

RAIL FREIGHT BRIEFING 2015

The Rail Freight Briefing at Prologis RFI DIRFT, highlighted the value of rail freight to the logistics operators. The event was held close to the site of the new intermodal terminal, which will form part of the third phase of DIRFT.

The briefing was introduced by **Lord Berkeley, Chairman of the Rail Freight Group** and guest speakers offered a range of views about rail freight and its future potential for the logistics sector. Bringing the event to a conclusion, **Robin Woodbridge and Phil Oakley, Prologis** summarised the history of the existing 6.25 million sq ft DIRFT site and outlined the next phase, which will provide a further 7.8 million sq ft. The development at DIRFT demonstrates Prologis' commitment to rail freight, which the company believes will be integral to many of its customers' logistics operations both now and in the future.

Guest speakers at the briefing included:

DAVID TURNER, MALCOLM LOGISTICS.

Malcolm Logistics has operated the existing intermodal terminal at DIRFT since 2010. During that period the demand for rail freight services at DIRFT has grown by nearly 20%. Over 140 trains currently pass through the railport every week, serving both UK and European connections as well as the deep sea ports. With both rail and road connectivity, DIRFT offers a range of benefits to occupiers, which include: high quality development opportunities; a strong labour market; a prime location within the Golden Triangle and reliable rail services. Looking ahead, David Turner was optimistic. Although

intermodal terminals currently deliver many benefits for logistics companies, the prospect of extended rail routes, longer trains and co-ordinated inland terminal infrastructure, indicates that they will be able to offer a great deal more.

SIMON POLMEAR, SAINSBURY'S.

Having assessed the geography of its stores, Sainsbury's decided to centralise their operations with a best-in-class 1 million sq ft facility in the middle of the country at Prologis RFI DIRFT. The building combines an import centre and long-hold facility; it also has its own rail terminal, which is operated by the Russell Group. When trains arrive at DIRFT on the West Coast Mainline, they are shunted from the reception sidings to the Sainsbury's facility, where Russell's unload them using electric-powered rubber-tyred gantry cranes. Containers can then be stored on the terminal, moved into the building or transported off-site to another Sainsbury's distribution centre or third party location. Although Sainsbury's is currently using rail routes to Scotland and Felixstowe, its operations are not yet at a scale for entire trains. Therefore, to support Sainsbury's rail operation, Russell's is running the terminal as a shared user facility. As Simon Polmear said: "It's all about collaboration."

GUY BATES, NETWORK RAIL.

Intermodal is the most successful sector of the rail freight commodity market with a gross tonne mile (product movement) increase of about 30% in the last 10 years. To support future growth, Network Rail has increased the

network's capacity to run 600+m long trains and carry high cube containers and is planning further investment. This will mean that operators can, for example, run more services and longer trains; they will also have access to shared user facilities such as nodal yards. With the increase in the capacity and capability of the network, the rail freight sector will need more intermodal terminals both inland and at the deep sea ports. Therefore, Guy Bates welcomed the further development of Prologis RFI DIRFT. As he said: "The new phase of DIRFT puts rail freight on the front foot."

ALEX LAFFEY, EDDIE STOBART LTD.

Eddie Stobart has a campus of four buildings at DIRFT, the most recent of which, a 420,000 sq ft rail-connected building that opened in August this year, is already at 75% capacity. As Alex Laffey explained, DIRFT is in an optimal location for many of Eddie Stobart's customers – who include Tesco - and the company currently runs 500 vehicles a day and 18 trains a week from the site. Along with the connectivity to all other parts of the UK, another benefit that Eddie Stobart sees at DIRFT is the prospect of future warehousing capacity. "We will continue to invest in our campus to ensure that we can support our customers' plans to manage their networks effectively," said Alex Laffey.