

Freight's role in 'A railway fit for Britain's future'

RFG welcomes commitment to freight but warns of risk from 'all powerful' Great British Railways.

On 18 February, Rail Freight Group (RFG) welcomed the government's consultation on 'A railway fit for Britain's future', but warned that the significant legal changes being planned could pose a threat to rail freight services.

Government's plans include scrapping the current legal framework for awarding rail capacity to freight operators, moving power to GBR, along with potential new powers for mayoral authorities. The proposals will also weaken the role of the Office of Rail and Road in determining rail access, although they will retain an appeal role. In its place, government has committed to setting a target for increasing rail freight growth and statutory duty on GBR to promote freight.

The report highlights a commitment to rail freight and introducing an explicit, statutory duty for GBR to promote rail freight in line with an overall growth target set by government.

Although the new commitments are welcome, the rail freight industry is concerned that without a strong legal framework it will be too easy for freight trains to be deprioritised to meet GBR or mayoral ambitions.

In the report Secretary of State for Transport Heidi Alexander MP wrote: "Up and down the country, the consensus is clear: our railway simply isn't working. Decades of sticking-plaster solutions and attempts at incremental change have failed, leaving behind a system that is fragmented, inefficient, and without leadership."

RFG Director General Maggie Simpson OBE said: "Rail freight is essential to meeting government's missions, from building new homes, supporting economic growth and delivering green energy. It is therefore essential that any new laws give certainty of access to enable businesses to invest and to grow."

She added: "These are profound changes to railway legislation and it is essential that the resulting framework is effective in protecting the right of freight to run on the network and to meet its customers' needs. We look forward to working with government to ensure that this outcome is delivered through the legislative process."

[Click here to go to the consultation document.](#)



DRS announces ultra-low IDA trial

Direct Rail Services (DRS) has started a new rail freight trial from Teesport to Manchester using ultra-low IDA wagons for the first time on the route.

Article on page 3.

Photo: Simon Richmond



P3.
It's time to start getting your entries in for our Awards



P5.
Our Members' Party kicks off a year of rail freight networking



P10.
We announce our Sponsor Partners for 2025



P13.
Freightliner announces coal wagon fleet repurposing project



Government must recognise value of rail freight more broadly

*Maggie Simpson OBE,
Director General, Rail Freight Group.*

Back in the turbulent times of the pandemic, the freight and logistics sector worked tirelessly to keep the shelves stocked and the home deliveries coming. Despite a few wobbles, and a few press photos of empty shelves, the sector delivered day in day out, and was rightly recognised by government for its contribution at the time. Spinning from this came the government's Future of Freight plan, and a renewed focus on the needs of freight, which was arguably well overdue (the excellent [Generation Logistics](#) campaign is a carryover of this plan and worth a look if you are not already involved).

By the summer of 2024, memories of the pandemic were fading, and so it is perhaps no surprise that the newly elected government didn't seem to place much emphasis on supply chains at all. Now, nine months in, that picture has sadly not changed much despite the repeated efforts of the sector. From the draft Industrial Strategy to the recent consultation on a proposed Steel Strategy, freight and logistics doesn't even get a mention despite it being an instrumental part of the success of new investments. Whether by rail, water, road or air, you cannot grow a modern industrial landscape without moving goods, nor for that matter can you build 1.5m new homes without at least some idea of how the bricks, concrete or even carpets and bathrooms are going to arrive on site! Perhaps it is a mark of

confidence in the sector that we are expected just to work this out – or maybe it reflects a lack of detail and understanding, which is concerning.

In rail the picture is more mixed. On one hand we have seen a good initial commitment to rail freight, with the promise of a renewed rail freight growth target and a duty to rail freight on the yet to be established Great British Railways promised in government plans. This has been echoed in the recently published consultation 'A railway for everyone'. Yet at the same time that consultation proposes sweeping reforms to railway law, which are a serious concern for many of our members. This includes dramatic changes to the way that track capacity and access rights are allocated, and to the framework for setting track charges, with responsibility in both cases moving from the independent Office of Rail and Road to GBR, who will also have responsibility for running both the tracks and most of the passenger trains. We will need a sturdy set of safeguards and policies to ensure that freight is not disadvantaged, and whilst there are some proposals in the consultation, many do not have enough detail, or go far enough, to really give comfort. We will be writing to all our members in the next few weeks highlighting the key points for anyone who wants to respond, and we would encourage you all to do so.

What is clear is that rail freight is, and will remain, a critical part of UK supply chains, and also of the journey to industrial decarbonisation. Ignoring freight and logistics in policy will simply make it harder for the UK economy to succeed, and we need to encourage government to be more inclusive in its various strategies.

Meanwhile, the rail freight sector continues to do what it does best, to start new services, and invest in its future, and you can read more about recent announcements in this RFG News. Please do keep your news coming, and make sure you continue to spread the news about the essential role that rail freight plays.

RFG appoints new Business Manager

The RFG team are delighted to welcome Maria Papp as our new Business Manager. She will be managing our events programme and leading on our administration and finance functions.

Maria said: "I'm excited to embark on my new journey as a Business Manager at

Rail Freight Group. With a passion for logistics, operational excellence and organisation skills, I look forward to being a family member in the rail freight industry. I'm eager to contribute my skills and collaborate with my new team to achieve success in this dynamic sector."

Maggie Simpson OBE, RFG's Director General, added: "We are delighted to welcome Maria to the RFG Team to manage our business organisation and events, and supporting all our members to grow rail freight."



Welcome our latest new members

Windsor Materials Handling

A leading provider of materials handling and access solutions in the UK.

Terberg DTS

Terberg DTS is the market leader in the UK for specialist vehicles and support.

Heidelberg Materials

A leading supplier of heavy building materials to the construction industry including aggregates, ready-mixed concrete, and cement-related materials.

Navigator Terminals

An independent bulk liquid storage provider, supporting critical infrastructure throughout the UK.

Getlink

A leading low-carbon transport operator and infrastructure manager for the Channel Tunnel.

Fargo Systems

Provides innovative intermodal management solutions, optimising container transport across road, rail, and sea.

Hitachi Rail

Hitachi Rail is a global player in the railway sector: an integrated group capable of offering rail transport vehicles, signalling systems and digital technology, service & maintenance activities as well as turnkey solutions worldwide.

Migo Consult

A transportation-focused innovation and transformation consultancy dedicated to helping our customers tackle their biggest challenges.

DRS trials new ultra-low IDA wagons

Direct Rail Services (DRS) has started a new groundbreaking rail service in a trial from Teesport to Manchester.

The service is the first on this route to use the ultra-low IDA wagons, which allow the use of standard high-cube containers, opening up the route to new customers moving goods by rail.

Gottfried Eymer, NTS's Managing Director for Rail, said: "This trial offers a new route to customers who may not have considered rail before. It is an open access service which will amalgamate different customers to one train, saving time and cost."

The service will operate from the PD Ports-owned terminal in Teesport and demonstrates the collaborative work which is going into diversifying supply chains and improving their environmental credentials.

Jo Edmenson, PD Ports' key account manager for rail freight services, said: "Transpennine connections for operators looking to move goods across the country have been confined to road freight for many years due to the constraints of the rail network, with height restrictions at stations, bridges and tunnels causing a number of issues. There is much anticipation about the Transpennine upgrade, which will hopefully remove many of those blockages, but with a completion date of 2030, we felt that was too long to wait when we considered the importance of rail freight as a means of decarbonising the

supply chain and removing road movements from congested major routes. We're excited to partner with DRS to offer this new service, direct from the UK's sixth largest port to the heart of the North West. The route opens up a major new connection between the two regions and offers alternative means of shipping goods into the east coast of the UK and onwards, with the same true for exports."

DRS has also recently announced it has launched a new bulk rail service delivering aggregate for a project vital to the safe and secure disposal of nuclear waste. During the first campaign, DRS will operate two trains a day, four days a week, to Nuclear Waste Services' (NWS) Low Level Waste (LLW) Repository site, in Cumbria. The trains will deliver aggregate for the Southern Trench Interim Membrane (STIM) project – a project to replace a protective barrier over the legacy disposal trenches at the site.

This marks the first time DRS has used its JNA-Z box wagons, with each train delivering over 750 tonnes of material – the equivalent of 36 HGVs. This is the first in a series of material deliveries as part of the project, delivering 46,400 tonnes of aggregate over 64 trains, and it's estimated that 2,320 lorry journeys will be saved in this stage alone – removing over 150,000 road miles.

Further trains will be run in other stages over the project's three-year duration, making the journey from Shap quarry to the LLW Repository, near Drigg.

News in Brief:

- John Smith, CEO of GB Railfreight (GBRf), was made an OBE in the King's New Year Honours List for services to the rail freight industry. John is among the list of people who the King has honoured for the role he has played throughout a lifetime dedicated to the railway.

- RFG's next Digital Forum takes place on 6 March. It will tackle the latest hot topics impacting efficiency gains, preventative maintenance and operational performance. To attend email yvonne@rfg.org.uk

- A new report from Jonathan Roberts Consulting has been published into alternatives to the Lower Thames Crossing. [Click here to download a copy.](#)

RFG AWARDS 2025

#RFGAWARDS

NOW OPEN FOR ENTRIES

The RFG Awards 2025, which recognise excellence in all aspects of rail freight, are open!

We would encourage all our members to use this opportunity to acknowledge the outstanding work undertaken by your teams to ensure the rail freight industry continues to develop and thrive.

You must be a current member to enter.

We accept joint entries as long as the lead company is a RFG member.

