

# Rail Plant Association Update

RPA Management Committee Chairman Paul Helks reports on the current initiatives of the association.

We start this issue's report with an opening note from Jordan Skey, Technical Head of Plant, Network Rail, with clarification on Network Rail's position in regards to the adoption of RIS-1530-PLT Issue 7.

'The adoption of relevant Rail Industry Standards is a requirement of Network Rail's operating licence (unless through industry consultation, where suitable alternative measures are adopted). As such, this means that RIS-1530-PLT Issue 7 comes into force at the point at which its compliance date is mandated on the RSSB's website (however, I do not believe that this was recognised at the point of publishing). This is also reflected in Network Rail's standards, most notably NR/L2/RMVP/0200/P300, where the issue number of RIS-1530-PLT is not specified and therefore signifies the use of the most up to date standard.

'As it was not the intention to mandate Issue 7 as soon as it was released, without giving the industry time to make the necessary adjustments (not withstanding that this is unfortunately the case), I will approve variations to the standard for a period of six months from the compliance date listed on the RSSB's website for 'first machine of a class' and 12 months for 'successive machines of the same class' (or until 1st March 2024 and 30th August 2024 respectively) without the need for significant justification. There is, however, one exception to this where, if required, a specific



Collective Mark

safety and engineering justification to clause 5.9.1.4 must be submitted to show that the risks associated with this non-compliance are demonstrably tolerable and ALARP. I believe that in almost all cases compliance to this clause should be sought as it is fundamental to preventing recurrence of the incident at Cholmondeston, and specified in RAIB report 08/2019. For reference, the clause in the standard reads as follows: '5.9.1.4 Where it is intended that reverse movements in travelling mode are to be controlled by ground staff, the maximum speed of the machine shall be limited by engineering means to 3mph (5km/h).' This is only applicable for machines without a clear view in reverse, not utilising either an additional operating position or suitable CCTV system as described in the standard.

'I am sending this to our nominated contacts at the registered Plant Acceptance Bodies and the Rail Plant Association (RPA). However, please circulate this as appropriate.'

## One Big Circle

One Big Circle was invited to the recent RPA

Management Committee meeting. Based at Bristol Temple Meads Station, One Big Circle is a dynamic and diverse team of over 35 working at the forefront of intelligent video, AI and machine learning within the rail industry. Utilising high speed footage from train-mounted video cameras, One Big Circle develops software and hardware systems with a broad range of expertise and technical skills. The team works to develop end-to-end systems to meet rail challenges and technological demands, finding optimal methods to deliver effective solutions. More can be found at: [www.onebigcircle.co.uk](http://www.onebigcircle.co.uk)

From a planning perspective, this is well worth a look. Complementing site visits, POS applications and visuals to staff prior to site arrival to mention just a few great features. As the Management Committee for the RPA, we were very impressed.

## COSS enhancement programme

We also had the pleasure to host Steve Diksa from Bridgeway Consulting who delivered a presentation on the COSS enhancement programme. The Margam 2020 recommendations required Network Rail to enhance the competence and training for safety leadership and non-technical skills. The approach agreed was to enhance COSS recertification and initial training in stages.

The additional proposal was to create a modular COSS competence - which is supported.

## Steve Featherstone update

In many issues of *Rail Infrastructure*, we have read reports about the manufacture and operation of the Network Rail high output fleet of track renewal and ballast cleaning machines. As the latter part of Control Period 6 (CP6) and the whole of CP7 are focusing far more on tactical solutions, the need for the high output systems has reduced significantly and the team is being considerably downsized. I find this disappointing as the high output systems played a key role in maintaining the average asset age.

In response to the financial constraints set by the government, the average asset age of the track system is being allowed to deteriorate during CP7. You have to go back decades to find a similar strategy of managed decline on the British rail network. I am surprised that the ORR endorsed plans which allow the average asset age to decline over a five-year control period. Hopefully, there are plans in place to recover this during CP8 and CP9, rather than establish a new baseline at the deteriorated level.

