



# FREIGHT

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**More** than just a **union**

## Class 68 UK Light: a new journey for DRS

**J**ANUARY not only marked the first month of 2014, but for Direct Rail Services marked the beginning of an exciting new journey with the arrival of 68002 the first of 15 new Class 68 Locomotives.

The Class 68 UK Light journey began in 2011 with DRS seeking a new mixed traffic locomotive to fulfil current and future business demands. DRS entered into a contract with Vossloh to supply an initial 15 UK versions of its newly developed Eurolight locomotive.

ASLEF representatives have been involved from an early stage and assisted in ensuring that the layout of the driver's cab would meet the requirements and expectations of UK train drivers. The driver's cab is ergonomically designed, fully air conditioned and soundproofed; offering a modern, clean and comfortable working environment for drivers.

The locomotive is powered by a 3805 HP (2800 KW) 4 Stroke Caterpillar diesel engine

that will allow 100 mph performance, offering the potential for new high speed freight services. It is equipped with electric train supply to allow the haulage of passenger services.

The locomotive has AC traction motors; dynamic braking and a 6000 litre fuel tank which combined with improved fuel efficiency should significantly reduce running costs and extend the range of the locomotive.

68001 is currently undergoing certification and testing at the dedicated test track at Velim in the Czech Republic. Whilst 68002 is based at DRS Kingmoor for a testing phase involving hauling both high speed passenger and intermodal services.

Following the successful order for the UK Light DRS have returned to Vossloh and ordered 10 Class 88 Locomotive, an AC electric version of the diesel electric Class 68. These new locomotives will primarily draw power



ASLEF was involved with the design of the new Class 68 UK Light locomotive.

form the OHLE but will also be fitted with a 700kW diesel engine for work on non-electrified lines. The first of these locomotives are expected to arrive in the UK during 2015.

### New paths must be reserved for freight services



In my introduction to the last *Freight Journal* I spoke about signs of possible economic recovery. Well, I'm happy to say that despite this government's best attempts at stopping the economy growing, markets are cyclical and the amount of work is currently growing faster than the amount of drivers we have in the industry.

That does not mean that our challenges are over. It simply means they have changed. Rather than fighting the very real threat of compulsory redundancies, one of the main threats we face is the same one we faced before the recession.

Infrastructure and capacity. Passenger numbers continued to increase, even throughout the economic downturn. Freight traffic is on the rise again. Both look like they will continue to increase, and for our economy and our environment this is great news. But unless we have the infrastructure that can cope with this it will lead to people and goods going back on the road.

This is why HS2 is so important. Not just for passengers but also for freight. Not only will it mean new paths for freight services on HS2 itself, but it will relieve capacity on the East and West Coast Mainlines. Throughout all of our consultations and discussions about HS2 with the DfT we have continued to argue that a good number of the new paths must be reserved for freight services and we will continue to push this point.

So, yes, things are certainly looking better than they did a couple of years ago. But battling for better working conditions, pay and investment in our infrastructure becomes the main challenge once again. The hard work continues.

**Mick Whelan, General Secretary**

### GB Railfreight invests £50 million to expand its fleet

GB Railfreight have followed their order for eight new class 66 locomotives from last September by ordering an additional thirteen as part of its plans to double its £100m annual turnover within the next three years.

The order is expected to be complete by the end of the year and will lead to the company having a

fleet of 71 class 66s.

The company, owned by Eurotunnel, are also acquiring 16 class 92 electric units in order to fully exploit the UK's plans to further electrify the rail network. The new units will also enable the company to run service through the Channel Tunnel.

### DB Schenker to run new HS1 service

DB Schenker is to start running additional services along HS1 containing refrigerated containers of perishable foodstuffs and automotive components in European-sized wagons. They will transport goods from Spain to east London. The contract is initially for 6 months but could well extend beyond that.

HS1 has been working behind the scenes to try and identify paths and has welcomed the move. Nicola Shaw from HS1 commented, "HS1 is delighted to welcome additional DB Schenker Rail (UK) freight services onto the high speed line. This is a big step up for freight on HS1, and is an area in which we continue to grow."

These services will be additional to the twice weekly return services to Poland that already run.



Class 68 cab

This new arrival promises an exciting future for Direct Rail Services, ASLEF members and the UK rail freight sector.

**Rob Smith, DRS Company Council**

### SNCF RUN EUROPE'S LONGEST FREIGHT TRAIN

The French National Operator SNCF alongside the French Rail Network (RFF) and intermodal operator Kombiverkehr ran a 1500m long freight train on 18th January making it the longest service in Europe.

