

# ON LINE

VTG RAIL UK NEWSLETTER No.40



A new batch of box wagons destined for Mendip Rail will transport aggregates from Merehead and Whatley Quarries to various locations.

## Boxing clever - additional wagons for Mendip

**VTG Rail UK has delivered the latest batch of 155 brand new JNA (T) box wagons to Mendip Rail.**

Production on the new wagons, which will be used to transport aggregates, began in January. They have been built by Greenbrier/Astra Rail Industries in Drobeta Tumu Severin in Romania.

The first wagons are already in operation and the final batch was delivered to Mendip Rail in September 2022. Chris

Parker, Fleet Engineer (South) at VTG Rail UK, said: "As the UK's largest lessor of rail freight wagons, VTG has been delighted to provide the best possible service to Mendip Rail for several decades.

"Working alongside our customers to provide what they need, when they need it, is at the heart of VTG operations. We play a key role in enabling our customers to move large quantities of product by rail rather than road which supports the push for long-term sustainability."

The new box wagons for Mendip Rail will transport aggregates from Merehead Quarry and Whatley Quarry in Somerset and Machen Quarry in Gwent.

The wagons have been designed to optimise the movement of aggregates and construction spoil, maximising durability with a minimum tare weight. The design allows more material to be carried by each train and further improves the environmental performance of rail transport.

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VTG Rail UK Managing Director Rob Brook retires after 16 years driving our company forward. **(Page 4)**



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VTG has earned 99 out of 100 in the GRESB global sustainability ranking. **(Page 11)**



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##### 20 YEAR CLUB!

Three of the team celebrate being with VTG Rail UK since the company started in 2001. **(Page 13)**



**VTG Rail UK wins Innovation & Talent Award for VTG Connect at RFG Awards (P10)**

## UK News

# Welcome

Colin Denman, Managing Director, VTG Rail UK.

## As 2022 draws to a close it's a good opportunity to look back on a fantastic year at VTG Rail UK.

There is a general buoyancy in our market and I am pleased to say that there is a great demand for rail freight wagons. As the UK's largest wagon lessor we are leading the way in driving the industry forward through innovations and technical advances.

This was recognised at two top industry awards in the Autumn. We won the Rail Freight Group award for Innovation and Talent for our VTG Connect offering which the judges described as being 'light years ahead of other software projects.'

We're very proud of VTG Connect, which gives our customers eagle eyes on their wagons, freight and transport chain through sensor enabled data analysis. The software is currently being trialled by two of our major customers.

Also in the Autumn we gained recognition at the National Rail Awards for our Ecofret 2 intermodal wagons. These wagons are revolutionising the way containerised freight is moved across Britain and the judges clearly agreed, by highly commending Ecofret 2 in the Freight and Logistics Achievement of the Year category.

Giving back to our local communities has also been high on the agenda for us during 2022 and we announced the West Midlands based Acorn's Children's Hospice as our chosen charity.

Fundraising began with eight members of our team flying through the air on the world's fastest zip line at Penrhyn Quarry in Wales! Our adventurers raised a fantastic £2,200 for the charity.

Some of our team also visited one of the charity's hospices, in Birmingham. I know this was, understandably, an emotional visit for them, but they were also very much struck by the positivity and happy atmosphere in the hospice. It is a wonderful charity, and I am looking forward to us being able to support it more

through fundraising efforts in 2023.

We will start the new year with vigour, and a new place to work! Towards the end of January we will be moving into a new head office in Bromsgrove.

After working from home during the pandemic, we have shown that hybrid working can be effective and we can still provide excellent service to our customers, as well as giving our team some flexibility.

Consequently, we no longer need such a large space that our current base, in Rubery, provides. The new premises are much more open plan and will allow for hot desking.

I would like to thank our team and our customers for a fantastic 2022 and wish you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas period and look forward to seeing you in the New Year!

Colin



## We're a great place to work... CERTIFIED!

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.



## New wagons optimise movement of aggregates

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Features of the new JNA (T) box wagons include a high impact floor to reduce the risk of unloading damage and an integrated compact bogie braking system that minimises maintenance down time.

Mendip Rail is a joint venture between two of the UK's largest aggregate/cement producers, Hanson Aggregates and Aggregate Industries (AI).

Mendip Rail moves more than nine million tonnes of aggregate each year from quarries in the Mendips in North Somerset. Much of this goes to terminals in London and the South-East, for use in construction and infrastructure projects. As well as housing and road improvements, there is also a significant commitment to the building of HS2.



VTG's new JNA(T) box wagons include a high impact floor to reduce the risk of damage.



# Tank Testing programmes completed

**Congratulations to the VTG Rail UK team for completing tank tests on 206 RID tank wagons and 117 cement tank wagons during 2022.**

The RID wagons were spread across four locations and the cement wagons were at five different sites.

Asset Manager Mark Pumphrey said: "To complete two arduous programmes in difficult and trying circumstances by November 10 (the earliest we've completed this for many years) is an

excellent achievement by our team at VTG and our customers. It is through close partnership working that results such as this can be realised.

"I'd like to thank all involved for making this happen. Special mention must go to our service delivery team members Janet Sheppard and Maria Baugh who worked very hard to get both programmes over the line, in conjunction with Motorail (Long Marston) Limited, Feldbinder Spezialfahrzeugwerke GmbH and our customers."



The VTG Rail UK team has successfully completed tank tests on 206 RID tank wagons and 117 cement tank wagons in 2022.

