

READERS LETTERS

Dear Mark,

I wanted to let you know that I totally agree with your comment on the embargo issue relating to the movement of mobile cranes.

I am simply a member of the public, a crane enthusiast and avid reader of Cranes & Access magazine, and it is clear and obvious to me that a mobile crane, especially one on four axles or less should be treated entirely differently to a wide load with an escort.

One moves as easily and rapidly as a normal delivery lorry, is no wider than one the only difference being the axle weights - so as long as the road is approved for these weights, the time of day should make no

difference. While the other needs to be moved at night or when the roads are quiet given that a) its slow - very slow and b) it takes up more than one carriageway.

That's it, more importantly perhaps is to say thank you for producing a great magazine, which I look forward to receiving every month.

Yours Sincerely

Ian Metherall

Hove,

Open letter

THE EFFECTS OF THE ROADWAY EMBARGOES/ROUTING ON THE CRANE HIRE INDUSTRY

Our industry as a whole seems to be enduring the same logistical nightmare surrounding Embargoes/Routing and seek suitable changes in legislation so the impracticalities they create, lessen the impact on our businesses and personnel.

I believe it's time to group together and discuss our options.

Vertikal Days 2024 is being held at Newark Showground on Wednesday 11th and Thursday 12th September 2024. CPA will be holding a meeting, most likely to be on the 11th although yet to be confirmed. With us all in the same place at the same time, this would be the perfect opportunity to not only see the CPA's position on this, but to voice our concerns and consider the approach or action we need to take.

The more support and discussion we have about this, the more likely we are to succeed in achieving change. Please forward this to all your respective contacts/connections within the industry, or to anyone you believe may want to join or help the cause.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the event, thank you.

Many Thanks,

Aba Crane Hire

The issue of increasingly disruptive embargoes on crane and some larger truck mounted lift movements is beginning to cause a major backlash in a number of European countries, and especially in the UK, where the authorities in many areas have shifted from a fairly lax attitude by European or US standards to one that is in some regions is having a disruptive and seriously damaging impact on crane rental companies and contractors alike.

The CPA has also sent the following letter to its members.

Dear Member

Many of you will be all too aware of the concerns regarding embargo times - police enforced movement orders which are preventing the movement of construction plant and equipment at the beginning and end of each day.

We have liaised with several members about the issues regarding this and it is apparent there is an inconsistent approach being adopted by different police forces across the country. Mobile crane hire companies in particular are seemingly being targeted.

One CPA member was notified by their local force that they had infringed their movement order by just 49 seconds, and we have also received reports of police vehicles sitting outside hire depots and construction sites, monitoring the movement of construction equipment.

A report published by the Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) yesterday entitled 'The Costs of Increased Police Enforcement of Abnormal Loads Regulations' highlights the impact this is having on the wider haulage industry - with high end estimates citing a £1.5 billion loss of economic activity over a 10 year period due to these regulations.

To outline our concerns, we have written a letter to the Secretary of State for Transport, Mark Harper, highlighting the extreme problems that many of our members are facing with embargo times. We have also issued a press release this morning to the construction trade press, both of which can be downloaded at https://mcusercontent.com/159bc84bd7a97257668417e77/files/69604084-f9f6-f62f-f7fd-25c797dfa063/Letter_to_Govt_Re_Embargo_Times.pdf

We hope this will encourage more dialogue at government level and will keep you updated of any developments in this regard. Assuring you of our best attention at all times.

David Smith

Legal Manager

THE DAY TO DAY PROBLEMS CAUSED BY THE EMBARGO

Good Morning

I am writing regarding the current embargo that has been put in place in the Midlands and wider areas. It seems that most of our mobile crane fleet now comes under the classification of 'abnormal loads' and is subject to movement orders and times.

The embargo restricts the crane hire industry to an almost unworkable level. Whilst it's true that many of our jobs are pre booked for certain dates, we are also a service industry that needs to meet our customers' requirements on an ever-changing time scale. I'm sure every crane hire company in the country will tell the same tale of last-minute changes to workloads on daily

and often hourly basis, created by an almost infinite multitude of factors. We constantly arrange, rearrange, alter or postpone jobs to suit our customers' requirements and just when we think we're on top of it we often have to start again, following a breakdown, a job running on, job not ready, transport held up, staff falling ill, impending inclement weather - the list of reasons for changes to the schedule is endless.

