

Lorry menace is back

The European Union might allow monster lorries into Britain despite public opposition and the known dangers and damage they would bring.

The alarm was sounded after a flawed EU report into road lobby plans to force people to make way for huge juggernauts. They would be 50 per cent longer and a third heavier than existing heavy goods vehicles.

After years of allowing road hauliers to operate ever larger lorries despite public opposition, the British Government took the lead last year in rejecting "LHVs" with all-party support.

Now the EU is considering giving the go-ahead for LHVs (longer, heavier vehicles) to be used on cross-border traffic.

Philippa Edmunds, Freight on Rail campaigner, said the EU research is based on "flawed arguments and modelling which neither calculate the extent to which rail freight will be forced back on to the roads, nor reflects the rebound effects of reducing road freight costs".

It also uses "questionable maths". She added: "Road and rail modes can complement each other but trunk movements of large quantities of freight can be more safely



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and sustainably carried by rail, rather than ever larger lorries. Even existing sized lorries are still 40 times heavier, four times longer, three times more likely to be involved in road fatalities, twice as noisy, and thousands of times more damaging to the road surface than cars and produce at least three times more carbon dioxide, per tonne carried, than rail.

In fact, one train can remove 120 HGVs from the road. For other reliable information on road and rail freight: www.rfg.org.uk/hot/

Railfuture's freight committee is preparing a briefing pack for members to lobby their MEPs against the EU lorry plans. For more info, please email: gary_tinsey@hotmail.com or phone 01268 781820.

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Wales

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■ ■ Cross-border services

Railfuture Wales has welcomed the extension of Arriva Trains Wales services from Birmingham New Street to Birmingham International. However, First Great Western services from Abergavenny to London Paddington have been withdrawn. So too has the remaining Arriva CrossCountry service from Cardiff to Newcastle upon Tyne. This leaves Nottingham as the most north-easterly destination from South Wales served by through trains.

■ ■ Aberystwyth to London

Railfuture Wales has responded to consultation by ATW for through services from Aberystwyth to London Marylebone. Glyn Jones of Cambrian Lines wrote to ATW on our behalf welcoming the services which on summer Saturdays could also run as far as Pwelli. He pointed out that Railfuture has objected in the past to the withdrawal of through trains and would hope the new service is in addition to the planned hourly pattern on the Cambrian main line. Overall, the proposals are welcome, as long as high-quality rolling stock with refreshment facilities is provided. Gareth Marston of the Shrewsbury to Aberystwyth Rail Passenger Association has also written in support of the plan, as an "essential requirement". The withdrawal of the Cambrian Coast Express by British Rail in 1991 is still regretted. He added: "The poor punctuality and dreaded Wolverhampton turnarounds of Aberystwyth services in recent years, combined with upgrade disruption on the West Coast main line, have acted as a demand suppressant. Birmingham New Street is almost universally hated as a change point."

■ ■ Heart of Wales line

A crossing loop at Llandovery has been taken out of use following a failure of point-operating components. Crossing loops at Llandeilo and Knighton are already out of use. Railfuture Wales has expressed its concern at the delay in reinstating the loops and fears this could affect the introduction of additional services and the running of charter trains.

■ ■ Irish Sea ferry crossings

Railfuture Wales has expressed concern about the deteriorating facilities for foot passengers on Irish Sea ferry routes following the relocation of the station at Rosslare last year. It has identified the Stena line crossing from Holyhead to Dun Laoghaire as the most convenient for foot passengers with good train connections at each end.

■ ■ Steel traffic

The movement of slab from Margam to Llanwern ceased after 2 December and subsequently Corus announced the mothballing of the hot rolling mill at Llanwern. Small quantities of steel coil have moved from Margam to Llanwern for the unique steel galvanising Zodiac facility. The daily trains from South Wales to Round Oak, conveying steel products mainly for the motor industry, have reduced from four to one.

■ ■ Top of the class

Recent performance statistics for timekeeping placed ATW as best in the regional operator category with a figure of 93.5%. An improved performance on the Cambrian lines following timetable changes in December 2008 has contributed to this improvement.

■ ■ Newport resignalling

Concern has been expressed locally that the design of the new signalling may not be fully compatible with future electrification.

■ ■ Locomotive-hauled service

The locomotive-hauled service introduced in December by First Great Western between Cardiff and Taunton has been reliable and is welcomed by commuters returning from Bristol to South Wales in the evening.