

ONLINE

VTG RAIL UK NEWSLETTER No.42



VTG Rail UK leading the way with the trial of the UK's first digital freight wagon

VTG Rail UK and Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems (UK) have partnered to digitally power rail freight in the UK.

VTG Rail UK hit the headlines this autumn for leading the way with the network trial of the UK's FIRST digital freight wagon.

The VTG iWagon is set to revolutionise freight performance on rail by introducing new and significant safety capabilities, creating operational efficiencies and increasing wagon availability.

VTG Rail UK Managing Director, Colin Denman, announced the launch of the iWagon at the Rail Freight Group's annual conference in October. He said: "The

iWagon has been over a decade in development and we are delighted to be at the stage where we can commence several country wide launches of the UK's first digitalised freight wagon which will enable real-time data to ensure safer railways and better wagon utilisation.

"The launch of the iWagon is very exciting for VTG, Knorr-Bremse and the wider industry. For the first time, we can see how wagons perform on the network in real time and see where low adhesion issues are occurring. Locked axles, leading to wheel flats and derailment of

freight wagons have caused high profile incidents in recent years in the UK.

"Digitisation allows us to prevent wheelset damage and axle locks, in real time ensuring multiple parties are given information quickly allowing appropriate corrective action."

The first phase of the nine-wagon launch is focussing on ground-breaking technology developed in collaboration between VTG Rail UK and Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems (UK), the market leader of braking systems and other systems for rail vehicles.

(Continued on page 4)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

UK News

Wagons for hire

VTG Rail UK has launched a new wagon availability catalogue for both new and existing customers (P7).



Group News

New Energies

VTG is working with partners to design new solutions for moving alternative energy sources by rail (P13).



People

Bowing out!

After dedicating almost five decades of service to the industry, Paul Lugg has announced his retirement (P14).



VTG Rail UK shortlisted as finalist for Innovation of the Year at Rail Business Awards 2024 (Page 12)

Welcome

Colin Denman, Managing Director, VTG Rail UK.

As we begin a new year there are many things to reflect on and look forward to here at VTG Rail UK.

Firstly, I am very proud of our fantastic team who consistently go above and beyond to deliver industry leading innovations and excellent customer service. Looking after our people and providing a caring and supportive work environment in which they can excel and thrive has always been a priority for me. This is why I'm delighted that we have again been awarded the Great Place to Work certification in recognition of the importance that we place on our team and how we develop them to make VTG a fantastic employer, which also ultimately benefits our customers through the excellent service that we provide.

We were delighted to treat some of our team to a celebratory lunch to mark Paul Lugg's retirement. Paul, our Dry Lease Coordinator, has spent an astounding 47 years working in rail freight and his knowledge of our business and freight wagons is unparalleled. We will miss Paul and wish him all the best for a very long and happy retirement. I'm sure we will keep in touch.

I'd also like to congratulate our Head of Engineering Russ Campbell for his 20 years' service to VTG Rail UK. He's a great asset to us and hugely valuable to our customers too. Thank you, Russ, for everything that you do.

Our relationship with our customers is exceedingly important too and we are fortunate to be able to work with and collaborate with other major companies to deliver industry leading offerings. One example of this is our close working partnership with Knorr-Bremse on the iWagon project, which is featured in this magazine. The industry wide safety benefits that this project

will bring cannot be underestimated. We are getting some excellent and interesting data back which we will be sharing with the wider industry in the coming weeks.

Our long-standing partnership with Yellow Rail also continues to go from strength to strength and we were delighted that in September 2023, our two companies completed the overhaul and fitting of 1,000 bogies to our wagon fleet.

At a group level, our parent company VTG is making great strides in working with partners to design new rail tank wagons and containers for the transportation of new energies. This will aid our goals to lower CO2 emissions and provide the best logistics solutions for our customers' supply chains. It's a hugely exciting project with great potential.

I feel a buzz in the air for rail freight in 2024. There are some excellent projects happening across the industry and I see an excitement and vigour to shift as much freight transport as possible on to rail. This will not be without its challenges, of course, but I'm confident that through collaboration, innovations and sharing best practice where possible, 2024 will be a great year for rail freight.

Colin



Shining a spotlight on the amazing people who work at VTG Rail UK

VTG Rail UK is proud to announce we have maintained our Great Place To Work status for 2023-2024, thanks to our incredible working environment and culture.

The Great Place to Work recognition is awarded to workplaces where employees willingly go above and beyond in their work, feel supported by management and have demonstrated longevity in their careers at the company.

The 2023-2024 distinction is based on employee survey results obtained through Great Place to Work's online portal which certifies an organisation when their overall survey results are 65% or higher. Through the Certification process, valuable employee feedback was captured using the research-driven Trust Index™ survey and details about the programmes and practises that make the VTG Rail UK workplace unique.



Contact the VTG Rail UK team...

If you would like to discuss anything in this newsletter, the work of VTG Rail UK or to speak with a member of our team, please contact us at: salesuk@vtg.com | uk.vtg.com | 0121 421 9180

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VTG Rail UK and Yellow Rail partnership achieves bogie overhaul milestone

The VTG Rail UK and Yellow Rail partnership continues to go from strength to strength and in September 2023, the two parties achieved the amazing milestone of completing the overhaul and fitting of 1,000 bogies to our extensive wagon fleet.

