEF makes a noise about loud 66s

## A report by **Mick Holder** of ASLEF's Health and Safety Department

As we go to press ASLEF has arranged for a meeting of officials and reps at headquarters to set up a working group which will address on-going problems with excessive noise in Class 66 Locos, an issue for the union since their introduction in 1998/99.

250 Class 66's were reportedly made in Canada by General Motors Electro-Motive Division (EMD) and are used extensively by DB Schenker, Direct Rail Services, Freightliner Group and GB Railfreight. They were designed with a "self-steering bogie" to reduce track wear and increase adhesion on curves.

Since their introduction there have been problems for ASLEF members in the drivers cab with a lack of air conditioning, poor seating and excessive noise levels. ASLEF has previously described the cabs as "unhealthy, unsafe and unsatisfactory". Research showed that in July 2006, when the weather had been extremely

hot, the number of times a driver passed a red signal increased.

While DB Schenker, GB Railfreight, Freightliner and DRS have investigated cab improvements, very little positive action has taken place and the problems with the cab environment persist. This failure to implement improvements has led to the union setting up the working group to look at ways of getting the train companies to act.

Dave Bennett of ASLEF's Health and Safety Department said: "The main cause of noise in the Class 66 cabs is engine vibration. This is because the engine of the Class 66 is bolted directly to the frame and, unlike some other diesel locomotives, the driver's cab is not isolated from the frame and so vibration and noise are easily carried."

However, all hope of getting something done isn't lost – far from it. There are other engineering solutions to reducing the noise in the cabs such as ensuring there are no places in the cab where bare metal vibrates against another bare metal surface, or ensuring sound insulation is in place in the doors,



walls, floors and ceilings. These are known as passive noise reduction methods. Another method is using active noise reduction methods where the noise being made is reduced by creating a second noise which cancels out much of the first.

Many of these elements are contained in what is known as

"hush kits" which are available for locomotives and driver cabs and are acknowledged as being effective. They have been used by GB Railfreight, however the problem is they haven't been widely used and therefore much of the stock is still very noisy – which is where the new working group comes in.

## No light thrown on Intermodal fires

A Freightliner Intermodal hand-out claiming to be a 'refresher' on fires was issued to drivers last month. I sincerely hope no fires break out – because the advice is as enlightening as a spent match in a long tunnel, says **Simon Weller**.

It appears this hand-out is prompted by a spate of unconnected locomotive fires which prompted one wag to Photoshop the name on the side of a class 70 from "Freightliner" to "Firelighter". The hand-out does nothing to address what a driver should do with the single smoke hood issued in cabs if there is more than one person in

the cab (an issue being pursued by your representatives). Whilst instructions are given, there is no clarity about the priority or order of actions drivers should take. There is no advice, for example, on whether the first step should be to raise the alarm, evacuate the area or fight the fire. Surely there should be some guidance in a 'refresher'?

When it comes to incidents with Dangerous Goods, the instruction is not just vague – it is contradictory. It says at the start we should alight, go along the line as fast as safety allows and then 'carry

out appropriate train protection'. This contradicts the previous paragraph. Do we first raise the alarm or go forward to protect the line?

Also, do we alert the Signaller/Control by using a mobile phone, in conjunction with the locomotive radio, or using the signal post telephone? Your guess is as good as mine.

The first option listed in the hand-out is to use a mobile phone – but why? Surely the default should be to use of the train radio, especially as GSM-R is to be introduced over much of the system by the end of

this year? And all this begs the question of how sure drivers can be that they have the correct signaller's number for the location.

And if I was scoring cheap points I might point out that Intermodal don't seem to be able to spell 'extinguisher' correctly on either page 3 or 6! It's not as if this is an unusual piece of kit!

Muddled in the middle of this publication for the rail industry is a series of helpful hints on fires in buildings and homes. All very interesting – but this is supposed to be advice for drivers on trains!