[Click here to go to our Awards page for full details, awards criteria and an entry form.](#)

Heidelberg Materials UK commits to cleaner shunting at Whatley Quarry

Heidelberg Materials has ordered its first zero-emission battery shunting locomotive to support internal rail operations at one of the UK's leading quarry facilities.

The highly innovative 08e battery locomotive will be delivered by Chesterfield based Positive Traction in the summer of this year and follows two weeks of trials with the 08e prototype in October at Heidelberg Materials' Whatley Quarry in Somerset, the company's largest UK quarry.

Heidelberg Materials' 08e shunter will be upgraded to zero emissions operations by repurposing an existing 60-year-old vehicle from its current operational fleet and removing its carbon-based diesel power source, achieving an immediate reduction in carbon, NOx and particulate tail-pipe emissions. The move to zero-emission shunting of thousand tonne trains within the Whatley Quarry site will also offer



environmental benefits to nearby communities.

Vincent Pitt, Area General Manager at Heidelberg Material's UK, said: "Our order for a battery powered 08e shunter is part of Heidelberg' Materials' 2030 commitment to reduce scope 3 emissions in delivery transport by 15 per cent from our 2019 baseline and to be fully carbon neutral by 2050. We were enormously impressed by the trial of the prototype 08e easily mastering 1,000-tonne aggregate trains on what is a steep and challenging internal quarry network in places. By offering a donor vehicle for conversion by the Positive Traction team we can capitalise on our existing assets and

secure the long-term future of these powerful shunting locomotives in a sustainable way."

Alistair Gregory, Director of Positive Traction, said: "I'd like to thank the Heidelberg Materials team at Whatley Quarry for inviting us to trial the prototype 08e last year and for their swift move in placing an order for an 08e designed with their specific and demanding requirements in mind. All of us at Positive Traction are hugely excited by Heidelberg Materials' recognition of the opportunities presented by repurposing existing traction to meet the zero emissions demands of tomorrow's railway."



lawyers with rail & logistics expertise

Myton Law's rail specialists have extensive hands on experience of railway law, not only in the UK but across Europe.

We provide cost effective advice on both straight forward rail matters and on complex strategic matters involving a number of areas of law.

- Rail freight haulage agreements
- Rail connection and track access agreements
- Sidings and track maintenance agreements
- Procurement contracts, including rolling stock
- European service design - traction sales & purchase
- Railway real estate
- Multi-modal agreements
- Ports & terminals
- Dispute resolution
- Warehouse agreements
- Regulatory
- Health & Safety

RFG
Rail Freight Group

myton law
SHIPPING • RAIL • LOGISTICS

Call us on +44 (0)1482 485020

www.mytonlaw.co.uk

RFG Members' Party kicks off a year of rail freight networking

A huge thank you to everyone who joined us at Truckles in Central London for our free RFG Members' Party.

It's always a great way to kick off our networking events at the start of the year - and celebrate the end of a dry January.

Networking is a key part of our work at Rail Freight Group, bringing people together to build positive and lasting business connections. You can read more about our work and the value of face-to-face communications at Multimodal 2025 in our blog on page 22.



**Join us at
our next
Members'
Forum
event:**



DIGITAL, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION FORUM

Join us to discuss key issues impacting rail freight
email yvonne@rfg.org.uk

Government announces Drax Power Station support mechanism

The Government has agreed heads of terms with Drax on a new support mechanism for low-carbon dispatchable generation after 2027. Drax and other eligible large-scale biomass generators will be supported via a low-carbon dispatchable CfD (Contracts for Difference).

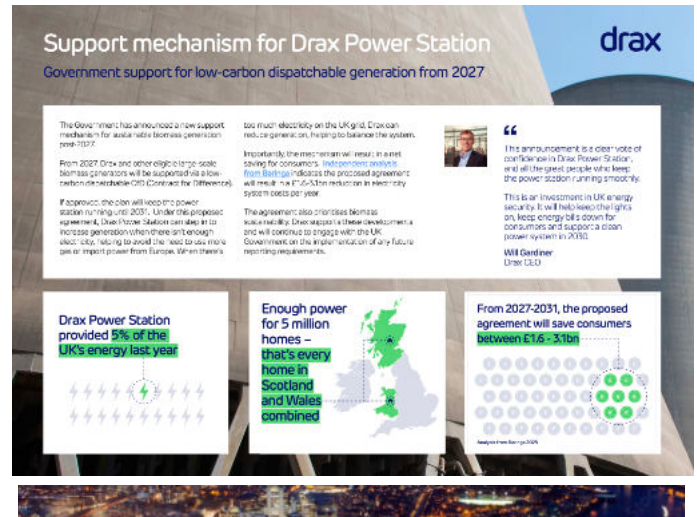
Mark Gibbens, Head of Logistics at Drax Power, said: "We support this approach. It is an investment in the UK's energy security, will result in a net saving for consumers, and is a vote of confidence in sustainable biomass electricity generation – both its importance to the UK's overall energy mix and the potential decarbonisation opportunities presented by carbon removals.

Drax Power Station is the UK's largest energy generator and currently provides the grid with enough power for 5 million homes – equivalent to every home in London, or Wales and Scotland combined.

Mark added: "As we look to the future, this mechanism will help to keep the lights on in homes and businesses across the UK during a period when electricity demand is forecast to rise significantly. Importantly, independent analysis by Baringa shows that this agreement provides net savings for consumers of between £1.6-£3.1bn over the term of the agreement (2027-2031), by avoiding the need to procure additional capacity and reducing the UK's reliance on gas and interconnectors.

"As we move towards the Government's target of "Clean Power" by 2030, Drax and biomass will continue to play an important role as a renewable source of energy. Under this proposed agreement, when there is not enough electricity, Drax will step in to increase generation, avoiding the need to burn more gas or import power from Europe, and when there is too much electricity, Drax can turn down and help to balance the system."

He went on to say: "At Drax Power Station, the mechanism will maintain the option for our Carbon Capture, Utilisation and



The mechanism in detail

- We've agreed heads of terms with the UK Government for a low-carbon dispatchable CfD, which will support Drax Power Station from 2027.
- If approved, the support will be in place from March 2027 to March 2031, and will apply to all four units of Drax Power Station.
- The agreement will incentivise producing more energy at times of high demand, and less in times of low demand, to ensure a 'stable' that will cover the total amount of support provided, and require a minimum 'floor' volume of generation in winter.
- The agreement also prioritises biomass sustainability. Drax supports these developments and will continue to engage with the UK Government on the implementation of any future reporting requirements.
- The mechanism is expected to result in consumer savings of between £1.6-£3.1bn.

Keeping the lights on

Drax Power Station is the largest energy generator in the UK. In 2023, it generated 11,078MWh of renewable energy – more than any other single source. Annually, the power station provides on average 5% of the electricity the growing number of homes and businesses across the country.

Keeping costs down for billpayers

Independent analysis from Baringa shows that this agreement provides net savings for consumers of between £1.6-£3.1bn over the term of the agreement (2027-2031), by avoiding the need to procure additional capacity and reducing the UK's reliance on gas and interconnectors.

Leading the way on climate action

By stepping in to increase generation when the power station is not at its full capacity, Drax can help to balance the system. The mechanism maintains the option for Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS). With the right investment framework, this could remove 8Mt of carbon dioxide a year from the atmosphere, broadly equivalent to taking 3m petrol/diesel cars off the road.

Learn more at drax.com/support-mechanism-for-dps

Questions answered

What does CfD mean?

The CfD (Contracts for Difference) is a government-backed scheme that provides a guaranteed price for electricity generated by low-carbon dispatchable generation from 2027. It provides a 'stable' price for electricity generated by low-carbon dispatchable generation from 2027.

How does the mechanism save billpayers money?

Independent analysis by Baringa shows that this agreement provides net savings for consumers of between £1.6-£3.1bn over the term of the agreement (2027-2031), by avoiding the need to procure additional capacity and reducing the UK's reliance on gas and interconnectors.

How does Drax Power Station support energy security?

Drax Power Station is the largest energy generator in the UK. In 2023, it generated 11,078MWh of renewable energy – more than any other single source. Annually, the power station provides on average 5% of the electricity the growing number of homes and businesses across the country.

Does biomass emit more carbon dioxide than coal?

Any biomass is a renewable energy source. Drax Power Station is a 100% biomass power station. It is a 100% renewable energy source. It is a 100% renewable energy source. It is a 100% renewable energy source.

Remembering David Brice

It is with much sadness that we have learned of the passing of RFG friend and industry stalwart David Brice.

Following time in Area Management, David became 'Mr Speedlink' and

masterminded the development of the wagonload network. He enjoyed a very long railway career, working well past normal retirement age, and will be remembered latterly for his consultancy work, particularly that in Afghanistan. Away from work he was a renowned chorister, notably with the '222' singers.

David's funeral service was held at St Mary the Virgin, Shenfield, on

Wednesday 29 January. Following the service at Bentley Crematorium for the family, a reception to celebrate David's life was held at Mount Avenue Banqueting Suite, Brentwood.

Donations can be made in David's memory to [Saint Francis Hospice](#).

Maximise your reach in the rail freight sector!

RFG is now starting work on the next edition of its Annual Rail Freight Handbook for 2025/26.

The handbook is the go-to resource for key decision-makers across the UK Rail Freight Industry, from operators and

logistics providers to infrastructure specialists.

Advertising in the handbook ensures your brand is seen by the right audience—those actively shaping the future of rail freight.

With print and digital exposure, it's a great opportunity to position your business at the heart of the industry. Get in touch to find out how you can feature in the next edition!

