

RAILWAY STUDY FORUM

Railway Study Forum Dinner

In October, around 200 professionals met at the Kia Oval for the Annual Railway Study Forum dinner. Delegates came together to reflect on the importance of the rail network and celebrate the achievements from the past year. Delegates ranged from Department for Transport, to CrossCountry, to Network Rail and CMAC. It is a prestigious event in the CILT calendar, it had a cross section of speakers and ample opportunities to network with people across passenger and freight rail.

Charlene (Charley) Wallace, Freight and Customer Director at Network Rail, was introduced as the forum's newest President, and gave a Presidential Address that described her plans to build on the forum's previous successes, as well as her plans on how she will take it forward into 2023. She discussed how to make the railway more attractive to users by improving accessibility, building greater resilience, and driving transformational efficiency.

Tanya Rahman, Consultant at Mercury3 Consult, spoke on how to make transport more accessible for all. She said: "Technology must be at the forefront of our thinking", as accessibility is one of the biggest challenges the rail industry faces, due to the lack of accessible infrastructure, the availability from well-trained staff and more. There is a need to make public



transport and active travel the natural first choice, as it is both an opportunity and a massive challenge, according to Tanya. She finished by saying that rail is at a crossroads, as for every opportunity, there is a massive risk, and the rail industry must remove barriers that hinder people travelling by rail. "We are only good as the last passenger journey", she concluded.

Following the first two courses, Kumar Gilbert, Customer Experience Strategic Resourcing Manager at LNER, spoke about his personal views on the future of public transport through his own anecdotes. Both Kumar and Tanya were named as two of the Tracsis rising stars of public transport. ■

Western Docks visit

On Thursday 22 September 2022, the CILT Rail Study Forum organised a fascinating trip to the Western Docks at the Port of Southampton, the second biggest container port in the UK. We were kindly hosted by Solent Stevedores who operate the 109 Rail Terminal, a vital link for the rail freight industry.

Joined by several CILT members from across the transport and logistics sector we witnessed the majestic operation that combines complex logistical challenges with rail transport, moving strategically placed containers from across the world from sea to land!

Watching the navigation of the colourful Tetris of 10ft and 20ft containers from the vast vessels on the English Channel to trains on our rail network was a sight to behold. The skills involved to unload and load the freight trains, lining up the containers by eye with the three reach stackers was

incredible to witness! One highlight being that some of us even got to sit in the cab of the Class 66, although I couldn't help but wonder what was in the containers!

As part of our trip Connor Lempriere, senior strategic planner and Stephen Walston, programme development manager from Network Rail gave a presentation on the recent upgrade works which enable longer trains in and out of the docks. The details of the Southampton Freight Train Lengthening project gave the CILT members a real insight into the work that has been done to realise the strategy to increase capacity and enhance freight growth on the network. The 775-metre capability for intermodal and automotive trains between Southampton and the West Midlands / West Coast Main Line increased capacity on each train by up to 20% equating to up to 14 additional containers on each train!

Clive Thomas, Group Commercial Director from Solent Stevedores shared an overview

of Solent's Container Operations in the UK & Developments at Southampton with their vision being to create the first integrated container storage, repair, maintenance, cargo cross docking and rail terminal facility in a major UK container port location.

Solent Stevedores provides a two-port solution for empty and loaded container handling, storage and maintenance between London Gateway and the Port of Southampton. They are looking for new and innovative ways to increase capacity dockside. The rail terminal at the Port of Southampton handles around 31% of containers by rail and they have growth ambitions increase this to over 40% and work such as the Southampton lengthening project supports these ambitions. Alongside this they are looking to develop an extension to the rail loading platform to increase the number of daily services by almost double.

A fascinating operation, thank you to CILT for helping to bring rail freight to life. ■