



A container train is assembled at Teesport Picture: Peter Wakefield

Expert eye on freight

Railfuture freight committee visit to PD Ports at Teesport

Report by Lee Davies

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Teesport is Britain's third largest port by tonnage, behind Hull and Immingham. The site includes the whole of the River Tees estuary along with Hartlepool, further up the coast.

Most of the land was reclaimed some 100-150 years ago from marsh. The two ports handle 48million tonnes of cargo – 8% of the UK total, with 70% of it bulk materials and 12% unitised with 300,000 containers.

Railfuture members met at Middlesbrough station for the short walk to PD Ports' grand headquarters in old Middlesbrough.

Our guide for the day was sales and marketing manager Helen Lyall.

The port has petro-chemicals on the north bank, with Corus steel works the main industry on the south bank.

Export traffic from Tees Dock is potash from Boulby in the North York's Moors national park and steel direct from Lackenby by rail into a purpose built steel export terminal. This traffic is under threat from the current global recession.

Imports are for the new major customers who have set up within the dock, Asda Wal-Mart and Tesco, which have built their own warehouses within sight of the river. Tesco alone generates 50,000 containers per annum.

Renault cars are imported but this has dwindled due to the recession.

A surprise to Railfuture members was the story of Taylors of Harrogate who are ethical merchants of fine teas and rare coffees based in Yorkshire and well-known as Yorkshire Tea and Betty's Tea Rooms.

Teesport has succeeded in having all the imports for this company transferred from a southern port to Teesport, combining a facility within the dock for storage.

Tees Dock is rail-served with movements of potash being the most frequent, operated by Freightliner Heavy Haul. With container traffic on the increase,

Tees Dock has two trains a day, one to Workington with chemicals and the other as a working to Mossend, both of which are in the hands of DB Schenker.

A short-lived flow was to Manchester Trafford Park but the increasing use of 9ft 6in high-cube containers meant that rail was unable to offer a route across the Pennines.

But Teesport is keen to win as much container traffic as possible.

The Northern Gateway Container Terminal is the port's £300million new venture to create an expanded deep-sea terminal.

At present most of the port's containers are 45ft long by 9ft 6in high containers on short sea journeys to and from northern Europe.

The new facilities will allow larger ships to dock and so about one kilometre of the channel will have to be dredged with additional space for the ships to turn round.

The aim is to handle two million containers by 2020 with the vast majority being direct shipping to Teesport, rather than via terminals in the south of England.

Currently, about half the containers arriving at Felixstowe, Tilbury and Southampton go north by rail or, for the larger 9ft 6in boxes, mostly by road.

Teesport has a problem with gauge clearance on the rail routes from the East Coast main line which may hamper the use of rail.

But Helen said the company is hoping new developments by wagon builder W H Davis of a super-low 45 wagon, along with gauge enhancement on the Felixstowe and Southampton routes, will free up the specialist wagons needed to allow them to be forwarded to Teesport.

The intended switch of traffic from ports in the south of England will be offset by an overall increase in the amount of container traffic across the world.

Thanks for hosting our visit go to PD Ports' Helen Lyall.

More info:

www.thenortherngateway.co.uk/
www.whdavis.co.uk/downloads/SL45JPG1.JPG

Sevenside

By Nigel Bray

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■ ■ Diversionary

In its submission to the Department for Transport's CrossCountry franchise consultation in 2006, Railfuture Sevenside deplored the reluctance of Central Trains, which ran the Cardiff-Nottingham service until 2007, to use diversionary routes south of Worcester. We were therefore pleased to see that on 6 October 2009, CrossCountry Trains was diverting these services via Bristol Parkway to bypass signalling problems on the normal route via Chepstow.



■ ■ Kemble campaign

An article in the *Gloucester Citizen* on 8 October had an upbeat view of the prospects for Swindon-Kemble redoubling, which the Office of Rail Regulation has so far declined to fund. The feature, which suggested that South West Minister Jim Knight had given a strong hint to the Regional Development Agency that the scheme should proceed, repeated points made by Railfuture in press releases. Among these were the added importance of this route during Paddington-Swansea electrification work and the idea of financing the Kemble project with funds allocated to the proposed Westbury bypass, which was refused planning permission by the Government in July. The latter suggestion was first put forward by Jenny Raggett of the Campaign for Better Transport.

■ ■ Modal shift now a benefit of rail

The branch response to the Association of Train Operating Companies' report on rail reopenings, *Connecting Communities (Railwatch 121)* received an encouraging reply from Chris Austin of ATOC. He pointed out that the New Approach to Transport Appraisal formula used by the Department for Transport for assessing rail projects no longer treated modal shift from road transport as a disbenefit in terms of reduced fuel duty.

Referring to our concerns that the 15,000 population threshold might exclude consideration of potential stations at slightly smaller towns, Mr Austin said these were not ruled out but were less likely to generate the necessary levels of demand. The issue at Corsham and Wellington was how these towns would be served as there were currently few local trains on the route sections involved, although Great Western electrification might help in the longer term.

We therefore suggested that Wellington could be served by the Exeter-Paddington semi-fasts, which already call at a number of much smaller locations. This service could be expanded with IC125s displaced by electrification.

Multiple entries pay!

Why not have more than one entry in the Railfuture Lottery? David Barr has five – and he has won two prizes in the past three months!

Entries cost just £1 per month each and half of the money raised is returned in prizes, while the remainder goes into Railfuture funds to help our campaigns. With a top prize of £40 and currently six prizes per month, you can help us and help yourself by joining the Lottery. For more details write to Railfuture Lottery, 24 Chedworth Place, Tattingsstone, Suffolk, IP9 2ND, or email lottery@railfuture.org.uk.

Recent prize winners are: **September 2009:** Brenda Sampson, David Stocks, Elaine Holland, S R McCulley, Steve and Sue Boulding, Roger Goring. **October 2009:** Graham Smith, Brian Houghton, Michael Savage, Timothy Fearon, David Barr, D J Harby. **November 2009:** John Henderson, David Barr, Mark Edgell, Fred Golding, P J Rowland, Jane Vokins.