Strategic Review of RSSB

With RSSB coming up toward its 10th Anniversary next April, the board of directors have initiated a strategic review which commenced in July this year.

The objective of the review is to confirm the role of RSSB, and to help the company to shape itself to deliver that role efficiently going into its second decade.

To steer the review a sub-committee of the board has been formed and in addition to directors, three members of the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) and representatives from the Department for Transport (DIT) and Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) are also part of the group. Given that the ORR is currently consulting on whether RDG should formalise itself as a cross-industry leadership body, it will be important to define the relationship between it and RSSB. Work is progressing well and we anticipate publishing a consultation document later in the year to ask members and other stakeholders for their views on changes in the RSSB Constitution Agreement. Although we anticipate beginning the consultation in November there will still be much work to do, to ensure member support for the many and varied activities that RSSB undertakes, and to define and shape the functions and services that RSSB will deliver going into the 5 year control period starting in April 2014. We anticipate incremental implementation of the outputs of the review with the front end being more focussed on the ‘what’ we do, followed by ‘how’ it is done. By March 2014 we would expect to have in place a new five year strategic business plan for the company.

In addition to the formal consultation more detail of the developing review will be communicated in future Information Bulletins.

For details of changes to Railway Group Standards view the Latest Updates page on the RGS Online website www.rgsonline.co.uk

Need funds to get a research/innovation project going? - Research grants are available to rail company-led consortia

The Research and Development (R&D) grant scheme managed by RSSB has been given a revamp to help support the industry in getting research and innovation projects going by opening up more direct and speedier access to the funding available.

RSSB managed research generally involves projects and initiatives being delivered on behalf of a cross-industry group. However, the R&D grant scheme is an alternative, co-funding option, designed for RSSB member companies to lead on a project in a consortium of at least two potential users of the research/innovation outcomes.

Following a successful pilot, the scheme is now being re-launched offering companies a fast decision on applications. Ideally suited to research ideas in rail companies which need an extra boost to overcome financial obstacles, the scheme allows the applicant to retain full management and control of the project. In return, the consortium agrees to share intellectual property rights of some of the research outputs with the whole industry via RSSB; each project can be negotiated on an individual, bespoke basis.

Following lessons learnt from the pilot the upper and lower limits of the grant amount have been removed. Grants are made up to a maximum of 50% of the total project cost. The contribution from the consortium must be made up of at least 20% cash (ie incremental costs), the remainder being in-kind contributions (eg use of existing equipment and resources).

An application can be made at any time, which is then assessed by a RSSB panel against the following criteria:

- Planning and commitment demonstrated by the consortium
- Likelihood of success
- Rewards including wider industry benefits

Once approved, the grant is awarded quickly, so the consortium can get on with the project straightaway, managing it directly itself. RSSB’s role can vary depending on the project and the make-up of the consortium but would normally be a ‘light touch’, perhaps as an advisor to the consortium (if it is relevant and appropriate), but will generally concentrate solely on managing the application process, assessing proposals, awarding grants and ensuring the consortium's project delivers benefit back to the whole industry including securing agreement on sharing findings at some level.

For more information, including the application pack, go to: www.rssb.co.uk or contact Paul Edmonds, paul.edmonds@rssb.co.uk

On the Right Track

Issue 3 of Right Track has recently been published on Opsweb (www.opsweb.co.uk) and sent out to rail companies for them to make available to anyone with a role in rail operations. The magazine is aimed at train drivers, guards, conductors, on-board staff, dispatchers, signallers, people on stations, people working on the track, shunters and all who operate the railway. It should also be of interest to managers and engineers.

Among regular features like SPADtalk and the ‘lowdown’ interview column, Issue 3 has a spread on signalling, including interviews with two signallers handling different types of route, traffic levels and signalling technology. There are also shared learning articles reviewing the lessons learned from an incident at the platform-train interface at Kings Cross in October 2010, a runaway trolley at Haslemere in September 2011, as well as the problem of animals on the line, with a look back at the impact of the Polmont accident in 1984.

Feedback from readers, the industry editorial group, managers and decision makers has been really positive. Companies are actively encouraging staff to read the magazine, and are using it to supplement formal briefings. Right Track runs with four issues a year, and its sponsor, the Operations Focus Group (OFG), is keen for it to continue into 2013-14.

RSSB manages the development of the magazine on behalf of OFG and the editorial group, supplying expertise in rail operation, communications, design and production, professional authoring, editing and copyediting, statistical analysis, human factors and R&D.

If you would like more information about Right Track, or wish to suggest or author an article, please contact righttrack@rssb.co.uk or telephone 020 3142 5300.
Supplier assurance: Engineering excellence into competence

RISAS (Railway Industry Supplier Approval Scheme) provides assessment and certification for suppliers of critical products and services, on behalf of the whole GB mainline rail industry. RSSB looks after the overall management of the scheme and acts as the accreditation agent for RISABs, the approval bodies who assess and, if successful, certificate companies.

The scheme is designed to generate supplier assurance on the most critical products and services, and so offers a single, independent, universally recognised, rigorous assessment of a company’s capability to provide them, so eliminating the need for audit by clients or other schemes.

This challenge for the suppliers is to demonstrate that their management systems and front line processes actually deliver the product specification required by the railway.

One area of consistent problems identified by RISAB assessments concerns the design and operation of competence management systems (CMSs). Experience reveals that these are predominantly ‘compliance-driven’ (based around former Railway Group Standard GO/RT3260) with little or no integration into a supplier’s overall business management systems, thereby providing no strong link between competency, safety and culture.