Contact Jennifer Collins
JenniferCollins@zincmedia.co.uk
01625 667583



GB Railfreight marks National Apprenticeship Week 2025

Many companies right across the rail freight and wider logistics sectors celebrated National Apprenticeship Week. The team at GB Railfreight (GBRf) marked the occasion by profiling those staff who have completed an apprenticeship to kick start their career. Apprenticeships have been vital to so many in shaping their careers including GBRf chief executive John Smith.

John Smith OBE – Chief Executive Officer

John has been a rail enthusiast all of his life, and was set on a career in the rail sector. He started his career as a Technical Apprentice in carriage works in York. This early valuable experience in the sector laid the groundwork for John to kickstart his career and ultimately go on to be the founder of GB Railfreight. John believes bringing young people into any business is essential for its growth and reinvention. They bring enthusiasm, new ways of doing things, and fresh perspectives. He said: "We take immense pride in watching our apprentices take on more responsibilities and drive their careers forward." His advice to anyone considering an apprenticeship is to go for it! An apprenticeship offers hands-on experience, a chance to earn while you learn, and a pathway to a rewarding career.

Miranda Apps – IT Assets Manager (Top left in picture)

Miranda has been at GB Railfreight for over five years and decided recently to start a International Diploma in Business Analysis apprenticeship through the British Computer Society.

She said: "I've been in IT for 30 years, working on service desks, software licensing and projects. GB Railfreight's Applications team were using their time liaising with end users and trying to interpret users' changing requests. I was asked whether I would be a Business Analyst to act as the conduit between the users and the developers/3rd parties.

"The British Computer Society (BCS) have an International Diploma in Business Analysis, which is recognised worldwide. An apprenticeship was a fantastic way of achieving this, as it combines practice via the apprenticeship along with the theory needed for the five exams that make up the Diploma," she added. Miranda's story proves that apprenticeships can be anyone at any stage in their career.

Ben Turner – Assets Project Manager (Top right in the picture)

After completing sixth form, Ben knew that university wasn't the right path for him. Instead, he sought out opportunities that would allow him to learn on the job and build a career quickly. He initially tried his hand at an internship as a Data Analyst but soon realized that sitting in front of spreadsheets all day wasn't for him. Ben wanted a more dynamic and hands-on approach to learning, which led him to pursue an apprenticeship. Ben was drawn to GBRf by the chance to work nationwide, travel, and meet diverse people. He expected lighter tasks at first, but was given real responsibility from day one, which fast-tracked his learning. Ben completed his Level 4 Project Management and PMQ Apprenticeships between January 2020 and July 2021. He said: "An apprenticeship allows you to hit the ground running, building momentum to progress and succeed!"

Ben Turner is now an Assets Junior Project Manager at GB Railfreight (GBRf) and has played a key part in delivering infrastructure projects worth £10m and implementing the use of body worn cameras across traincrew. Last year he was awarded



the Young Rail Freight Professional Of The Year at the RFG Awards.

Bailey Clifton – Business Property Assistant (Bottom left in the picture)

Bailey Clifton joined GBRf as an apprentice in August 2022, and his journey has been nothing short of inspiring. With a background in finance, media, and PE from his A-levels, Bailey was eager to start earning money and building a career right after school. A keen West Ham supporter, he knew university wasn't the right path for him and found the perfect fit with GBRf.

Bailey chose GBRf due to his proactive and positive recruitment experience. He quickly realised that apprenticeships at GBRf involved significant responsibility and trust rather than the stereotypical junior tasks given to apprentices, allowing him to grow both personally and professionally. Bailey completed his Level 4 Sales Executive Apprenticeship between August 2022 and April 2024. He said: "Apprenticeships offer a chance to get straight into work, build a career, and provide great progression opportunities."

Tyler Livings – Rail Operator (bottom right in the picture)

Tyler's journey from Assistant Store Manager at Domino's Pizza to a thriving career in the railway industry is truly inspiring. Encouraged by his grandad, Tyler joined GBRf as a Commercial Apprentice. His apprenticeship provided invaluable experience, networking opportunities, and the chance to grow both personally and professionally.

Encouraged by his grandad, who has a background in the railway industry, Tyler applied for an apprenticeship with GBRf. After a rigorous two-stage interview process, which included delivering a presentation and participating in panel interviews, he was offered the role of 'Commercial Apprentice' within the Rail Services team.

Tyler completed his Sales Executive Apprenticeship between August 2022 and April 2024.

He said: "An apprenticeship was the best way to enter a complex industry while gaining qualifications and progressing into a career."

Maximise efficiency with industry-proven intermodal solutions

- Seamless rail and road integration
- Enhanced visibility and efficiency
- Optimised planning and execution

Our rail terminal operating system optimises container movements, streamlines operations, and improves productivity across your network.





RFG CROSS-MEMBER MENTORING PROGRAMME 2025

43

Mentees matched with a Mentor

35

Mentors supporting - some with 2 mentees



12 MONTHS

The mentoring relationships will run for 12 months

ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED:

27

different organisations involved as mentors or mentees

PROGRAMME INFO:

4-8 WEEKS

Participants are encouraged to meet every 4-8 weeks



TRAINING

All mentors and mentees attend a 1 hour induction and have access to ongoing support & resources

An update on our Cross-Member Mentoring Programme

RFG has been delighted with the response to its Cross-Member mentoring Programme where we have seen 27 organisations take part in helping arrange mentoring pairs.

RFG's Cross-Member Mentoring Programme aims to enhance the skills and industry knowledge of professionals within the rail freight sector. First launched at RFG's Annual General Meeting and Autumn Members' Meeting in November 2023, the programme has grown in popularity and this year's programme is set to build on the success and provide valuable opportunities to both young people, those new to rail and experts.

Deanne Logan of Mulberry & Mint is leading the initiative and highlighted the programme's value. "The Cross-Member Mentoring Programme offers individuals in freight the chance to acquire new skills and broaden their understanding across various sectors over 12 months," she said.

Feedback from the earlier schemes indicated significant development in areas such as business insight,

communication, networking, self-awareness, and strategic thinking. Participants begin with a virtual one-hour introductory training session to clarify expectations. The mentoring journey encompasses six to 12 meetings, which can be conducted online, supplemented by quarterly support calls. Many participants have also engaged in site visits, enriching the learning experience.

Maggie Simpson OBE, Director General of RFG, emphasised the programme's role in career advancement: "Our mentoring scheme is designed to assist individuals in advancing their careers and honing their skills, while also deepening their knowledge of the rail freight industry." She encourages both potential mentors and mentees to participate, aiming to replicate the scheme's success through 2025.

For those interested in joining future programmes as a mentor or mentee, further details are available on the RFG website. The initiative reflects RFG's commitment to nurturing talent and promoting knowledge sharing within the rail freight community. Please note, it is only open to RFG members.

Scottish Freight Facilities Grant Funding

Scottish Government announced in December the positive news that after a hiatus in grant funding, an allocation to support the re-opening of Freight Facilities Grants had been included in its draft budget for the financial year 25/26.

The size of the funding pot will be formalised when the final budget is formally announced in March. RFG has learned that the funding has been possible because of an unexpected increase in the capital budget made to Scottish Government from the UK Government for the forthcoming year. This is why the funding is for FFG and not enabling the reopening of MSRS (a revenue support grant) and does mean that the funding is to be provided for single year 25/26 only. It will not be funding offered on a multi-year or rolling basis and there are no plans to return to a rolling budget position going forward.

Transport Scotland are very keen that this one year settlement is a success, as it will help make the case for budget allocation in future years.

RFG learned however that the conditions of the current arrangement are that projects looking for FFG support must be substantially delivered within the financial year 2025/6. There will be limited possibility to make grant payments beyond the year end, although funding from scheme developers can clearly happen over a longer time frame.

Therefore RFG was advised that applications for FFG supported project should be made to the Transport Scotland Grants team as soon as possible even if they are early draft applications to enable the Transport Scotland team to work with applicants to advise on applicability and expedite the proposal development and evaluation through to award and payment. The Grants team highlighted that they have dedicated resource to process applications and that to avoid delay to award or payment, it is also incumbent on the applicant to be prompt and accurate with any requested information about their projects too.

Although the one-year window is short, Transport Scotland confirmed that the evaluation process for applications will follow the established national criteria and value for money from the grant will remain a high priority.

So, please get your projects shaped up and draft applications lodged.

Link to guidance and application process is at the link [here](#).

Norfolk County Council's survey to support the Norfolk Freight Evidence Gathering Study

Norfolk County Council is seeking the views of organisations across the county in relation to their supply chain needs and challenges as part of a freight & logistics evidence gathering study.

It is keen to hear from different sectors and industries, companies large and small, on what their supply chain needs are now but also in the future, and the role they see the council playing in helping to enable and support them going forward. It is also keen to hear from operators moving goods, as well as businesses with their own fleets. The survey will close on 28 February.

Click [here](#) to the short survey. It closes shortly on 7 March 2025.

Please welcome our Sponsor Partners for 2025

Rail Freight Group (RFG) would like to welcome its Sponsor Partners for 2025. Each of the companies comes from within the membership and has chosen to provide additional support for the group's activities and events throughout the year.

Together, they represent a wide range of key stakeholders and RFG would like to thank all of them for their commitment to the group and ongoing support to the UK rail freight sector. Please take a moment to visit their respective websites and discover more about the role they play in supporting rail freight.



Associated British Ports (ABP) is the UK's leading ports group, with 21 ports handling around a quarter of the UK's seaborne trade worth £157 billion. Together with our customers, our ports contribute more than £15 billion to the UK economy and support 200,000+ jobs.