Later we are told that in the case of an accident the driver's 'immediate' action must be to switch on the



tail lamp on the front of your train, and switch on the hazard warning indication (flashing headlights). So does this overrule raising the alarm with either the Signaller or possibly the Control first? And what about alighting and 'immediately' switching on the tail lamp!

I don't know if our drivers need a refresher – but I Intermodal do! Or at least get someone who knows what they're doing to write them.

# ORR proposed freight charges could decimate rail freight traffic



**As freight drivers know only too well, the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) proposal to increase freight charges in the next control period (CP5) could threaten existing rail freight traffic viability, undermine confidence in future freight investment as well as setting unhelpful precedents for passenger and freight services, writes Philippa Edmunds ...**

**T**HE proposal would increase all charges for the period from 2013 but the biggest and most alarming change is the introduction of the freight specific charge.

The fundamental question is whether the ORR should be allowed to price demand off the railways with this freight specific charge; the proposal targets power station coal, spent nuclear fuel and iron ore traffic now but what is to stop the ORR not only increasing these charges but also adopting this policy for other freight traffic and for certain passenger services in the future?

The ORR proposal is that it is OK to reduce a freight market sector by as much as 10% through higher pricing. If they apply the 10% to "tonnes lifted" the impact on power station coal would be a much bigger cut of 23% in "tonne-miles" since longer distance Scots-Anglo coal would be most disadvantaged by the higher charges being applied on a per mile basis.

This massive cut in train miles proposed by Civil Servants in London slashes drivers' jobs in the economically hard pressed regions. It would put Scottish miners out of work and lead to higher levels of imported coal.

The ORR is planning to export employment in the mining sector from Scotland to Russia. Also, there is no limit to how often the 10% cut is applied; the ORR proposals would allow it to apply the cut cumulatively every time it makes a new price determination.

The nascent biomass market, which has seen serious investment in modified wagons, could be cut off in its prime if the ORR goes on to impose charges in Control Period 6, which it is minded to do if it thinks it can get away with it.

What we are asking for is straightforward charging which allows rail to compete with road, gives investors a degree of certainty about the



future and recognises the social, environmental and economic benefits of rail freight to society and UK PLC.

## Timescales

The formal consultation to which Aslef, Freight on Rail and rail freight operators and customers responded, closed on 10th August and a final determination is due to be announced by the ORR sometime in November. So it is crucial that we all lobby MPs and Ministers now.

## The case for rail freight is sound

The rail freight sector contributes £870 million to the UK economy and supports output of £5.9bn. Network Rail figures show that the benefits of rail freight fall outside the railway balance sheet but benefit the road network and the economy by removing or reducing;

- £772 million per annum in congestion costs

- £133 million per annum in road infrastructure costs
- £68 million per annum in CO2 costs
- Pro-rata 42 road deaths at a value of £78.8 million

Despite the recession, long distance consumer rail freight grew 29% in the past five years increasing market share.

Despite challenging economic conditions, rail freight continues to grow; the latest Office of Rail Regulation annual figures issued in June show that the total amount of freight moved in 2011-12 increased by 10% compared to 2010-11. This is the highest amount of total freight moved since 2007-08. Long distance intermodal traffic moved increased by 11%, the 9th consecutive year of growth for consumer rail freight. Rail now commands 30% of the market out of the Southern container ports.

The outlook for rail freight is very positive with forecasts showing overall rail freight tonne-km doubling between 2010 and 2030, long distance intermodal will quadruple, and with investment (longer trains, 6 day railway) this consumer sector could grow 5-fold as long as existing market conditions are maintained; Currently rail mode share growth is increasing faster than the forecasts.

