

A year of progress showcased at Rail Research UK Association's (RRUKA) Annual Conference

Marking a year since the November 2011 launch, the first RRUKA annual conference was held at the Royal Society in London on Wednesday, 7 November 2012.

With seventeen research presentations that showed the diversity of subjects being investigated, three stimulating keynote addresses and four compelling industry case studies, it was certainly an action-packed day which proved to be a great success.

We were able to provide over 150 delegates with a real flavour of the wide range of collaborative research projects currently underway. Amongst many others, these included subject matters such as energy storage, reducing suicide and trespass, improving capacity, wheelset costs and human performance. As RRUKA academic co-chair Prof. Simon Iwnicki noted in his closing remarks, UK rail research is looking quite healthy.

Some very lively Q&A sessions prompted a number of interesting questions and debates from the floor, which participants eagerly carried on during the various networking opportunities offered throughout the day, including the evening reception. SPARK live demos attracted quite a lot of interest during the lunch break – if you are interested, all conference proceedings are now available on [SPARK](#).

Most importantly, RRUKA was acknowledged for its unique and winning approach to maximising and growing partnerships between industry and academia. This was showcased by four industry presentations (from Southern, HS2, Hitachi Rail Europe and Graffica) which provided interesting examples of the ways research has benefited their businesses.

Very thought-provoking talks were given by the three keynote speakers (see pictures on the right), who agreed on the importance of research

Francis How, Technical Director, Railway Industry Association (RIA) opened the day posing challenges to RRUKA on how it can help enhance the sustainable provision of research by universities. In his closing remarks, Professor Richard Parry-Jones CBE, Chairman, Network Rail, highlighted the benefits of collaborations and of bringing in fresh ideas from other sectors and emphasised the need for the rail industry to be bolder and to think bigger when it comes to research. Proving an insight from another sector, Paul Stein, Chief Technical Officer of Rolls-Royce, emphasised the vital role played by



From left to right: Professor Richard Parry-Jones; Francis How and Paul Stein (below).

university research in achieving innovation at Rolls-Royce, where over 600 people are working in their university research centres.

Industry has shown a great deal of interest in the work that RRUKA has done and will continue to deliver in the coming years - half of the delegates were indeed from industry, including 20% at Director level! This makes RRUKA proud as it shows that we are building the right links between academia and industry, which is helping to focus railway research in directions which are most likely to be fruitful and to build long term relationships.

RRUKA has already achieved a lot in a short time, building its membership base to over 30 universities, research centres and funders and extending involvement in rail research to new disciplines and researchers. This injection of new concepts has been a vital part of the events held by RRUKA during the year, addressing very real industry issues and leading to £200k of university-led innovative research being funded by the RSSB-managed industry research programme. (Details of these can be found in SPARK at [Half Cost Train](#) and [24/7 railway](#))

RRUKA has just launched its new website where details of future events and activities can be found at www.rruka.org.uk. January and February 2013 will focus on the dissemination and academic response to the forthcoming [Rail Technical Strategy](#) and in March an event '[How safe will tomorrow's railway be?](#)' will be held, focusing on predictions and modelling.

For more information about RRUKA, please visit our website: www.rruka.org.uk

The Annual Conference proceedings are available on SPARK: <http://spark.rssb.co.uk/Lists/Records/DispForm.aspx?ID=2630>

Notes:

1. Rail Research UK Association (RRUKA) is a partnership between Britain's rail industry and UK universities. It was set up in 2010 to be an effective bridge between industry and universities. It is funded by RSSB and Network Rail. For more information see www.rruka.org.uk
2. RSSB builds industry-wide consensus and facilitates the resolution of difficult cross-industry issues. It provides knowledge, analysis, a substantial level of technical expertise and powerful information and risk management tools. This delivers a unique mix to the industry across a whole range of subject areas – with the aim of:
 - Driving out unnecessary cost
 - Improving business performance
 - Where reasonably practicable, continuously improving the level of safety in the rail industry
3. RSSB manages the rail industry's research and development (R&D) programme, which covers 'systems' issues across the railway, engineering interfaces within the railway, and interfaces with other parts of the community and society. It's also instrumental in supporting the development of a future vision for the railways – including its technical strategy and sustainable development - and assessing how that vision can best be delivered. A major benefit for industry is that the programme represents an efficient and cost-effective means for the industry to research, develop and problem-solve whilst retaining ownership and direction of the products through RSSB.