The last year of a control period has traditionally been a bumper year for the supply chain with the so-called hockey stick spend profile. CP6 is proving to be very different as Network Rail is cutting back on significant volumes of work which is putting the supply chain into considerable distress. The supply chain has got used to managing with boom and bust cycles, but what we are seeing now is more akin to a famine. It is to be hoped that the supply chain remains intact ready for when we get to the new

funding that will come with CP7.

The ORR recently announced its final determination for Network Rail spending in CP7. The Network Rail regulatory settlement is a cash settlement with inflation risk sitting with Network Rail. Continued higher than normal inflation will eat into the actual volume of work which can be delivered with the cash funds in CP7. As asset managers try to make the best of the funds available, CP7 will likely see an increase in heavy maintenance, life extension and refurbishment rather than the full renewal of assets. A new generation of railway engineers are going to discover how to make do and mend, and as a plant community we will have to support them in that.

On an inflation-adjusted basis, funding in CP7 for maintenance and renewals will be slightly less than in CP6 which will ultimately mean less work for the supply chain, albeit the reduction in high output work will compensate to some extent.

My rule of thumb for plant workload volumes is one third maintenance, one third renewals and one third enhancements. Whilst the first two thirds for maintenance and renewals are there or thereabouts for CP7, we still have no news from the government on the enhancements pipeline, which typically makes up the final third of the plant volume of work. This will be critical to the success or otherwise of the supply chain during CP7. The cancellation of HS2 from Lichfield to Manchester will see more work on the classic network, but this is for CP8 and CP9. Unless enhancement volumes pick up quickly to more normal levels, it is likely that CP7 total

volumes of work for the supply chain will be around 80% of that seen in CP5 and CP6.

On behalf of all RPA members, a delegation, including myself, is scheduled to meet with the Department for Transport on 8th December to explain what life is like for the supply chain dealing with an uncertain forward order book, high inflation, high interest rates and cashflow challenges. We will stress that with around £1 billion of plant and around 5,000 employees, it is important that the rail plant industry has the confidence to invest in the next generation of plant and resources to operate and maintain them.



Steve Featherstone, RPA Consultant.



**Paul Helks, Management Committee  
Chairman, RPA.**

The proposal, written by the technical lead, was to first enhance the existing competence requirements and to do this in stages instead of the usual one-hit approach. The proposal went further to create

a modular COSS competence, a 'CORE competence' that every COSS would require, O19 safety critical communications, HB6 and HB7 safety leadership and non-technical skills. Specific competence elements would then be created for protection systems, possessions and track warning systems. This proposal was supported by the P4D Programme Board.

No objection to the proposed approach has been received. As a committee, we will assist in this development. Thanks to Steve and the team.

### **Slips, trips and falls roadshow**

There are still too many injuries in this category. Walking on ballast and the ever-changing under foot conditions continually presents the challenge to improve the safety performance in this area. The joint Network Rail and ISLG 'Slips, trips and falls' roadshow will be launched with an event at Square One in Manchester on 13th December. The aim of the roadshows is to promote an understanding of the actions to mitigate the

risk of slips, trips and falls. The goal is to hold a roadshow in every route over the course of a year, targeted at health and safety professionals and line managers. For more information, please contact the ISLG team.

### **Safety advice NRA23-12**

In Network Rail North West and Central Region, a road/rail Geismar 18-tonne lorry-based MEWP was found to have a stabiliser foot assembly that had become completely detached from the stabiliser leg. These are used in conjunction with the crane and can also be used to increase the reach of the machine's basket. Investigations are ongoing, but initial inspections have indicated that a combination of wear and corrosion have led to the single bolt which connects the foot assembly to the stabiliser leg, having failed.

As such, immediate action is required. All stabiliser legs and feet assemblies are to be thoroughly inspected by a competent person. Do not use the stabiliser legs on the vehicles until the inspection has been completed and, if required, any remedial work has been carried out.