Our ports provide essential gateways for trade, enable green infrastructure and catalyse investment and good jobs in coastal communities. These contributions are built on the foundations of safe and resilient operations today, together with embracing innovation and people development to deliver the ports of the future.



A subsidiary of the Colas Group, we are part of over a hundred years of experience in delivering major innovations across our sector.

Every day, thousands of trains run on tracks built or maintained by Colas Rail.



At DP World, our purpose is to make trade flow and change what's possible for everyone.

We aim to achieve this with fast, sustainable movement of products through a single platform for trade. This is our north star. It guides every decision we make and allows us to make a meaningful difference to the world. Whatever we do, wherever we do it, it all leads here.

Our dedicated team of more than 100,000 employees from over 150 nationalities ensure the smooth flow of trade. As an equal employer that recognises and values diversity and an inclusive culture, we empower and up-skill our people with opportunities to perform at their best.



Forth Ports is a dynamic multimodal ports owner and operator. Our ports are strategically positioned and serve as logistical gateways across the UK. We offer businesses a wide range of diverse, port-related services, and help connect the UK with Europe and the rest of the world.

Forth Ports owns and operates eight commercial ports on the Firth of Forth, the Firth of Tay and the Thames: Tilbury (London), Grangemouth, Dundee, Leith (Edinburgh), Rosyth, Methil, Burntisland, Kirkcaldy. We have strategic locations offering Rail freight with both Tilbury having two intermodal and a Bulk terminal's and Grangemouth an intermodal terminal. All having recent investment to give capacity both North and South to receive 775m trains.



Greenbrier Europe, headquartered in Amsterdam has six manufacturing factories located in Świdnica and Olawa in Poland, Arad, Drobeta-Turnu Severin and Carcal in Romania, and Adana in Turkey.

The company is focused on promoting the sustainable and longterm development of the group in its evolution into a technologically and financially strong market leader in Europe's rail rolling stock manufacturing industry. We are specialized in the design, development, testing, and manufacturing of rolling stock and bogies.'



Maritime Transport is the UK's leading provider of integrated road and rail freight logistics, delivering a range of services spanning container transport and storage, domestic distribution, warehousing, freight management, and truck sales.

Today, the Company employs 3,000 personnel across 40 sites including eight strategic rail freight terminals, operating 1,600 trucks, 50+ modern container handlers, and over 30 daily rail services, together forming the backbone of its operations to provide customers with supply chain service, security, and choice for first and final miles.

Maritime aspires to lead the way in climate change and continues to implement its strategy to own and operate the cleanest, most sustainable full-load supply chain in the country.



PD Ports is one of the UK's major port groups with a reputation for excellence gained from decades of experience and a highly skilled workforce.

With headquarters in the north of England, PD Ports operates from locations across the UK. Teesport, owned and operated by PD Ports, services all four major rail operators with intermodal connections to Felixstowe, Doncaster, Daventry and Scotland all operating from its onsite intermodal rail terminal.



RFS Works is a leading integrated service provider of material handling and movement solutions for the rail freight, marine freight, port freight and construction materials sectors within the UK and Europe.

We provide specialist material handling equipment for loading, unloading, lifting or transporting bulk, containerised or loose materials, offering a "Total Service Solution" to our customers, which includes operating rail, port and intermodal terminals, aggregate logistics hubs, 3plogistics, on-site material processing & movement, in addition to providing all facilities and equipment solutions to suit your material handling and movement requirements.



Touax Rail is the second largest lessor of intermodal railcars in Europe, which currently manages a varied range of more than 10 500 wagons/platforms, such as intermodal, car- and coil – carrying, sliding wall wagons, hopper and powder railcars for transporting heavy goods.



Victa Railfreight provides a wide range of operational & logistics services to rail freight operators, customers and suppliers. We hold a UK wide Freight Train Operators Licence specifically aimed at achieving efficiencies and providing new business opportunities in collaboration with other freight operating companies.



VTG is the UK's largest railway wagon hire company and the first choice for all of your rail freight leasing requirements. Our 4,500 wagon fleet is managed by a team of 30 dedicated staff based at our Bromsgrove office and co-located within our customer's organisations. As an independent, UK-based ECM we are in full control of the maintenance of our wagons, and our team of engineers and controllers work with customers and maintainers on a daily basis to ensure maximum safety, availability and reliability, allowing uninterrupted rail delivery of your goods. We have recently launched iWagon – the UK's first digital freight wagon – which will revolutionise rail freight safety, performance and availability, featuring a plethora of features including Wheel Flat Prevention (WFP) technology- a patented system which monitors wheelset slide.



RFG is delighted to again be working with Rail Forum to hold its 'Focus on Freight' event on 13 March in Loughborough. The event will be our fifth joint 'rail freight day' and is set to be a great day of debate on the key issues impacting rail freight.

The day will be split up into two sessions. Session 1 will set the context of wider freight activity, introduce some user perspectives, and explore freight uncertainty with unique insights.

Speakers include:

- Maggie Simpson OBE, Rail Freight Group
- Zoe McLernon, GBRTT
- Vincent Barry, General Manager – Operational Quality, Groupe CAT UK

- Jonathan Stott, Sainsburys
- Peter Gibbons MBE, Network Rail

Following the break, in Session 2, speakers will explore topics including speeding up freight, ETCS and its impacts on drivers, as well as a step into innovation with an update on the Freight Innovation Cluster and how digital solutions are opening up freight path availability.

Speakers include:

Dave Burley, Rail Operations Group
 Nicolas Evans, Deutsche Bahn, and RSSB Rail Freight Operations Group
 Chris Swan, Tarmac
 Alan Peters, Connected Places Catapult
 Graham Cooper, Velociti Solutions.



Freightliner supports UK supply chains with a coal wagon fleet re-purposing project

Freightliner has announced a partnership with WH Davis and Porterbrook to repurpose a residual coal fleet into aggregate box wagons, supporting the UK supply chain and driving sustainable innovation in the rail industry.

This partnership will see wagon conversions being carried out at the WH Davis factory in Mansfield, bringing new life and service to an otherwise redundant fleet. The repurposed wagons will be funded by Porterbrook and leased to Freightliner. This collaboration aims to meet customer needs and enhance rail freight growth.

Dave Penney, Freightliner Managing Director - Rail Services & Heavy Haul, said: "We are delighted to be giving an otherwise redundant coal wagon fleet a new lease of life. Not only is this the more sustainable option, but it also allows us to support the local economy as these wagons will be reconditioned in the UK. We look forward to seeing the wagons in action next year delivering for our customers across the UK."

Andy Houghton, Managing Director – WH Davis Ltd, added: "This is a fantastic opportunity to demonstrate what can be achieved by giving redundant fleets a purpose for the next 30 plus years, it's a truly sustainable option that also gives UK manufacturing a boost to enable the creation of UK jobs in the industry. I really can't wait to see our latest box wagon design in traffic for Freightliner in 2025."

Mark Wyborn, Head of Freight at Porterbrook, added: "With freight volumes in the construction sector on the rise and expected to continue growing, we are proud to support the industry through our partnership with Freightliner and WH Davis. This agreement highlights our commitment to investing in the long-term growth of rail freight while providing affordable, innovative, and sustainable rolling stock for the UK railway."

DB Cargo UK has taken delivery of a fleet of new vehicles to bolster its breakdown and recovery activities.

The ten new Iveco vans will shortly be put into service across England, Scotland and Wales, providing a permanent replacement to the company's ageing fleet of Bruff road/rail vehicles which were taken out of service in 2023. The new, 7 tonne vans, will carry heavy-lifting and other recovery equipment and have been specially adapted to ensure DB's recovery teams will be able to access even the remotest regions of the UK's rail network.

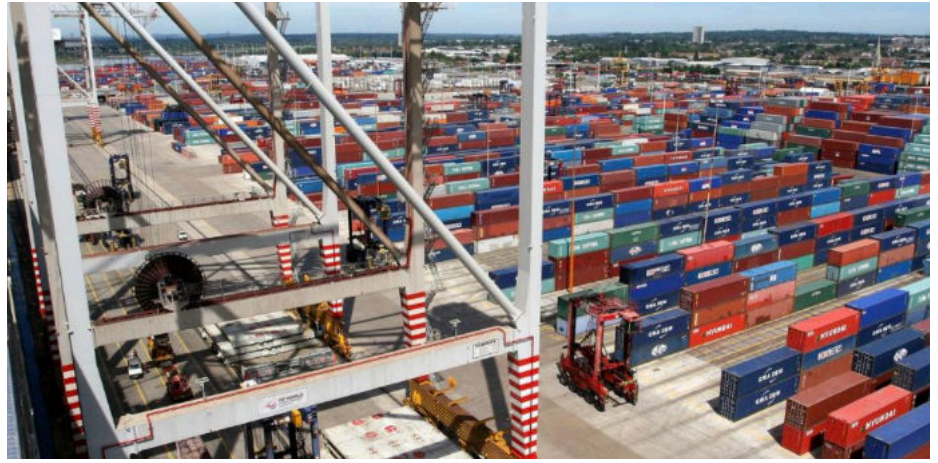
DB Cargo UK is the leading provider of breakdown and recovery services to the UK rail industry. Every year, the rail logistic company's teams respond to more than 140 incidents – ranging from minor derailments to major accidents - providing a rapid and effective recovery service to keep the UK's rail network moving.



DP World's carbon inset programme registers over 100,000 containers

The world's first container port Carbon Inset Programme has registered more than 100,000 TEU worth of import laden containers by cargo owners in its first two months.

