



## **Unite Submission to the Office of Rail Regulation - Freight Sites Study**

### **1 Introduction**

- 1.1. Unite is the UK's largest trade union with over 1.5 million members across the private and public sectors. The union's members work in a range of industries including manufacturing, financial services, print, media, construction, transport, local government, food, agriculture, education, health, not for profit. Of particular relevance to this submission, Unite has membership in train manufacturing, supply chain companies, train operating companies, maintenance depots, repair workshops and infrastructure companies.
- 1.2. Unite is in the fairly unique position to offer an employees' view on the industry, an holistic synopsis of the transport industry as a whole and how it would be effected by changes in the level or volume of rail freight movements. Unite is a member of the Freight on Rail campaign group which strives for increased utilisation of rail to transport goods, but at the same time works on behalf of the road haulage industry to improve the working conditions. Unite's membership also includes dock workers and those who maintain and operate Britain's inland waterways.
- 1.3. As a member of TUSDAC (Trade Union Sustainable Development Advisory Committee) which comprises of trade union representatives and Defra, the union is also striving to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Consequently Unite approaches the subject of freight logistics from a view which will maximise the utilisation of the most efficient transport options available while ensuring that the working conditions and employment of its members are preserved and, if possible, improved.

### **2 Executive Summery**

- 2.1. Unite believes that there should be an overarching strategic transport policy which encourages the movement of goods and people by what ever mode is the most environmentally friendly for that journey and that every effort should be made to provide the public and business with a fully informed choice. Key to this policy is the need to ensure that there is the infrastructure in place to maximise the potential of each transport mode in coping with the

possible modal shift. Such a policy would encourage the most polluting options to reduce their footprint.

- 2.2. Unite believes that current planning policy does not support the growth of a strategic transport network of any kind as it places too much power with the local communities, preventing the placement of nationally important infrastructure. This has been clearly illustrated by the blocking of two major train freight terminals in the London area due to local opposition despite the environmental, economic and logistical advantages this would have brought locally and nationally.

### **3 The need for Strategic Rail Infrastructure improvements**

- 3.1. Unite does not own or run any sites within the UK but is very interested in the future of these sites from a pure employment and economic perspective. The rail freight industry will inevitably identify a series of locations which it considers key to the development of its businesses.
- 3.2. Unite on the other hand suggests that one key focus should be the provision and development of rail freight terminals at ports, be they on the coast or inland. In providing a transfer hub for freight to road, ship or barge they are integral for the development of an intergrated, environmentally friendly freight transfer network.
- 3.3. Eddington's conclusions on the need to reduce congestion on inter-urban corridors and key international ports are still as relevant today and in the foreseeable future. The importance of rail freight's role in reducing long distance road congestion is recognised<sup>1</sup>. In fact, the economic recession makes the case even stronger for targeted interventions to stimulate the green economy.
- 3.4. Although major rail freight hubs provide a focus for the vast majority of rail freight demands, the provision of smaller, more local facilities are equally important. As a result of the Beeching cuts a number of what would have been viable freight routes are no longer available. Unite hopes that the outcome of this study does not lead to a similar cull of future viable hub locations whose potential may not be obviously apparent in the short term.
- 3.5. Once the land has been freed up for development it is almost impossible to claw that land back, robbing future generations of a way to reduce road congestion and hence lower the areas environmental footprint, while increasing its economic value of the area as a centre for local commerce. Consequently the location of rail freight needs, are dependent upon commercial interests outside of the transport industry, such as the construction and servicing of new shopping centres or industrial units. Therefore what may currently be disused can swiftly become situated in the right places to meet market requirements. It follows that sites should be protected against other developments over a long period.