The test operation was part of Europe's Marathon project to operate longer freight trains and ran between Sibelin yard near Lyon and Nimes.

After two years of preparation and testing the service was achieved by reforming three of Kombiverkehr's regular Germany – Spain intermodal trains into two 750m-long consists. These were coupled together at Sibelin yard to form a 4100-tonne 70-wagon train which was hauled across France by two Alstom class 37000 electric locomotives operating in distributed power mode.

The €4.4m Marathon project was co-funded by the European Commission through its 7th Framework Programme for Research and Development in April 2011. It aims to demonstrate the effectiveness of operating longer, faster, and heavier freight trains on selected routes in Europe.



## London Gateway open for business

The much anticipated London Gateway has now opened becoming the UK's newest deep-sea container port and Logistics Park. Over 30% of the containers moving through the port will be transported onwards by rail with both DB Schenker and Freightliner providing services to the port. DB Schenker will also provide track maintenance at the site.

The project took 10 years of planning and covers 3 square miles of land. London Gateway was built to allow the biggest ships in the world to bring goods to the UK. It will provide 2,700



More than 30 per cent of containers will be transported by rail

metres of quay, six deep-water berths with depth alongside of 17 metres, 24

giant quay cranes and an annual capacity of 3.5 million TEU.

## New proposals for £250 million rail freight terminal at Mossend

North Lanarkshire Council are currently considering plans for a new terminal at the existing Mossend rail head in Central Scotland. The £250 million scheme was presented to the council by site owners PD Stirling in November 2013.

The proposals would lead to a two thirds increased capacity rail link to UK and European markets. Proposals include two million sq ft of warehousing and

manufacturing space adjacent to the terminal. This will allow carbon neutral distribution and occupiers to load directly to and from the trains.

It is hoped that the project will create around 4900 jobs and will support rail freight growth by accommodating new 775m long electric trains on a daily basis.

It is hoped that construction will begin in 2015 with development phased until completion in 2030. The Scottish Government's proposed Third National Planning Framework (NPF3), recognises Mossend as one of three important freight interchanges and highlights that as export potential grows, rail freight will become increasingly important.

North Lanarkshire Council are expected to come to a conclusion on the application in early summer 2014.

## Co-operative Food look to rail to cut lorry miles

Co-operative Food is looking to build on their successful use of rail freight by rolling out rail freight service to more of their depots.

By putting more of its produce on rail, the Co-op has already reduced carbon emissions by 500 tonnes last year. This is due to the

organisation more than doubling its use of rail of the last 3 years. More than a quarter of The Co-operative's produce between Coventry and Scotland is transported by rail. The Co-operative rail freight service move 10 containers and around 500 roll cages of ambient



grocery stock between two sites every week.

A daily service is carrying more than 21 containers of produce every week between Daventry, close to the Group's national distribution centre at

Coventry, and a rail freight terminal at Mossend, near to its depot at Newhouse, on the outskirts of Glasgow.

By doing so 800,000km of lorry miles have been taken off the roads.

# More Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges is the way forward



**Here is a round up of the current issues which I will be raising with the ministers Stephen Hammond and Baroness Kramer, in our planned meeting in early March ...**

## National Networks National Policy Statement

As you know, the industry has been calling for policy to support the building of rail freight interchanges, especially the Strategic Rail Freight terminals, without which rail freight volumes cannot be expanded.

The Draft National Networks National Policy Statement, which was finally published in December, does in principle make the economic, social and environmental case for building SRFIs in its text.

## Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges

Strategic Rail Freight Interchanges – support the transfer of freight from road to rail and facilitate sustainable rail freight growth. To this end, there is a need for an expanded network of SRFIs to serve regional, sub-regional and cross-regional markets providing good connectivity with both the road and rail network.

These will be private sector, commercial developments that need to be located near the business markets they will serve – major urban centres, or groups of centres – and be linked to key supply chain routes.

However, as always the devil is in the detail

and we have two key worries with the policy.

Firstly that it needs to demonstrate a compelling need for SRFIs. However, policy makers are unlikely to be prepared to spell out the number of SRFIs needed in given regions because of the threat of planning blight but we will be pressing for a mechanism to take into account the current Network Rail Market studies and forecasted rail freight volume growth.

Secondly and even more worryingly, a new clause (para 3.4) changes the way carbon impacts of schemes are handled which specifically prohibits the carbon impacts of individual transport schemes from being a planning consideration. This change, which we will be opposing, would make the case for road rather than rail upgrades.