Let's take a perfectly feasible scenario that will be recognised by anyone operating a crane hire company; suppose we have a crane booked and routed to attend a job site tomorrow within an embargo zone. The crane booked has had a problem on the way back to the depot the day before the hire, (after 18.00 of course because we finished the job at 15:30 and, in accordance with the embargo, couldn't travel), and will need to be

attended to by a fitter the following day. So, we arrange an alternative crane or employ another company to carry out tomorrow's work on our behalf. The alternative or cross hired crane is not on the movement order so we're unable to move it. What do we tell our customer who's waiting for us on site, with a team of workers booked specifically for the day, maybe with transport of specialised equipment to be lifted. Surely the answer isn't "don't worry we'll be there in three days."

This week alone, we have had calls from two long standing customers that required immediate lifting operations, one first thing Monday morning with a 12t excavator that came to rest in a precarious position whilst digging foundations, and one on Friday evening with an entire concrete

Continued on page 14

plant on stop and requiring a crane to help with repairs. As usual we responded instantly and both jobs were carried out on the respective days. These customers could easily have been in the area where an embargo is being enforced, do we really need to tell them that after all these years of knowing they can rely on us at any time day or night, we can now confidently let them know that in the case of the Monday job we'll be there on Wednesday and in the case of the Friday job we'll be there next Tuesday, assuming we are in time to arrange the movement order using Friday as day 1 otherwise we'll see you on Wednesday (weekend days don't count as two clear days' notice).

These jobs may not be emergency as defined by the Police i.e. "terror attack, national emergency where there is a threat to life or a declared rails disaster" but to our customers they are urgent jobs that are unforeseen and require immediate response.

To meet the embargo times, we now need to be on site by 07:00 often before sites are manned or open or during a noise restriction period, or we park up somewhere suitable (any ideas welcome) and continue our journey after 09:00 a.m. for arrival at an unscheduled time. Similarly, when leaving the site, if it is before 16:00 will we get to the same place to park up? Do we stay on site until 18:00 often after the site has been locked up? As a result, there is a very real danger of jobs being rushed to fit in with embargo times. That can only have a negative and potentially dangerous outcome.

What do our operators, the ones that are increasingly difficult to attract into the crane hire business, do for an hour or two in the morning and the same in the evening while they're waiting to move? Undoubtedly some will be pondering other ways to make a living, others will relish the chance to get some more hours in. Both will be earning overtime that will be difficult to incorporate into the hire contract and will become

another cost to absorb in the ever-spiralling costs associated with running a crane hire company. The operators and drivers of genuine abnormal loads, i.e. abnormally long, wide, tall, and or heavy will accept the difficulty of rush hour movements with an oversized load and will no doubt charge and be paid accordingly. The mobile crane industry just can't work like that, they are two completely separate entities and in my view should be treated as such.

According to the West Midlands Police "the roads around Birmingham are considered some of the busiest in Europe and the economic impact of traffic congestion is significant." Are the roads around Ross-on-Wye, Worcester, or Evesham, also some of the busiest in Europe? Does the removal of mobile cranes from our roads during the ironically named 'rush hour' mean that somewhere a commuter is jumping for joy because their commute was a breeze due to the lack of mobile cranes on the road? What will be achieved by omitting a vehicle that would travel pretty much the same speed as a loaded 40ft lorry when in heavy traffic and the same speed as any other vehicle when in traffic? Surely all these commuters are there, not because they want to be part of the congestion but because they need to be at their place of work at a given time. How does that differ for the vast majority of mobile cranes that need to be at their place of work, i.e. a job site, at a given time?

I understand genuine abnormal loads being restricted, but most cranes do not fit the abnormal load criteria other than their axle weights. The Department for Transport enabled mobile cranes to "travel with higher axle loadings and at more realistic road speed" ages ago, why are the Department for Transport and the Police battling in contradiction?



It's not just crane hire companies that are struggling with this, it has a massive impact on construction projects. During the pandemic lockdowns of 2020 and 2021, Government told us of the importance of keeping construction going and the measures we should take to keep our staff safe and continue working "where people cannot work from home - including, people who work in critical national infrastructure construction", yet now, in 'normal' working times, infrastructure construction is not critical.

