

Alstom boss warns of deadline for Derby site

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The Managing Director of Alstom UK and Ireland has warned that there are six weeks of manufacturing work left at the Derby site.

Nick Crossfield was speaking at the Transport Select Committee (TSC) in an evidence session on the subject 'Rail Services and Infrastructure' focusing on the sustainability of the rolling stock industry.

"In six weeks we go from an annual output of 650 cars employing 3,000 people to zero at the end of January," he said. "Today I have the supply chain already showing liquidations.

"The timing of these (new/refurbished rolling stock) decisions is critical, because if I don't get clarity in six weeks it all goes and in the future we'll be pulling in from China, we'll be pulling in from the Middle East. It is a very different supply chain and once you lose it you don't get it back."

Last month Alstom announced it had started a consultation which will involve potential redundancies of 550 Alstom permanent employees. 780 contractors are also at potential risk.

Nick added: "Short term it is very challenging market, but medium to long term it is actually quite an attractive market. In European terms the UK market for rolling stock is predicted to be the second largest market in Europe. The market for commuter rail in the UK from 2027, 2028 onwards is probably the fastest growing market in the European geography.

"The other grave concern I have about the UK market for rolling stock is not just in volume terms, but in

technology terms we are way off the pace in this country in terms of decarbonisation. If you look, most of the major developed rolling stock markets in the spaces around Europe and the world where most of the original equipment manufacturers operate, you're seeing the acceleration of decarbonisation at pace which we don't see in this country. We need to accelerate our efforts in introducing those new technologies as well as securing a much more stable volume pattern going forwards."

In the discussion, Nick explained that the lead time between invitation to tender hitting the market and cutting metal on a train is three years. A short-term solution is the modernisation and repurposing of existing fleets, which is a much quicker initiative to get up and running.

Answering a question on the conversations between government and Alstom, Nick said: "Conversations are ongoing, and ongoing at secretary of state level. Those conversations are not yet over and at this stage we are hopeful, but not certain of a positive outcome.

"It is imperative to maintain capability to cover a short-term period between from 2026/27 onwards the market for UK rolling stock grows. That is a market everybody wants and a market we will supply, the question we are addressing right now is how are we going to supply that market.

"Are we going to supply it from a fully integrated, embedded vertically integrated manufacturing facility in the UK with all the engineering and software capability that we need in this country to deliver these trains into service, or are we going to supply it using an international supply chain and have a light front end finishing veneer in the UK."

The Railway Industry Association (RIA) was invited to give evidence to the TSC in the evidence session. Technical Director David Clarke gave evidence alongside RIA members, Nick, from Alstom and Malcolm Brown, Chief Executive of Angel Trains.

David referenced RIA's July 2023 report 'The UK Rolling Stock Industry: Making 2023 the year of opportunity not crisis' which was compiled in collaboration with RIA members. The report can be found [here](#).

In response to questions from TSC members, David said, "The Department for Transport (DfT) does not currently have a process or strategy for the procurement of rolling stock.

"Transport Secretary Mark Harper previously told the Transport Select Committee he would set out a 'Roadmap for Procurement' by the end of the year, yet we are very close to Parliament going into recess until the New Year, and there is no indication of when this is going to be published. So we need to see the Government's thinking as soon as possible, including details of the timeframes for new train orders.

"We need a visible and smoother pipeline for new and refurbished rolling stock, to provide clarity for rail suppliers and protect UK rail manufacturing and upgrade capacity in the short to medium term. This doesn't only benefit the rail supply sector but also reduces carbon and ensures value for money for customers – both passengers and freight – and taxpayers too."

Photo credit: Parliament TV