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Atkins
Woodcote Grove, Ashley Road
Epsom, Surrey KT18 5BW
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)1372 726140
Fax: +44 (0)1372 740055
info@atkinsglobal.com
www.atkinsglobal.com

Europe's most ambitious new rail upgrade gathers pace

A joint venture, led by Atkins and Ramboll, has now mobilised over 80 technical consultants as work gathers pace on Europe's most advanced rail upgrade.

The Danish ERTMS project promises a radical improvement in safety, performance, and capacity, and opens up the possibility of running non-stop trains across all borders. Teams of specialists – from Atkins, Ramboll and JV partners Parsons and Emch+Berger - have been steering the signalling programme through its early stages and are now preparing final tender documents for the supply of on-board train equipment and signalling infrastructure.

Eva Rindom, director of rail in Atkins Danmark said: "This is the first time an advanced signalling system like this has ever been fitted to an entire country's strategic rail network. As Europe's leading signalling design house Atkins was a natural choice because this is one of the most sophisticated challenges in the world rail market at present. It will require technical excellence and precision planning to deliver ERTMS level 2 on a running railway with as little disruption as possible.

"The system promises higher punctuality of services and will also upgrade safety as there will be a homogenous high level of safety on all Banedanmark lines."

ERTMS, European Rail Traffic Management System, will see on-board computers fitted to every train which receive and relay information via trackside radio beacons that communicate with a central control. This improves timetable reliability and offers capacity improvements because services can be run closer together. Safety is also a key feature as ERTMS also includes an Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system which applies a train's brakes automatically if it is danger of a potential collision.

As well as the boost to passenger services the freight industry could also see huge benefits. At the moment the average speed between European cities is around 20kph because freight has to be shunted at national borders to other locomotives and drivers that can run on the next country's network. In future if both countries had ERTMS fitted that would not be an issue, so freight deliveries could be far cheaper, and faster.

Tonni Christiansen, Ramboll's Director of Rail said: "Internationally, there is no precedence for an upgrade of an entire country's signalling system. However, we expect the rest of Europe will be taking on similar projects in the coming years, and we are excited to be the first to take on the challenge, in essence setting a standard for how this can be done."

One of the key drivers for Rail Net Denmark to fit ERTMS to the entire strategic rail network is the economy of scale such a large procurement brings. The upgrade is also being applied with expansion in mind, particularly looking at interoperability with the Swedish and German networks.

Denmark is also now emerging as the most important player in the effort to optimize key freight routes throughout Europe, with the Danish Public Transport Authority taking a lead role in the plan to establish ERTMS on 3,600 km of railway line between Stockholm and Naples, a vital freight corridor. The goal is to introduce the system throughout the corridor by 2020, in order to support an anticipated 50 per cent increase in the number of freight trains on the line.

The joint venture carrying the Danish signalling upgrade is led by Ramboll, with Atkins, Europe's largest engineering design consultancy, as equal majority partner. The joint venture also includes Parsons, and Emch+Berger.

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For more information:

Maria Virklund
Media relations, Atkins Danmark

+45 5251 9149 / +45 2780 7059
maria.virklund@atkinsglobal.com

Andy Winstanley
Group head of media relations

+44(0)1372 752018 / +44(0)7703 259643
andy.winstanley@atkinsglobal.com

Richard Seston
Media relations officer, Rail

+44 (0)1332 225660/+44 (0)7834 506233
richard.seston@atkinsglobal.com

Notes to editors:

Atkins (www.atkinsglobal.com) is the UK's largest engineering and design consultancy and the world's 11th largest design firm. We have the depth and breadth of expertise to respond to the most technically challenging and time-critical infrastructure projects and the urgent transition to a low-carbon economy. Whether it's the concept for a new skyscraper, the upgrade of a rail network, the modelling of a flood defence system or the improvement of a management process, we plan, design and enable solutions.

Recent projects include:

- Major infrastructure works, such as the design and programme management of the civil works for the Dubai Metro red and green lines;
- High profile transport planning and urban design – our innovative scheme to deliver a diagonal crossing at London's Oxford Circus has helped tackle the problem of pedestrian crowding;
- Key rail projects – providing architectural and engineering design services on London's Crossrail, Europe's biggest civil engineering project, and designing stations, tunnelling and track systems on Gautrain, South Africa's first high speed line;
- Multidisciplinary building design – North Wood Primary School in Darlington is an exemplar project which raises standards for environmental design and community engagement;
- Vital water and environmental projects – as part of a joint venture, Atkins is providing technical assistance to the Water Supply and Sanitation Sector Reform Programme in Nigeria, which will benefit up to three million people.

Atkins was named Consultancy of the Year in the CIBSE Low Carbon Performance Awards 2010; received the first ever certification of the Carbon Trust Standard awarded to an engineering consultancy in the construction sector; and was named among *The Times* Top 50 Companies Where Women Want to Work 2009 and *The Times* Top 100 Graduate Employers 2009. Atkins was also construction and civil engineering sector winner for the fifth consecutive year in the Target National Graduate Recruitment Awards 2010 and was awarded a RoSPA Gold Award 2010 for excellence in control of health and safety in the workplace.

Atkins is the official engineering design services provider for the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.