

## **RMT Briefing**

### **Network Rail Job Cuts**

#### Summary

- In the last twelve months Network Rail's decision to defer rail renewals work (ie laying new track and signals) has caused the loss of 1000 skilled jobs. The company have also now announced the loss of another 1500 skilled maintenance jobs to go by April 2010.
- RMT welcome high speed rail but the above jobs losses mean vital skills for the future are being permanently lost and the cost of High Speed will rise as a result.
- Although overall annual funding for Network Rail is not being cut, the Economic Rail Regulator, The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) and Network Rail (NWR) have agreed that Network Rail need to make 21% efficiency savings over the next five year financial control period 2009-2014. This is on top of 31% agreed for the previous five year period.
- NWR have determined that these efficiencies will in part be achieved by sacking at least 1500 directly employed frontline maintenance staff by April 2010. These are the staff responsible for inspecting and repairing the railways track, signals and overhead lines.
- Also as part of this process Network has deferred 28 percent of rail renewals (e.g. laying new track, installing new signals). Renewals work is carried out by contractors and again a significant number of rail jobs are under threat.
- The ORR is also the safety regulator and there is scepticism, to say the least, that the organisation who in part determined the cuts will take an objective view on whether the proposals are safe.
- A confidential RMT helpline has been inundated with hundreds of concerns raised by Network Rail members. The reports received make the union fear that the cuts will lead to another rail tragedy.

#### **Green Jobs lost**

Rail transport is green transport and rail jobs are green jobs as such our railways should be a powerhouse for a green stimulus to the economy to help beat the recession. The government subsidises Network Rail to the tune of £5 billion pound a year and by not acting against Network Rail's cull of jobs the government is in effect subsidising redundancy.

It is disjointed to say the least that when the government is battling to save jobs by using taxpayers money to intervene in completely private sector industries such as the car industry, the rail industry, which is heavily dependent on tax payers' subsidy and based on a number of contractual relationships with Government, is being allowed to announce widespread jobs losses and is making strategic decisions which will result in further job losses. The question has to be asked why is the Government standing aside whilst Network Rail throws thousands on the dole, exacerbating the effect of the economic downturn.?

The Network rail cuts will also impact on jobs in other areas of the rail industry. Network Rail admits in their 2009-10 business plan that a “huge reduction in track renewals expenditure” will have a “major impact on the supply chain” with “20% - 30% less heavy materials” resulting in “supply chain redundancies”. I.e. the decision will and is having a knock on effect on the rail freight industry and in addition a whole range of other industries such as Quarrying and Steel.

### **Another rail tragedy**

In response to setting up a confidential email reporting service RMT has received hundreds of messages from our members at Network Rail raising serious safety concerns in respect of the current regime. We have raised these concerns specifically with the ORR and generally with Network Rail. To date the company have refused to hold formal national safety discussions with the union.

These concerns indicate that Network Rail is already scaling back maintenance and inspection functions in preparation for the jobs cuts. A summary of the issues reported to the confidential line are as follows,

- In their drive to cut costs, Network Rail has introduced a series of standards and asset management systems that are designed to reduce the frequency of vital, routine maintenance inspections, including track inspections.
- Reducing the frequency of inspecting Train Protection Warning Systems from once a quarter to once a year. With the concern that the same change in inspection frequencies is also happening with Automatic Warning Systems.
- Level crossing faults are reported and re-reported often taking between 3 and 6 months to fix.
- The “total asset management systems” being used by the company are not efficient, are not being used properly and that in some cases they are simply being manipulated by management to produce the results they require. For example many members have received mixed messages, on one hand being told that there is no necessity to record job times correctly, and not receiving full training, but then conversely being told that accurate recording is imperative.
- The times recorded for jobs are seldom a true reflection of the actual time taken to complete the task and in some instances norm times are the same throughout the country, not taking into account the impact that geographical differences has on equipment, not to mention different weather conditions.
- Particularly worrying is the fact that jobs seem to be simply disappearing off the system without having been carried out and now the amount of jobs to be done in some areas has reduced by up to 50% without any obvious reason as to why this should be the case. The obvious health and safety implications are of great concern, as are such examples as an increase of Red Zone working, reported faults still in existence 6 months after being reported due to a lack of staff available to attend to them and, in one area, a backlog of 2500 jobs in the last quarter accompanied by Network Rail’s refusal to allow any overtime to deal with the situation.;
- In one location, there is a backlog of around 2,500 jobs to be done in the Signals & Telecoms maintenance section. These gangs have been cut to 2 staff in the majority

of instances in that location, with management not prepared to fund the overtime to bring gang members up to three members.

- At a further location there are a series of signalling assets and/or equipment not listed on the asset management system. This has led to a situation where over 500 hours of work has been carried out over the year that is simply included in the analysis Network Rail produces. In these circumstances it is not possible to make an accurate assessment of staffing requirements.
- At a further location RMT members have reported that at least 114 hours of work is missing from their handheld equipment because equipment data is missing from the system.
- Overall there are huge concerns that if these total asset management systems figures, which are self-evidently not accurate, are used to determine redundancy numbers errors will be made.

### **RMT Policy**

- A moratorium on redundancies in the rail industry pending urgent industry wide and government discussions to put in plan a programme for our railways to provide a green stimulus to the economy to help fight the economic downturn
- National consultation with the union on the safety implications of the job cuts. No cuts that will endanger the safety of passengers and workers.
- No compulsory redundancies