## Re-purposed coal hoppers destined for new markets

**VTG Rail UK has re-purposed 14 former IIA coal hopper wagons for use in the aggregates industry.**

Ian Shaw, VTG Rail UK's Sales and Marketing Director, said: "These wagons started life leased to a freight company to carry coal, but as that industry has diminished, we got the wagons back and decided that the only way that we could keep them operational was to re-purpose them. This meant reducing the volume that they carry from 90 to 60 cubic metres, allowing the wagons to be made shorter and more efficient.

"They are now perfect for the aggregates market and will be joining that traffic soon. It's great that wagons can be repurposed like this, particularly as it supports VTG's approach to sustainability."

The wagons were converted by independent wagon manufacturer WH Davis, which provides a wide range of design and manufacturing services for rail wagons and specialist transportation equipment.



VTG Rail UK Sales and Account Manager Archie Lucas in front of one of the re-purposed coal hopper wagons destined for the aggregates industry.

## UK News

# End of an era... Rob's masterclass to success!

VTG Rail UK has marked the retirement of former managing director Rob Brook with a celebratory dinner in his honour.

**With an illustrious career spanning over 40 years, Rob spent 16 years driving our company forward with many notable achievements.**

On Line magazine caught up with Rob to discuss his career highlights, what he sees as being major future developments in rail freight and the many exciting activities he has planned for his retirement.

Rob recalled: "Throughout my career I've moved sector a lot, never intending to stay within the same one.

So when I applied to be managing director of VTG Rail UK I didn't think I'd get the role because I had not worked in rail before, I didn't even have a train set when I was a kid! But it turned out that this was exactly what the Group CEO wanted, someone who was a businessman and would look at things afresh."

Looking at the business with new eyes brought a greater focus on customer needs. "In the early days, across the industry, there wasn't a real understanding of what the customer wanted when they leased wagons," Rob said. "Most people thought that, rather than buy wagons, operators wanted to lease them just as a way of getting use of them without the capital outlay to buy them. But what became rapidly apparent to me was that, although the leasing versus buying element was important, what the customer really wanted was the wagon to be there when they needed it and where they needed it.

"So we started paying much more attention to the availability of wagons for each customer, which meant we increased our focus on maintenance and service delivery. Those key elements of engineering, maintenance and service soon became the

backbone of what we are known for, making wagon availability the best it can be. I believe our approach woke the market up to this principle and our competitors had to start thinking about it too."

When Rob joined VTG Rail UK it had a team of 14 people and there are now 26 and turnover has increased five-fold. "The CEO allowed me to have an entrepreneurial edge to my role," Rob explained. "It felt like I was running my own business, to the point that if I wanted to do a project, as long as I

for many years. "I will miss the team and being part of this great group," he said. "I'll also miss the tech challenges and being part of the exciting new era of digitalisation and innovation because I think now is a really exciting time to be in the rail sector, and particularly as an engineer. We live in a time when government is more conscious of the value of rail freight than it was when I started in the industry and there are two key themes the sector must focus on – getting lorries off the road by having a

much better rail freight network, and meeting carbon reduction targets. During the covid pandemic the general public saw the importance of rail freight – it was still delivering goods when it was really difficult to do so by road."

As far as what's next for Rob in retirement, there are no plans to put his feet up. "I've got a very long list," he smiles. And an impressive and inspirational list it is too!

It includes renovating a vintage tractor, writing up his dad's astonishing World War 2 story (he left

11 hours of audio recordings of his experience as a prisoner of war and escapee in Italy), learning Italian, learning the harmonica and also discovering about fungi & foraging so he can teach his grandchildren more about nature.

Rob also plans to join the Blood Bikes charity as a motorbike courier, which supports the NHS in moving vital supplies out of hours.

In addition he will continue to play a key role in his village pub, The New Inn, in Norton Lindsey, Warwickshire. Rob led the campaign for his community to buy the pub almost six years ago and he is currently heading up the project to add a shop to the site.

**Rob, from all of us at VTG, we wish you a wonderful, fulfilling and very happy retirement.**



Rob Brook (centre) receives the Environmental Award on behalf of VTG Rail UK from Lee Griffiths of NNR Global Logistics and comedian Milton Jones at the Global Freight Awards in 2016.

had a good plan and had thought it through, then I would get support. Our great team made VTG become the market leader and be recognised as the voice of wagon leasing, so it's really nice to be finishing my career with the business in that position."

Rob said that VTG Rail UK is a very people focussed place to work. "I love that we have made VTG Rail UK a fun place to work. We give our employees the extra little things, like family fun days and simple treats to say thank you, things I could never do during my many years in the manufacturing sector due to the constant pressure on reducing cost. The Group CEO understood that the reason for doing these sorts of things was that they brought something special in terms of motivation and building a team mentality."

This is evident in the happy and stable workforce that has been maintained at VTG



## UK News

# Ecofret 2 deliveries right on track...

VTG Rail UK has delivered 252 of its revolutionary Ecofret2 wagons to GB Railfreight.

**VTG's Ecofret2 is a revolutionary offering for the intermodal rail freight sector, changing the way containerised freight is moved across Britain.**

Introduced to the UK fleet in 2021 Ecofret2 is the next generation of the award-winning performance of VTG's Ecofret wagon and offers optimal enhancements to deliver even more in efficiency gains and cost savings for rail freight operators, their customers and

telematics system, allowing customers to subscribe to a range of GPS-based tracking, monitoring and digital services.