We believe that the ORR could be in breach of statutory duties to promote the carriage of freight, contribute to sustainable development and provide certainty for users of the railways. Additionally the proposals should be reviewed in the light of the SoS for Transport guidance issued in July 2012 which expressly states that the Government recognises the important role that rail freight plays in the nation's logistics and the achievement of the sustainable distribution objectives. And that the Government wishes to facilitate the continuing development of a competitive, efficient and dynamic private sector rail freight industry and is committed to ensuring that policies and regulations should work to this end and should not create unnecessary transactional costs or other obstacles to the achievement of these objectives and future growth. (Paragraph 32)

Given all these factors as well as the Government Climate Change Act commitment to reduce transport carbon emissions, the ORR proposals seem misplaced. Rail freight produces 70% less carbon dioxide per tonne carried than the equivalent road journey; and directly related to this is the fact that rail is fuel efficient with a gallon of diesel carrying a tonne of freight 246 miles by rail compared to 88 miles by road.

## Freight-specific charge on avoidable costs and its impact on jobs

The most worrying part of the proposed ORR increases is its introduction of freight specific charges for avoidable costs which is aimed at recovering at least some of their "avoidable costs" which represent expenditure which would be avoided if freight trains were not running on the network.



MDS Transmodal, who carried out the modelling for the ORR consultation, stated that increases in charges would lead to 23% drop in rail tonne kilometres. So in broad terms given that coal is around a third of the business, this increase could lead to a drop of a quarter of that traffic which would certainly bring about redundancies in the FOC workforces.

### Impact on other traffic

The consultation implies that the selected traffics can bear increases in charges, as demand is inelastic and would not cause significant modal shift unlike in other sectors. However, coal traffic cannot be isolated from other traffic. If coal traffic is reduced, this will have knock on effects on other parts of rail freight, for example locomotive use, maintenance and terminal costs across other commodities which could render other traffic unviable.

Freight traffics are not segregated on the railway or in operator accounting in this way, so increases in costs and reductions in volume in some traffics will have impacts on the costs for other traffics where demand is more elastic.

There will also be a knock on for other users of coal other than the electricity generators that also rely on coal deliveries for their production process, e.g: cement, steel.

Changes in price would also make coal less

competitive compared to gas. Coal could be a tipping point which causes a spiral of decline.

A key question is what impact assessment has ORR carried out, both in terms of rail freight overall and on the economy and society? If the ORR does not continue to take into account the economic, social and environmental benefits of rail freight to society and support the sector in its charging structures, certain rail freight flows may no longer be viable.

This could result in the DfT having to build more roads, with the resulting increase in pollution, road accidents and road congestion. This could lead to the Government not being able to meet its carbon dioxide reductions for 2020 and 2050, to which it is legally bound.

What is there to stop the ORR increasing the percentage of coal tonne miles it deems acceptable at the next review and applying this approach to other commodities?

### Scottish Open Cast mines case study

These freight increases could lead to the closure of eight open cast mines which supply all the English power stations. These proposals would hit longer distance traffic so rail traffic from Scotland would be especially badly affected. Therefore in addition to the hundreds of Scottish mining jobs, rail freight sector would be badly hit as half the coal extracted in Scotland is transport

to England – all by rail. As access charges are generally levied per tonne-km, the increase in cost per tonne used will be greater for coal which has travelled further.

Longer term the ORR has stated its intention to determine a charge that is geographically disaggregated which would add further complexity even though the current consultation is about an average charge across all vehicle types and geography. If distance based charging is not being considered on road why is it applicable to rail?

Route based charging will potentially distort competition with winners and losers on different routes being affected by different charges, e.g: iron ore inland sites such as Scunthorpe compared with coastal sites such as Port Talbot. Capacity/scarcity charges are yet to be developed and are likely to be an additional cost.

Finally, it has to be asked why the ORR is considering undermining rail freight which has been a success story for the railways. Rail freight has a crucial role in reducing long distance road congestion, a problem which is estimated to cost businesses £24 billion per annum.

Please contact your MP who needs to be alerted to the adverse congestion, pollution and safety impacts if freight traffic is forced back onto the roads. A short communication is all that is needed to highlight the grave situation rail freight faces.