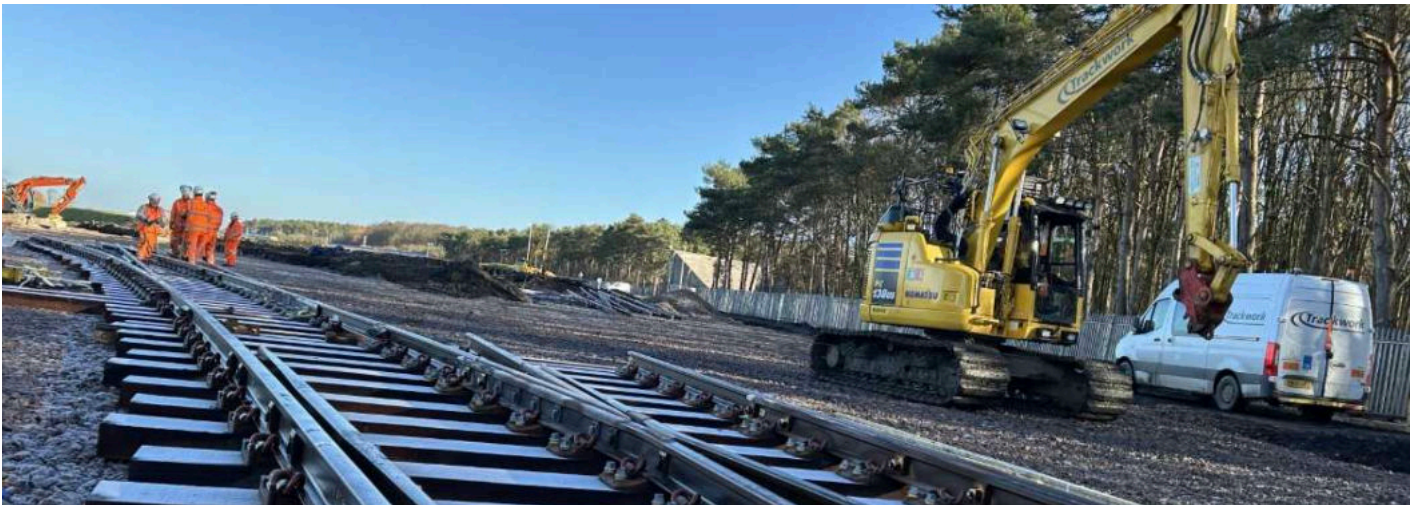
Launched by DP World in the UK in December 2024, the six-month trial commenced on 1 January and rewards importers with 50kg CO₂e of carbon credits for every loaded import container they move through DP World's London Gateway and Southampton terminals, helping them to reduce their indirect (Scope 3) emissions. If 50 per cent of import cargo owners register for the programme during the six-month trial, it will remove over 10,000 tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions from supply chains.



DP World's carbon credits are generated through its subsidiary, Unifeeder, which deploys incrementally lower-carbon fuels across its Northern European shipping network. The credits are independently verified and pooled every quarter, allowing participating companies to showcase their efforts to customers and help meet their sustainability requirements.

John Trenchard, Vice President – Commercial & Supply Chain, DP World in the UK, said: "At DP World we are committed to innovation and offering our

customers transparent and pragmatic solutions that help them achieve their sustainability goals. Through our revolutionary Carbon Inset Programme, we are working with partners in the DP World group to build on what we have already achieved with our Modal Shift Programme, which reduced the carbon emissions of our customers by more than 17,000 tonnes in its first year. We have already seen a surge in sign-ups to the Carbon Inset Programme, putting this programme on the course to success.



Major upgrades underway at Porterbrook's Long Marston Rail Innovation Centre

Construction is underway to further modernise Porterbrook's Long Marston Rail Innovation Centre (RIC) in Warwickshire with a 3.5km electrified track.

This major development to the UK railway's only test loop will open the site for electric fleets at speeds of up to 50mph, alongside hydrogen, battery and diesel vehicles. There will also be the capability to support European Train Control System (ETCS) in cab signalling in the future.

Mary Grant, Porterbrook CEO said: "We're pressing ahead with our ambitious plans at the Long Marston Rail Innovation Centre, investing over £75m to deliver exceptional facilities for our customers and manufacturing partners. With these significant upgrades we can provide the best level of service and a full turnkey solution for new rolling stock entering service."

The company has overseen a transformation of the 135-acre mainline connected site, including tarmacking roads to significantly improve access, upgrading lighting and installing a new state-of-the-art security system. There are now enhanced training and office facilities, and old storage buildings have been replaced with similar structures to maintain the heritage of the former Royal Engineers' WWII supply depot.

The fully renovated Asset Management Facility opened in April 2023, providing a high-quality space for maintenance and upgrades complete with three pitted roads, able to accommodate vehicles of up to 23 metres. Chrysalis Rail, the UK rolling stock service supplier, is a valued partner to Porterbrook with a permanent presence at the site.

Siemens Mobility will design, supply, install and commission all electrification and signalling works. In a UK first, the company will introduce the innovative Rail Charging Converter (RCC), a containerised solution that plugs directly into the local power grid using an 11kV charge, cutting delivery times for traditional electrification projects from seven years to as little as 18 months. Their Overhead Line Equipment (OLE) solution, Sicat SX, will provide span lengths of more than 110 metres between supports, a 50% increase compared to standard solutions, making it cheaper to install and maintain.



A graduate's perspective: an insight into rail freight

By Matthew Terry, Network Rail

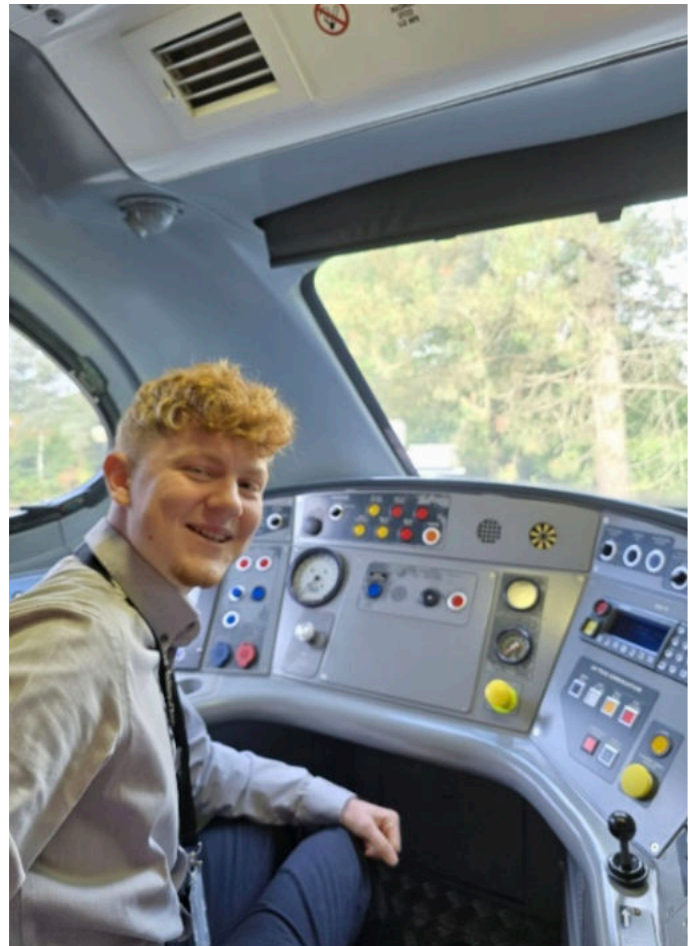
As my time on the Network Rail Operations Management Graduate Scheme comes to an end, I've had the privilege of completing my final placement with Team Railfreight. This opportunity, facilitated by the Policy and Advocacy team, has given me a deeper understanding of the rail freight industry and its crucial role in the wider transport network.

Since joining Network Rail in September 2023, I've worked across various areas of the industry, from frontline operations in stations and control, to project management environments. These experiences have been instrumental in preparing me for my next step—taking on the role of Performance Improvement Co-ordinator. My placement with Team Railfreight has been a particular highlight, providing hands-on involvement in projects that support the sector's growth and development.

One of my key tasks was conducting data analysis for Transport for Greater Manchester to assess freight flows in the region. This work helped to quantify the environmental benefits of rail freight and examine the range of traction types operating on the network. The findings reinforced the significant contribution freight makes to sustainability efforts and the wider economy. Additionally, I played a role in future Great British Railways freight process design, organising workshops where industry experts collaborated on shaping a priority process to facilitate freight growth. With ambitious targets of 7.5% growth by the end of CP7 and a 75% increase by 2050, it is essential that robust processes are in place to integrate freight efficiently within the rail network.

Another key area of my placement involved analysing the performance of new freight services introduced under the new CP7 'track access discount scheme'. Adding more trains to the network may introduce risks to performance. However, a review into these new services demonstrates that they are operating efficiently, contributing positively to overall performance metrics. This experience has been invaluable in preparing me for my new role, where I will continue to engage with freight performance at a route level. The placement has reinforced the importance of freight within the broader rail industry and the ongoing efforts to support its expansion.

I would highly recommend the graduate schemes offered by Network Rail for the diverse and rewarding experiences they provide. As we move into a period of rail reform, understanding the needs and priorities of freight is more critical than ever. My time with Team Railfreight has underscored this, and as I transition into my new role, I'll carry forward the key lessons learned—above all, that freight is great.