Sam Hunt, project engineer with VTG Rail UK, said: "The key benefits of the Ecofret range are that it avoids the need for empty spaces, which are so often seen on trains made up of 60ft deck length container flats carrying a single 40ft box. These empty spaces are wasteful and create considerable turbulence when

carried on all platforms giving maximum loading flexibility to customers."

The Ecofret2 comes in different configurations offering maximum flexibility, building on the great work from the first Ecofret. The introduction of these new 40' platforms in significant numbers allow freight operators to reconfigure their wagon fleets and run optimal trains for the type of containers being moved.



VTG's revolutionary Ecofret2 platforms are fitted with a bogie design incorporating rubber suspension components and hydraulic damping.

ultimately the general public buying their goods from the supermarket shelves.

By offering greater carrying capabilities, no wasted space and less turbulence Ecofret2 decreases the cost of transport by offering better fuel economy. Track friendly bogies lower track access charges, further enhancing the business case for modal switch.

Ecofret2's track-friendly "TF20" bogie, with integral braking system, offers enhanced dynamic ride performance and incorporates additional container mounting points for increased loading flexibility. Ecofret2 is also fitted with VTG's next-generation 'Connect'

running at 75mph, increasing drag and fuel consumption.

"Ecofret2 platforms are fitted with a bogie design incorporating rubber suspension components and hydraulic damping, giving an improved dynamic ride. This new bogie is the first to meet the revised version of Railway Group Standard GM/RT2141 which was updated following RAIB recommendations for approvals procedures to demonstrate that vehicles are not susceptible to derailment due to 'cyclic top' track features. They also feature additional container mounting points on the outer platforms, meaning that either two 20ft or one 40ft box can be

Where 40' and 20' deep sea containers are being transported from the main South and South-East ports to inland terminals, trains consisting of Ecofrets, possibly in combination with 60' FEA platforms, provide the most efficient solution with minimal wasted space and therefore customers can benefit immediately. This then allows any Megafret twin wagons that may have been used in maritime container traffic to be diverted to 'domestic intermodal' operations, carrying 45ft containers from inland terminals or other smaller ports to distribution centres throughout the country.

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## UK News

# Ecofret2 platforms offer maximum flexibility...

(Continued from page 5)

As always, using the most efficient tool for the job pays dividends and over time the gains from the introduction of the Ecofret range to supplement the existing intermodal fleet will provide significant cost savings for users and end customers alike.

The Ecofret2 was put into assembly in the winter of 2020, briefly delayed by the pandemic. One of the key challenges to its production was of course the need for effective social distancing measures that rapidly needed to be implemented across the business.

All of the new wagons were built at WH Davis' Shirebrook site in the East Midlands, where the first prototypes were also tested.

John Smith, Managing Director, GB Railfreight, said: "We are delighted to be partnering with VTG Rail once again and to be able to roll out their new fantastic Ecofret2 wagons. As we grow

GBRf's intermodal business, we couldn't ask for a better partner than VTG, which is at the cutting edge of the industry. In addition, the whole sector has a huge role to play as we look to move more freight by rail in order to remove carbon emissions – a move which will be made easier thanks to the brilliant and industry-leading work done by the likes of VTG and GBRf."

The first Ecofret wagons were launched into UK service back in 2012 following a significant investment in the design and development of this ground-breaking design by VTG. They were an instant success and won industry awards for their innovation. Provided in both triple and twin configurations, Ecofret has been running with most of the major UK FOCs for the last seven years and is now an indispensable part of the UK's intermodal scene. VTG Rail is excited to see how Ecofret2 will meet the demands and lead the next generation of intermodal rail freight wagons.



VTG has delivered 252 Ecofret2 wagons to help GB Railfreight grow its intermodal business.

## New Year - New Office

**The New Year will bring a new head office for VTG Rail UK.**

We will be moving to our new premises at Topaz Business Park in Bromsgrove in late January. The office is just a few miles down the road from our current base in Rubery, Birmingham.



VTG Rail UK's new offices at Topaz Business Park.

The move comes as a result of new, hybrid working practices following the Covid-19 pandemic.

VTG Rail UK managing director, Colin Denman, said: "Following the pandemic we introduced a hybrid working trial, whereby our team works from the office for a number of days per week and the rest working from home. The trial has proved successful and so we have decided that it will become our normal way of working. This, of course, means we don't maximise use of the large office space that we currently have."

The layout of the new office has been designed to provide a modern, clean environment providing collaboration and quiet working areas.

**Our new address from late January 2023 is: VTG Rail UK, 2 Topaz Business Park, Birmingham Road, Bromsgrove, B61 0GD.**



## UK News

# Colin Denman appointed new chairman of RWA

**Our VTG Rail UK managing director, Colin Denman, has been appointed chairman of the Rail Wagon Association (RWA).**

The organisation represents the interests of companies involved in rail freight wagons across the UK including wagon owners, keepers, users, designers, manufacturers, hirers, ECMs, consultants, maintainers and operators.

Colin said: "I am excited and honoured to be taking up this position. I feel this is an important period for rail freight as we address industry matters resulting from the Llangennech incident.

"There are also wider societal matters such as the need to decarbonise, as transporting more freight by rail gains momentum. Both of these have the potential to have a far reaching and positive impact on rail freight and particularly the RWA with our focus on wagons."

