

Joe Quill
Office of Rail Regulation

24 July 2012

Dear Mr Quill,

ORR Reference: ORR/005/2012 - Consultation on Rail Freight Access Charges

I am writing to you in connection with an article in the 'Rail' magazine concerning the ORR's proposal to increase freight charges up to 400%, resulting in less tonnage but more profit to Network Rail.

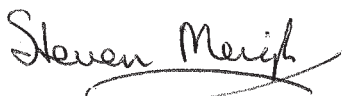
This is sheer lunacy. Rail freight is increasing; even a heritage Deltic locomotive was hired from a collection because of loco shortages. Now you want, at a stroke, to snuff it out. This will result in more damage to the road surface (already resembling a lunar landscape) with associated (hidden) costs to car tyres and suspension where the cost will be borne by the consumer and no link will be made to the increased profits of NR. With extra congestion, the fuel consumption of vehicles stuck in stop-start traffic will be huge; my 65mpg Yaris does 25-30mpg in heavy traffic. In short increased profits for NR will be offset by hidden stealth costs to the rest of society. Add to that the need for extra road building and burdening industry with additional transport costs during the worst recession ever.

This plan should be strangled at birth. It is outdated '80s thinking. Freight trains taking containers the bulk of the journey, finishing off by road from the rail hub give maximum flexibility. Moreover, industry and commercial pressure must be calling for something other than short-term rubbish such as this.

Ironic also that it is the 50th anniversary of the infamous 'Beeching Report'. Most people now realize he went too far. We have seen off the 'Serpell Report' that proposed reducing the rail network to 4000 miles. We have seen off Alistair Darling and his 'we can't move fresh air round the country' i.e. close lines.

Please stop this nonsense now and encourage better railways, freight and passenger, plus line reopenings.

Yours faithfully,



Steven Meigh.

PS I live near the Churnet Valley Railway who, with MCR (Moorland & City Railways) is working to get the line from Cauldon Lowe to Stoke reopened for quarry trains, reducing lorries plus creating jobs. Remember a major heritage railway puts £20-30m into the local economy. They have worked so bloody hard to get this link reinstated. As one example of many, ORR could kill this dead with one stroke of a pen.