

# Network Rail's new high output ballast cleaning system for the UK - update

**Plasser UK's Mark Simmons gives the latest progress with the system's different elements and machines.**

Once again, the last two months have been an extremely busy time. As the High Output Ballast Cleaning System 5 (HOBBS 5) project moves into the intensive build stage for the bigger machines, the amount of time spent during project meetings working through extensive lists of requirements, suggestions for improvement and drawings of concept solutions has naturally decreased; to be replaced with significantly more time inspecting the metal reality of those previously reviewed drawings. As the note taker for those project meetings, it makes them much easier to manage, but I was worried would give me consequently less material to use for an update article.

It does, however, provide a number of photographs to work through to find the best angle to display the progress. Naturally, as part of the process, there are constant checks on the production - from the foremen on the factory floor, to the designers, the project sales department in Austria, Plasser UK staff and the customer, so it is very pleasing to report that the workshop staff have remained cheerful, enthusiastic and proud throughout. Not only have they welcomed all the inspectors, they have even asked for advice on any production improvements that could help lead to increased maintainability of the machines they build.

## Visitors

In the list of people who have been into the workshop to view the production, I had not even included equipment suppliers. During the most recent project visit to the RM 900, we encountered the Deutz representative inspecting the engine installation and both Network Rail and Plasser UK staff were treated to a fascinating half hour on how the new engines manage the diesel particulate filter to keep it from clogging up. This unexpected encounter provided a first-hand answer to some questions the Network Rail project





team had and will directly impact their plans for machine management.

extensive knowledge of the installed third rail.

painting stage, as pictured on page 13. A maintainability inspection is currently ongoing on half being constructed at Robel in Freilassing. Next is for the power vehicles and first tampers to begin production and, by the time this issue is published, this process will have begun. This means that in the next update you can look forward to seeing the bare metal inner structures of those vehicles.

**Site visit**

In fact, the inspections have gone both directions. During October the design team from Plasser & Theurer came to the UK and were welcomed to a couple of nightshifts by the very professional Network Rail team operating HOBBS 1 (The RM 95 RT systems) on a worksite near Liphook in Hampshire, as pictured above left and right. Yes, a ballast cleaner working with the third rail!

The RM 95 RT ballast cleaner had been modified at Plasser UK to work on third rail areas with the third rail in-situ. The team were extremely helpful in demonstrating the operation and proving information and suggestions for improvement and development that could be incorporated into the production of the RM 900.

The amount of third rail outside the UK is insignificant and the only place to really get any experience of it is right here. Even obtaining information in the UK on the third rail installed has proven to be quite difficult. There are a number of types and variations, all of which have their own mechanical characteristics - material type and size affecting weight and bending moments etc. Our thanks must go to the team at Pod Trak, based in Perivale (just a little way up the road from West Ealing), who have taken the time to help us with their

**Other progress**

In terms of production progress, there are now 12 completed MFS-D wagons in Linz, some of which could be seen being inspected (pictured below) with four more being completed each month. The RM 900 assembly has progressed rapidly with both halves now nearing the



**A maintenance revolution for the UK - update**



Further to Rail Infrastructure Issue No: 107, Plasser UK's Mark Simmons details the latest on the Robel Mobile Maintenance Train (MMT) for Network Rail.

Robel MMT number two left Germany on 22nd September and, after problems getting through the Channel Tunnel and then a delay moving out of Dolland's Moor, arrived at Plasser UK in West Ealing almost a month later on 20th October. It was handed over to Network

Rail on 30th October and is pictured above left leaving West Ealing.

Robel MMT number three left Germany earlier than originally programmed on 6th November - to provide a little flexibility with respect to the problems getting through the Channel Tunnel. There were no hold-ups en route and it arrived in West Ealing on 12th November, less than a week later! It is due to be handed over to Network Rail on 18th December and is pictured above right at Plasser UK.