Colin said he wanted to concentrate on three key areas:

- Delivery of the Llangennech recommendations and continuing the good work already started by the RWA and the wider rail freight industry.
- The wider industry freight training need. Colin explained that some companies have their own excellent in-house training programmes but there is a need for an accredited wagon maintenance training programme that would attract new skilled people to join the industry and address the need for digital skills as more condition-based monitoring on wagons is introduced.
- Colin would also like to focus on the benefits of decarbonisation. He said: "Given the need to decarbonise and the inherent benefits of rail freight this places a challenge on the industry in terms of how we will support and deliver this growth with new wagons. We need more wagon builders and fitters."

The purpose of the RWA is to undertake the role of a professional trade body for



VTG Rail UK's Colin Denman - the proud new chairman of the Rail Wagon Association.

its members by representing their interests in liaison with other industry participants, the DfT, the UIC (via UIP membership) and any other appropriate bodies.

RWA facilitates the sharing of information, the discussion of relevant engineering and safety issues and developing appropriate responses. RWA does not have any manufacturing, services, or supply chain operations of its own.

## Unique partnership set to bring further innovation to UK rail freight sector

**VTG Rail UK is supporting a collaboration between the University of Huddersfield's Institute of Railway Research and the Rail Wagon Association (RWA) to engage in a unique Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) to bring further innovation to the UK rail freight sector.**

The KTP will develop new models, methods, processes and technologies to monitor and predict component wear and damage in rail freight wagons. The outputs will then be disseminated and applied across the UK rail freight sector through RWA members. These innovations intend to focus on safety, asset life and to ensure the sector is more sustainable, and ultimately more capable of addressing the carbon net-zero challenge.

In support of this a new role has been created of Asset Performance Engineer (KTP Associate) and recruiting is underway now with a deadline of January 2nd 2023.

The successful candidate will drive a strategic programme of change to achieve the aims of the project, embedding further innovation at the heart of the industry. They will primarily be

based with VTG Rail UK, developing, testing and adopting enhanced asset management systems and methods for freight wagon maintenance to be rolled out across the sector.

They will also spend time working with other RWA members and at the University, accessing specialist software, equipment and facilities.

The Asset Performance Engineer will use solid project management skills and academic understanding to deliver this project successfully, with industry and academic support and guidance, and a programme of personal and professional development.

There could be an opportunity for the right candidate to join an RWA member organisation on a permanent basis after the initial two-year project has concluded. **To find out more click below:**

**IRR**  
Institute of Railway Research  
University of Huddersfield



## UK News

# Customer placement offers industry insight for new starter

**Our new sales and account manager Archie Lucas spent a week at the GB Railfreight offices in Peterborough in September as part of his introduction to the rail freight industry.**

Archie, 23, spent time with the controllers and the TOPS desk. He said: "I found the visit to GBRf's offices to be a brilliant insight into the workings of a freight operator. Being new to the rail industry I had little prior knowledge of the workings of the railway, so spending a week behind the scenes with our largest customer was an eye-opener to see the work that goes into ensuring that trains run both safely and efficiently."

"One of the most memorable parts of my visit was spending time with the controllers. It was very interesting to see the challenges that our customers face on a day-to-day basis and to learn how these challenges are dealt with."

During the week Archie also spent time with VTG fleet controllers Martyn Catlin and Matthew Harris who are based at the Peterborough office. He said: "Seeing how they keep our wagons in service through planning maintenance and communicating with GBRf's team was a great insight into the work that goes into delivering a reliable fleet for our customers."

He added: "Of course, one of my favourite parts of the trip was visiting the yard to see some of our wagons! This visit also included a look of one of GBRf's Class 66 locomotives which was brilliant to see up close."



GBRf Class 66 at Peterborough

Archie joined our team in September and has already made a great impact. He said he was attracted to a career in the rail freight industry because of its sustainability credentials and the exciting future possibilities of being able to move a variety of different goods by rail that are currently transported by lorries.

"I can see many possibilities for an exciting future in rail freight," he said. "I was attracted to VTG because it is innovative in creating new and forward-thinking solutions."

We wish Archie every success in his career with VTG Rail UK.



Welcome to VTG Rail UK! Sales and Account Manager Archie Lucas checks out our fleet of repurposed coal hoppers with Sales and Marketing Director Ian Shaw.

## Signing up for a sustainable future

**VTG Rail UK has extended our strategic collaboration with Predge AB to develop and strengthen our digital transformation process.**

The VTG Rail UK fleet requires vast maintenance operations supported by decisions based on the digital collection and real-time analysis of condition data. Predge will provide solutions for predictive maintenance keeping VTG Rail UK's long-term goal to provide sustainable logistics with high availability, reliability, top-tier safety, efficiency, and reduced maintenance costs.



Sam Hunt, Project Engineer at VTG Rail UK, said: "We look forward to extending our co-operation with Predge as part of our ongoing journey towards a more efficient and sustainable operation. Our agreement is a strategic leap in our digital transformation."

Predge AB is an AI / Cloud / SaaS company that supports customers' digitisation through advanced analyses of the condition of components and systems. Their services reduce operational disruption and optimize the service life of components and systems for railway operators, infrastructure owners and material handling systems.

Simo Pykälistö, CEO at Predge adds: "It feels incredibly inspiring to step into the British market as a strategic partner with a large and reputable player like VTG Rail UK. We see it as proof that we have an attractive offer for logistics companies with digital transformation on the agenda."