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<sup>1</sup> An average freight train can remove 50 long distance HGVs journeys from our roads - Network Rail 2010

#### 4 **Rail freight growth potential is being stifled by “nimbyist” planning barriers**

- 4.1. Rail freight usage is generally on the increase: 60% growth since 1994/5 and a projected growth<sup>2</sup> of the entire market share against road haulage by 8% by 2030. From an environmental perspective, this is a very positive step forward. Logistically, however, this growth rate could be difficult to maintain given the UK railways' decline in track length since the turn of the century and increasing demands from passenger traffic.
- 4.2. Although the volume of freight moved in 2009/10 fell by 7.6% from 2008-09, due to the economic downturn, this still represented 19.06<sup>3</sup> billion net tonne kilometres of freight which did not have to travel long distances via the road network saving 315 thousand tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub><sup>4</sup>.
- 4.3. As the coalition policy stands, however, there is conflict between the localism agenda and the desire for economic growth which need to be addressed in the Localism Bill and any other future planning legislation changes. For a rail network or any logistical or passenger transport system to work, it requires an overall strategic plan, often involving alterations and changes to the use of land along the whole route. If proposals to involve locals in all planning decisions to the degree indicated, it would very quickly make impossible or at the very least improbable any strategic involvement, due to the high probability of “nimbyest” objections.

#### 5 **Specific examples**

- 5.1. The Kent International Gateway (KIG), a 16-acre rail and road freight terminal and 3.9 million ft<sup>2</sup> of warehousing, is an example of a failure of epic proportions. The proposed development on a 277-acre plot of land, east of Maidstone next to junction 8 of the M20 was heavily opposed by local residents in the nearby village of Bearsted who objected to the potential increase in lorry traffic in the local area despite the fact that it would have taken a very large volume of freight off the roads nationally. Needless to say Maidstone Borough Council turned down the plans and on 5 August, Communities Secretary Eric Pickles made the final decision, dismissing the appeal and refusing planning permission. KIG would have provided around 3,500 new permanent jobs in the private sector, on top of those created during the construction phases, at a time when government austerity measures mean that job creation initiatives such as this should be highly prized.
- 5.2. Another example was the planning application by Argent for the London International Freight Exchange (LIFE) on land north of Colnbrook bypass, next door to Heathrow Airport, was refused by this Council and that this refusal was upheld by the Secretary of State following a public inquiry. Again

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<sup>2</sup> The Institute of Mechanical Engineers project that growth in the rail freight industry indicates that there will be 60% increase in volume being carried, and an increase in tonne kilometres of 114%, by 2030.

<sup>3</sup> Taken from the ORR National Trends yearbook

<sup>4</sup> Based on the difference between the calculated emission levels for articulated 40 tonne lorries and rail freight figures gathered from TNT and the ORR respectively.

the principle reason for the rejection was the increased volume of lorries in the area which is already heavily congested due to the presence of the airport.

- 5.3. The land which was to be used for LIFE has now been bought by Goodmans who have been promoting a similar scheme, the Slough Intermodal Freight Exchange (SIFE) though the core strategy and site allocations development plan document. Due to the existence of the SIFE proposal another far more important application for a facility of twice the size was rejected by St Albans Council for the site at Radlett. Despite the inspector who held the public inquiry, favouring Radlett over SIFE, the appeal again did not succeed, only this time as the Secretary of State felt that SIFE would do significantly less than the harm to the Green Belt than that caused by the Radlett proposal due to their relative size.
- 5.4. These decisions have left a significant gap in the strategic rail freight infrastructure for the South East creating a situation where all of the current new infrastructure eggs are in the one basket. Had proposals for a third runway gone ahead at Heathrow, with a northern extension of the airports perimeter, their may have been scope for access to the airport air freight facilities making SIFE a truly intermodal exchange and removing a significant volume of road traffic from the roads in the area. None the less Goodmans claims that it is working with BAA on plans to improve road connectivity.
- 5.5. The provision of Airtrack and Crossrail and future connectivity direct to the High Speed Rail network could significantly reduce the levels of passenger road traffic in the area, which in turn, may, if constructed, provide the capacity to cope with increase lorry demand. Growth of rail hub facilities to serve London are currently absent however, and it is doubtful that SIFE on its own will be sufficient to meet these demands.
- 5.6. Where local involvement does work, however, it tends to work well. The Humber Ports upgrades are an example of partnership of public and private sector organisations, where Northern Way, a consortium of different authorities worked with Network Rail & Associated British Ports to bring about rail infrastructure improvements. The Hull docks branch upgrade increases capacity from 12 trains to 22 per day, (£15.5M), on the Hull docks branch and improvements in network provides resilience with the re-opening of the Brigg Line for freight services.

