

From: [Houghton, Gareth](#)
To: [Sareen Ekta](#)
Cc: [EXTL: Haynes Stephen](#); [Ball, Simon](#); [Vickers, David](#); [Dunn, Julian](#)
Subject: RE: Suspension factors - Network Rail's Proposal (DRAFT)
Date: 10 August 2012 14:46:30

Dear Ekta

Subject: Suspension Factors – Network Rail's Proposal

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposal for freight suspension banding. It was unfortunate that Colas Rail were not invited to attend the industry workshop event of the 18th June 2012, however the documentation that you have kindly forwarded has helped in understanding the latest developments.

Colas Rail welcomes Network Rail's intention to introduce a new quantitative method for allocating vehicles to suspension bands utilising the 'Ride Force Count' (RFC) with the MMU's 'revised approach' as outlined in the MMU report "Feasibility of an Alternative Application of the RFC Freight Banding Method" 16th February 2012. We are also supportive of the voluntary option being available for bespoke applications where in circumstances that there was more information available it is possible to tune a new vehicle to the lowest RFC value using the original RFC method (proposed in June 2011).

Colas Rail also welcomes that the new methodology will apply to new vehicles (or those where it is necessary to calculate a new VUC rate) from the start of CP5 (1st April 2014) and it has been agreed that it is not appropriate to automatically and retrospectively apply the revised bands to old bogie types in CP4 and CP5.

Giving operators the opportunity to opt-in to use the RFC methodology to recalculate the suspension factor for existing vehicles is a reasonable approach; however we do have a concern with the dead line of February 2013 for submitting revised data for CP5 charges might not give sufficient time for operators to commission the research work if there are delays in developing the RFCpro software or if the ORR is delayed in their decision.

We are in agreement over the withdrawal of the proposal for all existing vehicles to have their suspension factors reset to 1.0 at the beginning of CP6. We feel that had this proposal gone ahead operators would have lost the benefit of previous investments in the purchase and maintenance of existing track friendly bogies, whilst giving the wrong incentives to owners of wagons with poor suspensions.

Colas shared the concerns expressed by other operators that the project has not considered the impact of lateral forces and does not quantify the real costs of track damage associated with a vehicle ride force count (i.e. applying quantified RFC against un-quantified track damage costs). We now understand that research in these areas will be subject to a separate workstream in CP5

Kind regards,
Gareth

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