The VTG-Yellow Rail working relationship commenced back in September 2018 and has grown significantly since then. To commemorate the 1,000 bogie milestone, dual-branded polos were created to recognise this achievement, acknowledging the incredible effort from the two parties.

The works are being carried out at Yellow Rail's dedicated 15,000 sq ft bogie overhaul centre at Pride Park, Derby. Russ Campbell, VTG Rail UK Head of Engineering said: "We quickly realised the benefits of working with an adaptable and experienced rail supplier and how it was worthwhile investing time to jointly produce and develop detailed overhaul specifications.

"Yellow Rail gave these the focus they required to 'productionise' the overhaul of bogies, to a point where volumes quickly increased across several very different bogie types, which meant that they outgrew their original workshop



Yellow Rail has a long-term supply arrangement to provide bogie overhaul services for VTG UK. The works are being carried out at their dedicated 15,000 sq ft bogie overhaul centre in Pride Park.

within months. Having started with the most challenging of bogies, moving to modern bogies was literally like 'shelling peas' for Yellow Rail!"

Mark Pumphrey, Asset Manager at VTG Rail UK added: "Yellow Rail has demonstrated their capability to provide cost-effective, safety critical services to VTG and has done so across a number of different and complex bogie types. Having broken through the 1,000-bogie

barrier in September, we fully expect to see bogie number 1,200 completed by early February.

"This is a great performance from Yellow Rail in conjunction with VTG's Service Delivery Team and our wagon maintainers who plan and carry out the exchanges respectively, thus ensuring that there's a steady flow of dirty units being returned to Derby or overhaul."

Tom Smith - Head of Production at Yellow Rail, whose role is to ensure all bogies are delivered on time, and always to the standard of quality expected from VTG and our customers, said: "The fleet planning team and Engineers at VTG deserve a lot of credit for the overall performance of the service, from removal to return to service - it's a great team effort, taking into account the scale and time critical complexities in delivering this contract."

Andy Kevins, Managing Director of Yellow Rail added: "We are very proud of reaching this milestone with Europe's No.1 wagon asset owner and for the opportunity VTG gave the company five years ago."



Members of the VTG Rail UK team show off their dual branded polo shirts in recognition of our partnership with Yellow Rail completing the overhaul and fitting of 1,000 bogies to the VTG fleet.

VTG Rail UK iWagon set to revolutionise rail freight safety, performance and availability

(Continued from page 1)

The features on the launch include axle-lock detection and Wheel Flat Prevention (WFP) technology – a patented system which monitors wheelset slide. In addition, full brake condition monitoring and data downloads allow a complete overview of the wagon's brake system and operation.

Each of the wagons has also been fitted with new wheelsets containing four axle end generators which provide power to the WFP system - these will power further digital innovations on future iWagon trials such as digital real-time maintenance, temperature monitoring, harmonics frequency monitoring and many more.

The first three VTG Rail JPA tank wagons to be fitted were modified at Tarmac's maintenance depot at Dunbar in Scotland and went into traffic in early October to begin four months of testing on Tarmac's flow from Dunbar and to Aberdeen, Leeds and Inverness.

The further wagons for launch fitment have been deployed on the Hanson and Mendip Rail fleets and initial data from the nine-wagon trial will be available in Q1 2024 ahead of the first 50 production ready wagons planned for Q2.

Sanjay Albert, Director of Engineering and Innovation at Knorr-Bremse, said: "Working in collaboration with VTG Rail UK is very exciting for us at Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems UK, especially as part of our mission to combine mechatronic expertise with our digital monitoring capability.

"Our patented Wheel Flat Prevention technology increases wheel life and reduces potential deep wheel flats which may result in track damage, or in worst cases, derailment. Our digital monitoring capability will enable valuable insight generation to support our customers to achieve efficient operations and maintenance as well as extent to wider industry benefits."



Colin Denman and Sanjay Albert take to the lectern to launch the iWagon at the RFG's annual conference held in October.

The iWagon technology provides further benefits such as brake condition monitoring which will allow VTG to analyse the performance of a wagon's brake system from their office in



(L-R): Nigel Day (Business Improvement Director VTG Rail UK), Marc Hurn (Sales & Marketing Director, VTG Rail UK), Colin Denman (Managing Director, VTG Rail UK), Sanjay Albert (Director of Engineering and Innovation, Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems UK), Chris Swan (Head of Rail UK and Europe, Tarmac), Joshua Jordan-Boddey (Business Manager, Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems UK) and John May (Digital Services Business Development Manager, Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems UK).

UK News



Each of the wagons has been fitted with new wheelsets containing four axle end generators which provide power to the Wheel Flat Prevention system.

“Better wagon reliability and availability, as well as not having to arrange the removal and placement of a wagon from the train when a wheelset exchange is required, will reduce disruption on the network.”

Chris Swan, Head of Rail UK & Europe at Tarmac, said: “We’re really proud to be part of the network launch of the first digital freight wagon in the UK. Tarmac is one of the biggest users of rail freight in the country and we are committed to using our extensive rail network to deliver essential materials to our customers in a sustainable way.

“The digitisation of the rail fleet sector will bring important performance and safety benefits, and so trials like this one with our partners in VTG and Knorr-Bremse are vital for the continued growth of rail freight.”

