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The Apprenticeship landscape in England is undergoing radical reform. The Government is making Apprenticeships more rigorous and responsive to employer needs through the introduction of new Trailblazer Apprenticeship Standards, designed and developed by employers.

A group of Rail Engineering employers, large and small, are taking the opportunity to develop new Rail Engineering Apprenticeship Standards in order to make the Rail Apprenticeships more flexible, focussed on delivering the current and future needs of employers and apprentices and recognising the scale of technological and operational change the industry is facing. The group is currently working on Apprenticeship Standards at Operative, Technician and Advanced Technician levels. The National Skills Academy for Railway Engineering (NSARE) is supporting the employers through the project management, facilitation and delivery support.

The employers group identified that they require future apprentices to be:

- Higher skilled and multi-skilled, providing more role agility & flexibility;
- Able to take a more proactive/preventative approach with more emphasis on systems thinking and diagnostics where appropriate;
- Aware of the wider rail industry and how their role fits within it.

To support this vision it was agreed that Rail Engineering should be treated as one "occupation" encompassing a number of disciplines being: track; telecommunications; signalling; electrification; overhead lines; traction & rolling stock and rail systems. Within each discipline Rail Engineering covers maintenance, renewal and construction/installation. The Standards have been developed on a "core and options" basis where the core content across all the disciplines is treated as such and apprentices will undertake core learning plus one specialism in order to complete their Apprenticeship. It is the intention that the Rail Engineering Technician Standard will map to EngTech enabling apprentices completing their Rail Engineering Technician Apprenticeship to be "EngTech ready".

This approach to apprentice development will support the vision of more flexible apprentices for employers whilst, for the apprentice, enhancing the transferability and recognition of their apprenticeship across the industry. If you would like find out more or to be involved in the further development of the new Apprenticeship Standards please contact sue.gill@nsare.org.

**Sue Gill, Project Director,
National Skills Academy for Railway Engineering**



Front Cover: A long distance tilting train passing a suburban train on the April 25 Bridge over the Tagus River in Lisbon, Portugal. The two signals show are for normal direction (oval background) and reverse direction (rectangular background) (Preparation and idea: Nuno Silverio Barrento. Photo: Pedro Ferreira).

IN THIS ISSUE

	Page
Australian Signalling Revisited (London March Paper) Peter Symons	2
Why Organisations Need to Think About Reliability in the 21st Century Harry Munro	12
Signalling with Hindsight - from Clapham to Finaghy and Beyond! Colin McVea	14
Industry News	20
IRSE Matters	23
Finance Committee: Watching the Money	23
International Convention: Brisbane and Rockhampton	24
Midland & North Western Section: <i>Ethernet for Railway Telecoms and Signalling</i>	24
York Section: <i>ERTMS National Integration Facility, Remote Condition Monitoring and Hitachi ETCS</i>	26
Feedback	27
Membership Matters	28 and Back Cover