

# Carbon-cutting test run sees Welsh timber return to railway

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For the first time since 2005, a freight train carrying Welsh timber left Aberystwyth as part of a trial that could see regular freight traffic return to the Cambrian line.

The successful trial, aimed at exploring the feasibility of transporting timber by rail to reduce carbon emissions, opens up the possibility of removing hundreds of large lorries from the rural roads of mid Wales.

The timber, which came from the forests of Ceredigion and Powys, was loaded onto a Colas Rail freight service at Aberystwyth on Friday 29 April, ready to be transported to the Kronospan manufacturing plant in Chirk, north Wales. Kronospan makes and distributes timber products such as wood panelling for furniture and flooring and plays an important role in the timber supply chain.

Ten wagons of unfinished timber left Aberystwyth on Friday, pulled by a pair of Class 37 locomotives owned by Network Rail, thanks to a partnership with the freight operator Colas Rail. The Class 37s were handpicked for the job in order to haul the 700-tonne load over the steep gradients of parts of the line, which skirts the edge of the Snowdonia mountain range.

Transporting this much timber by rail removed upwards of 16 lorries from the roads, helping to reduce carbon emissions and traffic congestion. It's estimated that a quarter of a tonne of carbon dioxide was saved by using the railway for this purpose, which equates to 30,411 charges of your smart phone or the carbon emissions per passenger taking a one-way flight from Amsterdam to Rome.

Jess Lippett, Network Rail senior route freight manager, said: "Rail freight is a vital part of our infrastructure, providing a fast, green, safe and efficient way of transporting goods.

"This trial run shows how we can work together to have a positive impact on the environment and the economy, with the potential to remove hundreds of lorries from rural roads while supporting local businesses."

Simon Metcalf, business delivery manager (North) for Colas Rail said: "Colas Rail Freight, Kronospan and Network Rail have worked in partnership for many years developing cost effective and environmentally friendly solutions for the continuing transportation of timber by rail.

"Our latest venture combines minimal road transportation of timber from the forests of Ceredigion and Powys to the strategic Railfreight hub in Aberystwyth. From here, approximately 700 tonnes of material can be moved by Colas Rail Freight in one trainload to the Kronospan manufacturing plant in Chirk.

"These new services are the first commercial freight trains to operate over the Cambrian rail route for over 25 years - aside from one journey in the early 2000s - and combine route specific traction with state-of-the-art European Rail Traffic Management Signalling (ERTMS).

"Both Colas Rail and Kronospan continue to strive to identify the reduction of CO2 emissions across their business portfolio."

Owing to the success of this first trial run, Network Rail hopes to work with Kronospan and Colas Rail on another test journey in the near future.