The Data Science teams are working on more data and investigations throughout January and further insights will be presented at future forums and workshops.

Watch the video!

[CLICK HERE](#) to view footage filmed ahead of the first trial of the iWagon at Tarmac’s maintenance depot in Dunbar. The film features interviews from key players at VTG Rail UK and Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems (UK).

Bromsgrove, with the final goal of removing annual brake tests. It will also ensure that a brake system defect is highlighted on the day it occurs and potentially assist Network Rail in identifying low adhesion hot spots on the network.

The new systems have significant advantages but are further enhanced when combined with VTG’s current innovation data platform i-Maintenance (wheelset life & damage prediction software), and enhanced VTG Connect and wagon/bogie imbalance which will also feature on the iWagon.

VTG Rail UK has been working with key industry partners towards the introduction of various major innovations within the rail freight sector for many years.

VTG Rail UK’s Business Improvement Director, Nigel Day, said: “We currently have 9 wagons operating within the UK on some of the most challenging routes allowing real, accurate and detailed results to show how revolutionary the product is, specifically the Wheel Flat Prevention element. The teams have been impressed with the initial findings and the demonstration of the first freight wheel protection system in the industry.”

“Stopping wheelsets sliding has significant benefits to both VTG UK and the wider performance of UK rail. Adding brake condition and harmonics frequency monitoring will strengthen the

case for change and revolutionise the way in which wagons are maintained.

“For instance, one benefit would be the removal of the annual brake test which will allow us to be more flexible around our maintenance regimes and moving towards i-Maintenance. These new regimes bring further benefits such as improved customer service.

“Low level disruption is predominantly caused by small micro slides, which can grow to create a major train performance issue. This can lead to a significant impact on the customer to remove the wagon from service and into a location for wheelset exchange.



VTG Rail UK Managing Director, Colin Denman and Business Improvement Director, Nigel Day inspect the first of three VTG Rail JPA tank wagons to be modified at Tarmac’s maintenance depot at Dunbar.

RFG Autumn Meeting concludes with tour of Barrow Hill Roundhouse

VTG Rail UK's Sales and Account Manager Archie Lucas and Marketing and Sales Coordinator Lewis Bryan attended the Rail Freight Group Autumn Meeting in November.

The day featured a knowledgeable line-up of rail freight experts and guest speakers who offered important industry insights and concluded with a fascinating tour of the Barrow Hill Roundhouse. Here, RFG members were invited to ride on a prototype Class 08e shunting locomotive – the UK's first re-engineered battery powered alternative to diesel engine shunters.

The 08e prototype could have a significant long-term influence on the

UK's locomotive fleet – the original 66-year-old Class 08 diesel shunter has been stripped down to its component parts and rebuilt as a modern plug-in 450hp battery electric locomotive by rail engineering company Positive Traction.

Barrow Hill Roundhouse is the last surviving railway roundhouse in the United Kingdom with an operational turntable. Built in 1870, it was threatened with demolition in 1991 when the site was closed by British Rail. It was saved by a group of dedicated volunteers who have transformed it into a unique combination of a heritage museum and engineering facility.

iWagon update presented at RWA Innovation Day



VTG Rail UK Managing Director Colin Denman and Business Improvement Director, Nigel Day were joined by Sanjay Albert, Director of Engineering and Innovation at Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems (UK) Ltd to present the latest updates on the VTG iWagon trial at the Rail Wagon Association & RSSB Innovation Day held in November.

This was the first update since the announcement of the VTG iWagon at the RFG conference in October and the event predominantly focused on addressing and mitigating the complications of locked wheels. The iWagon combats these complications because of the capability of reacting to locked wheels due to the axle-lock detection technology.

Wheel Flat Prevention (WFP) also plays a significant role as it identifies a wheel slide within micro-seconds, subsequently activating the system to stop the slide to prevent wheel flat and maintain good wheel condition.

Colin Denman said: "Digitisation allows us to prevent wheelset damage and axle locks in real time, ensuring multiple parties are given information quickly, allowing appropriate corrective action. This innovative technology will help prevent derailments, making rail freight safer."



Lewis Bryan and Archie Lucas check out a prototype Class 08e shunting locomotive at Barrow Hill.



Barrow Hill Roundhouse, the last surviving railway roundhouse in the United Kingdom with an operational turntable now offers a unique combination of a heritage museum and engineering facility.

VTG Rail UK announces launch of wagon availability catalogue

An online catalogue featuring all available wagons is being launched by VTG Rail UK as it seeks to improve its commercial offering for customers facilitating the enquiry process.


The service will be available to customers either wishing to hire wagons to boost their existing fleets or for new customers looking to enter the rail freight sector (see link below to download a copy of the catalogue).

VTG Rail UK's Marketing and Sales Coordinator Lewis Bryan said: "We wanted to find a new way to promote the wagons that are available."

And it's not just existing freight operating companies who are able to use the new service; their customers who also want their own fleets can also use the new service. The online catalogue features a mixture of hoppers, boxes, autoballasters and special wagons that either are, or will be, available.

Details available to potential customers include the wagon's specifications, broken down to gross laden weight, tare weight, payload, wagon length and bogie type.


Furthermore, it provides descriptions of the wagons and what loads they would be suitable for.



