

Possible redundancies in South Queensferry – no formal decision yet

Unite the union has today reacted to the news that Progress Rail Services intends to make 147 workers redundant by closing its South Queensferry site by the end of the year. The redundancies are due to commence on 30 November with the last proposed dismissals due to take place before the end of the year.

The union has appealed to The Scottish and UK Governments to intervene to support high-quality jobs saying that if the site does close then it would be another 'massive blow' to Scottish manufacturing and the nation's domestic rail infrastructure.

The South Queensferry facility can produce castings up to five tonnes in weight in a variety of steels from austenitic manganese to Argon Oxygen Decarburisation (AOD) refined stainless steel.

Unite industrial officer, Graeme Turnbull, said: "The news that Progress Rail Services is closing its South Queensferry site is a massive blow to Scottish manufacturing. Around 150 highly skilled jobs are on the brink of being lost over the

coming months, which is why we are calling on the Scottish and UK Governments to immediately initiate discussions with the company and Unite to see what measures could be brought forward to keep the site open. It's depressing news to see a successful UK based manufacturer that has supported this country's rail infrastructure for over 100 years being faced with closure. The loss would mean that the entire UK network would be fully dependent on imported railway components, which would be a further travesty following the closures of Wabtec and the Caley Rail works."

Progress Rail Services acquired the Scottish based manufacturing business in 2011. The company which has manufacturing sites across the UK is facing closure following an indicative decision by Network Rail to award a 5-year contract to overseas suppliers. Progress Rail employs 450 people throughout the UK. The announcement follows the decision by Wabtec to close its Kilmarnock factory in March this year, which refurbished high speed train carriages leaving around 100 workers unemployed. In July 2019, another key part of the rail transport infrastructure was lost as the Caley Rail works in Springburn closed with 200 highly-skilled direct and indirect jobs lost to the industry.

A spokesperson for Progress Rail which is owned by US parent company, Caterpillar, said: "Progress Rail is committed to open and fair competition. We have supplied the UK rail industry for more than 160 years with critical track materials. Progress Rail was recently notified of Network Rail's intention to award a significant infrastructure contract to other suppliers. This award constitutes the majority of the volume Progress Rail has historically received from Network Rail.

"As Network Rail's largest supplier of track components, Progress Rail is challenging the award and has notified its employees. Due to the potential impact of Network Rail's tender outcome, Progress Rail has opened a collective

consultation with employee representatives at each of its UK track work locations to discuss possible redundancies and efforts to mitigate potential impacts, although no formal decisions have been made at this time.”