

REPORT FINDS NO BARRIERS TO UK USE OF SLAB TRACK

A new study by Arup has found that there is no real reason for concrete slab tracks not to be more widely used in the UK. The study, commissioned by the Britpave, through its Task Group for Rail, found that, as a whole, existing European and UK infrastructure owner (Network Rail and London Underground Ltd for example) standards already provide sufficient general guidance for the specification of concrete slab track. However the study did call for some further specific guidance on design, transition zones, testing, commissioning and decommissioning.

The Task Group was set up by Britpave, the transport infrastructure group, to demonstrate the potential of slab track in the UK. High-speed concrete slab track has been successfully used in Japan for over 40 years and is increasingly being specified in the USA and throughout Europe where the results have been the elimination of unplanned maintenance plus superior levels of safety, performance, accuracy and buildability.

So far only a limited amount of slab track has been constructed in the UK, for the Channel Tunnel Rail Link and for 150m trial on the Crewe to Kidsgrove line using the Balfour Beatty embedded rail and support sub-system set a on continuously reinforced concrete slab track. The rest of the UK rail network relies on a 150 year ballasted track system that Britpave believes is totally inadequate to meet the demands placed upon it. "Britain needs to take its crumbling 19th century rail network in the 21st century", said David Jones, Director of Britpave. "Concrete slab track is a proven technology. This new study shows that there should be no barriers to our own rail system being upgraded to properly meet the demands being placed upon it."

Jones believes that the use of slab track for the Channel Tunnel Rail Link and on the Crewe to Kidsgrove line potentially provides the basis for UK-based guidance and specification on the use of slab track. He said: "The existing European and infrastructure owner standards already provide adequate general guidance. However, the Channel Tunnel Rail link and Crewe to

Kidsgrove projects should provide a useful starting point for developing more specific guidance that covers the structural specification and design of slab track for the UK. Britpave will be working with Arup to develop the necessary design and performance criteria to facilitate the wider adoption of concrete slab track in the UK.”

ENDS

Notes to editors.

1. Britpave (British In-situ Concrete Paving Association) promotes the better and greater use of concrete for transportation solutions. Its members include major contractors, specialist contracting companies, specialist equipment and material suppliers, consulting engineers and interested trade associations. Together they provide a single voice for the in-situ concrete paving industry. For further information see www.britpave.org.uk
2. Issued by Steve Elliott, Constructive Dialogue, tel: 01276 36735, email: condialogue@aol.com

---000---