Special Wagon: KWA

Well wagon suitable for carrying plant machinery such as diggers etc. Optional self-loading ramp and platform. Suitable for excavators and plant machinery.


Gross Laden Weight (t):	57
Tare Weight (t):	25.2
Payload (t):	31.8
Length (mm):	17,060
Bogie Type:	VNH1
Qty Available:	30



Hopper Wagon: JGA-K

Covered hopper wagon with pneumatically operated top doors and shore-line connection at ground level. Suitable for small aggregates, sand and other similar commodities.


Gross Laden Weight (t):	90
Tare Weight (t):	23.8
Payload (t):	66.2
Length (mm):	14,400
Bogie Type:	Y25
Qty Available:	25



Hopper Wagon: HHA-E

Open hopper wagon with an internal capacity of 55 cubic metres and capable of 75mph in tare state. Suitable for small aggregates, sand and other similar commodities.


Gross Laden Weight (t):	101.6
Tare Weight (t):	24.5
Payload (t):	77.1
Length (mm):	15,200
Bogie Type:	TF25
Qty Available:	27



Box Wagon: JNA-A

Open top box wagon with an internal capacity of approx. 57 cubic metres. Suitable for aggregates, scrap metal, spoil and other similar commodities.


Gross Laden Weight (t):	101.6
Tare Weight (t):	23.15
Payload (t):	78.45
Length (mm):	13,970
Bogie Type:	Davis & Lloyd 3-Piece
Qty Available:	25



Hopper Wagon: HQA

Open hopper wagon for the transport and application of railway ballast. Suitable for small aggregates, sand and other similar commodities.


Gross Laden Weight (t):	90
Tare Weight (t):	25
Payload (t):	65
Length (mm):	17,200
Bogie Type:	AM1
Qty Available:	30



Box Wagon: KEA-Z

Open top box wagon fitted with a buck-eye coupling mechanism. Suitable for aggregates, scrap metal, spoil and other similar commodities.

Gross Laden Weight (t):	101.6
Tare Weight (t):	26
Payload (t):	75.6
Length (mm):	16,192
Bogie Type:	Davis & Lloyd 3-Piece
Qty Available:	22



Hopper Wagon: IIA

Covered high volume wagon with automatic top door operation triggered by magnetic door control sensors. Suitable for biomass, wood chippings and other similar commodities.

Gross Laden Weight (t):	101.6
Tare Weight (t):	27.7
Payload (t):	73.9
Length (mm):	18,339
Bogie Type:	TF25
Qty Available:	24

To enquire, please contact: salesuk@vtg.com 0121 421 9180

To download the online catalogue click [HERE](#)>

VTG reaffirms commitment to carbon capture and storage

VTG Rail UK Sales and Marketing Director, Marc Hurn, spoke at the Carbon Capture and Storage Association (CCSA) 7CO₂ Stakeholder Day in October.

The event addressed the importance of Carbon Capture, Utilisation and Storage (CCUS), focusing specifically on the Hub for the West of England Cluster (Sevenside), and focused on emitters, shipping and storage for similar schemes across the UK.

Carbon capture refers to a variety of techniques that are used to trap the carbon dioxide (CO₂) produced by power plants and other industrial facilities, typically before it can be released into the atmosphere. CO₂ that has been captured through one of these methods is either recycled for other purposes or stored where it cannot escape - a process known as carbon sequestration.

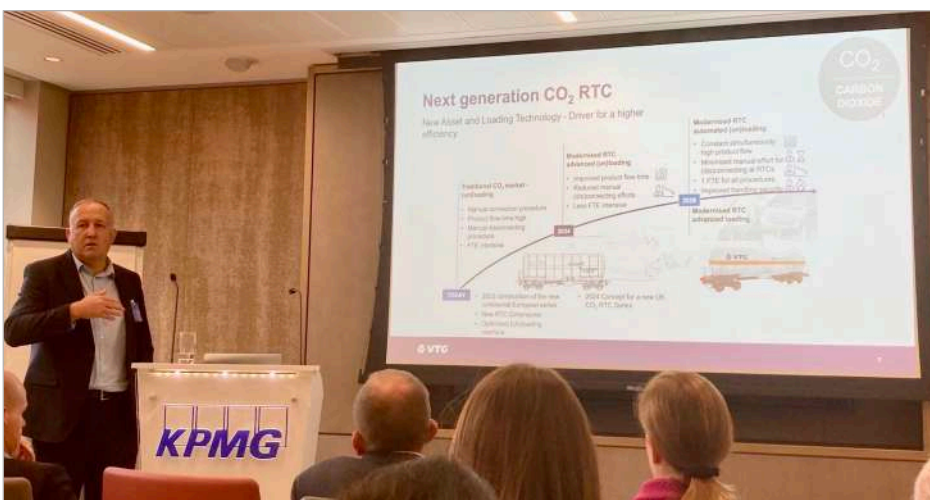
The 7CO₂ project in the Sevenside area of England and Wales aims to develop a hub where carbon emissions from operators in farther areas can be collected and shipped to permanent storage sites. This approach would rely on rail and shipping solutions to connect sites, hubs and storage facilities.