Who decided to link mobile cranes with 'abnormal - thus exceptional - loads'. Clearly they spent no time with a crane hire company to gauge just how problematic and unworkable these rules are. When the legislation changed regarding the use of rebated fuel, we all knew that from April 2022 we would need to run our cranes on white diesel. There were discussions, consultations and guidance from the CPA. and HMRC. The change was implemented, not without its issues but relatively smoothly, and we continued operating normally. The debilitating 'abnormal load' and embargo fiasco has arrived without consultation or notice and is unworkable.

I for one would welcome a rapid U turn on the movement order and embargo time restrictions for smaller 'taxi' cranes to keep our industry viable and enable us to continue working in a safe, timely and practical manner.

* I wonder which of the images above any normal person would consider to be an abnormal load - currently they are both in the same category.

Simon Ellis

Ellis Crane Hire Ltd

PHILIP GRAHAM CUTTING 1947-2024

Phil Cutting, founder and former managing director of UK access rental company PG Platforms has died. He was diagnosed with cancer last August and after suffering from complications from the chemotherapy, passed away on Saturday 20th April with his family by his side, he was 76.

Phil Cutting started out in 1970 when he joined John Laing and its crane and rental division EPL which had both cranes and aerial lifts in its fleet. In fact, it was a pioneer in the powered access market under Paul Adorian who went on to become IPAF's first full managing director.

Phil decided to start his own access rental business somewhere between 1982 and 1984, operating as a sole trader from a location in Strood, near the historic Chatham Dockyards east of London. The PG Platforms name dates from 1984, by which time the fleet consisted of half a dozen Versalift van mounted lifts. Over the next 25 years the business expanded at a steady pace with more truck mounted lifts, van mounts and then other platform types.

In 2009 Phil and his son Steve, who joined his father in 1992, incorporated the business as PG Platforms Ltd. In the years since, the fleet make up has grown even wider, to include most types of frequently used self-propelled aerial lifts including booms, scissors, spider lifts and mast booms etc... In 2015 the company moved into new headquarters in Snodland, Kent, while a second location was opened in Bolney, near Haywards Heath in West Sussex. The company has also added a third generation in the form of Steve's son Charlie who joined in 2018 as a truck mounted lift operator and is now hire desk controller.

A post by Steve Cutting said: "Phil started PG nearly 40 years ago and was the driving force behind the company for many years until he partially retired, although he was still very much involved until shortly before his passing. RIP to a man we called Phil, Boss, Friend, Dad & Grandad. He leaves behind his wife Carole, three children, six grandchildren and two great grandchildren.



Phil Cutting

CORRECTING HISTORY

Dear Leigh,

I regret to inform you that having read the book 'Don't Look Down' that there are errors about me on pages 65 & 66.

1. We were never appointed as an exclusive JLG distributor for Europe.
2. I don't recall speaking to Paul Adorian after the trip to Conexpo.
3. I never ever had second thoughts about JLG!!
4. We never sold or transferred the five JLGs to Paul Adorian at EPL. We had no need to as we were obtaining hires at £300 per week per platform.
5. H.B. Plant Hire Ltd had a company M.B. Plant Sales that was the Scottish distributor for Acklift Truck & Van Mounts. The sales manager and salesmen were both ex-North British who was the Scottish distributor for Simon Platform.

We were also dealers for Acklift truck mounted lifts and sold the first truck mounted lift over 100ft in Scotland. It was a 103ft model.

We sold the first 80ft LG to the Harland & Wolff Shipyard, and one of the first 40ft booms to the Burrell Collection in Glasgow and another to an aluminium plant in North Wales. We never sent him (Paul Adorian at EPL) our first five JLG booms either, two went to Hewden Stuart, another two to a company in South Wales and we rented another to one of the rig building yards in Scotland for blasting the topsides. They had been using an 18 tonne Grove Rough Terrain crane with a basket to carry out the work, tying up the crane and its operator, while not providing the best solution for the blast crew. So, the switch to the JLG boom made sound economic sense as well as being safer.

The company were delighted with the demonstration that we had organised when they asked for a price I quoted them £300/week which they jumped at. The list price of the machine at that time was £12,000, but we had a 25% dealer discount and then on top of that you could claim a 20% investment grant, reducing the effective cost to £7,000.

When the first machines arrived with us, John Grove arranged for an HSE inspection so that the new machines had some form of official approval. I recall collecting the two inspectors from Inverness airport and taking them to our yard in Evanton. The first thing they did not like about the booms was the fact that the gate was not self-closing, so we agreed to add a spring to it.

