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A BETTER DEAL FOR FLEET ENGINEERS

THE PRIVATISATION and break-up of the railways has brought massive change across the industry and in the Fleet Engineering sector.

Where once we had central bargaining for standard pay and conditions we now negotiate with hundreds of employers, all of whom want to get as much as they can out of their staff as possible. Thousands of jobs have been stripped out and demarcation lines eroded.

For train maintenance depots, the fragmentation has resulted in vastly differing pay rates and conditions.

But RMT – the only union that unites all rail workers – has managed to maintain the fight for better pay & conditions, good pensions and safety. Where we are well organised we have made strides but where the workers are less united they have fallen behind.

RMT’s strength, alongside its long history of organising railway workers, is that it is an industrial union, uniting people in all grades, in every depot: skilled fitters, electricians and technicians, cleaners, shunters and depot drivers, clerical and administrative staff, supervisors and team leaders.

RMT has an agenda that seeks to bring all workers in the Fleet Engineering sector under the umbrella of a well organised, strong and powerful union. In this pamphlet we set out the RMT’s agenda and programme for the Fleet Engineering sector that we can take forward with all of the rail companies.

It is not a wish list: our experience tells us that wishing will get us nowhere, and if we are to move forward with our agenda and win improvements for everyone in the sector, we must organise to achieve it.

The first step towards bringing this Charter to reality is to ensure that every depot worker becomes an RMT member with solid organisation in every workplace. Organised workplaces with the membership actively supporting the union’s agenda win better deals. So we need every Fleet Engineering worker in the RMT and supporting the union’s programme and campaigns.

Our unity is our strength, and together we can win a better deal for all

General Secretary, Autumn 2016
Section 1

WHAT WE'VE GOT

We should not underestimate the strides forward we have made in negotiating good deals for Fleet Engineering workers in many areas. Where RMT is strong and well organised with members actively supporting the union’s campaigns we have achieved some deals that are the envy of the industry.

For instance at LUL and Eurostar we have shop-floor grades on shift with salaries well in excess of £50k per year on a 35-hour week. These are two of our best organised RMT companies.

On the other hand in companies where the union is not so strong there are grades earning far less, for longer hours, hoping for overtime so they can make up their earnings.

RATES OF PAY

One of the tasks of the union is to make our members and all workers in the sector aspire to win the best rates in the sector. Ultimately we aim for national negotiations but in the meantime through strong organising and continual campaigning on pay we can raise the lower rates to a higher level and keep the higher rates moving forward.

This is a highly skilled and responsible sector and all workers of all grades in it deserve proper rewards for their skills and knowledge, for the unsocial hours and for the fact that they keep the system running around the clock throughout the year.

CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

Any examination of weekly working hours, annual leave and sick pay arrangements reveals a massive range of entitlements for train-maintenance workers.

With regard to the working week, it should be noted that train-maintenance staff are often working longer hours alongside colleagues in the same company operating on a 35-hour week and yet receive no greater reward. We have to keep moving forward to reduced hours and our demand that rosters and working hours
are on the basis of a 32-hour, 4-day week.

There are also issues with harmonisation of conditions within companies where a number of franchises have been consolidated. For example, one group of workers might receive a supplement for Sunday working, but other colleagues at the same company do not because Sunday is part of the working week.
Section 2

WHAT WE WANT

Pay claims affecting Fleet Engineering workers must reflect our demands for the sector. Some members may already benefit from some aspects of what we have set out below but our aim is to achieve best practice across the sector.

PAY AND SICK PAY

Clean, inclusive basic salaries, for day workers, shift workers and night workers, which members can depend on, not salaries that vary enormously with every minor roster change. We will seek to negotiate the best rates of pay across the industry for all, along with best-practice sick pay arrangements.

PENSIONS

We continue to demand the maintenance of defined benefit final salary schemes and all schemes should be of good value that will secure a decent living standard in retirement.

HOURS

No 'annualised hours', 'free' (i.e. unpaid), committed or banked hours. The ultimate aim is for a reduced working week of 32 hours, across 4 days, without loss of pay, with the establishment of a 35-hour week where it is yet to be achieved.

Where we achieve reductions in hours this has to result in quality time off from the place of work. That means additional rest days off, not just trimming the shift lengths.

TRAVEL FACILITIES

Reinstated for all staff, with a minimum of free travel between home and workplace, and working towards an industry-wide agreement. We have to have an industry-wide scheme for all railway workers.

ENHANCEMENTS

Christmas and Boxing Day, New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day to be voluntary
and to be paid at negotiated premium rates, as with Network Rail infrastructure staff.

There must be agreements in the pay package that cater for unsocial hours, overtime and other relevant enhancements.

**ANNUAL LEAVE**

Annual leave should not be less than 34 days, including bank holidays, based on five-day-week shift working, but should be no less than 30 days in any circumstances, regardless of shift patterns and the method used to calculate leave.

Our aim is to achieve best-practice leave entitlement for all, with agreed calculations of leave entitlement.