If you would like further information on VTG's wagon solutions which focus on CCUS, please click [here](#) or email salesuk@vtg.com

Updates poured in from the 7CO₂ hub for the West of England Cluster and the session was filled with invaluable insights from emitters, the rail industry and the e-fuels sector. The day concluded with a visit to Bristol Port, where the team had the opportunity to witness key emitting sites and the capture hub at Avonmouth Dock.

Marc Hurn said: "VTG Rail UK is proud to be included as a key contributor to the whole process and fully supports the UK's drive for sustainability in which carbon capture, utilisation and storage is a predominant factor. We have many options and solutions within our portfolio of wagons at VTG which focus on CCUS, reducing loading and unloading times."

The CCSA was founded in 2006 and brings together a wide range of specialist companies across the spectrum CCUS technology, as well as a variety of support services to the energy sector. The CCSA exists to represent the interests of its members in accelerating the commercial deployment of CCUS in the UK, EU and internationally through advocacy and collaboration to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.



VTG Rail UK Sales & Marketing Director, Marc Hurn spoke about new asset and loading technology at the Carbon Capture and Storage Association 7CO₂ Stakeholder Day in October.

We're now on Instagram!

Instagram is where we'll be sharing the more visual side of VTG Rail UK so you can see the business from another angle and feel even closer.

You will now be able to see our reputable, reliable and robust wagons on the tracks in the palm of your hand! The VTG iWagon's technology will also be revealed close up, showcasing features such as the axle end generators which provide the power to the Wheel Flat Prevention (WFP) system.

Give us a follow [@vtgrailuk](https://www.instagram.com/vtgrailuk) to keep up-to-date with the UK's largest wagon lessor; stay connected with the VTG family.



[@vtgrailuk](https://www.instagram.com/vtgrailuk)

Send us your news

Do you have a news item you would like us to include in the next edition of ONLINE?

Whether you are a member of VTG Rail UK staff, an existing customer or have worked with us as a project partner, please feel free to get in touch to share your news. Email: marketing@vtg.com

People

Engineering expert celebrates milestone after achieving 20 years' service with VTG Rail UK

VTG Rail UK's Head of Engineering, Russ Campbell achieved the impressive milestone of 20-years' service with the company in October 2023!

Russ, who joined VTG as Fleet Conformance Engineer in 2003 from Network Rail, spearheads our engineering team in the UK, allowing us to maintain high availability of wagons for our customers.

Having begun his illustrious career on the railways in 1986, when he joined British Rail as a dual trained fitter/electrician apprentice at Toton TMD. On completion of his apprenticeship Russ progressed to the role of Senior Technical Officer within the technical office at Toton, before moving to BR's Trainload Freight operations in the Railway Technical Centre at Derby where he worked as a Traction & Rolling Stock, Reliability & Performance Engineer.

During privatisation of the Railway, Trainload Freight was split into 4 x Profit Centres and Russ then worked for Trainload Construction (which later became Transrail) until all of the profit centres were purchased by English, Welsh & Scottish Railway (EWS). During his time at EWS, Russ worked as Rolling Stock Standards Engineer before joining Network Rail as a Standards Engineer where he was involved in managing the Private Wagon Registration Agreement in 2002. Subsequently in 2003, Russ joined the private side of the railway where he worked for



Head of Engineering Russ Campbell, who began his career on the railways in 1986 and celebrated 20 years with VTG Rail UK in October 2023.

Marcroft Engineering - the maintenance business owned by CAIB - which was later purchased by VTG.

With his vast knowledge and experience, critical thinking, and due diligence, VTG Rail UK continues to improve on our service and ensures our fleet is managed effectively so that our customers' needs can not only be met, but also exceeded.

Everyone at VTG would like to congratulate Russ on reaching this incredible landmark and thank him for playing a significant part in our continued success.

VTG Rail UK appoints new Fleet Engineer for Southwest and Wales

Raj Sharma began a new role as VTG Rail UK Fleet Engineer (Southwest and Wales) on 1st December, having previously been Sales Manager since 2018.

In this new role, he will manage reliability, safety and performance of wagon fleets as well as liaise with, and manage, customer expectations.

Managing RMA and MSA suppliers on a day-to-day basis also forms part of the new position as well as supporting the Service Delivery Team with managing component supply-chains and managing specific fleet-related and innovation projects as required.

Speaking about his new role, Raj said: "I thoroughly enjoyed my Sales Manager role where I had the privilege of delivering key responsibilities such as account management and business development. I am immensely grateful

for the valuable experiences and relationships I cultivated in this role. "However, I am excited to rejoin the Engineering Team and I will now be leveraging my skills and passion in a new capacity as Fleet Engineer.

"In my new role, my primary focus will be on ensuring highest levels of safety and reliability is achieved, utilising my background in sales to enhance customer experience and satisfaction. This transition allows me to apply the strategic insights gained from business development to assist our Service Delivery Team with optimising the efficiency and effectiveness of our fleet operations".

Raj joined the business in April 2007 as a Fleet Support Engineer and was appointed Safety and Conformance Engineer in 2012; a role he held until leaving the company in 2017 before he

returned to VTG Rail UK the following year as Sales Manager.

In his previous Sales Manager role, Raj was responsible for maximising the revenue and profit earned by the VTG wagon fleet to ensure sales and financial targets are achieved in accordance with the local and corporate strategies.