Update on Control Period 7 performance reset

The Office of Rail and Road (ORR) has published an update letter on its CP7 performance reset. A copy of the letter is available to download [here](#). Further

information on the work is available on the ORR website at the link [here](#).

The letter updates on the control period 7 (CP7) passenger train performance reset and the work ORR will undertake with Network Rail and train operators in 2025 and early 2026.

The performance of Great Britain's railways is a priority for passengers and freight users who want reliable and punctual services. A railway that works well also supports the economy by, for

example, keeping people connected to jobs and freight moving.

In the letter, ORR wrote: "The industry must work together to deliver train performance improvements; the railway operates as a system and no single party can deliver good punctuality and reliability in isolation."

If you have any questions on the CP7 train performance reset, please email prm@orr.gov.uk with 'CP7 performance reset' in the subject line.

Terberg and Seacom is a perfect combination for port applications



The Terberg YT series tractors, combined with a Seacom trailer, form a durable combination for port applications and are easier to service and maintain. Operators experience the highest level of comfort and ergonomics. The range includes the YT193/YT223 (Stage V diesel engine) and the fully electric YT203EV, featuring next-generation EV technology.



STAGE V ENGINE



NEXT GEN ELECTRIC



**24H FIELD SERVICE
SUPPORT AVAILABLE**

For more information go to www.terbergdts.co.uk
or via e-mail: info@terbergdts.co.uk



Preparing for the Railways Bill

Consultation now, with new track access doctrine at the heart of legislative change

By Jonathan Roberts, JR Consulting

The government launched its public consultation on 18th February, ahead of the forthcoming Railways Bill. Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander made an introductory statement in the Commons on 24 February after the preceding week's recess, while Lord Hendy of Richmond Hill, the Rail Minister, repeated the statement in the Lords.

The intended Bill was presented as part of the Government's 'Plan for Change', with overriding policies for investment and reform, and desired outcomes of growth, more money in people's pockets, and renewal and new building within Britain.

Reform and integration to strengthen performance and reduce costs

Reforming the railways is presented in the consultation as being central to this, with improved performance, bringing more people back to rail, generating greater revenue and reducing costs. It is intended to replace the fragmentation of the 1993 Railways Act, with a simplified model "built from the ground up to serve its users... A railway that offers a genuine alternative to road travel, combined with a thriving rail freight sector, means cleaner air and less congestion for everyone."

The consultation sets out the Government's plans to establish as a new arm's length body, bringing responsibility for train services and rail infrastructure together into one integrated organisation. "This means most passengers will travel on GBR trains, running on GBR tracks, and arrive at GBR stations – all delivered by a single organisation in line with the clear strategic direction set by government."

In parallel the Government wants a more customer-focused culture, which for passengers will be strengthened by a "new independent watchdog that will monitor standards, champion improvements, and ensure passengers feel they have a clear voice within the industry standing up for them".

Key changes resulting from new doctrine on track access

There is much discussion in Chapter 3 with consultation about a better track access model, improving capacity allocation with a single directing mind in the form of GBR, to optimise use of available train paths and improve delivery of intended benefits and financial outcomes. This is core to the objective of railway reform and the purpose of Great British Railways (GBR), and also leads to key changes in the duties of the rail regulator, the Office of Rail & Road (ORR).

"Unlike in the current fragmented system, GBR will have consolidated accountability for planning the use of its rail network. Working to these statutory requirements and rules, GBR will be empowered to assess options, develop solutions, and engage others to reach decisions."

Rôles of the Office of Rail & Road (ORR)

The guidance and duties that govern the railway regulator, the ORR, "will be reviewed to ensure that they are aligned with the new sector model, as well as allowing the ORR to align with wider government priorities like promoting growth."

"The role of the ORR in access decisions (under Sections 17-22C of the Railways Act 1993) will therefore be reformed to enable this new role for GBR. The ORR will no longer approve access or direct the sale of access rights for the GBR railway and will not set standard access terms for GBR." It is intended that there will be a new framework for access charges, with a

quinquennial cost apportionment process and non-GBR operators charged fairly and on a non-discriminatory basis. GBR trains will not pay access charges as it is argued that track provision will be an internalised burden directly on GBR.

Details of revisions to ORR's role in the review of access charges, as in Section 19A of the Railways Act 1993, are set out in the consultation's Chapter 4. In summary, it is proposed that ORR would be more of an appeals body for access charges.

The ORR's role as safety regulator will not change. The Government proposes that the ORR will continue to act as competition authority (concurrently with the Competition and Markets Authority) and remain the consumer law enforcement body for rail. Outside of the law and various technical standards associated with these functions, and its reformed roles in access and funding, the licence will be the only mechanism through which the ORR can take direct enforcement action against GBR. It is intended that ORR will retain the same roles as today in licensing non-GBR operators and infrastructure managers, regulating the High Speed 1 line, and acting as Highways Monitor for strategic roads. Continuing role for the private sector

The consultation endorses continuing vital rôles for the private sector in the new model, "from freight and open access services to ticket retailing, rolling stock and the wider supply chain". It is intended that "GBR will leverage the best of both the public and private sectors to unlock growth and drive innovation. GBR will follow fair, efficient and transparent processes when allocating access to the network, with a robust set of protections for third-party operators enshrined in law."

A statutory duty to promote rail freight

There will also be a statutory duty on GBR to promote the use of rail freight, recognising the sector's growth potential and helping to deliver on the government's commitment to net zero." There will be an overall rail freight growth target set by the Government. It is not clear if the target will be higher than the non-statutory 75% increase set by the previous Conservative Government.

There would be considerably greater opportunity if some long standing and well-known infrastructure constraints with high BCR were actually funded for improvement, such as the cross-country bottlenecks for intermodal rail at Haughley and Ely. Also critical is tackling the capacity shortfall on the West Coast Main Line caused by the impact of HS2 Phase 1 where it reemerges with the WCML north of Lichfield. Industry estimates are that this could enable the rail freight growth target to be raised to 100-150%. These are matters which simply need investment decisions and Treasury support, not explicitly a new Railways Act!

More devolution opportunities

Devolution is given greater weight in the consultation, with existing devolution settlements protected, while devolved leaders "will benefit from new statutory roles, drawing on their experiences and expertise to manage, plan and develop a network that delivers for communities". The Government says "we will continue to work closely with these leaders as we shape this role to ensure the benefits of our reforms are felt across Britain. In addition, established Mayoral Strategic Authorities will have a right to request further rail devolution within England, bringing decision-making closer to those who use the railways".

Next steps and the consultation process

The consultation marks the next milestone ahead of the introduction of the Railways Bill later in this session. The Government wants to hear from passengers, freight customers, industry suppliers and experts, and the public at large. The consultation will run until 15 April 2025. It has a detailed list of questions from page 48, see link here: [A railway fit for Britain's future](#) The Government will supplement feedback on the proposals set out in this consultation through additional engagement with users of the railway (both passenger and freight), rail industry bodies and experts.

Continued over the page.

More devolution opportunities

Devolution is given greater weight in the consultation, with existing devolution settlements protected, while devolved leaders “will benefit from new statutory roles, drawing on their experiences and expertise to manage, plan and develop a network that delivers for communities”. The Government says “we will continue to work closely with these leaders as we shape this role to ensure the benefits of our reforms are felt across Britain. In addition, established Mayoral Strategic Authorities will have a right to request further rail devolution within England, bringing decision-making closer to those who use the railways”.

Next steps and the consultation process

The consultation marks the next milestone ahead of the introduction of the Railways Bill later in this session. The Government wants to hear from passengers, freight customers, industry suppliers and experts, and the public at large. The consultation will run until 15 April 2025. It has a detailed list of

questions from page 48, see link here: [A railway fit for Britain's future](#). The Government will supplement feedback on the proposals set out in this consultation through additional engagement with users of the railway (both passenger and freight), rail industry bodies and experts.



Contact

Jonathan Roberts, MD, JR Consulting
jr@jrc.org.uk



GB Railfreight agrees extension with Aggregate Industries

GB Railfreight (GBRf) and Aggregate Industries have agreed on a four-year contract extension to move aggregate materials from source points at Bardon Hill and the Isle of Grain, enabling the development of some of the UK's most significant infrastructure projects.

The relationship between GBRf and Aggregate Industries has been forged over the past ten years, with a shared ambition to collaborate, drive growth and provide a best-in-class service. The partnership will see GBRf move in excess of five million tonnes of aggregate materials over the lifetime of the contract.

In total, across all its aggregate services, GBRf moves over five million tonnes of aggregates and sand, in addition to 600,000 tonnes of cement every year. These materials are critical in supplying the construction industry and helping the Government

achieve its target of building 1.5m homes over the next five years.

John Smith, Chief Executive Officer – GB Railfreight, said: “I am delighted that Aggregate Industries have committed to extending our partnership. This is a long-standing relationship which we hope will continue for many years, reducing the carbon footprint of moving construction materials essential for building homes across the country in addition some of the UK's biggest infrastructure projects.”

Simon Blake, General Manager (Rail) – Aggregate Industries, added: “Extending our partnership with GB Railfreight recognises the close working relationship forged between the two companies and the importance of shared goals. We value the professionalism, enthusiasm and innovation demonstrated daily by the staff of GB Railfreight in delivering our services. Together with GB Railfreight, Aggregate Industries are committed to providing excellence in customer service and making sustainable construction a reality.”



New digital era dawns for train traffic control through Crewe

Network Rail's £190m investment in Crewe has seen improvements to track, lineside equipment and digital signalling installed at Basford Hall freight depot and the lines which connect it to the West Coast main line.

