

Rail Plant Association Update

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

The sixth Rail Plant Association (RPA) Leadership Meeting was held on 9th July at the Valley Suite, Severn Valley Railway, Kidderminster. To open the proceedings, Jonathan Dunster, Managing Director, Severn Valley Railway, welcomed everyone to the railway and described the opportunities, which the railway provides for testing, training and demonstrations of railway plant.

Steve Featherstone followed on with the 'What's on my mind session?' Topics covered included:

- A recent tragic fatality of a rail colleague on his drive home.
- Runaway incident.
- Safety trends.
- Supply and demand balance for plant.
- Change of government.
- Bring back blockades.
- Short notice cancellations.
- Fatigue management impact on rosters.
- Modernising maintenance impact on rosters.
- Consideration of travelling distances when awarding contracts.
- Christmas
- Network Rail owning and operating plant.
- Incentives and challenges to invest and innovate.



■ Rail Live review.

Jordan Skey, Technical Head of Plant, Network Rail, took everyone through the latest plant safety bulletins and the latest standards' updates.

Doina Diac, Lead for Plant Product Acceptance, Network Rail, explained the latest changes to the product acceptance process along with some good practices for companies going through the process.

Tim Walden, Capital Delivery Director for the Wales and Western Region, Network Rail, provided an update on the key issues facing the Region along with a forward pipeline of the total volumes of work through Control Period 7.

Tom Male, Head of Capital Portfolio Delivery, Network Rail, presented the latest, week-by-week, work volumes at a national level over the next 18 months including the significant peaks at Christmas 2024 and Christmas 2025.

Phil Bennett, Commercial Director, Network Rail, provided a response to the RPA's concerns on Christmas terms and conditions and on short notice cancellations. I was impressed by the progress made on both of these issues.

Martyn Cusack, Senior Supply Chain Manager at HS2 (High Speed Two) Ltd, provided the annual update from HS2 on the progress of the programme and the likely timescales on when the plant requirements will need rail-mounted equipment. By registering on the Competefor.com website you will be able to view the up-and-coming opportunities.

We covered a lot of ground during the day which equips the RPA members with better information to inform their own business plans. The next RPA leadership event will be on 5th November. If you are the director of a rail plant company, which is an RPA member, then please contact Adam Godwin, if you wish to be invited, by email on: rpa@cpa.uk.net

Vehicle numbering system

Up to and including RIS-1530-PLT Issue 6, the UK special number in the European Vehicle Numbering (EVN) system was 99709. However, in Issue 7 and 7.1, this was changed to zz709 and the zz indicates the on-track

Steve Featherstone update

One of the most important responsibilities when managing a railway is managing risks. However, risks need to be managed at a holistic level rather than at an individual level, otherwise what is achieved is risk displacement rather than risk management.

The siloed nature of the railway often means that risks managed by one team create risks for other teams, which are sometimes more safety critical than the original risk which has been mitigated. We are seeing that at the moment with the application of the fatigue management standards by Network Rail and its supply chain. The fatigue management standards are not new but the way that they are being applied appears to have changed.

Fatigue is one of the key risks in the railway. The Hidden report after the Clapham Junction rail crash, in 1988, highlighted what can happen when people work when they are too tired. The Hidden working time limits were introduced and these have progressively been updated as the science of fatigue management has become better understood. There are now fatigue management models identifying risk scores for individuals so that their planned working rosters can be fine-tuned to keep everyone as safe as possible from a fatigue management perspective. And that is all good.

However, there are unintended consequences of managing in such a fine-tuned way. For maintenance teams, it means that sometimes only three shifts per week can be rostered when one of these is a nightshift. This is resulting in an increasing maintenance backlog.

For renewals teams, it often means delivery plans are built around working three

eight-hour shifts rather than two 12-hour shifts. This is great for fatigue management, and allows better shift handovers, but it requires 50% more resources. In an industry with a scarcity of resources, this means that some jobs are being deferred in order to fulfil the resource requirements on other jobs. This is resulting in the average age of railway assets increasing which, in turn, reduces their reliability and increases the chances of in-service failures, disrupting the service provided to passengers and freight customers.

The unintended consequences of changing the industry approach to fatigue management is that the maintenance backlog is increasing and the average age of railway assets is increasing. The safety risks have been displaced from individual fatigue to the whole railway asset. Compounding the fatigue management impact on rosters is the impact of the modernising maintenance programme. The reduction in headcount means that the cover for rosters, which used to be there, is no longer there.

Further compounding the fatigue management impact is the lack of consideration of resource locations when contracts are awarded, sometimes meaning that resources have to travel around two hours to get to site. This travelling time has to be considered in the fatigue risk assessments even though it was not considered when the contracts were awarded.

Understanding and making risk trade-offs is not easy when you control all of the levers and it is even more challenging when the industry works in siloes.

From a rail plant perspective, it all adds up to a significant percentage of shifts being cancelled at short notice. Towards the end of

Control Period 6 (CP6), as money was tight, we saw lots of shifts cancelled at short notice. As we moved into CP7, and new funding became available, I had expected the number of short notice cancellations to reduce. Sadly, there is no evidence yet that this is the case. Short notice cancellations in themselves introduce safety and efficiency risks to the supply chain and so the risk transference continues.

The RPA met with Network Rail to ask them to step back and to review both the intended and the unintended consequences of the fatigue management standard, the modernising maintenance programme and the continued high level of short notice cancellations. We will continue to provide input and evidence to Network Rail on behalf of RPA members.



Steve Featherstone, RPA Consultant.

plant does not have running mode and so cannot work or travel outside a possession. Please see below the relevant part of RIS-1530-PLT Issue 7.1, albeit it does not describe the zz part. Please contact the RPA if you need any further information.

GB numbering system – RRV											
Z	Z	7	0	9	a	b	c	d	e	f	X
Special vehicle	Registered in UK	Special						Sequence number			
a – b = 91, 92, 93 Type 9A machine a – b = 94, 95, 96 Type 9B machine a – b = 97, 98, 99 Type 9C machine					Check digit the digits in even positions of number are taken at their own decimal value the digits in odd positions of number are multiplied by two add together all the digits formed by the two processes retain the units digit of this sum the complement required to bring the unit digit to 10 is the check digit NB if unit digit is 0 the check digit is 0						
c = 0 360° excavator – wheeled c = 1 360° excavator – tracked c = 2 MEWPs / access boom c = 3 dumper c = 4 bulldozer c = 5 tractor / buggy c = 6 van / land rover c = 7 open back lorry c = 8 box lorry c = 9 miscellaneous											

RPA supports CIRAS campaign

The RPA is supporting the new campaign from CIRAS confidential safety hotline. Members, including A.P. Webb Plant Hire, Morgan Sindall, Quattro Plant and Readypower Rail Services, are among the companies sharing the message of ‘Make the right call and report

your safety concerns’ to staff. The campaign raises awareness of CIRAS alongside other reporting channels, and focuses on more and better listening. It encourages people to find someone who will listen when they have a safety concern to report. Resources to help promote the campaign and encourage reporting are available through <https://www.ciras.org.uk/rightcall>, along with new videos and other content. Read more about the campaign elsewhere in this issue.

And finally

It has been a great pleasure to have held the post of RPA chair. I have enjoyed working with you all. Therefore, it is with regret that I must inform you that as of 31st August, I will be stepping away from the role due to other commitments. And wish Andy Crago my full support as the next incoming chair the very best. The RPA and its members remain fully committed to delivering a first-class service to the railway infrastructure managers as always, and I have every confidence that the



sector will continually rise to the challenges that the future may hold.