UK News

UK Rail Minister recognises VTG iWagon as one of the year's highlights in rail freight

Representatives from VTG Rail UK joined more than 800 members and guests at the annual RFG Christmas Lunch held in December.

Rail Minister Huw Merriman MP was the guest of honour and he spoke about the coming rail freight growth targets and the success of rail freight in helping build HS2 Phase 1. The minister outlined a number of exciting projects which will directly benefit rail freight operations specifically

mentioning VTG's iWagon, the UK's FIRST digital freight wagon which will introduce new and significant safety capabilities, including axle-lock detection and Wheel Flat Prevention.

Speaking on the day, RFG Director General Maggie Simpson OBE said: "This year has had many challenges, both in the railway and the UK economy but, as always, rail freight has shown its resilience, flexibility and determination, and we end the year

ahead of last, and with real progress in growing volumes and also in developing and modernising the sector.

"So a huge thank you to all of you who have worked to deliver success over the year. In particular, I would like to thank those of you who have used your buying power and influence to encourage other businesses to use rail. And those of you working to implement new innovation and digital technology into rail freight."



Rail Minister, Huw Merriman MP addresses members at the RFG Christmas Lunch where he spoke about the coming rail freight growth targets and the success of rail freight in helping build HS2. (Photos courtesy of Phill Goodson @ PhotosSimply).



Just the trick - VTG Rail UK Business Improvement Director, Nigel Day (right) keeps a careful eye on the magician's cards.

Career progression firmly on track for Chris

Chris Parker began his new role as VTG Rail UK Standards and Reliability Engineer at the start of 2024, moving from his previous position as VTG Rail UK Fleet Engineer, Southern Region.

Reporting to VTG Rail UK Head of Engineering Russ Campbell, Chris' new role is office-based and requires him to work on standardising the company's internal documentation. This covers areas including engineering instructions and risk assessments, for example, and will see Chris support the fleet engineering department.

"My strengths are in technical documentation, and this helps me in my career progression," said Chris, who

has an upper second class honours degree for Automotive Engineering (BEng) and who completed a year's industrial experience at VTG Rail UK prior to joining the company full-time in September 2020.

Chris' new role was devised by Russ Campbell, who has been his manager since he joined the company. Chris explained that the role will help VTG Rail UK focus on reliability of its assets and provide it with the resources required to dig deeper into any issues, enabling it to be proactive rather than reactive when it comes to reliability, thereby helping the business move forward.

The promotion also helps Chris' career progression, something he hopes will

continue at VTG Rail UK, which remains the only company he has ever worked for.



Steel train roadshow promotes portfolio of products and services



A stop off for the steel train roadshow in Joigny (France), where customers were able to view both existing and new to market wagon solutions currently available to customers in mainland Europe.

After touring through Europe to showcase VTG's existing range of assets and market innovations for the steel industry, our dedicated steel train roadshow came to an end in November.

After a great launch event held at the VTG maintenance workshop at Brühl in August, the steel train, hauling both VTG modular and standard wagons designed for carrying different cargoes such as coil, slab and scrap, travelled a total distance of around 4,400 kilometres across Europe.

Making stops at six locations in a total of 5 countries – Germany, France, Austria, Italy and Poland, before returning to Germany, experts from VTG were on hand at each stop-off to share information about VTG's transport solutions for the steel industry in greater detail.

Expectations for the events were far exceeded and we are thrilled with the level of interest and the constructive discussions at each event where customers were able to see our rail transport solutions for themselves.

VTG Rail UK attended one of the events in Joigny, France in September where attendees were able to view both existing and new to market wagon solutions currently available to customers in mainland Europe, including VTG's ModuPallet Coil and

Steel superstructure solutions for transporting steel coils and girders

The steel industry is currently responsible for around 10% of global CO2 emissions. This means that it will be crucial to transform this industry if we are to make any big leaps towards carbon-neutral production. On top of that, no other industry is capable of reducing such high amounts of CO2 so quickly.

With the Steel Train campaign, VTG has showcased cutting-edge transport solutions that are perfectly tailored to meet the needs of the steel industry and provide it with unmatched support during its 'green' transformation. Our broad portfolio of products and services range from suitable wagons and innovative superstructures to optimised freight-forwarding processes, traction and digital solutions.



The roadshow showcased cutting-edge transport solutions that are perfectly tailored to meet the needs of the steel industry.

Temperature controlled transport by rail

Thanks to the use of electrified wagons, Baltic Rail is now able to transport goods by rail in a temperature-controlled, eco-friendly and energy-efficient manner on its intermodal services which operate through the Baltic Adriatic rail corridor.

Goods including batteries, frozen and perishable goods, confectionary and pharmaceuticals are kept at their optimum temperature thanks to the SWS-PowerBox® which provides an autonomous energy supply to the wagon. A hydraulic pump and generator mounted on the wheelset converts kinetic energy into electrical energy, which is then used to supply the temperature control units and charge the battery.



Due to an uninterrupted power supply, containers can be transported in a problem-free and climate-neutral manner from ports to inland rail terminals or warehouses and offer a more economical and flexible storage option than trucks. In addition, customers can also able monitor the supply chain around the clock and in real time using the Traigo digital platform.

What's more, since the wagons usually arrive at terminals with a fully charged battery, waiting times can be bridged with an uninterrupted power supply and processes in the terminals can be flexibly organised.