All systems went live on 3 January with full control of the new signalling successfully switched to the state-of-the-art Rail Operating Centre in Manchester. It's the culmination of two years' work which this Christmas saw three traditional signal boxes retired from service and replaced by the latest digital technology already directing trains across much of the North West.

The work has seen: 65 new LED signals installed, six new structures built, 24km of new signalling power cable, 30km of fibreoptic cabling, seven new buildings to house control systems, 5km of railway drainage renewals and 74 sets of points upgraded including heating systems to stop them freezing in cold weather.

The significant signalling upgrade needed a phased closure of the railway in Crewe over the festive period.

Louise Ward, Freightliner safety and sustainability director, said: "Basford Hall is one of our big hub locations – it's the point where we join freight trains which are going on to London and where we split trains which are going up to the North of the country. The resignalling is all about making the railway as efficient and resilient as it can possibly be. This major investment will make sure that freight and people get to where they need to be, when they need to be there."

[Click here for more on the project.](#)

EKFB welcomes 1000th HS2 freight train into Quainton railhead

EKFB, a joint venture made up of Eiffage, Kier, Ferrovial Construction, and Bam Nutall, has successfully welcomed the 1000th freight train into its railhead near Quainton, in Buckinghamshire, enabling the delivery of 1,620,837 tonnes of material onto site.

Situated on an existing freight line north of Aylesbury, the railhead is managed by Fishbone Solutions on behalf of EKFB with the trains operated by DC Rail and GB Rail Freight on behalf of Heidelberg Materials. Welcoming its 1000th train, the railhead has now effectively removed 162,084 lorries off the local roads within

Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, and West Northants.

Offsetting the need for the transportation of materials by road, the railhead has delivered 15,908 tonnes in carbon savings for HS2 – the equivalent of 53,098 single passenger flights from London to Rome.

Once the materials are delivered to site, it is stockpiled before being distributed along the trace using EKFB's dedicated internal haul roads to minimise the disruption to the local roads.

In early spring of last year, EKFB celebrated one million tonnes of material brought in by rail. As the works progress, the railhead is expected to welcome a further 1,400 freight trains over the next two years taking the total amount of material delivered to around three million tonnes.

EKFB's Deputy Project Director, Christos Fasoulas, said: "We have reached an

important milestone with the delivery of the 1000th freight train into Quainton Railhead. This achievement demonstrates our commitment for a sustainable delivery of the project as we reduce our carbon footprint and support the community by removing a significant number of vehicles from the local roads."

EKFB's Head of Logistics and Security, Paul Bedford, said: "This is a fantastic milestone. We knew the potential of moving material by rail at the start of the project, but to see it happening is a testament to all the people involved, and the commitment by this project of delivering material in a sustainable, cheaper and safer way than the traditional use of transportation by road."

Fishbone Logistics Director, Paul Clews, said: "EKFB has clearly demonstrated its commitment to rail, delivering lasting benefits to the local community while driving significant carbon savings."

DP World Southampton makes £60m investment in record-breaking new cranes

DP World has ordered four new quay cranes for its Southampton container terminal.

The new cranes will be the largest quay cranes in Europe and can perform quad lifts, moving two 40ft containers together from ship to yard in a single move, reducing the time taken to load and unload large container vessels.

The quay cranes, which stand taller than Big Ben and each weigh more than 2,000 tonnes, are scheduled to arrive from mid-2026. Designed to service the largest ships currently in operation, including 24,000 TEU megaships, the cranes have an operational lifespan of around 25 years and are a key investment to future-proof DP World Southampton's trading capabilities.



Photo: Andrew Sassoli-Walker

Aart Hille Ris Lambers, Vice President – Commercial, Ports & Terminals at DP World in the UK, said: "Our order for these new large quay cranes comes at a crucial time for DP World Southampton. We are continually innovating and investing to enhance our operations to give our customers, who operate the world's largest container vessels, a smooth and efficient service."

"As our productivity and handling rates at Southampton continue to grow year-on-year, and we develop our nationwide end-to-end supply chain network, we're always looking for ways to improve our infrastructure and our offer to customers, while serving the national interest."



GBRf's first Class 99 leaves the Stadler's factor in Valencia for the Velim Test Track

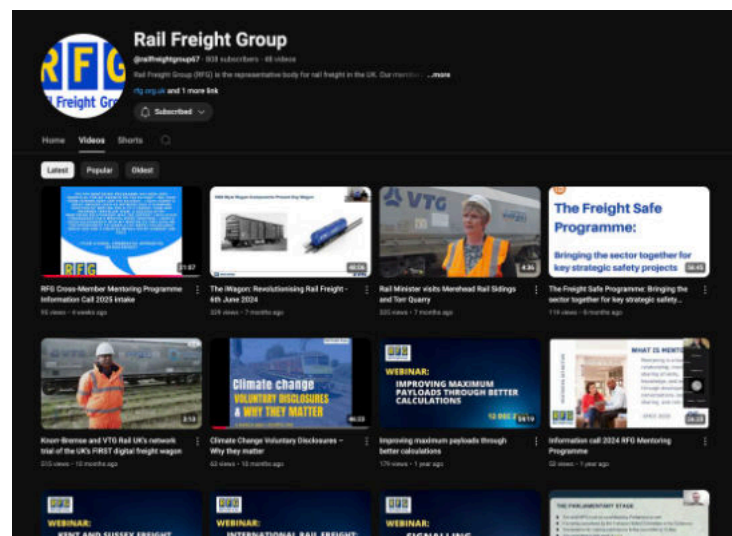
GB Railfreight's first Class 99 (99001) left Stadler's factory in Valencia on 6 January 2025, and made its way to Velim in the Czech Republic – where it will undergo a rigorous programme of testing and commissioning.

After testing in Velim, GBRf expects the 99001 will be in the UK in the early summer of this year.

Send us your rail freight videos

Rail Freight Group (RFG) is happy to post and share rail freight industry videos on our YouTube channel.

If you have a video showcasing products, services or rail freight operations that you would like us to promote with our membership, please send to contact@rfg.org.uk via [wetransfer](https://www.wetransfer.com) or a similar free file sharing site.



Colas Rail awarded HS2 Overhead Catenary Systems contract

Colas Rail has announced it has been awarded the contract by High Speed 2 (HS2) to deliver the systemwide Overhead Catenary Systems (OCS) for HS2, spanning 280 miles of track capable of speeds of up to 225mph (360km/h).

Colas Rail UK will be responsible for the design, manufacture, supply, installation, testing and commissioning of the OCS using the leading-edge V360 OCS design range under licence from French SNCF. This system was the first in Europe to be certified for speeds of up to 360km/h and will provide power to state-of-the-art high-speed trains.

Colas Rail UK CEO, Jean-Pierre Bertrand, said: "We are thrilled to be awarded this opportunity to further deliver our High-Speed capabilities in the UK. I am extremely proud of the talented people we have at Colas Rail UK and within the Colas Rail Group who have made this possible. We are committed as always to delivering a best-in-class service to HS2."

First construction milestone achieved at SEGRO Logistics Park Radlett

SEGRO has completed the first major construction milestone at SEGRO Logistics Park Radlett following the installation of a major underbridge structure under the Midland Main Line

between London St Pancras and Bedford.

The structure enables the installation of the new section of track, running underneath the Midland Mainline, that will connect the Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) to the rail network.

The works were carried out over five of the nine days that the railway line was already scheduled to be closed for wider improvements during the festive period, including an overhead line upgrade and a major bridge replacement in Camden.

The process involved cutting out a 60m section of track and removing approximately 12,500 m3 of material from the 19th century rail embankment, using hydraulic jacks to push a 6,000-tonne pre-cast concrete structure into place at approximately 4m per hour, then re-filling the earth around the concrete structure and reinstating the track.

[Click here for more on the project](#)

Fargo Systems makes new senior appointments

Fargo Systems is strengthening its board of directors by appointing John Thompson as Chair and David Landau as a Non-Executive Director.

Following August Equity's recent investment, these strategic additions bring deep expertise in SaaS, supply chain technology, and business growth, reinforcing Fargo Systems' position as an industry leader.

John Thompson, a seasoned executive with over two decades as a SaaS Founder and CEO, has mentored and coached over 30 tech CEOs. He brings significant experience in scaling technology businesses, having chaired multiple high-growth tech companies through expansion and successful acquisitions. His expertise will be instrumental in driving Fargo Systems' next phase of growth and innovation.

David Landau joins the board as a Non-Executive Director, bringing extensive experience in supply chain and logistics technology. Having held key leadership roles at Manhattan Associates, BluJay Solutions, and Transporeon, David has a proven track record in product strategy, business transformation, and scaling operations.

His leadership at BluJay Solutions contributed to the company's significant growth, transformation and eventual acquisition by E2open, while his tenure at Transporeon saw him overseeing network strategy, alliances and M&A. His industry knowledge and strategic insights will support Fargo Systems in enhancing its solutions and expanding its market presence.

Steve Collins, Managing Director of Fargo Systems, commented: "Their expertise will help us accelerate innovation, expand our reach, and continue delivering best-in-class solutions to our customers."



LET'S DO THIS

UPCOMING SPORTING EVENTS

- BIG HALF MARATHON
- SWIM SERPENTINE
- CYCLING CHALLENGE

JOIN OUR TEAM TO SUPPORT OUR RAILWAY FAMILY
fundraising@railwaybenefitfund.org.uk





Derby MPs visit Loram's RTC Derby workshops

Loram UK recently welcomed Baggy Shanker MP (Derby South) and Catherine Atkinson MP (Derby North) on a visit to the company's RTC workshops in Derby.