## Group News

## roadrailLink leads to fewer trucks on Italy's roads

**Combined transport is the ideal solution as a flexible, climate-friendly way to meet today's transportation needs. While rail takes care of the long haul, trucks can cover the last mile where necessary.**

Yet, one serious problem makes this more difficult than it sounds as 95 percent of the semi-trailers in use today are not craneable, which means they cannot be transferred from trucks to modular freight wagons. The solution to this problem is roadrailLink or 'r2L' in short, which enables semi-trailers to be used for combined transports opening the way to shift countless freight consignments from road to rail.

Developed by VTG in collaboration with its partner VEGA International, this innovative trans-shipment and transport technology makes it economically viable to lift non-craneable semitrailers of all kinds onto rail freight wagons. This is accomplished with a fully galvanised r2L solution - a platform or ramp that terminal cranes and reach stackers can lift vertically onto and off double pocket wagons.

The concept has already convinced a large number of customers, including one major Italian logistics firm who is currently deploying r2L on two routes as

an efficient and climate-friendly way to link southern Italy with the north of the country and the rest of Europe. These transports are already taking several thousand trucks off Italian roads, reducing traffic congestion and easing the burden on the environment.

The r2L solution needs no traditional ramps or other fixtures to drive semitrailers onto and off the rails, so handling is practical and convenient. On

the one hand, shifting the trucks from road to rail is simplicity itself. On the other hand, terminal capacity is not obstructed by having to have mounting ramps lying around. Trans-shipment takes literally a matter of minutes, and the use of laser measuring technology makes it so precise that little or no manual intervention is needed. Terminal tractor drivers can simply position each semitrailer to perfection without leaving their cab.



roadrailLink enables semi-trailers to be used for combined transports opening the way to shift countless freight consignments from road to rail.

## FastTrack – the ultimate in flexible transportation

**Already well established at ports such as Rotterdam and Gothenburg, VTG's FastTrack is now also available at another key European freight hub - DUSS terminal Munich-Riem.**

FastTrack maximizes flexibility for customers. Thanks to 24/7 availability, it provides a fast and easy way to book extra capacity in response to ad-hoc planning needs or unexpected outages. Reliable, high-quality transports are therefore guaranteed.

The DUSS terminal in Munich-Riem is the pivotal hub between Central and Southern Europe, bundling transports to and from Italy in particular. It provides a central transshipment point for

numerous operators and hosts a large number of railway companies. Customers can now book single wagons (90-foot container wagons) for maritime and continental traffic online around the clock.

Thomas Dittmann, Head of Digital Products at VTG said: "We have set up a premium service throughout Europe in the shape of FastTrack and we are thrilled to be adding another attractive location to this network.

"The ability to make wagons available in Munich at short notice and with digital support helps us provide additional capacity to guarantee failsafe transports, most of which would otherwise be

carried by road. Besides being a very attractive service for our customers, this also plays a part in realising the transportation and environmental policy goal off shifting freight off the roads and onto the rails."



## UK News

## Light years ahead - VTG celebrates major win at Rail Freight Group Awards



Managing Director Colin Denman (centre) proudly displays the RFG award for Innovation and Talent alongside colleagues from the VTG Rail UK team based at our offices in Birmingham.

**VTG Rail UK has been recognised for its commitment to revolutionising wagon tracking technology after winning this year's Rail Freight Group Award for Innovation and Talent for VTG Connect.**

Showcasing accomplishments within the rail freight sector and the many benefits it provides for the UK, the distinguished Rail Freight Group Awards took place in September and saw the judges describe VTG Connect as being 'light years ahead of other software projects'.

Accepting the award on behalf of our team, Managing Director Colin Denman said: "VTG Connect gives customers eagle eyes on their wagons, freight and transport chain by providing sensor-enabled data analysis of freight wagons. It is a fantastic product providing significant operational benefits to our customers.

"We believe that digitising wagons from end to end is fundamental to keeping rail competitive as a mode of transportation. They are a crucial factor in enabling us to give our customers innovative services

that make their logistical processes and collaboration with rail carriers more efficient."

The programme to equip all VTG UK wagons with Connect is in full swing and over 2,000 vehicles have been fitted with the technology. By allowing customers to keep connected to their wagon, freight and entire transport chain at all times, customers are able to implement more robust processes for smooth operations.



The RFG award for Innovation and Talent takes its place in the VTG trophy cabinet.

For more information on VTG Connect, please contact [salesuk@vtg.com](mailto:salesuk@vtg.com)

## VTG recognised at National Rail Awards

VTG Rail UK is delighted to have been recognised at the prestigious National Rail Awards which took place in October at London's Grosvenor House Hotel in Park Lane.

Our Ecofret 2 intermodal wagon was judged Highly Commended in the Freight and Logistics Achievement of the Year category providing further recognition for this revolutionary offering which is changing the way containerised freight is moved across Britain.



Sam Hunt and Martyn Catlin at the National Rail Awards in October.

