

# Rail Plant Association Update

RPA Acting-Chairperson Paul Helks reports on the current initiatives of the association for road/rail plant owners.

## David Simmons steps down

In April 2020, the incumbent RPA Chairperson, David Simmons, had to take a leave of absence from the position to undergo treatment for an ongoing medical condition. In February 2022, David informed the Board of Directors that, although the treatment had been as successful as he could have hoped, due to his ongoing recovery he feels that he would unfortunately not be able to make the same level of commitment required to continue in the RPA Chairperson's position.

On behalf of the entire RPA Membership, we would especially like to thank David for his outstanding contribution and commitment to the Association during his tenure as RPA Chair and we wish him our very best for a full and continued recovery. David will continue to serve the Association as an RPA Director on the Board of Directors.



David Simmons, Former Chairman, RPA.

In August 2020, Darren Matthews, of ReadyPower Rail Services, very kindly stepped into the role of Acting-Chairperson of the RPA Management Committee to cover for David Simmons in the interim period whilst David underwent his treatment. Darren fulfilled the Acting-Chairperson's role with vigour and commitment to ensure that the function of the Management Committee continued pretty much seamlessly throughout the various Covid-19 lockdowns as the industry had to adjust very quickly to the new method of working and procedures. At the April RPA Management Committee meeting, Darren stepped down as Acting-Chairperson, but continues to serve on the Management Committee. Once again on behalf of the RPA Membership and Management Committee, we express our appreciation and gratitude to Darren for stepping up to the plate so ably during such a challenging period time for the Association - so a huge thank you again, Darren!

## Signing on as

### Acting-Chairperson - Paul Helks

Hello to all readers, it is with great pleasure that Darren and the Management Committee, and my boss Andy Webb, trust me to take on the role of Acting-Chairperson. As Darren mentioned in the article in *Rail Infrastructure* Issue No: 147, I have had the honour of being on the Management Committee for a good number of years. There is no question that, following in the footsteps of the early pioneers of the RPA like Andy Webb, David Simmons, and through to



Collective Mark

others in recent times, will be big boots to fill. I will endeavour not to disappoint.

There are many work streams and groups attended by the Management Committee. Lots of hours and dedicated input. Working for the members and for the overall betterment of the industry.

Along with my learned colleagues, we will continue this valuable work. But I would like to challenge the RPA membership, and that of the wider reaching community, to think about the new era that approaches us all with Great British Railways. And the further demands it will place firmly upon the plant supply chain.

Sustainability, efficiencies, carbon reduction and a safer environment for our colleagues to name but a few. Ask yourselves the question of how can we work more collaboratively to address these challenging requirements?

There are certainly areas that we still work in isolation from one another and region to region, following dated practice and putting up with historic behaviours.

There are many working groups and steering committees within our industry that strive for similar goals. And yet I believe a more joined up approach should and must deliver prompt, measurable and tangible outputs.

Thought point: Remove barriers that have long hindered industry transformation. There is still much more to do in this area and we will do that faster and more effectively when we work together across the industry.

With the ever-changing situations in the world, post-pandemic recovery and industry pressure, time is of the essence to recalibrate our thoughts on our capabilities. There is a wealth of knowledge and experience within rail plant and the contractor community.

To fully harness this potential would benefit all. The Management Committee meet regularly and would welcome ideas input and, of course, guests are always welcome.

## RPA consultant position

Although the RPA Management Committee has continued its work on the compliance and technical initiatives, during the pandemic the Association's lobbying activity had been limited. This was down to two factors, firstly Network Rail's devolution of the railway into the different Routes and Regions, which meant that instead of having a central point of contact with the Director of IP Track, Steve Featherstone and his team, there is now a different contact within each of the 13 Routes, all managing their infrastructure work bank projects and maintenance in different ways.

Secondly, as a result of devolution, the RPA Leadership Alliance (which was a tripartite forum established to enable Network Rail, Tier 1 Contractors and the RPA to discuss the key topics and pertinent issues of the day in a collaborative manner) was disbanded. The RPA

Leadership Alliance had three 'Chair's' each representing their industry sector - David Simmons was the RPA's representative Chairman, with Steve Featherstone representing Network Rail and Richard Ladd of Amey representing the Tier 1 Contractors.

The devolution of the railway into the Routes/Regions and with the establishment of the new Great British Railways organisation (which will eventually incorporate and replace Network Rail) on the horizon, there is an opportunity for the Association to place itself in an even stronger position by establishing a new network of key contacts within Great British Railways.

We feel that now is the ideal time to look at establishing a new RPA consultant role to ensure the Association is in the best possible position going forward to influence the key industry decisions, which will impact the RPA membership and ensure that the RPA's voice is heard as a collective rather than individual member companies. Please contact Adam Godwin on: [rpa@cpa.uk.net](mailto:rpa@cpa.uk.net) for further information on this initiative.

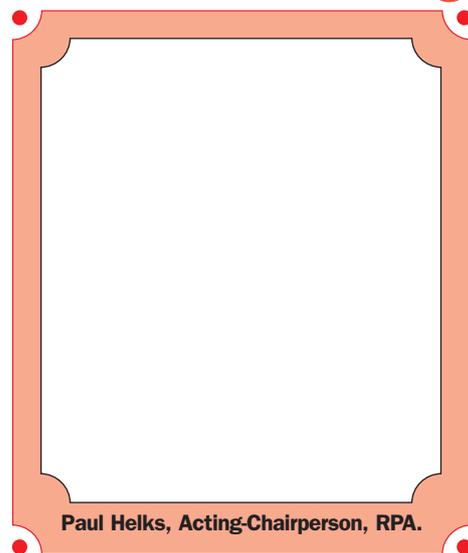
## Points to share

Supply chain sustainability school. The online school is completely FREE and allows you to access training in a wealth of different areas including; sustainability, digital, lean construction, management, off-site, people and procurement. It can be found at: <https://www.supplychainschool.co.uk/>

Fatigue Risk Management NR/L2/OHS/003 - compliance date 29/10/22. To assist with your preparedness for the compliance date, follow the link below on Network Rail Safety Central: <https://safety.networkrail.co.uk/fatigue-improvement-programme/>

## Communication

Thank you for reading our article, and please have a think on the topics outlined. The Management Committee is always open to discussion for members and non-members. Please have a look at the RPA website pages, which can be found on the CPA website as normal: <https://www.cpa.uk.net/special-interest-groups/rail-plant-association-rpa>  
Stay well, stay safe.



Paul Helks, Acting-Chairperson, RPA.