## Cross border mega trucks

I managed to get both the *Daily Telegraph* and the *Daily Mail* on-line to show that Tory MEPs were supporting amendments in the legislation which would allow longer and heavier trucks as well as higher ones.

I also took part in a lively Radio Five Live debate with the Tory MEP who leads on transport and the topic was covered by important trade magazines such as *Auto Express*.

At a subsequent meeting with DfT officials, they said that the government do not



necessarily follow their MEP's policies and restated their opposition to mega trucks in the UK. However, we all know that it will be hard to stop mega trucks once they are freely circulating across Europe but at least the government is aware that we will put up a good fight.

The European Parliament negotiations are influx and change daily. The two opposing camps remain divided and the only thing they agree upon is that the vote, scheduled for Tuesday 18th March, on whether to allow cross border traffic of mega trucks is too close to call so there will have to be some kind of compromise. So it is likely that the status quo will remain until the Commission carries out a full



**Grants to shift freight to rail supports the domestic sector such as the services for Tesco and other retailers**

latest safety features such as rear view cameras with screen in drivers cabin, lane assistant, distance warning and emergency brake systems.

The Greek Presidency representative thinks cross border is sensible and opposes a ban so we are not going to get any support during this Presidency which ends on June 30th. He does not see the need for conditions. He acknowledges some member states led by Austria are totally opposed. And that some like France have concerns but he does not think that they will fight it so he does not envisage a blocking minority against the Commission proposal and expects an agreed General council view between March and June.

The fundamental arguments remain the same so please do lobby your MPs about this and go to my web site for the latest details.

### Longer semi trailers

We are still working with the Technical Advisers Group a local Authority representative organisation, to try to get the government to restrict the 7ft longer semi trailers, to designated

urban routes. The government has finally admitted that the longer trailer has a slightly greater tail swing; in fact it is over two metres which is double the existing 16.5 metre outswing.

### Grants

The mode shift revenue grants, justified by the economic and social benefits of removing lorry traffic from the roads, come up for renewal in April 2015 and remain crucial if existing services are to remain on rail and more new services are to commence.

The current regime delivers excellent value for money, (in the order of 4-5:1) and is only awarded for actual containers removed from roads.

We are asking the government to retain and adequately fund the scheme with some long term guarantee of support, so that operators and customer have the confidence to carry on investing in the industry.

A sudden cessation of the scheme will abruptly force back onto the roads significant rail flows and customers will lose confidence in the user of rail; estimates indicate that the direct impact would be flows to the Midlands reverting to road causing around 250,000 containers to shift back to road with further knock-on impacts on other routes.

Vitality the scheme also supports the domestic intermodal sector such as the services for Tesco and other retailers. This sector has grown significantly from a low base, and is competing effectively with road on core flows; the grant support remains essential as economy of scale is established.

**Philippa Edmunds, Freight on Rail manager**

impact assessment.

This outcome would be better than a vote in favour of cross border traffic but it has inherent problems. Namely the status quo will be interpreted by proponents of mega trucks as being allowed under the Commission reinterpretation of 2013 and also unless the new Commissioner after the European Election is opposed to mega trucks it is likely that Commission bureaucrats will make sure that the impact assessment is in favour of mega trucks.

Another fall back arrangement would be to insist on strict conditions, especially weight limits, so that mega trucks pay their way through proper lorry road user charging and have the

## DIRECT RAIL SERVICES COMPANY COUNCIL REPORT

I would like to begin by welcoming our new company council representative for the DRS Northern Constituency, brother Richard Bamber and pass on our thanks to brother Tam Mckendrick who has served ASLEF members at DRS for the last 8 years. He has helped guide us through some tough times which we have hopefully seen the back of.

Members at DRS voted to accept the 2013/2014 pay award which has now been delivered this package offered an increase on basic salary along with the annualised hours being calculated on a quarterly basis. To complement this new arrangement any hours that are over flight path at the end of each quarter will now be paid quarterly as overtime. Genuine paid overtime has been a long term ambition for the council and we are pleased that the company seems to have realised the

benefits it can offer in terms of commitment and flexibility.

As I am writing this article the first Class 68 "UK Light" locomotive has arrived to begin the testing phase. Over the coming months the rest of the new fleet will continue to arrive. These locomotives offer drivers a significant improvement to the cab and working environment when compared to the class 66 that we all know and love! These locomotives will offer genuine mixed traffic capabilities. I will continue to update you all as their introduction continues.

Many of us can recall those dark days of 2008/2009 when we all suffered as a result of the global economic downturn. Whether some of the issues affecting companies were genuine or not is still the subject of heated debate in many a mess room!