Then when we did the overload test, the machine tipped - not an overturn, it just leaned as the back wheel lifted off the ground. When they asked what we were going to do about it we agreed to contact JLG and find a solution - probably more counterweight? Which we did.

There is much more to tell, but I was very fortunate to have come into the industry at a time when we seemed to be constantly trailblazing.

Yours faithfully,

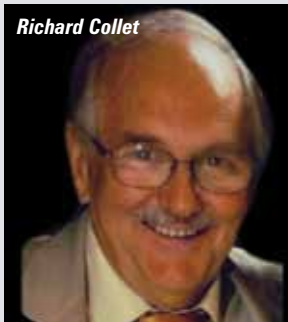
Tom Renwick.

The book Don't Look Down was written by Paul Adorian detailing his business career and the early years of the European powered access industry, through to his time setting up IPAF and managing it through until 2003. Pages 65 and 66 refer to his time as managing director of Laing owned sales and rental company. It seems that in 1975 both he and Renwick - a director of Motherwell Bridge - attended what was still widely known as the 'Chicago Road Show', although the official name for the 1975 event had changed to the International Construction Equipment Exposition, becoming Conexpo after moving to Houston in 1981 and Las Vegas in 1987. While at the show they both spotted JLG's small stand in one of the quieter halls, with its 40ft telescopic boom lift, the 40F. It seems that both Adorian and Renwick were promised distribution rights by different members of the JLG team. The rest you can probably work out from Tom Renwick's letter.

Paul Adorian's book is otherwise a good read and is available direct from the author at pauladorian@outlook.com or if you prefer Tel: +44 (0) 1539 562699. Or through the Vertikal Press on booksales@vertikal.net.

RICHARD COLLETT 1942-2024

Richard Collett, the chairman of UK heavy moving and rigging specialists Collett & Sons has died. He passed away at Airedale Hospital on the 9th of February, having suffered with prostate cancer since 2002, he was 81.



Richard Collett

Richard Collett was born on a farm in Keighley, West Yorkshire on the 26th of August 1942, the seventh of nine children of Richard and Margery Collett.

His father, also Richard, was a farmer who had started a milk collection business in 1928, buying his first truck in 1933. As soon as he was able, young Richard was expected to work on the farm, carrying out a variety of jobs from helping with milking to going out with the truck drivers collecting milk from local farms and delivering it to the dairy.

In 1960 he married Patricia, with the two going on to have five sons. Richard, David, Lincoln, Mark and Michael. In 1962 he moved to a derelict farm in Halifax, where he opened a new milk collecting operation as well as farming. In 1964 he and his father established R Collett and Son, initially as a milk collection business, but it also won an animal feed delivery contract for West Cumberland Farmers building a fleet of around eight used trucks. Collett did all the wagon services and repairs himself and in 1975 was joined by his eldest son Richard who became a mechanic after leaving school.

In 1975 he formed R. Collett & Sons (Transport) to move into heavy haulage work, with the idea



Richard Collett with a milk collection truck and three of his sons

that all five sons would join the business. He bought his first low loader - a small second hand single axle Crane Fruehauf trailer - in 1976 and the business began to take off. In 1985 he bought a yard in Keighley, having outgrown the farm, and in 1996 consolidated both locations into a new yard in Pellon, Halifax, where the company is still based. Whilst his formal education was brief and continually interrupted, his enthusiasm for hard work coupled with the fact that he was bright, ambitious and had an excellent sense of judgement, more than compensated for his poor reading and writing skills.

He was a true character who didn't suffer fools and was outspoken, but fair. As his sons and grandchildren left school, they joined the company contributing to the business which increasingly specialised in heavy transport. While he technically retired in his late 70s, he carried on working until the end. He was buried at the Mount Pleasant cemetery in Wainstalls on the 1st of March following a service at the Halifax Minster. His coffin was transported on the back of his 1952 Bedford O type milk wagon.

Collett is based in Halifax with yards in Elland, Bradford, Goole and Grangemouth in Scotland, as well as an office in Dublin, Ireland. The company purchased its first wagon in 1933 and more recently it has added the supply of craneage, along with heavy lift, contract lifts and rigging services to its portfolio.



Richard Collett's last journey