Additional long-service leave entitlement, such as two days’ leave for every five years of service.

**ROSTERING**

Minimum shift length of seven hours, and a maximum of ten hours. Any exception to the ten-hour maximum should only be to facilitate, by agreement, sociable and family-friendly rostering, to maximise grouping of rest days, to minimise fatigue and to provide a positive work-life balance.

A minimum 32-hour rest period between shifts working towards 48-hours between blocks of shifts.

Rest days to average three per week over the roster period where Sundays are part of the rostered working week, with a minimum of two rest days per week where Sundays are outside the working week.

Sunday working: where Sundays are rostered, no more than one Sunday in two to be worked. If outside the working week, then it must be voluntary, unless agreed otherwise.

**REST BREAKS**

Paid meal and rest breaks, away from the working environment and free from interference, with a minimum of 30 minutes in the first four-hour period, 45 minutes in the first six-hours, one hour in an eight-hour period, and one hour and 15 minutes in a ten-hour period.
REST-DAY WORKING AND OVERTIME
Any rest-day working and overtime should be by agreement for each company and each depot, controlled by company council agreement and monitored by local reps to ensure fair opportunity for all members and grades in the depot. All additional hours to be voluntary and at enhanced rates.

ON-CALL AND CALL-OUT AGREEMENTS
All on-call and call-out time must be voluntary and paid, with clearly defined compensatory time off before being required back at work. No individual to be on-call for more than one week in three.

Proposed arrangements to be referred to regional organisers to ensure that they meet RMT policy criteria.

PROMOTION, TRANSFER, RESETTLEMENT & REDUNDANCY AGREEMENTS
The PTR&R agreements we had under British Rail served to protect our members in times of reorganisation and change. In London Underground we have the Principles Document along similar lines. These can be threatened by fragmentation and the uncertainties of ‘design and build’ contracts.

Where PTR&R or similar principles are not in place we must secure similar agreements that restores the security and career-path opportunities afforded by PTR&R and prevents redundancies and the hire & fire culture.

CORE WORK AGREEMENTS
All staff to be directly employed. Any short-term exceptions to be discussed and agreed with RMT representatives. Depot establishments and overtime enhancements to be agreed.

All companies and depots need to have agreements that clearly set out the work bank of the directly employed staff and their right to carry out that work on the rolling stock, equipment and facilities.

The aim is to eliminate or contain as far as possible the use of sub-contract or agency labour in the regular work, or, for any modification or warranty work. The companies need to give clear written commitments that work will be retained
in-house and that there will not be encroachment on that work by giving it to other parties. RMT can provide a template document for negotiation with employers.

**DESIGN, BUILD, MAINTAIN**
Increasingly this is the mode through which new rolling stock is procured, often with new maintenance depots built for the fleet. The RMT campaigns for the fleet engineering facilities to be kept in-house and for the right of the existing staff to be transferred.

We will seek agreements with all of the companies that secures the jobs, pay and conditions of the existing staff and that ensures that all of the new facilities are covered by RMT agreements so that the new sites do not become cut-priced non-RMT outfits.

**GRADING ISSUES**
Clear and achievable grade and career progression for all grades.

Staff to get the appropriate ‘rate for the job’ when ‘acting up’ in skilled work for which they have been trained, but there must be clear demarcation even in flexibility and higher-grade duty agreements.

In each company we need agreements that enable staff progression through the grades based on their attainments of skills, knowledge and competencies. Those that are carrying-out the tasks and duties should be paid the full rate.

**DEPOT DRIVING, MANOEUVERING AND SHUNTING DUTIES**
Adequate training to nationally agreed standards.

Clear demarcation between roles during movements.

Agreed levels of pay that fully reflect the additional duties and responsibilities and the productivity achieved for the company.

**NEW TECHNOLOGY AGREEMENTS**
Management are constantly looking to bring in new and enhanced technology. The use of this equipment such as hand-held data devices and iPads should be
non-compulsory. Where introduced, the use of such technology should be fully negotiated.

Any productivity benefits of new technology use to be reflected in pay and benefits.

No 'big brother' use of data and monitoring systems to watch the workers.

All proposed agreements to be vetted by regional organisers and/or the RMT National Executive Committee.

REPRESENTATION LEVELS
Improved levels of representation. We need to ensure that all depots are effectively organised and represented by RMT and that all grades get a fair deal from our agreements.

Adequate facilities for reps and time off. Facilities to include office, computer, printer, email, telephone, fax, copier, adequate lockable filing cabinets and notice boards, and access to meeting rooms with privacy.

RMT to be afforded access to induction courses.

HEALTH & SAFETY
Monitoring and action on issues of specific importance to workers in a train maintenance environment, such as the asthma risk from diesel fumes and the consequent need for extraction fans and proper ventilation.

National conformity and standards for safe working practices and systems, including protecting shed workers from vehicle movements and isolation of current.

Safe walking routes to be clearly marked.

Proper consultation, in good time, with RMT safety reps.