Taking away steps, to improve safety

The latest batch of new JNA-T open box wagons supplied by VTG Rail UK for the Skanska, Costain and STRABAG (SCS) joint venture, have been delivered incorporating the latest safety addition.

The state-of-the-art 60m³ wagons have been built with new 'step prevention panels' covering the horizontal beams on the ends to prevent any chance of someone stepping towards overhead power lines.

The wagons also feature increased thickness sides and floors for maximum durability and are fitted with track friendly bogies with integrated brakes meaning no underframe mounted rigging or cylinders for reduced maintenance and better availability.

The delivery in October completes an order from SCS for 169 of the box wagons which are supporting the removal of over 5 million tonnes of tunnel spoil from the logistics hub at Willesden Euroterminal over the course of the HS2 project.

At peak, up to seven trains per day depart the hub hauling 22 wagons capable of carrying more than 1,500 tonnes of material – the equivalent of 80 lorry loads – safely, efficiently and sustainably. The logistics trains are currently operated by



The latest JNA-T box wagons have been fitted with 'step prevention panels'.

GB Railfreight and the entire operation is the result of meticulous planning between HS2, Network Rail, SCS JV and HS2's supply chain.

VTG Fleet Controller Matthew Harris said: "I'm immensely proud to see the fleet in Willesden running in such a highly intelligent supply chain, with technology assisting the project at almost every intervention."



The latest batch of new JNA-T open box wagons supplied by VTG Rail UK for the SCS joint venture.

Photos courtesy of Matthew Harris.

VTG iWagon shortlisted at Rail Business Awards



2024 has kicked off with the exciting news that VTG Rail UK and Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems (UK) have been shortlisted in the Rail Business Awards 'Innovation of the Year' category for our joint work on the iWagon project.

The Rail Business Awards (RBA), which are the longest established national awards for the rail sector, recognises excellence in every aspect of the industry, from daily operations, safety and customer service to technical innovation and major projects across the UK.

After 25 years of holding the awards ceremony in London, the RBA has decided to start ringing the changes, and reflect the geographical spread and diversity of the railway network. The 26th Rail Business Awards will therefore be taking place in Manchester, on 22nd February.

Manchester has a proud industrial history, and railways have played a special part in the growth and prosperity of the city over almost two centuries. Today, it remains one of the UK's leading railway hubs, with an extensive spread of inter-city and inter-regional services offering convenient links to bring RBA participants and their guests from all parts of Britain.

Hopefully we'll see you there!

Future-oriented transport solutions for New Energies

With VTG as a reliable partner, alternative energy sources can already be transported sustainably and safely by rail.

To achieve our climate-protection goals and lower our CO₂ emissions, we will have to design new industrial processes and establish new supply chains.

This makes it more important than ever to shift as much freight transport volume as we can onto rail. Since high transport volumes of New Energies are expected, VTG is already working with partners to design new rail tank wagons and containers, improved loading and unloading systems, and optimised logistics solutions for them.

Future-oriented solutions for transporting New Energies

The challenges associated with climate change, the limited availability of fossil fuels, and our dependence on energy resources imported from just a handful of countries demand proactive responses. The energy transition is making it necessary for industries – and especially those in energy-intensive sectors – to decarbonise their industrial processes and to use new, alternative sources of energy. But only a certain proportion of commercial and industrial consumers will be able to meet their needs by exclusively using pipelines. This means that rail will be needed to transport large volume flows safely, reliably and cost-effectively.

VTG classifies the following under the umbrella term New Energies: first, all energies that haven't been transported via rail before; and, second, products that



VTG is already working with partners to design new rail tank wagons and containers, improved loading and unloading systems, and optimised logistics solutions for them.

have already been transported by rail, but not to be used as an energy source. The latter includes LNG, hydrogen, hydrogen derivatives and biogenic energy carriers. In addition, the term New Energies encompasses carbon dioxide that is captured during industrial processes or while producing certain fuels and then transported to be recycled or stored.

VTG's New Energies strategy aims to provide companies with the best possible support while they transition to sustainable industrial processes. Thanks to its many years of operational experience and by fostering an ongoing dialogue with partners new and old, VTG is upgrading its assets and logistics solutions for the markets of tomorrow.

At the same time, it can already offer products and services to transport alternative energy sources by rail, such as

hydrogen, ammonia, e-fuels and LNG, as well as CO₂. As a leading provider of rail-based solutions for New Energies, VTG aims to connect customers in the hinterland with terminals and hubs in Europe. In doing so, we are helping to secure the energy supply, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and boost industry's ability to compete.

Advantages of transporting New Energies by rail

In addition to being eco-friendly, transporting New Energies by rail offers a high degree of safety throughout the journey. A single freight train can already replace up to 52 trucks. Rails make it possible to flexibly connect locations to terminals and hubs. Remote, hard-to-reach areas as well as companies that only need small volumes to be transported can also be reached using multimodal solutions. Thus, when it comes to transporting New Energies, rail has an edge in terms of performance and flexibility.

VTG is happy to help you with your transformation process by providing new technological and logistical solutions as well as through collaborative efforts. Take advantage of VTG's extensive portfolio of services for New Energies, which range from designing special transport containers, to logistics planning, to executing transports with its own rail transport company, to digital customer service.



