

Planning for recovery

While the reintroduction of a fresh Covid-19 'lockdown' at the end of 2020 meant a difficult start to the New Year, the recent announcement of a timetable for the easing of restrictions will be welcomed by all – including UKTram members.

The clarity it provides will help the sector plan for the return of customers and we will, of course, continue to work closely with the both the Department for Transport and Transport Scotland on further financial support to help maintain operations until all restrictions are lifted, and to help with post-Covid recovery.

Since the last issue of the UKTram newsletter, the other major event has been the end of the Brexit transition on 31st December.

In January we reported that, so far, the sector has been largely unaffected and while some operators have reported delays on parts deliveries, this has generally been attributed to coronavirus restrictions rather than Brexit.

Of course, we will continue to listen to our members, and raise any concerns they may have with the Department for Transport, and you can read more on this story [here](#).

Although these have been uncertain times for everyone, the past few months have seen significant progress on a wide range of projects led by UKTram, and our Working Groups have continued to meet online to discuss the challenges they face and to share best practice.

This latest issue of the newsletter offers a taste of what they've been doing over the last couple of months, together with updates on other UKTram projects as we look forward to brighter times ahead and an increasingly important role for light rail as part of a 'green' recovery.

James Hammett
UKTram Managing Director



HR Group meets

The launch of a new working group has seen HR professionals from across the light rail sector commit to sharing best practice on training, recruitment and employment issues.

Representatives from Edinburgh Trams, Manchester Metrolink, West Midlands Metro, Croydon, Sheffield Supertram and Blackpool Transport joined the group's first online meeting in February, and each gave an update on the challenges they've faced through the pandemic.

Topics covered included staff Covid-19 testing, furlough, vaccinations and recovery plans, and future meetings are set to look at employee engagement, recruitment post-pandemic, the kick-start programme and National Occupational Standards.

The meeting was so successful, a second is planned for 16th March and anyone who would like to join in should email Jamie at jamie.swift@uktram.org. Further details about the group can be found [here](#).

Apprenticeships in the spotlight

The importance of specialist training programmes to the growth of light rail in the UK were put in the spotlight by sector leaders during National Apprenticeship Week in February.

UKTram is already playing a key role in helping to shape future apprenticeship programmes alongside a host of other initiatives designed to bridge a growing skills gap while encouraging more young people to consider a career in a sector that offers a wealth of opportunities.

In an online feature, UKTram Managing Director James Hammett, who launched his own career as an apprentice engineer at Seaton Tramway, highlighted the benefits of a structured approach to training and development.

Low rail adhesion research

Promising research into combatting low rail adhesion has been welcomed by light rail engineers.

In a presentation to members of the UKTram Light Rail Engineers Group, Peter Krier of Sheffield University highlighted modifications and improvements made to an innovative cryogenic kit.

Results of recent trials on Tyne and Wear Metro and tests on mainline tracks have provided very promising data on the effectiveness of the kit that blasts dry ice onto the surface of the rail.

The presentation was made during the first UKTram Light Rail Engineers Group meeting of 2021, which also offered an international perspective on a very topical subject at this time of year – ice on the overhead lines.

You can read more about the LREG meeting [here](#).

"From my own experience I know that apprenticeships provide a solid platform on which to build a successful career," he explained.

"However, as light rail becomes increasingly important in improving connectivity and air quality in many urban areas, it's clear we need to boost the number of people coming into the sector with the required skills."

Although 2020 proved a challenging year for everyone, the pandemic didn't prevent significant progress being made on the issue, with UKTram playing a pivotal role. Late last year the organisation joined a 'trailblazer' review of engineering apprenticeships and you can read more [here](#).



James Hammett's nephew Alex Baldwin, who is set to follow in his uncle's footsteps later this year when he starts at Seaton Tramway as an apprentice mechanical engineer.

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Wider trials of biometric monitoring technology

A pioneering project using biometric monitoring technology to further boost light rail safety has taken a major step forward with sector-wide trials of a new prototype wearable device.

Developed as part of the Driver Innovation Safety Challenge (DISC), FOCUS+ monitors fatigue levels of key employees and alerts operators of other wellbeing issues that may impact on safety.

Led by Edinburgh Trams with the support of UKTram and a partnership of public and private sector organisations, a number of networks across the UK have already signed up to the initiative, with more set to take part in the coming months.

Dan Hill, Technical Officer at UK Tram, explained: "The project has already demonstrated its potential to make a huge contribution to further improving light rail safety, and the initial trials provided a wealth of useful data."

Now the project is preparing for the next phase of trials, and you can read the full story [here](#).



Heritage update

Representatives from across the light rail heritage sector have been discussing the challenges faced by organisations preserving the country's rich tramway history.

Led by its chairman Geoffrey Claydon, the UKTram Heritage Committee met online in January to discuss the impact of the ongoing coronavirus restrictions.

The meeting also included a presentation on a new hazard perception tool while other hot topics of discussion included new legislation that will allow volunteers under the age of 16 to work on heritage systems and you can read more [here](#).



National Occupational Standards

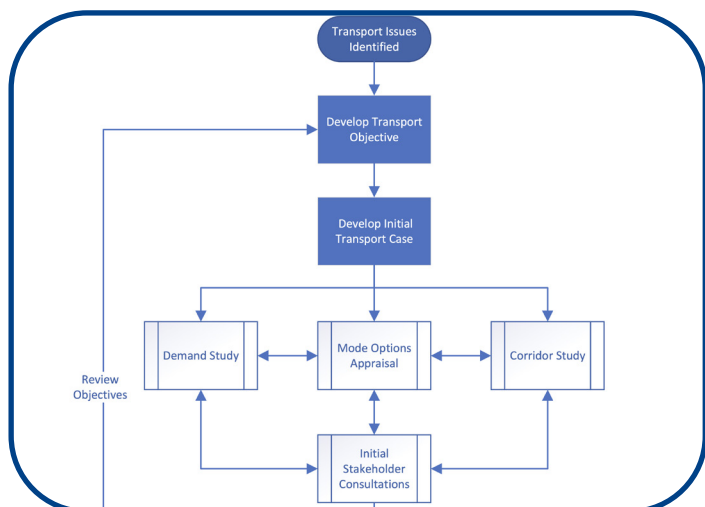
An ambitious project to develop and refresh new standards for light rail engineering roles has received a positive response from professionals across the sector.

UKTram has now received feedback on a series of draft National Occupational Standards (NOS) for Rolling Stock and Infrastructure Technicians.

The next stage of the project is to submit the standards for approval and, based on the feedback already received, this looks increasingly likely. The full story can be found [here](#).

Step-by-step guide to tramway development

A comprehensive 'route map' to help keep proposed light rail schemes on track has been published by UKTram's Centre of Excellence.



The new document provides a step-by-step guide for project sponsors and aims to help them build a solid case for their plans and a clear path towards successful operations.

Covering everything from research into potential demand to negotiating the planning process, it draws on a wealth of experience from across the light rail sector.

Its publication couldn't be more timely, as an increasing number of cities and regional bodies are expressing an interest in light rail as a solution to congestion and associated pollution.

Colin Robey from the Centre of Excellence explained: "We're tracking around 100 different proposals across the UK. The route map will help sponsors to judge the suitability of those plans and, if they prove viable, to take the next steps towards realising their ambitions."

The Route Map can be downloaded [here](#) and you can read the full story [here](#).

Web directory

Following a recent refresh, the UKTram website has been further upgraded to include an updated directory in an enhanced 'Members' section.

All members are entitled to a listing and they should send their entry, including a logo and any updated text, to jamie.swift@uktram.org.

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