

Porterbrook in rolling stock deal

By Robert Wright

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The owner of nearly a third of the UK's passenger rail rolling stock has been sold to a consortium led by Germany's Deutsche Bank in the latest of a series of deals likely to transform the sector's ownership.

The sale of Porterbrook Leasing, owned since 2000 by Abbey National, the UK bank now part of Spain's Santander, comes just four months after Angel Trains, the leader in the UK market, was sold to a consortium organised by Babcock & Brown, the fund manager, for £3.6bn.

Porterbrook did not say how much the consortium - which also includes Antin Infrastructure Partners, a fund run by France's BNP Paribas, and Lloyds TSB - would pay. However, the sum involved appears to be about £1.4bn.

Porterbrook said the deal should be concluded before the end of 2008. Paul Francis, Porterbrook's managing director, said he was pleased to have concluded the transaction in the current difficult circumstances. Deutsche Bank is expected to concentrate initially on the UK market, rather than re-entering the continental European arena.

Porterbrook briefly entered that market - where private competitors to the big state railways often lease new trains rather than buying them - while under Abbey's ownership. It later sold the business.

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