## 6 Environmental considerations

- 6.1. 40 tonne articulated lorries emit around 670g of CO<sub>2</sub> per km<sup>5</sup> moving up to 15 tonnes of freight on each journey (25 tonnes of the lorry weight is taken by the traction unit). At best, therefore, haulage by road causes the release of 44.7gCO<sub>2</sub> per tonne km compared to 28.1gCO<sub>2</sub> per tonne km<sup>6</sup> by rail. Whilst it is not possible to eliminate all road journeys, it is possible to reduce

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<sup>5</sup> Emissions per km detailed on the TNT website.

[http://group.tnt.com/Images/TNT\\_annual\\_report\\_2009\\_chapter14\\_tcm177-491425.pdf](http://group.tnt.com/Images/TNT_annual_report_2009_chapter14_tcm177-491425.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Taken from the ORR yearbook 2009/10

the demand for longer journeys by road. Such a position also increases load security as it eliminates the need for lorry drivers to be responsible for loads while they are meant to be resting or even sleeping. Consequently Unite believes that any measure which can increase the volume of freight by rail should be encouraged. Clearly this includes the need to construct hubs where freight can be consolidated onto a single train to a destination.

- 6.2. Unite believes that the Olympic Delivery Authority's aim to turn the 2012 event into the most environmentally friendly games was somewhat marred by the way in which the logistical requirements were handled. Each supplier to the park was asked to investigate if it would be practical to deliver their goods to the park by rail. Consequently each rail freight company was approached to see if they would be prepared lay on a train specifically to ship their product to the Olympic village. Given the quantities involved these loads would have amounted to, at most, one shipping container load a week, making the provision of a train for this purpose prohibitively expensive. If, however, there had been a logistical plan in place, all of these smaller loads could have been consolidated onto a single train, therefore reducing congestion, cost and emissions. To maximise this potential such a plan would require a number of regional rail hubs to be utilised.

## 7 **Load Security**

- 7.1. Eight out of every 1000 HGVs on the road are stolen every year and only one in every 1000 is recovered. These thefts often involve assaults on the drivers who are sleeping in their cabs due to the countries lack of suitable secure truck stops. The man in the street would normally feel that it is ridiculous to expect a lorry driver to be responsible for the security of their load while they are sleeping but that is the current state of affairs. Unite is campaigning for an increase in the number of secure overnight truck stops to improve this situation, but believes that a reduction in the need for drivers to stop overnight would help resolve this situation. If secure parking for lorries is not available the driver is left with little option but to park up on deserted industrial estates or on the side of the road. One of the principle hurdles is the increase in rateable value which would occur if site security is improved.
- 7.2. In February a lorry driver was gagged, bound, abducted and then abandoned by thieves who stole his load of Lego and beauty products. The man was sleeping in the cabin of his lorry, parked in Kettering, Northamptonshire. In June a gang of 12 from Merseyside were jailed for committing at least 28 attacks around the country, stealing over £1 million of goods. The judge felt that this was only the tip of the iceberg. Attacks on truck drivers took a new and unwelcome turn in September, when two drivers are alleged to have been gassed in their cabs at Sandbach Services on the M6. It seems that both drivers woke up choking and when they managed to get out they found that the side curtains on the trailers had been slashed but nothing appeared stolen. These are just a few of the numerous incidents that have occurred this year alone.
- 7.3. Utilising a hub and spoke system where the train copes with the bulk of the journey, increases load security, leaving the road legs reduced to a

minimum. Such a logistical solution requires there to be regional rail hubs able to cope with the transfer traffic.

## 8 **Conclusion**

- 8.1. The market for the movement of freight is predicted to increase with population and economic growth. Such expansion cannot be continuously destined for the roads of the UK, resulting in demand for an alternative. Rail Freight offers that alternative in a method which can be as fast if not faster than traditional road haulage, at a fraction of the environmental cost.
- 8.2. Unite believes there are clear environmental and economic values in providing British industry and commerce with the ability to improve their environmental footprint; improve the security of loads by providing the industry with a fast track method of approving rail hubs. Such a move would have the potential to improve the working lives of those in the road haulage industry, by reducing the need for overnight stops away from home and drivers exposure to criminal activities.

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