## Nigel Gibson looks forward to hitting the ground running in both Freightliners and GB Railfreight



Having spent over seven years on the Executive Committee of ASLEF, I was elected to the position of District Organiser for District No. 5 in June 2012 and I have now been given the responsibility as Lead Officer for three of the freight companies, GB Railfreight; Freightliner Intermodal and Freightliner Heavy Haul as well as Greater Anglia and c2c.

Whilst I did spend a few years at Stratford before it closed in 1994 and did have the opportunity to work on various freight and ballast trains, my train driving background has been passenger based. I was however kept well apprised by the late Andy Morrison and in my role on the Executive Committee, of the issues faced by members in the freight sector.

The structure of the Machinery and Representation is the key to all that we do on behalf of the membership. If that process is not working or is frustrated by the management then we will always have difficulties delivering on your behalf. Having met with all three freight companies now, I believe there are changes that can be made to improve the functionality of the machinery of negotiation to provide the Local and Company Council Reps with the opportunity and support needed to carry out their role.

We need to improve the ways in which we communicate with you as members using e-newsletters and Company Council Websites. I would also urge you to provide ASLEF with your email and mobile phone number to assist us in our efforts to improve communication.

Whilst understanding that the freight sector is a different world to that of passenger operators, with the insecurity of contracts, we cannot allow the companies to use that as an excuse to drive through unnecessary changes which are detrimental to our members' terms and conditions of service or rates of pay.

I realise that there are many issues that will need to be discussed and I have begun to meet with the Reps and it is also my intention to attend branch meetings where invited to listen to the views and concerns of our members over the coming months and I look forward to working alongside you all.



### RAIL FREIGHT POISED TO COME INTO CENTRAL LONDON ONCE AGAIN

Freight services into central London are set to begin in the next few weeks with Colas running services from Daventry International Railfreight terminal into London Euston. The services will be run on behalf of the Stobart Group and will be run by electric Class 86 locos.

The goods being carried will initially be for the Marks & Spencer and Tesco shops within the station and will also supply businesses locally. Goods destined for other stations on the Euston Road such as King's Cross and St Pancras could also be supplied by the service.

The frequency of the services, which will probably arrive during the night or early morning, has yet to be established. They will use the platforms where parcel and Motorail traffic once stood in the east or west of the station. These platforms have access to the road through ramps and are currently only used by a handful of Virgin Trains, London Midland and London Overground trains as well as the ScotRail sleeper.

# DB Schenker battle on pay and conditions



**Report By  
Simon Weller,  
National  
Organiser ...**

**D**BS members have been fighting two issues, one is pay and the other is a battle to end the almost continuous abrogation of terms and conditions, abuse of rostering and diagrams.

The initial pay offer from DBS was a paltry 3%, increased to 3.1% following further talks. Obviously this was never going to be good enough. Following a magnificent ballot result of nearly 86% voting Yes based on an 83% return we took strike action – timed to disrupt ballasts and minimise the number of members who would lose pay.

This resulted in an increased offer of 3.5%. This was applied across all allowances but with a moratorium on the rest day rate until December 2013. The rest day rate will increase by 3.5% then. This is currently out to referendum, with a return date of the 15th October 2012.

The most important issue is the abuse of T&Cs. There have been long and protracted discussions with DBS over the issue of abuse and misuse of diagramming – something that you have made very clear was a priority.

We are not going to sort out the abrogations without addressing the root cause of the problems which is their shortage of fully trained drivers.

We know in their desperation to get a driver on a train they'll pull any stunt. We have to make sure that the need to pull these stunts is no longer there. We can posture, threaten and demand they stop as much as we like but unless the shortage of fully trained drivers is addressed we all know that they'll be up to their old tricks within weeks.

However, there is a very important aspect which is when they do pull a stunt drivers should be telling them no. We must stop colleagues from coming out of their windows to help out. We let them do it once and it'll become the norm. How can we insist the company stick to the agreements when we are happy to bend them ourselves?

To address the changes the current rest day working agreement is designed to deliver training. We cannot afford to continue allowing DBS to rely on wholesale volunteers to run a multinational company.



