

Rail Minister visits Merehead Rail Sidings and Torr Quarry
Tour showcases VTG's iWagon technology and advancing rail freight collaboration

The collaboration between rail freight companies VTG Rail UK, Mendip Rail, and Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems (UK) took centre stage as Rail Minister Huw Merriman visited Merehead Rail Sidings and Torr Quarry in Somerset.

The highlight of the tour (on Thursday May 16) was the presentation of the ground-breaking iWagon, a partnership between VTG Rail UK and Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems (UK), which is poised to redefine rail freight performance with enhanced safety measures, operational efficiencies, and increased wagon availability.

With cutting-edge technology developed by dedicated engineers and innovators from VTG and Knorr-Bremse, the iWagon integrates state-of-the-art sensors, data analytics, and automation to elevate safety, performance, and reliability standards of rail freight wagons.

Rail Minister Huw Merriman said: *"I'm a strong supporter of the rail freight sector, which has a huge role to play not only in keeping our economy moving but in an environmentally friendly way too. Exciting new developments like this are a perfect example of the industry using cutting-edge technology to power toward our ambitious growth target."*

Commenting on the Minister's visit, **Colin Denman, Managing Director of VTG Rail UK**, emphasised the collaborative ethos driving industry progress, stating: *"It was a pleasure to show the Rail Minister the huge advantages that the iWagon will bring to the rail freight industry. The iWagon, which we work on jointly with our partners at Knorr-Bremse, will revolutionise rail freight."*

"Alongside this, our long-standing and successful partnership with Mendip Rail ensures that a huge number of lorry movements are diverted from our congested roads, and on to rail. At VTG Rail UK we have great working relationships with our industry partners. Collaborating with them brings many benefits to the rail freight industry and beyond and it is the mature way to do business."

Paul Goodhand, Managing Director of Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems (UK), echoed this sentiment, highlighting the transformative impact of the iWagon on industry safety and performance. He said:

"Rail freight already has a good track record for safety but that doesn't mean that we should stop striving for even better. Our partnership with VTG on the iWagon is a monumental breakthrough for our whole industry. Together, we are innovating, developing and implementing game changing technology."

"Thanks to the iWagon, our industry can see how axles perform on the network in real-time and see where adhesion issues are occurring. Digitisation allows us to prevent wheelset damage and axle locks, ensuring multiple parties are given information quickly allowing appropriate corrective action. These are exciting times for rail freight."

Maggie Simpson OBE, Director General of the Rail Freight Group, said: *"Initiatives like the iWagon are transforming the way that rail freight operates on the network and they're going to bring huge benefits to"*

productivity, to safety and to the appeal of rail freight to our customers. It's brilliant to see the uptake of technology and the new initiatives that are coming on stream."

During the visit, the Minister also gained insights into the enduring partnership spanning over two decades between VTG and Mendip Rail, which removes the equivalent of 400,000 lorry movements every year from the roads. In addition, rail offers significant environmental benefits by offering 76% CO2 reduction versus road deliveries.

Mendip Rail, a joint venture between Aggregate Industries and Heidelberg Materials, is a major player in aggregate transportation. It moves over nine million tonnes of material yearly from the quarries in the Mendip Hills to terminals in London and the South-East for various construction projects, underlining the vital role of rail freight in infrastructure development.

Alberto Nobis, CEO of VTG GmbH, said: *"The relationship we have with Mendip Rail is one of the best we have in Europe. They are a perfect customer because they have invested into the rail solution as part of their supply chain, so, for us, this is the perfect environment in which to provide a state-of-the-art solution for our client."*

Damien Preece, General Manager of Mendip Rail, said: *"It was our pleasure to host the Rail Minister and provide a platform for VTG and Knorr-Bremse to exhibit their exciting iWagon technology. Doing so amongst our working rail sidings really helps to bring the application of the technology to life. We move close to nine million tonnes of aggregate each year on VTG wagons so to see their commitment to improving rail freight safety through technology is extremely reassuring and key to our strong partnership."*

Maggie Simpson OBE, Director General of the Rail Freight Group, said: *"Collaborations like the one we see at Mendip Rail are really important in rail freight. On site there is the rail freight operator, the quarry, Mendip Rail operations and maintenance facilities. That's a collaboration of different businesses working seamlessly together. Every night they despatch dozens of trains, sending millions of tonnes of aggregate to London and the South-East and across the country. It really couldn't work without the dedication of all those companies and all those people working together."*

The visit underscored the commitment of industry leaders to advancing rail freight capabilities, heralding a new era of safety, efficiency, and sustainability in the sector.

