

RAIL EVENT SEES NEW EVENT FORMAT ON RIGHT TRACKS



The second in a series of market sector seminars for CBM members was held at the Advanced Manufacturing Training Centre (AMTC) next door to the Catapult Manufacturing Technology Centre (MTC) at Coventry's Ansty Park.

Following an earlier aerospace event in Derby, the focus for this busy half-day session was commercial opportunities within the rail industry, and how companies should look to win lucrative supply chain contracts.

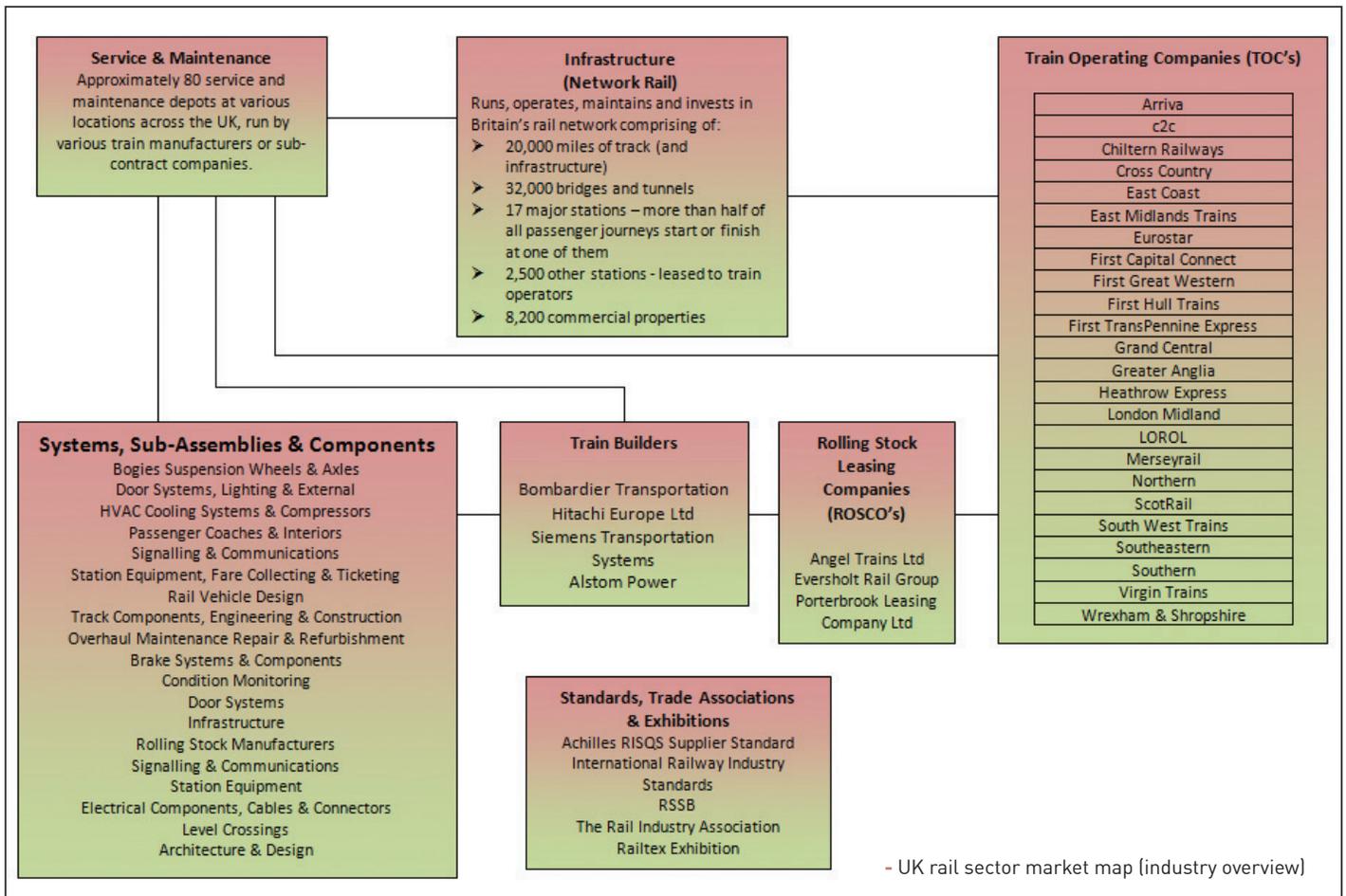
The AMTC was an eye-catching location, and feedback suggests the many delegates were also impressed by the array of knowledge and insight from the six-strong panel of speakers.

Dr Peter Standing, who chairs the CBM's Technology Transfer Group, welcomed the scene-setting presentation by Mike White, the managing director of Arvada Strategic Marketing, and previously a senior manager with Lucas Industries, IMI and Wm Canning plc.

This concerned the available data on UK and European rail networks which Mike suggested could readily be obtained from the internet. By way of example, he showed a Market Structure Map of the UK Rail Sector (*see below*) which identified who does what and with whom. This was followed by further slides indicating a €21bn rail spend in Europe and £1.3bn within the UK, over £750m of which was for components used in rolling stock. This, Mike suggested could offer many business opportunities for the CBM and its member companies. A suggested advantage here would be with those companies which had automotive experience which they could share to enhance the rail industry.

