

December 2025

# Wagon Condition Programme

## Update for Safety, Engineering & Operations Managers

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Thanks to the continued support from you and your teams, we continue to make good progress and remain on track to deliver the collective aims of the programme.

### Key Wagon Maintenance Principles document on target for publication in December

This document, which aims to set out good practice for the maintenance of wagons and support Entities in Charge of Maintenance (ECMs) in delivering their objectives, is due to be released in the December update of the catalogue of RSSB standards. This follows a targeted consultation focussing towards the freight industry which has allowed the document to receive minor but important improvements.

The work has identified opportunities to fill gaps in 12 specific topic areas where industry would benefit from further guidance. This will form a future work bank under the supervision of the Freight Technical Committee, hosted by RSSB. The document provides useful good practice that ECMs can use to health check current practices and process to drive improvements.

### Yards and Sidings 'Centre of Excellence' (CoE) Toolkit

The toolkit has been tested at Margam, Basford Hall, Cardiff Tidal, Carlisle and Whitemoor, with learning and refinement achieved at each. Front line participation is helping to ensure the toolkit is grounded with practical and deliverable support and advice. It will provide a simple way to benchmark performance and identify practical methods of improvement. Two further test sites have been proposed, with trials at Wootton Bassett and an SCO worksite in the planning. This phase of the 'Plan, Do, Check, Act' development cycle will draw to a close with the toolkit set for publication, on time, in March 2026.

### Train preparation standard continues to develop

RSSB is on track in drafting the train preparation standard, building on the legal responsibility clarification work from the WCP and the site workshops for the Centre of Excellence. The draft standard has been tested to ensure the final standard meets the needs of the industry. Work is on track to deliver this in March 2026.

### Research to understand the 'above rail' factors that lead to wheel flats

Research has taken place into a range of factors associated with wagon design, operation and maintenance that have the potential to impact the formation of wheel flats. Copies of the completed report were sent to key stakeholder groups before being more widely published on the RSSB website in November. This has provided important focus on how wheel flats form and also on what has changed over time within braking standards, wagon design, wagon/braking maintenance, train formation and braking compatibility that might lead to flat formation. Armed with this knowledge, we can explore areas further through practical static brake testing, or by considering potential future changes to brake configurations or standards to explore cost-effective ways of reducing the propensity of wheel flats.

Timescales are tight, but we remain committed to delivering and starting to report meaningful conclusions in March 2026.

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## Technology Working Group

The group is acting as sponsor and client for a research project to determine a whole industry strategy for remote condition monitoring (RCM) equipment for rail vehicles, as well as developing a data protocol to allow effective sharing of safety critical information real time to drivers and signallers, while protecting sensitive Intellectual Property. Current work builds on the earlier work of TWG in identifying the desired system requirements for RCM, as well as embracing current state of the art developments in lineside and onboard technology developed by Network Rail, wagon owners and their industry partners and suppliers. Part of the project deliverables will be to develop a whole system business case covering what is the most cost-effective way to deliver the wants and needs of industry in the RCM space, agnostic to whether it is lineside, onboard or a combination of both.

## Thank you

As ever, we are grateful for the ongoing time and commitment to the programme, and your continued support is valued and appreciated.

Further questions or requests for clarity can be directed to us using the e-mail addresses below or through Elinor Jackson at RSSB ([elinor.jackson@rssb.co.uk](mailto:elinor.jackson@rssb.co.uk)).

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## What is the Freight Safe Programme?

The programme was launched in early 2024 and brings together key stakeholders to build on rail freight's strong safety performance. It leads on key safety projects to give expertise across the industry on any potential challenges and risks. It is led by a steering group of senior and experienced professionals from across rail freight. The programme is a collaborative rail freight industry undertaking, which is partly funded by Network Rail's Freight Safety Improvement Portfolio (FSIP) as well as funding coming from freight operating companies and other key stakeholders.

To find out more visit: [www.freightsafe.uk](http://www.freightsafe.uk)

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