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For further information please contact Melanie Hill at Gravity PR – mel@gravitypr.co.uk – 07527 847423.

Photo captions:

Photo caption 1:

(L-R): Richard Bew (Business Development Director, Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems UK), Sanjay Albert (Director of Engineering & Innovation, Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems UK), Paul Goodhand (Managing Director, Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems UK), Huw Merriman (Minister for Rail), Marc Hurn (Sales & Marketing Director, VTG Rail UK), Archie Lucas (Sales & Account Manager, VTG Rail UK), Nigel Day (Business Improvement Director, VTG Rail UK) and Colin Denman (Managing Director, VTG Rail UK).

Photo caption 2:

Huw Merriman, Minister for Rail interviewed in front of the VTG iWagon on a recent visit to Merehead Rail Sidings and Torr Quarry in Somerset.

Animation: How it works. The iWagon in detail: <https://uk.vtg.com/products-and-services/iwagon>

Notes to Editors:

About the iWagon:

The iWagon offers a range of benefits to rail operators, including further improved safety measures through real-time monitoring and predictive maintenance capabilities, increased efficiency by optimising wagon utilisation and reducing downtime.

The iWagon also includes axle lock detection and Wheel Flat Prevention (WFP) technology which monitors wheelset slide and brake condition. Each of the wagons are fitted with four axle end generators which provide power to the WFP system - these power further digital innovations including digital real-time maintenance, temperature monitoring and harmonics frequency monitoring.

About VTG:

VTG Rail UK Ltd is part of the VTG Group which is the European leader for private sector wagon leasing.

Headquartered in Hamburg, VTG GmbH is an international asset owner and logistics company with a strong focus on rail. Besides hiring out rail freight wagons and tank containers, it also provides multimodal logistical services and integrated digital solutions. The company's fleet includes around 84,000 rail freight wagons – mostly tank wagons, intermodal wagons, standard freight wagons and sliding-wall wagons – as well as about 5,000 tank containers.

This diversified service portfolio gives VTG's customers a robust platform for international freight transportation, based on which the company develops made-to-measure logistical solutions for any and every industry. Over many years, VTG has accumulated granular expertise across the entire transport chain – expertise that is now flanked by smart technology. The Group likewise combines a wealth of experience with a specialised knowledge of the transportation of liquid and sensitive goods in particular. Its customers include a plethora of leading companies representing the chemicals, petroleum, automotive and paper industries, agriculture and virtually every other sector besides.

VTG posted revenue of EUR 1,306 million and an operating profit (EBITDA) of EUR 467 million in the 2022 financial year. Effective December 31, 2022, VTG employed around 2,100 people worldwide.

About Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems UK

Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems UK is a member of the global Knorr-Bremse Group, the global market leader in braking systems and other mission-critical systems for rail and commercial vehicles.

Knorr-Bremse (ISIN: DE000KBX1006, ticker symbol: KBX) is the global market and technology leader for braking systems and a leading supplier of other rail and commercial vehicle systems. Knorr-Bremse's products make a decisive contribution to greater safety and energy efficiency on rail tracks and roads around the world. 33,000 employees at over 100 locations in approximately 30 countries develop and produce innovative solutions and services that meet the highest technological standards. In 2023, Knorr-Bremse's two divisions together generated revenues of approximately € 7.9 billion. For almost 120 years, the company

has been at the cutting edge of its industries, driving innovation in mobility and transportation technologies with a leading edge in connected system solutions. Knorr-Bremse is one of Germany's most successful industrial companies and profits from the key global megatrends: urbanization, sustainability, digitalization, and mobility.