

Rail Plant Association Update

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

The 22nd RPA AGM, held on 1st March, saw a great turn out and thanks to all who travelled from far and wide. During the meeting, a proposal was made to extend the number of RPA Management Committee members from 10 to 12 to draw on an even broader range of industry experience that will benefit the membership and further the objectives of the association. The members present agreed the proposal with no objections being registered. Therefore, we welcome the following individuals who are joining the Committee for 2023:

- Andy Back, Avondale Environmental Services.
- Paul Price, Story Plant.
- Steve Bodman, Total Rail Solutions.
- They join previous committee members:
- Paul Helks, A.P. Webb Plant Hire.
- Jim Nabarro, Balfour Beatty Rail.
- Ian Morgan, McCulloch Rail.
- Graham Pirson, Quattro Plant.
- Darren Matthews, Readypower Rail Services.
- Liam Ledger, SPL Powerlines UK.
- Richard Romaszko, TXM Plant.
- Andrew Shipley, VolkerRail Plant.
- David Richardson, XYZ Rail.

Steve Wadham long service

May I take this opportunity on behalf of all past and present members of RPA, and the wider rail community, to thank Steve Wadham for his long service and many contributions over the years. Steve has stood down as an RPA committee member this year. He has been a key and influential member of many working groups, and championed and

Steve Featherstone update

Just before Christmas, the government published its High Level Outputs Statement (HLOS) and its Statement of Funds Available (SOFA) to Network Rail for Control Period 7 (CP7) in England and Wales, which starts in April 2024. The HLOS was similar to that for previous control periods and, in very high level summary, was to maintain and operate a safe and reliable railway. The SOFA was initially far more concerning.

In round terms, the SOFA is £44 billion for CP7 compared to £48 billion for CP6. The SOFA numbers are in cash terms and have not been inflation adjusted. Adjusted for inflation, the efficiency challenge between CP6 and CP7 initially appeared more like 25%. However, in the detail and notes, it was clarified that the CP6 SOFA contained around £10 billion of enhancements funding and in CP7 enhancements funding is excluded. Taking this into account, the real terms SOFA for CP7 shows a slight increase compared to CP6 for operations, maintenance and renewal, which is good news for the supply chain.

There is one more funding stream to look at - enhancements. In the past, this has often been beneficial to the overall asset condition as many old assets were renewed under the banner of enhancements to increase line speed, electrify the railway, extend platform lengths, etc. Enhancements schemes are largely commissioned and funded by the Department for Transport (DfT). The DfT



Collective Mark

promoted many of the best practice platforms that we work with today. Many thanks for all your time and efforts, Steve.

Guest speakers

At the AGM we were joined by a number of industry speakers. Tom Male, Network Rail, spoke about Christmas 2022 and Easter 2023 preparations. Robin Lapish provided an overview of HS2 and its opportunities, with Leigh Goble looking at Network Rail PPS.

Publications review

The RPA Management Committee Publications Review Group has recently completed its latest appraisal of the Rail Industry Standards. A website link to the Standards Review documents has been circulated to RPA members.

Standards, regulations and legislation, as detailed in the RPA Standards and Legislation Register, are checked for any new issues, withdrawals, derogations, etc. Rail Group Standards can be found electronically at www.rssb.co.uk and Business Standards at www.ihs.co.uk. The new or changed standards are reviewed to determine their effect on RPA members. The summary notes are used for this purpose before reading the complete standard to see if applicable to members.

manages an extensive portfolio of enhancements including Network Rail, National Highways, HS2, East West Rail, TRU, etc. and is expected to stay within an overall funding envelope set by the Treasury. It has recently been reported that HS2 is overspending against its budget and looking at options to manage this themselves. In the event that additional funding is required from DfT for HS2 then this will have to be found from across the wider portfolio. This could, therefore, mean that the enhancements funding for Network Rail is lower than has been typical in other control periods. Even if enhancements funding is available, with passenger numbers at reduced levels post Covid-19, it could still be challenging to justify some enhancement schemes until passenger numbers return to pre-Covid levels.

In summary, CP7 should see maintenance, works delivery and renewals volumes at similar levels to those seen in CP6 but enhancement volumes could be significantly below the normally expected levels. This may have a significant impact on the supply chain which relies on this work.

There are perhaps some brighter skies on the horizon as the HS2 works move onto the significant enabling works on Network Rail's infrastructure, such as at Crewe, and once the rails are in place on HS2 then it will need far more support using railway plant rather than the current civils plant. The national push for carbon neutrality by



Paul Helks, Management Committee Chairman, RPA.

Network Updates

■ A warm welcome to Jordan Skey, who has recently been appointed as Technical Head, Network Rail, replacing Olufemi Okeya.

■ Cap Gemini Survey on legacy Product Acceptance - a report on its scope showed that the Rail Vehicle Asset Register (RVAR) needs updating and it has requested companies keep their sections up-to-date. The new contact of pov@networkrail.co.uk should be used for notifying machine changes.

■ The POS Representative Competency will be developed now the ALO coordinator competency is completed.

2050 will no doubt involve significant volumes of electrification of the railway at some point but this does not look imminent.

So, overall, the outlook for the supply chain looks like a busy final year closing out CP6 followed by a number of quiet years as enhancements funding is potentially reduced in CP7. Towards the end of CP7, and into the beginning of CP8, enhancements funding could pick up. For many years, the supply chain has challenged its clients to reduce the boom and bust cycle of renewals and enhancements. It feels like we are heading into another boom and bust cycle during CP7.



Steve Featherstone, RPA Consultant.