With the memories of 2008/2009 still lingering on it is pleasing to see that DRS along with others appear to have turned a



corner and are now actively recruiting drivers. An intake of trainee drivers have recently commenced their driver training and their arrival at depots is eagerly anticipated to assist with the recent influx of work.

**Robert Smith**  
DRS Company Council Secretary

## FREIGHTLINER INTERMODAL

Our last report was for the autumn period 2013 and in that short period a lot has gone on that affects us all as Drivers. We have seen a large number of Drivers leave Freightliner for both TOCs and other freight companies. There is numerous reason given for why drivers have left, the biggest reason given seems to be pay. At the time of writing, we have been offered a 3 year deal that we shall put before the Executive Committee, with our recommendation for acceptance with the offer being put out to referendum to the drivers (if you take year one ,that is 0.9% above RPI). We shall be visiting all the depots to go through the deal but it is hard to compare in the so called pay league. We know we are not the highest paid but the biggest point we get told is to keep our present conditions and we as a Council take that on board .Steve Wilson has done some work and has pointed out that DBS work 19 days more than us, take this with the £10 a day Booking on/retention plus our conditions and we feel it is not all doom and gloom. Look at some of the drivers who have left for a TOC, we hear that some are now looking at the fact that out of 10 weekends they are working at some point for seven of them when our weekend work is minimal. I spoke to a Driver who has recently joined GB Rail and he is not 100% happy with his lot, what



he was told turns out is not the day to day reality. When the pay deal does go out to referendum I hope that every driver uses this vote to let us know what they want and hope to see a high turnout.

Along with pay we have worked on Harmonisation of Local Agreements, some might say why have we done this. Basically every Depot had its own local agreements on extra payments and it was left to the individual to ask what he might get. A number of Depots were getting a lot less than others, we feel with this we have

control of what is going on at a National level and every driver will now know what he is entitled to book.

One of the matters that Nigel has brought about in the past year is the improved release for us as Business Council Reps and us meeting with Local reps. We have just had a meeting at ASLEF Head Office, which we found very useful and we are looking forward to another 2 meetings later this year .Throughout our Depots I feel we have a lot of experience and hope we can all share our own

knowledge when others need it. Crewe Depot has 2 new LC reps, Simon Heywood and Ian Dickinson and I hope that if needed we can all offer our support to them in this challenging role.

At this moment in time the Company is running a trial on sound Cancelling Head phones , which I was the first rep to be involved . Freightliner is the first Company to Trial these and when the trial is complete I will forward a report .

One last point and a personal one is that I would like to congratulate Bro Colin Smith on his recent re-election to District 3 District Organiser. Whilst Colin is not our Lead Officer he is always there if I need any advice and with both himself and Nigel to lean on I will not go far wrong.

**Peter Mason**  
Business Council Secretary  
Freightliner Intermodal

## DB SCHENKER PAY DEAL

At the time of writing voting papers are being prepared for a referendum on the revised DBS pay deal and the company council and I are travelling the country meeting members at depots and branches.

One of the questions asked is "Why are we making changes, why can't we stay as we are?" It is quite natural to distrust change, particularly in the context of DBS. The answer is simple and it is what drives the council and me: job security.

As we all know the freight sector is fully privatised in a ruthlessly competitive open market. Unlike our colleagues on the passenger side where the TOCs are simply bus companies carrying out government contracts who are not exposed to the same dog-eat-dog market.

Political interference by the government's Department for Transport through the Network Rail ballast contracts have made that market even more volatile with Network Rail imposing additional flexibility on their contractors and onerous conditions on pricing.

As freight competitors become increasingly flexible, this exerts a downward pressure on terms, conditions, and pay of the workers. For DBS to compete they need to bid for contracts at a lower rate than the others, who in turn become more flexible, or in other words, cheaper. Which places further pressure on DBS and the cycle starts again; a cycle commonly known as the race to the bottom. This is a characteristic product of liberalised and deregulated markets. More profits for the owners, less security and higher productivity from the workers

The challenge for us as a union is to resist the flexibility demands and race to the bottom but also allow the employer to win contracts and maintain the jobs we rely on. It is no use having idealised



conditions of employment if there is no employment to go along with them.

I have been asked why I am "hell bent on giving away conditions?" I am not, however I am hell bent on making sure we have job security and we do not have to face the spectre of real redundancies again as our work moves to competitors, as we have seen in recent years. It is not good enough for us simply to stand still as the market is forever shifting.

I believe the pay deal we negotiated allows DBS to retain existing contracts, win new ones, and bring in significant improvements for us with quality time away from work in additional rest days and stability in rostering. Whether that is right is a decision for the DBS members to make in the referendum.