VTG aims to connect customers in the hinterland with terminals and hubs to help secure the energy supply and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Paul bows out on a high after 47 years in the industry

After dedicating almost five decades of service to the rail freight industry and at the age of 74, VTG Rail UK Dry Lease Coordinator, Paul Lugg has announced his retirement.

Paul was Engineering Manager for three years before becoming our long-term Tank Fleet Sales Manager. His knowledge and expertise of the wagon leasing business across the UK and Europe is second to none and his long service to the industry was recognised by his peers at the 2023 Rail Freight Group Awards when he was presented with the Outstanding Individual Contribution Award.

Paul's career in rail freight began in 1977, with wagon leasing company STS. Over the years VTG can trace its roots through the decades with a number of companies that Paul has worked for including STS, which became CAIB, which was later bought by Brambles and in 2002 by VTG so, in essence, he has always worked within the VTG family.

Paul has played a vital role in the development of VTG successes in rail freight as the VTG Rail UK fleet has grown from around 2,000 wagons with under 85% utilisation to 4,500 wagons with



Managing Director, Colin Denman presents Paul Lugg with a leaving gift at a recent event attended by friends and colleagues to celebrate his time and success at VTG Rail UK.

over 95% utilisation. His unique combination of technical qualifications, manufacturing experience plus his appreciation of the customer's needs and practices, have made him something of a sought after rail wagon expert, particularly in the field of tank wagons for petrochemicals.

He has represented both VTG, as well as the wider UK rail freight community on a number of crucial, but often overlooked committees and working groups. As well as taking an active role as part of the

RSSB's Rolling Stock Standards Committee and the Dangerous Goods Working Group (DGWG), Paul also enjoyed a period as Chairman of the Private Wagon Federation (PWF) and was recently rewarded with a certificate commemorating his 50 years of continuous membership of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers.

It goes without saying that he will be greatly missed by all his friends and colleagues who have worked with him.

VTG Rail UK Managing Director, Colin Denman paid tribute saying: "Paul is an outstanding individual who has dedicated almost half a century of his life to the industry. His encyclopaedic knowledge of wagons and his willingness to share this passion and expertise with the team typifies the true professional he is.

"It's fair to say that Paul lives and breathes his job and it has been a privilege working alongside him and learning from him during my time as Managing Director. I would like to take this opportunity to wish him every joy and success in his retirement and look forward to hearing what the next chapter in store brings for him."

Good luck Paul – here's to a long and happy retirement.



Paul Lugg receives the Outstanding Individual Contribution Award at the 2023 RFG Awards. (Photo courtesy Phil Goodson @ PhotosSimply).

New box wagons for Direct Rail Services

A fleet of 25 brand new JNA-Z box wagons will enter traffic in February with Direct Rail Services (DRS), which is leasing the vehicles from VTG Rail UK.

The wagons are being built by WH Davis at its Shirebrook facility and will be operated by DRS, primarily in traffic for Nuclear Waste Solutions (NWS). The plan is for the first 16 wagons to be delivered at the start of February, with the final nine following at the end of the month. They will be used to form a rake of wagons that will be used to transport spoil.

WH Davis, which is the last manufacturer of freight wagons in the UK, will be completing the build scheme. Each wagon's gross laden weight is 101.6 tonnes and the tare weight is 24.2t

meaning that the payload is 77.4t.

VTG Rail UK Sales Manager Archie Lucas said that this would take the number of wagons used by DRS that are leased from the company from 115 to 140, further diversifying the portfolio, with the previous hires all involving intermodal wagons.

These new wagons are being hired via a wet-lease, meaning that VTG Rail UK will also provide maintenance.

Archie said: "It's good to work with WH Davis and support UK manufacturing whilst also delivering a robust set of wagons for our customer. We look forward to seeing these wagons coming off the production line and entering service with DRS very soon."



The new JNA-Z box wagons being fitted out at WH Davis' Shirebrook facility will enter service in February.



The wagons will take the number currently on lease by DRS to 140. (Photos courtesy Les Bryant @ WH Davis)

Creating a virtual iWagon - how we did it...

The company behind the 3D computer modelling which formed an essential part of our launch presentation for the VTG iWagon explain how they did it.

Maven Create Ltd is a consulting and creative agency that develops and delivers innovative solutions to clients across Europe. Starting from scratch and working from existing wagon photos and basic dimensions, Maven worked with the team at VTG to develop an impactful 3D video to spotlight the ground-breaking technology of the iWagon.

Duncan Gardner, Director at Maven, explains: "At Maven, we can create a photo-realistic representation of a product before it physically exists. Working from either engineering digital drawings or, as in the case of the iWagon, photos and basic dimensions, we created a 3D computer model to design the components necessary to construct a virtual wagon.

"We combined these parts into a final 3D computer model as a wireframe. To this, we add textures, colour, and branding. Once

the model is complete, we design how the virtual model should be lit and how the camera will be used. We filmed the final high-resolution movie, and then in post-production, edited and added the branding and captions to create the finished film.

"From the intricacies of 3D modelling to the final production, this was a journey of innovation and creativity, and we are thrilled to have worked alongside VTG on this project."



See how it works!

CLICK HERE > to see the iWagon animation.



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