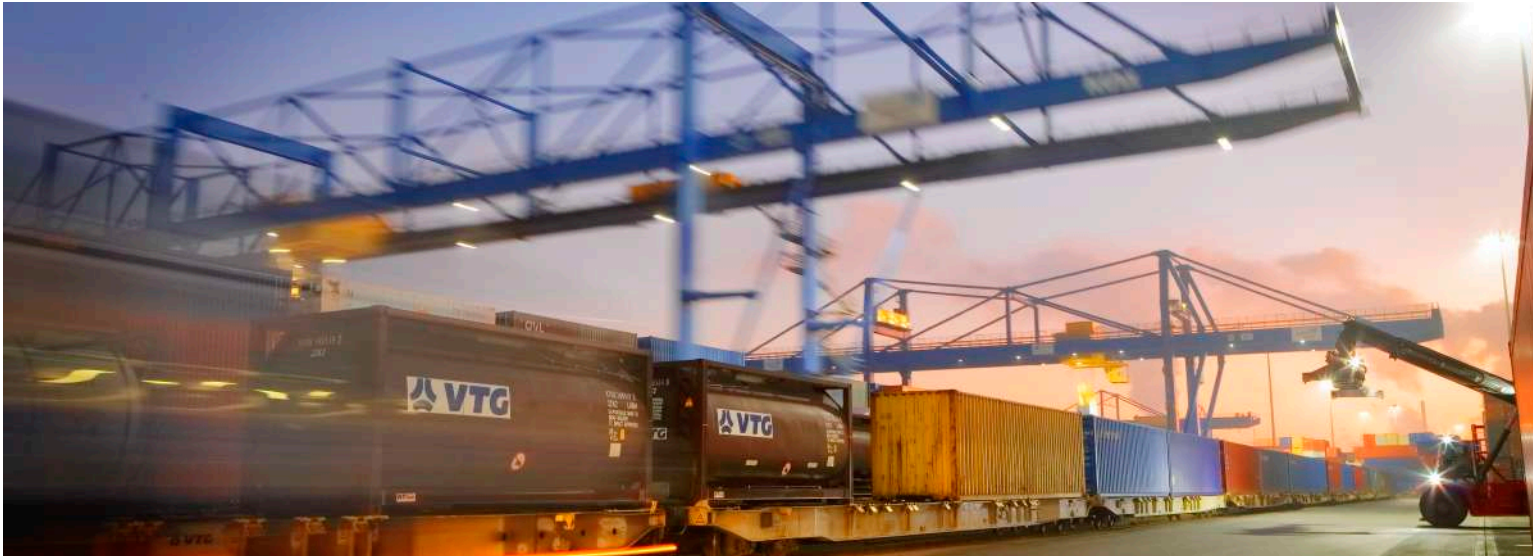
Introduced to the UK fleet in 2021, Ecofret2 is the next generation of the award-winning performance of VTG's Ecofret wagon and offers optimal enhancements to deliver even more in efficiency gains and cost savings for rail freight operators, their customers and ultimately the general public buying their goods from the supermarket shelves.

VTG Rail UK Sales and Marketing Director Ian Shaw said: "This is great news for VTG and the intermodal rail freight sector. Rail freight is vital to the UK economy and will continue to play an increasingly important and leading role as the UK looks to decarbonise its transport sector and move towards meeting the 2050 net zero targets.

"These objectives will not be achieved without innovative rolling stock always being available to continually drive freight performance. Ecofret2 platforms meet the flexible demands of the customer by providing streamlined services for the intermodal sector."



# VTG boosts excellent rating in GRESB global sustainability ranking



On the right track - VTG is embracing its sustainability strategy with innovative solutions and sustainable transport concepts to realise the urgent need for a modal shift from road to rail.

**In just its second year participating in the Global Real Estate Sustainability Benchmark (GRESB), VTG has earned 99 out of 100 possible points (2021: 96) in the prestigious ranking. This score enabled VTG to move up to 12th place in the overall assessment (2021: 22nd place) out of 649 participating companies (2021: 550) in the Infrastructure category.**

GRESB is the leading international rating system that specifically aims to measure the sustainability performance of companies and funds in the real estate and infrastructure sectors.

With its benchmark, the American-Dutch institute compares participating companies and assesses their sustainability performance in seven categories: management, policy & disclosure, management of risks and opportunities, monitoring and environment management system (EMS), certifications, stakeholder engagement and performance indicators.

The extensive assessment criteria are updated every year and aligned with international reporting standards, goals and specifications. The so-called GRESB score resulting from the weighting of the seven categories plays an important role in increasing the transparency of companies' sustainability related efforts and enabling them to be compared.

Bernd Nawitzky, Head of Management Systems & Safety said: "We are pleased about the excellent ranking, but, more importantly, we are thrilled to be on the right track with our sustainability strategy. VTG is embracing its responsibility. With our innovative solutions and sustainable transport concepts, we are helping to realise the urgently needed modal shift from road to rail while using our resources sparingly.

"We aim to be a climate-neutral company by 2040 and are acting against climate change with this clear course. At the same time, VTG is also fulfilling its social responsibilities with a wide range of initiatives."

This commitment to environmental, social and governance issues has once again been awarded a 5-star rating, the highest possible score, in the GRESB assessment. Among the 22 rail companies participating worldwide, VTG took first place this year for the 'Performance' component.

Eike Furkert, Sustainability Manager at VTG added: "In addition to being a great acknowledgment of VTG's commitment to sustainability, this also shows that we are using the right indicators to manage these activities. Our work is paying off, and we would like to thank all our colleagues for their dedication to sustainability and for the extensive efforts they made while preparing the company to participate in the GRESB assessment."

Representing the entire Executive Board, Sven Wellbrock, Chief Operating Officer Europe & Chief Safety Officer at VTG AG, said: "The rail system will be a key success factor in shaping a sustainable future. We are keenly aware of the need for VTG – the market leader and a driver of innovation – to set an example by putting our expertise and inventive capabilities to good use.