It is a difficult balancing act particularly with the justified mistrust of DBS by the drivers. It always seems that the workers are picking up the pieces and those responsible for the mismanagement get away with it scot-free. Unfortunately, for us, that is yet another product of the free-market.

**Simon Weller, National Organiser**



## GBRf COMPANY COUNCIL

Time is approaching for the company council to start pay and T&Cs negotiations with in GBrf.

Last year saw some significant improvements to our Roster codes of practice and the council will be striving for further improvements to our ROCP this year aiming for ASLEF's charter of shorter working week and shorter working days of a maximum of 9 hours and 30 minutes.

The company last year pushed for a minimum working day of 4 hours which the council blocked. Our shift length still stands at 6 to 12 hours. A 4 hour working day would have proved difficult for some frontline staff as they have to commute to their work location.

GBrf has been gaining new contracts recently and this has caused some upset from our members from the other freight companies. It needs to be said GBrf's company council have no dealings in the commercial side of the business and the comments that ASLEF members are putting other ASLEF members out of work is utter nonsense. We all are in one trade union and should stand as one.

The controversial new ATME grade will soon come into play within the company. The training course is underway with the first batch of ATME's are about to undertake their first T3 possessions alone.

Only time will tell the impact this grade will have on the freight sector as a whole.

**Barry Hare, ASLEF Company council GBrf**

## FLHH

Health and Safety in the rail freight industry continues to be a challenge. The agenda seems to be driven by what other FOCs are doing and seeing if we can do it cheaper. Unfortunately there is little or nothing in law to protect drivers as it is always guidance or recommendations and it's up to the FOC if they so choose to use them. We are further hampered on FLHH with different areas having different local agreements with winners and losers depending on which depot or area you are in.

On FLHH we are currently being faced with degraded route knowledge on T3s, with only a day's route brief. Drivers in rear locos are not required to have any route knowledge.

There's an ongoing discussion about what constitutes the maximum working week. Our contract states 60 hours, management have recently reinterpreted this with seemingly no limit for those who choose to work excessive hours which goes against the aspiration of tackling fatigue and the obvious implications associated. The Clapham disaster was 25 years ago and Antony Hidden made a number of recommendations to help protect us from excessive hours and fatigue. On the freight side of the industry this seems to be forgotten with 12 hour nights still common place and excessive overtime. When you mention this to a passenger driver they look on in disbelief.

As a final point whenever we raise problems at BC level we are always asked where is the evidence. Please don't just moan to your work mates. Report it to control, tell your manager and tell us.

**Paul Barber, Freightliner Heavy Haul BC H&S rep**

# ASLEF: a platform for freight in the wider rail industry



I was recently asked why ASLEF had allowed or worse still, encouraged small freight operators to move into an industry with poor or minimal terms and conditions of service.

The inference being that employers such as GB Railfreight or Freightliner Heavy Haul are undermining members employed by other freight companies with more traditional conditions.

In my view, ASLEF had no choice but to get involved and seek to achieve a recognition agreement with these companies which have grown out of all original proportion in the last ten years or so. Whilst our membership numbers don't reach the density levels we enjoy elsewhere, it is slowly increasing and is substantially stronger than most other unionised industries.

All these private companies would still be in existence and operating whether

ASLEF buried its head in the sand and ignored their existence or not. We only have to look at where some new entrants to the rail freight market are at this moment in time and perhaps if we stand back too long we may well see the alternative demonstrated to the detriment of train drivers in freight. Colas are already introducing practices which put pressure on other operators to become more competitive.

Whilst principles may say we should not allow ourselves to become soiled by such 'fly by night' companies, any failure to organise in companies such as Colas may well prove to be a mistake.

Being a member of ASLEF should be first and foremost when it comes to loyalties; yet too often we see finger pointing at colleagues whilst defending the colours of respective employers. This can only serve to build upon the divisions that the privatised industry thrust upon us, that we must fight

against through a commonality with our trade union and its aspirations.

Last year we held a Freight Members Weekend in Peterborough which proved a desire for members and representatives to really participate and have a say in ASLEF. We need to make sure freight has the voice it deserves within ASLEF and the wider railway industry.

I have been actively encouraging members employed by freight companies to put their names forward to attend our annual conference in Brighton this May which I hope will see members have a greater voice in the democratic processes of the union. In short, the phrase 'united we stand' applies across the membership spectrum irrespective of today's employer, ASLEF and its members will still be here long after they have moved on.

**Nigel Gibson**, District Organiser, District 5