The agreement is about changing their behaviour but also protecting us by allowing DBS to fulfil their obligations to customers.

The Directors have agreed that things must change and the cycle of abuse must be broken and sharp practices ended. In any event the Program Expectancy clause will be withdrawn from December 2013.

If DBS fail to adhere to the obligations contained in the agreement and therefore fail to change their behaviour – and there are monthly reviews - then the agreement will be withdrawn.

In some areas we have seen tactics out of sheer desperation to get the service resourced and now they have RDW and a proper training plan then these problems will end. The agreement is clear that this is only for the

resourcing of drivers covering drivers' duties – not to resource their managerial structures.

Depot establishments are now an issue to be dealt with nationally and a new establishment calculator will be developed to replace the discredited TP6.

There are two appendices contained in the agreement; the monitoring section is important as it is no longer retrospective - they can no longer put illegal diagrams out and then say they'll do something about it afterwards, a key failing of the current system. The local reps will be briefed on this as they will be responsible for the national monitoring and reporting. The other appendix is the detailed training allocation plan which will be reviewed by reps to ensure individual drivers are allocated their training blocks in the most appropriate way; avoiding leave, block RDs etc.

We are also aware that some depots are still at risk and some may be at risk in the future so the agreement includes a no compulsory redundancy clause.

These are significant changes – partly because they now realise we are serious in changing behaviours. This is the first time they have been truly challenged and the nine weeks without RDW has shown how poorly resourced they are.

We have tried many things to stop DBS abusing the system in the past but simply saying "stop" hasn't worked - if we're going to be effective we need to change their behaviour by addressing the root cause of the problem - hence the strict training plan.

We shouldn't have to take responsibility for managing the firm but if we don't it won't stop.





## Brazilian rail freight boss taps Derbyshire for its expertise to deliver Olympics and World Cup

The president of the Brazilian National Rail Freight Association, Rodrigo Vilaca along with the president of the Brazilian Railway Industries Association, Vicente Abate came to Derby at the end of September. They are looking to team up with the town's rail firms in order to help build the infrastructure required to

deliver both the World Cup in 2014 and the Rio Olympics in 2016.

The delegation who were invited to Derby by the government organisation UK Trade and Investment East Midlands were shown around Network Rail's state-of-the-art control centre, which monitors all on-track activity for East Midlands Trains.

In addition Mr Abate, who is based in Sao Paulo, said: "We came to Derby because it is a very big centre for the rail industry in the UK. In the 19th century, the British built railways across Brazil and the expertise and skills at companies here could support our plans. Brazil has been growing in the past 10 years and there are plans for 10,000km of



**Trains have been made in Derby since 1879**

railroad and an investment of billions. There is the chance to make partnerships with UK companies."

The United Kingdom Trade and Investment (UKTI) have identified Brazilian Railways as a high-growth market. Peter Hogarth, regional director for UKTI, said "They are hosting the World Cup in 2014 and so there is lots of work to infrastructure taking place. Brazil is a high-growth market and there is a lot of potential for work. This visit provides a fantastic opportunity for local firms to tap into the opportunities out there."

## Report shows HS2 will allow rail freight to continue to lower carbon emissions

A new study by Greengage 21 has shown that by freeing up capacity on the existing mainlines, HS2 will allow more rail freight to travel and will therefore create carbon benefits of over 50%.

HS2 will create an additional three train paths per hour in each direction which would be utilised by long distance freight services.

ASLEF General Secretary Mick Whelan explained, "One of the reasons ASLEF has supported HS2, has not only been to increase the passenger capacity for rail in the UK, but also because of the benefits it can

bring to rail freight. Relieving the West Coast Mainline and the East Coast Mainline of passenger services means that more Freight paths can be found." He added, "This study proves what we have always said. Create more capacity for rail freight and you will reduce carbon emission, not to mention the benefits of reduced road congestions in terms of financial costs and safety."

ASLEF will be appealing to the Government to ensure that rail freight is given fair access to any freed capacity as a consequence of HS2.