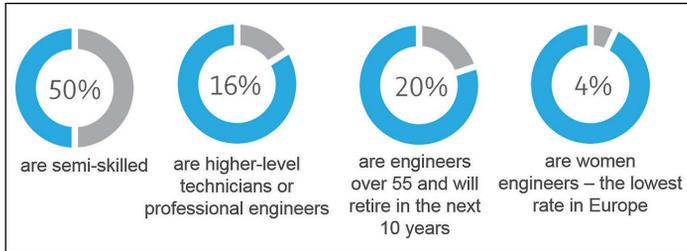
John Evans, CEO of the National College for High Speed Rail surprised many delegates by stating that there were 25k people involved in HS2 which was a 35 year project. This, he suggested, would require a major effort to upskill the rail industry and its supply chain to meet the challenges of running trains having 1100 seats.

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- UK rail sector market map (industry overview)

<< continued from page 7 John described where the current gap in skills existed within the UK, one example being that only 4% of engineers are women which is the lowest rate in Europe. In an attempt to start as we mean to go on, John told delegates of the two Campus' which would help address the skills balance. One at Doncaster (for the heavy end) and the other located in Birmingham (Aston) for the electronics and digital side.



- Skills gap in engineering and rail'

Comments made at the end of the presentation welcomed the prospect that a 35 year strategy for the rail industry offered a significant 'career' prospect to any young person seeking an engineering related long term future.

Access to finance has been a long-term challenge for many of our SME members, so the presentation by Colin Harris, the investment director for Finance Birmingham's Rail Supply Growth Fund, was extremely important in highlighting the funding sources and initiatives which are available.

He suggested that companies looking to win work from rail industry supply chains of the future will have to increase their capabilities and productivity. External investment will play a critical role in achieving those aims.

Colin informed delegates of a £20m fund to help deliver the strategic goals of the Rail Supply Group meet the demands of the future. This was in addition to £0.5bn of funding currently invested in the Automotive and Aerospace sectors which supported 70 supply chain projects.

Colin told his audience of the means by which any interested parties could enter the bidding process with applications between £0.5 and £2m. From projects already in progress it was believed the rail sector was 20 years behind the automotive industry in terms of its supply sector.

Dr James Winnett, from the Warwick Manufacturing Group, highlighted research into the use of innovative lightweight materials for what the industry calls 'Very Light Rail Vehicles'.

His presentation focussed on the symbiotic relationship of energy, materials, manufacture and drive systems to maximise efficiency. A number of examples were shown where the WMG have been involved in such projects. The current one is the concept of the Very Light Rail Innovation Centre and a proposed Test Track in Dudley.

Jim Panter of the Rail Alliance explained that, with 400 members, his organisation was the voice of SME's in the rail supply chain. Originally formed by BIS, DfT alongside Top Tier companies, its role was to help ensure that suppliers to the global rail industry obtained 'mutual benefit' from the 2017 – 19 market forecast of £128bn pa business.

His role, he explained, was to organise and implement the SME Mentoring Scheme helping SME's to understand and proceed through the various industry requirements prior to engagement.

Jim presented a 'flow chart' type progression indicating the steps and necessary conditions which all SME suppliers to the industry must pass through if they are to obtain 'accreditation' and where guidance could be obtained.

The contribution from David Atkinson, the UK head of manufacturing for the SME banking unit within Lloyds Bank was particularly well received.

As he told delegates, he had been involved with manufacturing from an early age, spoke the language of the metal industry, and focused very precisely on what his organisation was doing and could do for SME companies based in engineering.

Despite the uncertain future within competing manufacturing based countries since the 2008/9 financial problems, Dave showed attendees that it wasn't just the UK which found recovery difficult. However, he stated, there were significant opportunities available for those with good plans and that investment in the future was the key to success. To support that view he stated that Lloyds Bank had committed to a £1m sponsorship of the AMTC developing over 500 engineering apprentices. Dave then explained the areas of help and support he and his team of Managers were offering to the 10 000 SME clients which Lloyds had on their books.

He ended with a quote from the Dalai Lama saying "if you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito" suggesting that Rail and other OEMs need companies like those in the CBM inside their supply chains.

Wrapping up the event Peter Standing thanked all the speakers for providing a thoughtful, positive and entertaining set of presentations.

He then informed delegates of a new Self Help Practical Problem solving scheme which the CBM, through its TTG were initiating. Details of the first feasibility study can be found at on page 11 of the current Metal Matters.

In conclusion, Geraldine Bolton, CBM CEO, thanked Lloyds Bank for sponsoring the event and stated that the next in the sequence of market sector meetings will be an automotive event on 22nd November.

All presentation material from the event can be obtained by CBM members from Kirsi Lintula on 0121 601 6350 or email: kirsi.lintula@thecbm.co.uk.

CBM AUTOMOTIVE SECTOR EVENT

The CBM automotive sector event will take place on **22nd November 2016.**

For further information please call Kirsi Lintula on

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