

Rail Plant Association Update

RPA Acting-Chairman Darren Matthews reports on the current initiatives of the association for road/rail plant owners.

Welcome and Happy New Year. 2021 was challenging for us all from a Covid-19 point of view, but let us be optimistic for 2022 and say it is going to be a great year for us all.

Let us start by announcing the RPA Annual General Meeting will take place on 22nd February at our usual venue the Nuthurst Grange Hotel, Hockley Heath. At the time of writing, that meeting is a few weeks away, but be sure you will get a full update on how it went in the next issue of *Rail Infrastructure*.

What is in store in this article?

Well, a little something for our members. One item we will discuss below in detail is the quarterly 'external publications review' we have started to do for our members. With circa 60 member companies in the RPA, all of which carry out the same review tasks, we hope to reduce the time it takes for them to undertake that job. We also have a bit to talk about on Road/Rail Vehicle (RRV) impacts on the environment and the use of diesel/HVO fuels as well as an update on the POS Panel rearrangement.

RPA members

One of the arduous tasks we all undertake, every March, June, September and December, is the review of railway standards, and possibly other externally controlled publications such as safety and environmental legislation. I know some of the individuals who undertake this task for their employer will spend half a day checking the Rail Safety and Standards Board (RSSB) website and the IHS Technical Indexes database for railway group and railway company standards respectively for their latest standards catalogues and update information. Many will include an additional delve into the HSE and other .gov websites for their legal documentation checks, too.

What the RPA Management Committee is now doing (from December 2021) is undertaking a full external publications review, focusing on RRV businesses and uploading it on the RPA Website.

The obvious benefits for members will be a vast reduction in time spent doing this task every three months. The process includes reviewing the catalogues of standards from the RSSB and IHS Technical Indexes/Network Rail hub, along with the HSE and Environmental Legislation websites. The review also includes checks against the Mechanical and Electrical Engineering (M&EE) Networking Group's Codes of Practice (COPs) and posters.

The next part in the process is for the external publications review working group to draft three spreadsheets, listing the railway standards, environmental legislation and safety legislation. The final part is for the members to use the template Impacts Log to show what impacts any of the itemised changes have on their business. In summary, reducing their time spent on this task by a significant amount.

To finish off, we will be sharing the process with the RISQS auditing scheme manager to make this part of the RISQS audits for the supply chain a little easier.



Collective Mark

Our new logo

Some of you keen eyed readers may have spotted our new logo above. Not only is it new, but we have completely refreshed all our publications which you can access via the RPA website. Since we are not artistic enough to do this ourselves, we have to give thanks to Other Duck Designs (ODD) who have been brilliant for us. They also worked with the M&EE Networking Group for its logo, see page 21.

RRVs and their environmental impact

There is no getting away from it, climate change is here and it is hurting us. The government is taking big steps to help the UK reduce its damaging impacts and that naturally means we, as employers and RRV owners, have to do the right thing and strive to reduce our adverse impacts as much as we can.

In a perfect world, we will all have brand new plant we can hire to our clients. Plant that is hybrid, full electric or hydrogen fuelled. No doubt these are the fuel directions we are heading, but it takes time. Time is needed for manufacturers to develop their power source and to make it so their plant can last as long as work (shift times) is needed. Although there are some small plant units running full electric, they do not have the running durations required by sites at the moment. But we are confident they will do over the coming years.

And what about the charging infrastructure? Electric cars are now getting access to a growing infrastructure of charging points and battery technology is improving at an incredible rate. In some cases, car drivers can experience 450-500 miles per hour of charge, making it attractive knowing a quick 100-mile charge can be obtained in under 10 minutes. The railway, as we know, has electricity built into its infrastructure. Does the future hold opportunities for 'plant charging points' to be located at frequently used access points?

Helping us move to full electric is the hybrid option. A combustion engine combined with battery power. Certainly, for tunnel work, the electric would remove the need for external fans at the tunnel ends if the expected air quality is likely to be impacted by diesel fumes. There are a few options for this already out there, but here is the rub. The plant costs more money to buy and, therefore, more money to hire. Without doubt, there is a sincere desire from the infrastructure managers to move from diesel, but will the purse strings allow them?

Here at the RPA, we are not experts or advisors on any diesel fuel substitutions. We know there are alternative diesel substitutes and some of our members are looking at, or

already using, Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO). This product has its pros, such as reduced NOx, PM and CO2 emissions, but is more expensive per litre and can have adverse quality and environmental impacts where palm oil is used.

On a plus note, the RRV community can at least remain using red diesel as opposed to all other plant workers (construction and agriculture) where the tax benefits derived from red diesel are prohibited from 1st April 2022. The premise is the plant must have rail wheels and be approved as rail-mountable machines. No doubt this will be an ongoing topic for months to come and we will do our best to keep you updated.

On-track Plant Operating Scheme (Investigation Panel)

Just a quick update from Network Rail regarding changes that have been made to the Plant Operating Scheme (POS) Investigation Panel members. Previously, any POS provider found in breach of the POS rules, or involved in a significant RRV incident, would have been investigated by the POS Panel. Outcomes from their findings could lead to the loss of the POS qualification via RISQS.

Investigations will still take place as before, but the aspect of change is in the team members. Network Rail will still primarily lead any investigation, but it has called upon the RPA to have a seat as an observer. The RPA welcomes this approach as it allows the RPA representative to see its members, which provide POS services, are investigated fairly.

A final note

Just before we close, the RPA would like to wish Malcolm Miles (Network Rail's Technical Head of Plant) a happy retirement and a sincere thank you for the support offered over the years. And likewise, the RPA would like to congratulate Malcolm's replacement, Olufemi Okeya (aka Femi). We have interacted with Femi for a number of years now and look forward to assisting him in his new position.

That is all for now. So, until next time, be safe everyone.



Darren Matthews, Acting-Chairman, RPA.