"Thus, we are delighted not only that VTG is making a significant contribution to developing eco-friendly transport concepts for our customers with our business model and innovative solutions, but also that it succeeded in making another outstanding impression during its second time participating in the GRESB rating."

## People

## Fundraising year off to a flying start!



(L-R): Debbie Field (VTG HR & Office Manager), Emma Harewood (Acorns Hospice Partnerships Fundraising Officer), Anna Kobzda (VTG Sales Support Coordinator) and Mark Pumphrey (VTG Fleet Operations Manager) in the beautiful gardens at Acorns Children's Hospice in Birmingham.

**Fundraising for our charity of the year got off to a flying start back in July when eight intrepid members of the VTG Rail UK team flew on the fastest zip line in at the world to raise £2,200 for Acorns Children's Hospice.**

The daredevil group took on the challenge at Penrhyn Quarry to raise money for the West Midlands based charity which offers support from its three hospices in Worcester, Birmingham and Walsall, as well as in family homes and the community.

Colin Denman, Managing Director of VTG Rail UK, said: "I'm very proud of all my brave colleagues who took part in the zip wire challenge which marked the beginning of our year of fundraising efforts for our chosen charity, the Acorn Children's Hospice. This is a fantastic charity which provides a network of specialist palliative nursing care and support for babies, children and young people under the age of 18 who have been diagnosed with life-limiting or life-threatening conditions, as well as providing support to their families.

"I'd like to thank all our families, friends, customers and suppliers who sponsored

our zip wire team enabling us to raise these funds for Acorns."

Emma Harewood, Partnerships Fundraising Officer at Acorns, said: "We wouldn't be able to carry out our vital work without the generosity of local businesses and the community. In the past year we have cared for more than 700 children and almost 1,000 families, including those who are bereaved. It costs us £27,000 every day to provide our services, the bulk of which comes from fundraising. So, we are extremely grateful to VTG Rail UK for choosing to support our charity."



VTG adrenalin junkies who took part in an exhilarating Zipwire Challenge to raise funds for Acorns Children's Hospice in July.

## Sun shines on RBF Annual Golf Day

**VTG Rail UK was pleased to support this year's Railway Benefit Fund Golf Day held at Hendon Golf Club in September.**

The charity's 18<sup>th</sup> annual Golf Day raised an incredible £16,000 with all proceeds raised from the event going directly to support railway people and their financial dependents through difficult times.



Getting in the swing ahead of the annual RBF Golf Day at Hendon Golf Club.

The day was rounded off with a dinner and prize giving ceremony, auction and raffle. Unfortunately, we were not amongst the medals this year, but congratulations to winners Railpen and well done to second placed GB Railfreight and third placed AW Rail Services.

It was a fantastic event with some excellent golf played on a very sunny day. Most importantly of all though, thousands of pounds were raised for an extremely worthy cause, thanks to everyone who took part and helped make it such a great success.

The Railway Benefit Fund is the only UK charity solely dedicated to supporting current, former and retired rail workers for issues such as debt, redundancy, illness and domestic abuse. **To find out more, please visit their website by clicking below.**





## People

# Twenty Year Club - the journey so far...

**The company has enjoyed a fantastic journey so far with three of our team, Dry Lease Co-ordinator Paul Lugg, Service Delivery Manager Maria Connolly and Sales and Marketing Director Ian Shaw, having been with the company from day one.**

Ian said: "The growth we've achieved over the last 20 years has been a real highlight in my career. Our turnover has grown five-fold over that period, and we have welcomed many new customers, whether from scratch, such as BA, Cappagh and SCS or via sale and leaseback with the likes of Tata and Tarmac or by the acquisition of AAE and Nacco."

Ian's VTG career started in 2001 with the company he joined, CAIB, already about to be sold by Brambles to VTG.

He said: "The fleet has grown from around 2000 wagons with under 85% utilisation to 4,500 wagons with over 95% utilisation. The rail freight industry has developed in the last 20 years, for example with the introduction of FOCs such as GBRf who we have worked alongside and helped to develop. Of course, the coal market died but construction and intermodal are booming which shows the resilience of this industry in being able to be agile and adapt for new sectors."

Ian added: "VTG Connect is a very exciting introduction to the market, along with other digital monitoring, to make our fleet and maintenance smarter and more efficient for our customers. We will also keep striving to even further improve our reliability and availability of wagons, cementing VTG's position as the number one in our sector."

Over the years VTG Rail UK has had three different HQs in the West Midlands – Worcester, Quinton and Rubery – and will move to its fourth site in Bromsgrove in early 2023.

With an illustrious career of 46 years Paul, aged 72, recently changed his working hours to two days a week.

When asked about the highlights of his career with VTG so far, he said: "I think the thing I got the most kick out of was getting the order with BA for 42 brand new wagons in 2017. We were competing against all the other wagon hirers and it was a great feeling of triumph and testament to the professionalism and expertise of our team when we won that contract."

Maria said: "The biggest highlight of my career so far was back in 2014 when I became VTG's Service Delivery Manager. With my team of three fleet controllers, it was our job to be focused on maximising wagon availability and making sure we deliver for the customer at every level. Eight years on our promise and commitment is still the same and with an ever-growing fleet we are now a team of seven and I couldn't be prouder of their continued dedication to deliver the unrivalled service VTG prides ourselves on. Of course, this wouldn't be possible without the support of the wider team and working with such a highly motivated professional team definitely has to be the second biggest highlight."

