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### **Rail research body to catch universities' train of thought**

Both the railways and universities are looking to exploit the mutual benefits of even closer cooperation.

The Rail Research UK Association (RRUK-A), which was started up a year ago, was officially launched yesterday in London. The launch seals the joining of forces between UK universities and the rail industry in a virtual research body, to be a bridge between the rail industry's research needs and potential providers of research in the UK university sector.

The Minister of State for Transport, Theresa Villiers MP, welcomed the development in her keynote address at the high-profile launch event with rail industry personnel and over 20 universities on 8 November at Westminster Central Hall.

The industry believes that there is a wealth of knowledge, ideas and creativity at universities, which could be used to meet the needs of the railway in the UK, and that there is the opportunity to build on existing relationships and to provide further focus to realise the full potential of all of this capability.

RRUK-A industry co-chair, Anson Jack, of industry body RSSB, said: 'Forging connections like this means that the rail industry is in a stronger position to get the best, and most focussed activity and knowledge from the country's leading thinkers, researchers and developers. Together we hope we can unlock more innovation potential to support the nation's railway system, and so deliver a stronger and more sustainable economy.'

RRUK-A academic co-chair Simon Iwnicki, of Manchester Metropolitan University, added: 'The bridge we're formally opening with industry today builds on the success of a number of growing, fruitful partnerships. For the universities and organisations in

RRUK-A, we think this alliance will yield substantial benefits. We will have a clearer picture of rail industry R&D needs, and so be able to play a bigger part in enabling innovation and growth in the railway.'

The body was opened for membership in 2010, and has grown to become a vibrant association of the UK's leading academics in railway science and engineering, with an enviable cache of research capabilities. Professor Martyn Pemble, of the Tyndall National Institute, showed how universities are in a position to bring things to rail that have never been tried before, like nanotechnology.

One of the key aims of RRUK-A is to remove the barriers between academia and the railway industry through better focusing research effort towards solutions for real-world problems and also through a better understanding within industry of what university research can offer and how it can be supported. RRUK-A is run with oversight from an executive committee consisting of elected university representatives, and the two funders, RSSB and Network Rail.

Alongside Theresa Villiers, Professor Martyn Pemble, industry co-chair Anson Jack and academic co-chair Simon Iwnicki at the launch event was Network Rail's Andy Doherty, who chaired a panel session with four university researchers and two industry representatives, talking about research that has been done to date and the benefits that it has brought.

In all, nearly 120 delegates attended, including a cross-section of chief executives, operations and engineering heads from across the industry as well as decision makers in RSSB and Department for Transport, and representation from over 20 universities leading the field of academic rail research.

**-Ends-**

For further information, please contact the RSSB press office, on 020 3142 5332 or 5331 or email [pressoffice@rssb.co.uk](mailto:pressoffice@rssb.co.uk) or visit the website on [www.rssb.co.uk](http://www.rssb.co.uk)

Notes to editors:

1. Rail Research UK Association (RRUK-A) is a partnership between Britain's rail industry and UK universities. It was set up in 2010 to be an effective bridge between industry and universities. It is funded by RSSB and Network Rail.
2. RRUK-A builds on the foundation of RRUK, which was a virtual research centre funded by the EPSRC from 2003 to 2010 and comprised specific research groups from a limited number of universities. Funding was available for research focussing on particular subjects at those universities for a fixed time and is now complete. RRUK-A is new and is open to all universities. The funding provided by RSSB and Network Rail supports the core functions of RRUK-A. Additional funding for collaborative research projects will be sought from research funders and industry.

For more details about RRUK-A membership:

Secretariat: Tony Leyland, Southampton University [secretariat@rruka.org.uk](mailto:secretariat@rruka.org.uk)

Rail industry engagement: Tanya McCallum, RSSB [rruka@rssb.co.uk](mailto:rruka@rssb.co.uk)

3. The launch event took place on 8 November 2011, at Westminster Central Hall, London. Photographs of the event are available on request from [pressoffice@rssb.co.uk](mailto:pressoffice@rssb.co.uk), telephone 020 3142 5332 or 5331
4. RSSB builds industry-wide consensus and facilitates the resolution of difficult cross-industry issues. It provides knowledge, analysis, a substantial level of technical expertise and powerful information and risk management tools. This delivers a unique mix to the industry across a whole range of subject areas – with the aim of:
  - Driving out unnecessary cost
  - Improving business performance
  - Where reasonably practicable, continuously improving the level of safety in the rail industry
5. RSSB manages the rail industry's research and development (R&D) programme, which covers 'systems' issues across the railway, engineering interfaces within the railway, and interfaces with other parts of the community and society. It's also instrumental in supporting the development of a future vision for the railways – including its technical strategy and sustainable development - and assessing how that vision can best be delivered. A major benefit for industry is that the programme represents an efficient and cost-effective means for the industry to research, develop and problem-solve whilst retaining ownership and direction of the products through RSSB.