There is a range of existing and emerging guidance on competence management and in particular, the Office of Rail Regulation (ORR)’s Railway Safety Publication 1 (RSP1) – ‘Developing and Maintaining Staff Competence’ 2007. The competence of personnel working on critical products is vital to the safe operation of the railway and so this is reflected in the requirements and conditions of how suppliers are assessed (documented in RISAS/003). This includes the requirement that the supplier shall be able to demonstrate that it has a competency management system (CMS) consistent with the requirements of RSP1 mentioned above.

The RISAB experiences also led the RISAS Board to ask RSSB to develop suitable guidance (including examples of good practice) in terms of how the principles of RSP1 could be addressed in real life.

The result is ‘Engineering excellence into competence’, a new guidance document published by RSSB, principally to support all companies engaged in RISAS (as users, suppliers or approval bodies). Specifically, section B.7 of RISAS/003 refers to this document for guidance, so is the agreed reference to use when judging the relative adequacy of competency management systems as part of any RISAS assessment activity.

Reference to and adoption of the relevant guidance within this document will ensure that RISAS remains both up to date and at the forefront of good practice as well as keeping abreast of latest industry developments and research in this area. Although specifically designed for use by RISAB’s and suppliers, the guidance in this document should be of use for the development of competence management systems in all areas of the industry.

Go to [http://www.rssb.co.uk/NP/SCHEMES/Pages/SUPPLIERASSURANCE.aspx](http://www.rssb.co.uk/NP/SCHEMES/Pages/SUPPLIERASSURANCE.aspx) to download a copy of ‘Engineering excellence into competence’ or contact Andy Tandy, systems and stakeholder manager at RSSB, andy.tandy@rssb.co.uk

New Approach to Rules

Earlier this year, as part of the New Approach to the Rule Book ([http://www.rssb.co.uk/RGS/Pages/rulebookandnational.aspx](http://www.rssb.co.uk/RGS/Pages/rulebookandnational.aspx)), RSSB carried out a survey with front-line staff to establish what they thought of the new Rule Book Modules and Handbooks. The survey was for Tranche 2, which covered setting up safe systems of work (Handbooks 6-10, Rule Book Module T10 and Rule Book Module TS1, Section 13) and for Tranche 3, which covered possessions and control of rail movements (Handbooks 11-15 and Rule Book Module T3). The results indicate that both Tranches 2 and 3 have achieved their objectives in terms of being significantly more usable than previous documents in areas such as being easy to read, finding information quickly, being set out in logical steps and using understandable words.

A survey is now underway to collect feedback for Tranches 4 and 5 of the New Approach to the Rule Book. Tranche 4 relates to AC and DC electrified lines (Handbooks 16 and 17 and Modules AC and DC). Tranche 5 relates to level crossings (Handbook 18 and Modules TS9 and TW8). The surveys are available from your line manager or can be requested by contacting alice.monk@rssb.co.uk.

The surveys, which are strictly connoenian, provoke a valuable way of ensuring that the documents meet both the individual’s and industry requirements. We would like to receive completed surveys by Wednesday 17 October but all feedback is welcomed.
Building a cross-industry innovation team

The rail industry is creating a new team to accelerate and champion innovation.

Headed by Director Designate David Clarke, the innovation team will support the industry in capitalising on the latest thinking. It will fund demonstration projects to test new technologies and business approaches, so that the industry can adopt these with confidence. It will help transform innovative concepts into tangible applications, products and processes rapidly and efficiently. The team will also provide entrepreneurial and technical know-how to enhance the industry’s innovation capability.

It will manage an innovation fund, with initial pilot funding from the Department for Transport of £16m. The team will also be looking to leverage further funds. It is expected that the team will administer the innovation fund announced in July by the Secretary of State for Transport in the High Level Output Specification for the railway, for 2014 to 2019 (http://www.dft.gov.uk/news/statements/greening-20120716a).

With industry backing from the Rail Delivery Group, Planning Oversight Group and the RSSB board, the team’s activities will be overseen by the Technical Strategy Leadership Group (TSLG). The team will be hosted by RSSB.

Research has shown that innovation is not working as well in the rail industry as it could. Work commissioned by TSLG identified things which get in the way of innovation, notably the lack of a suitable body to champion it and cross system thinking, where good initial research fails to develop to commercially available products because of a lack of funding, and recognition of the importance of the supply market in producing innovative solutions. While there are positive examples of individual initiatives, there remain significant gaps in the range of enablers of innovation, where further coherence and joining-up will deliver more value to and for the rail sector.

The team will also support the implementation of a more co-ordinated and far-reaching approach to embedding innovation in the rail industry, ensuring that:

- Innovation efforts are focussed on the priority challenges for the industry
- Optimal use is made of the innovation funds available
- Ideas are pulled through the value chain from idea to realisation rapidly and efficiently
- Capabilities and resources are developed that can contribute to the innovation efforts

The initiative will bring together industry players and suppliers who share a common interest in optimising the balance between performance, cost and risk but find they cannot justify acting on an individual basis because of for example uncertainties, mismatched cost/benefits, timescales and/ or lack of funds, which would therefore represent missed opportunities for the industry. It will create a climate where companies will be drawn to participate more confidently with the rail industry.

For more details, contact Guy Woodroffe, head of research and development, guy.woodroffe@rssb.co.uk or innovations@futurerailway.org.

Events:

Organised by:
RSSB Human Factors Team,
Network Rail Ergonomics Team,
University of Nottingham Centre for Rail Human Factors
In association with The Institute of Ergonomics and Human Factors, ERA and UIC.

The Fourth International Rail Human Factors Conference will be held in London on the 5-7 March 2013. The conference will bring together delegates whose common concern is to investigate, understand and design for people on the railways.

For more information, see http://www.railhf2013.org/Pages/home.aspx