COSHH assessments and information on hazardous substances as appropriate. End blame culture in maintenance depots and advertise CIRAS under which workers may report problems without fear of reprisal.
Post-incident investigations to be transparent and free of undue influence seeking to lessen employers’ responsibility. Full involvement of safety reps in the investigation process - Health & safety reps to seek formal agreement for joint accident investigations.

**NO LONE WORKING**
As a principle we do not accept working alone is a safe practice. We do not accept further extension of working alone and where it exists we will work for it to be eliminated.

**PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT**
Hazards to health and safety to be reduced as much as possible and where it is still required as a last resort. Personal Protective Equipment to be subject to agreement in all cases to ensure suitability for the job, adequate supply and reasonable choice. PPE to be supplied at zero cost, available at adequate levels and to be replaced or repaired immediately if damaged or lost.

Choice of overalls or bib & brace and two-piece to be supplied (and mixed where requested).

Choice of supplier of industrial footwear to allow for different needs.

**NO DILUTION OF MAINTENANCE EXAMS**
RMT demand the highest standards of maintenance, examination and repair of rolling stock in order to protect the travelling public, the railway system and job security.

Dilution of maintenance schedules to cut costs will be challenged. Mileage based maintenance should have an alternate “drop-dead” date for examination.

Any such signs should be reported to the appropriate depot Rep for action immediately.

**TANK EFFLUENT**
Exposure to raw sewage while de-tanking effluent from trains to be minimised or eliminated to avoid risk of illnesses.

Employers to assess risks from exposure to effluent, to provide proper instruction,
training and supervision and proper maintenance of appropriate equipment, and to monitor staff health. Suitable specific PPE to be provided.

Adequate personal cleaning facilities (see also Welfare Facilities below) and adequate first-aid equipment. Areas for storage of clean and contaminated equipment to be segregated and separate from eating facilities.

**RECOGNITION OF MEDICALLY-RESTRICTED POSITIONS**

Light duties to be recognised for the medically restricted, and relief from shift work for older workers towards the end of their careers when requested, and without loss of earnings or pension rights.

**WELFARE FACILITIES**

Subsidised staff canteens in larger workplaces.

Adequate heating and air-conditioning in all mess rooms, and blinds to prevent monitoring of staff during rest periods. Hot and cold drinks to be provided.

Adequate hot showers and drying areas, properly maintained and refurbished as agreed, and adequate paid time to use them.

Maintenance sheds should be adequately heated in the winter and cooled in the summer.

Locker rooms, with separate lockers or compartments for clean and dirty clothes. Car parking adequate for the total number of staff at any one time, proper standards of surfacing and marking, not for use of contractors, with adequate security measures in place.

**TRAINING**

Industry-wide standards for training to NVQ level or better for all grades and company agreements on training provision and job training to allow career progression for all grades.

An end to the undermining of proper training by substituting ‘competencies’ and ‘on the job training’.

Financial recognition for those who mentor or coach trainees and other staff.

Apprenticeship quotas to be agreed, with apprentices directly employed under
negotiated terms and conditions.

Paid college release for staff to pursue vocational and non-vocational courses for all grades.
Section 3

HOW WE MOVE OUR AGENDA FORWARD

Maximum RMT organisation is crucial for success. We need to recruit workers at every Fleet Engineering depot into the RMT and make sure that we have a structure of Industrial Relations and Health & Safety Representatives to take up the issues.

Your RMT branch, your Regional Organiser and Regional Office is there to support the Representatives on any issue.

Attend your branch meetings and encourage other members to do so too - details of times and venues can be found via the Contacts section on the RMT website www.rmt.org.uk.

RMT has a National Industrial Organising Conference of Engineering grades which sets the agenda for the sector and where delegates can meet and network with others from the sector.

RMT Fleet Engineering has a social media presence via Facebook. The page is called RMT Fleet Engineering.

Reps need to locally engage and connect with members in surgery days and other feedback and negotiate paid release days to do so.

Every potential member in every grade in every depot must be recruited.

Use this Charter and we can produce targeted recruitment material to aid recruitment at your depot.

Colleagues can join online at www.rmt.org.uk or via the RMT Freephone Helpline on 0800 376 3706

Working with Local Reps, National and Regional Officers can be available for depot visits to raise the profile of the RMT and assist in recruitment and organising,
The demands of the Charter should be featured in any every pay claim submitted for train-maintenance depot workers of every grade and on the agenda of meetings in Local or Functional Councils.

The issues within the Charter will be reported to and discussed at the RMT Engineering Conferences and in their committees to make sure we continue to address the relevant issues.

The union has also established a Train/Fleet Maintenance Committee to coordinate our organisation in the sector.

**WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP MAKE THE ASPIRATIONS IN THIS CHARTER A REALITY**

Join RMT and get involved: attend branch meetings, and attend your grades conference

Make sure all your workmates have joined RMT – ‘Unity is Strength’ is not just a slogan, it succeeds in the workplace.