Maria added: "I have seen a lot of changes in the rail industry over the years, including an increase in women joining the sector. With the continued investment and focus on diversity, I truly believe it is a very exciting time for women to be involved in rail."



Long servers! Paul Lugg, Maria Connolly and Ian Shaw celebrate 20 years with VTG Rail UK.

## People

## VTG Rail UK staff complete Rail Safety Awareness course



Anna Kobzda, Keith Link and Archie Lucas gained valuable knowledge and an understanding of working in railway infrastructure as part of their Rail Safety Awareness course.

**VTG Rail UK colleagues Keith Link, Anna Kobzda and Archie Lucas are the latest members of our team to attend the Rail Safety Awareness course at Long Marston Innovation Centre.**

Anna said: "Keith, Archie and I are relatively new to the railway industry and so knowing how to navigate the railways in a safe and secure manner is vital. We'd like to thank Colette Ranford and the Victa Railfreight team for providing us with instructions, knowledge and an understanding of how to stay safe whilst working in railway infrastructure such as private rail yards and sidings."

The training included bespoke modules covering areas such as:

- Rail freight interchanges and terminals
- Rail-connected ports
- Maintenance personnel working in the vicinity of railway infrastructure
- Emergency Services
- Rail maintenance depots
- Private/preserved railways
- Personnel requiring an insight into railway safety
- Personnel responsible for the safety of rail operations on site

## Supporting the rail freight community at Christmas



VTG Rail UK was delighted to attend and support the Rail Freight Group Christmas Lunch in December. The annual event is an excellent opportunity to meet with colleagues, customers and suppliers alike.

## VTG Rail UK on a MISSION FOR CHRISTMAS

VTG Rail UK is delighted to be supporting Free Radio's Mission Christmas appeal, to provide gifts for children who are at risk of waking up to no presents on Christmas Day.

We are supporting the appeal by holding a collection from across our team which will enable us to donate brand new toys and help to meet the demand for the particular children's age group in which we know that securing enough donations is always a struggle.

VTG Rail UK HR and Office Manager, Debbie Field, explained: "The cost-of-living crisis, plus the lingering effects of the pandemic, are pushing local families who were just barely managing into poverty.

"Christmas is normally a magical time for children, believing that Santa will have them on his 'good' list resulting in new toys and goodies under the tree, but many families will find that Christmas is a luxury they just can't afford this year at a time when the choice could be between having enough money for food or heating, or buying gifts for their children."

Free Radio's annual campaign aims to make sure no child goes without a gift under the tree at Christmas. Cash for Kids, which runs Mission Christmas, says that the number of gifts donated this year have never been this high so early in the campaign.

**To find out more please visit the website by clicking below:**





# A reliable partner for the future



Alternative energy sources can be shipped safely and eco-friendly by rail.

**To diversify its energy supply, Europe must push ahead with imports of hydrogen and liquefied natural gas (LNG). Only then will it be able to become less dependent of gas supplies via pipelines and also reach its climate policy targets.**

For this to succeed, investment is required in the import and distribution infrastructure and to develop tailored logistics concepts. Rail has an important role to play, providing a safe, climate-friendly transport of alternative energy sources.

VTG has for years been working on solutions to carry new energy sources by rail. The process involves completely rethinking the transportation of energy – from the development of special transport containers to logistical planning and transports involving our in-house railway company and digital customer service.

## LNG by rail

As far back as 2015, VTG became the first company to unveil an innovative liquefied natural gas (LNG) wagons that features an insulated tank that can safely carry large volumes of cryogenically liquefied gas by rail. LNG has already

been transported as a global commodity in special tankers for many years. In the future, however, Europe will be supplied with far more LNG and in the meantime, the first biomethane liquefaction plants are also now taking shape.

On the flip side, a number of countries still lack one important piece of the supply puzzle. Germany, for example, still has no dedicated LNG import terminal where LNG (and hopefully other gases) can be unloaded, degasified and/or simply transferred to rail for onward journey. Terminals at Brunsbüttel and Wilhelmshaven have been planned for many years and have now both been given the green light with initial consignments of LNG expected to start arriving in northern Germany in 2023. When these (and other) terminals are ready, VTG will be standing by as a partner.

However, while the loading and transport of LNG in tank cars has been successfully tested in recent years, terminal operators and industry players have yet to create essential conditions for rail transport such as the construction of railway sidings where loading and unloading technology is already in place.

## Clearing the way for hydrogen & CO<sub>2</sub>

Importantly, LNG is not the only consideration in Europe's changing energy strategy. Hydrogen is equally pivotal to the European Commission's REPowerEU planning. 'Green' hydrogen generated from renewable sources effectively delivers carbon-neutral energy, as the production process gives off little or nothing in the way of greenhouse gas emissions.

Stefan Siegemund, VTG Business Development Manager for New Energies, said. "We are well aware that hydrogen transports will increase in the years ahead and VTG is excellently prepared. We have invested and are continuing to invest so that we will be able to support our partners by letting them lease equipment such as special tank cars and tank containers."

Finn Torge Bremer, VTG Strategy and Innovation Manager agrees: "We have logistical concepts that are tailored to carrying hydrogen, and we have the necessary traction thanks to our railway company Retrack. Beyond that, we are already planning concepts for the rail-based transport of CO<sub>2</sub>."



# Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

From everyone at VTG Rail UK

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