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Allocating Freight Vehicles to Suspension Bands – Consultation on
a Revised Approach

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the above consultation.

Having reviewed the information contained within your letter of 2nd March, Direct Rail Services (DRS) would make the responses attached to the questions raised in this consultation.

Yours Sincerely

Andy Martlew
Engineering Standards Manager
Direct Rail Services

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Appendix A – Consultation Questions

Revised approach (technical report attached)

Do you agree that the revised approach (to allocating freight vehicles to Suspension Bands) addresses the issues raised in responses to the June 2011 consultation ?

Yes, although Direct Rail Services had no major objection(s) to the original proposal.

Do you consider the revised approach to be generally fit for purpose ?

Yes, although by using the generic wagon body types to place bogie designs into suspension bands some compromises have had to be made. It would be worthwhile leaving the original vehicle RFC method available to operators/wagon builders/bogie manufacturers who wish to tune their wagon bodies and bogies to achieve the lowest RFC. This would be particularly beneficial for large wagon builds/high mileage wagon fleets. The bogie type could be selected at contract placement stage using the RFC values defined using the generic wagon bodies with the RFC refined as the vehicle design progresses. This would allow the opportunity to evaluate the effects if bogies are tuned to individual vehicle bodies

Do you have any comments to make on Manchester Metropolitan University's (MMU) report (attached) ?

No.

Timing of introduction

Do you agree with our proposal to introduce the revised approach (to allocating freight vehicles to Suspension Bands) from the beginning of CP5 ?

Yes, for new or substantially modified (replacement/different running gear) vehicles only.

Do you agree that the revised approach (to allocating freight vehicles to Suspension Bands) should not be applied retrospectively for old bogie types in CP4 and CP5 ?

Yes, it will not be cost beneficial or practical to create dynamic models of all freight bogies currently operating on the UK rail network.

Do you agree that it is reasonable to reset all Suspension Factors to 1.00 from the beginning of CP6?

No. It will be costly and time consuming to create dynamic models of all freight bogies currently operating on the UK rail network to allow bogies/vehicles to be banded according to suspension performance. This should only be considered if the process can demonstrate a cost/benefit.

Suspension Factors

Do you agree that it is reasonable to retain the current spread between the highest and lowest Suspension Factors of +9.8% and -14.2% respectively?

Initially Yes, but Network Rail should carry out further work to demonstrate a link between RFC and track damage to allow the suspension factors to truly reflect the track friendliness/unfriendliness of different vehicle/bogie types.