As well as being vocal champions for the rail supply chain in Derby and the wider East Midlands, both MPs are also members of the House of Commons' Transport Select Committee.

During their visit, which was hosted by Debbie Francis, Managing Director of Loram, Baggy and Catherine saw work taking place on construction of the first Loram RGX Rail Grinder, designed to meet growing demand for these specialist on-track rail re-profiling machines in markets both at home and abroad. The building of the first RGX in Derby represents significant continued investment in Loram UK by its US parent company, Loram Maintenance of Way.



DB Cargo UK has royal warrant renewed by King Charles

DB Cargo UK has been awarded a new warrant by His Majesty King Charles III to maintain and operate the Royal Train. It has now held the royal warrant since rail privatisation, marking more than 30 years' continuous service to the Royal Household.

Welcoming the news, Chief Executive Andrea Rossi said: "This is a tremendous honour for the company which comes

with huge responsibility as we are trusted to safely carry senior members of the Royal Family across the UK rail network. There's always a great sense of occasion when the Royal Train is seen out on the mainline network, a sight we hope to see more frequently in the years to come, particularly with His Majesty's focus on promoting sustainability and the environment," he added.

Mr Rossi said the company would now begin the process of changing the Royal Cypher and nameplates on the Queen's Messenger 67005, which will be renamed King's Messenger. Royal Sovereign 67006 will also have a new Royal Cypher but retain its name.

Ian Prosser CBE confirmed as independent Chair of the Porterbrook Safety Committee

Porterbrook has confirmed Ian Prosser CBE as the new independent Chair of the Porterbrook Safety Committee.

Ian will be responsible for reviewing the company's approach to maintaining a

safety-focused culture across its whole asset portfolio, consistent with the high standards required within the UK rail industry.

He served as HM Chief Inspector of Railways for more than 15 years, retiring in June 2024, and succeeds Jim Hagan who has stepped down from the committee after six years in post. Jim is the Head of Safety at Eurostar.

Ian Prosser CBE said: "I am delighted to have been asked to chair Porterbrook's Safety Committee. Under Mary Grant's leadership, the company has shown a real passion for improving standards. With a strong health and safety

performance already in place, I believe we can now work together to reach even higher levels."

Mary Grant, CEO of Porterbrook, said: "We look forward to the wealth of experience that Ian will bring to this position. His unwavering dedication to making the railway a safer place during his career has been commendable, and Ian has rightly set a high standard across the industry. I would also like to thank Jim Hagan for the key role he has played over the last six years improving safety across the business. We all wish him the very best for the future."



The power of presence: Strengthening rail freight connections at Multimodal 2025

In the end, people do business with people. It's not about companies and statistics but about personal relationships and the best way to build those relationships is by being in the same room.

After the restrictions imposed during the Covid pandemic, many predicted the death of trade shows, exhibitions and face-to-face meetings. But, as employers are also finding, there are many advantages to working in the same physical space as colleagues and customers.

RFG has long recognised the importance of bringing together people with common interests and challenges through our Members' Meetings and specialist forums, for instance. We understand that we can all learn from each other – as well as do business better – by meeting up and talking.

Since the launch of the Rail Freight Pavilion at the Multimodal exhibition, held at the NEC in Birmingham each year, many of our members have benefited from the close proximity of others in the rail freight industry.

"Being on the Rail Freight Pavilion helps in that it attracts people we can do business with. You definitely get more footfall than if you are separate. People come to talk to RFG people or to one of the others on the pavilion and then realise we can help them as well," says Steve Freeman from RailX.

He says that face-to-face meetings are especially beneficial when trying to explain a new concept, like the RailX service. "People can tell us what they want and we can work together to see how our service can work for them. They don't even know they want it until we show how they will benefit. That is so much more difficult to do on an online meeting."

The Port of Sunderland was also on last year's pavilion. "The benefits of being on the Rail Freight Pavilion was increased visibility and the ability to network easily," says Matthew Hunt. "Being part of a larger stand also encouraged collaboration, knowledge sharing, and engagement with industry peers."

Another RFG member on the pavilion was XPO Logistics – not a traditional rail freight company, but one seeking to work with customers to help them reduce their carbon footprint – using rail and many other methods.

Dr Nicholas Head, Logistics' UK&I Head of Sustainability, said: "Being on the RFG Pavilion and meeting clients alongside



potential leads in person was a real benefit of attending Multimodal this year.

"In addition, the proximity to the speaker theatres was an added benefit and allowed a wider opportunity for networking and arranging meetings with those directly involved with moving freight from road to rail or with those innovating in this space to facilitate the decarbonisation of freight transport.

Finally, the level of interest from rail freight operators and large shipping companies in what XPO Logistics is doing on decarbonisation and how this can complement their own initiatives was a significant takeaway from many in-person discussions," he added.

So why not consider taking a small space on the Rail Freight Pavilion. Or, at least make sure that you come and visit us at the NEC in Birmingham, 17- 19 June 2025

Join us as an Exhibitor on the Rail Freight Pavilion at Multimodal 2025. Email the RFG team at contact@rfg.org.uk

RFG Events Calendar 2025

- **Focus on Freight**
Co-hosted with Rail Forum
13 March 2025 | Loughborough
- **Spring Group Meeting**
20 - 21 May 2025
- **Multimodal 2025**
17- 19 June 2025
- **RFG Awards Dinner 2025**
4 September 2025
- **Annual Rail Freight Conference**
TBC October 2025
- **Autumn Group Meeting**
11 - 12 - November 2025
- **RFG Christmas Lunch 2025**
10 December 2025

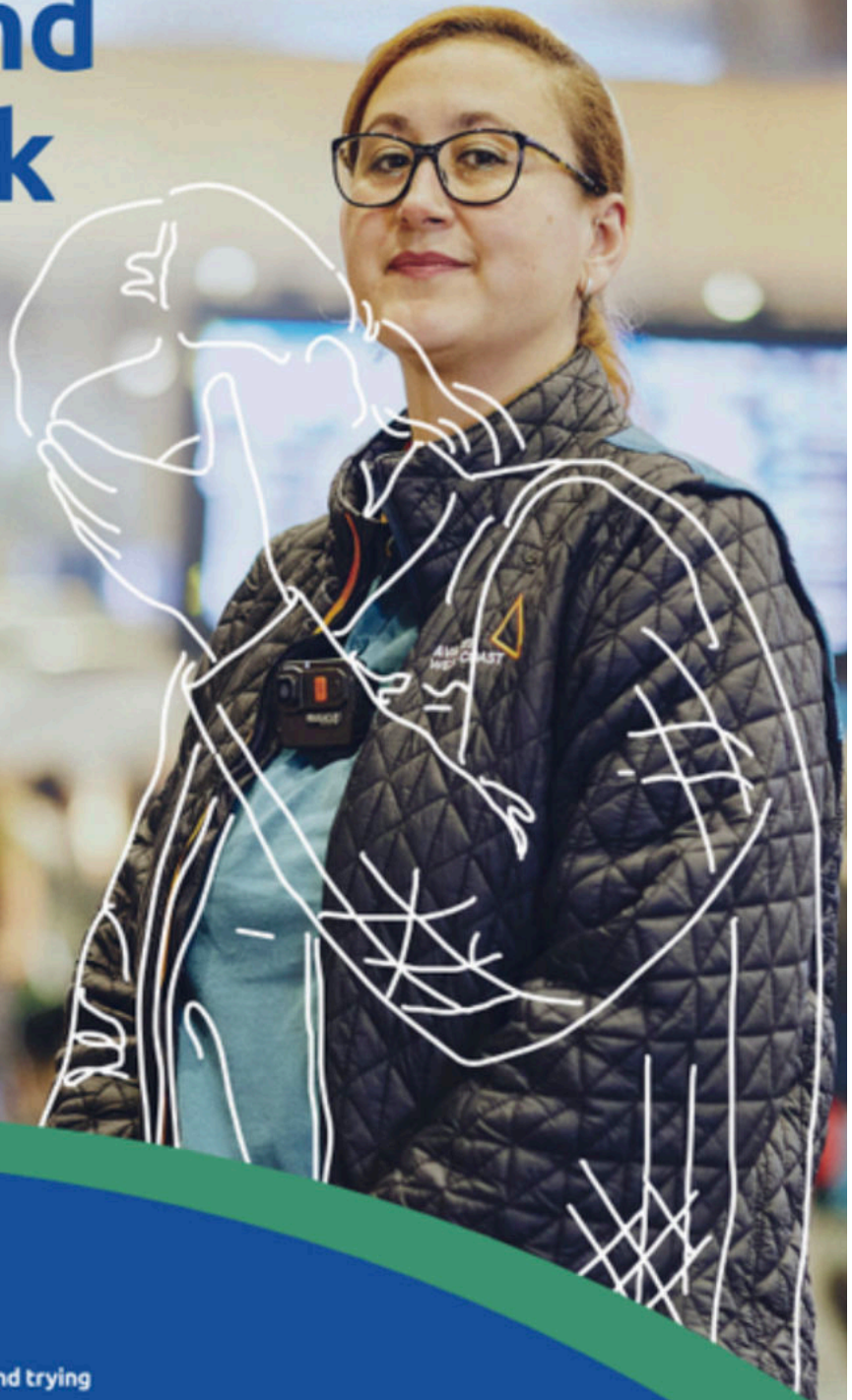
RFG Forum Dates

- **Digital Forums**
6 March 2025
11 June 2025
10 September 2025
4 December 2025
- **Intermodal Forums**
25 March 2025
26 June 2025
15 October 2025
- **Construction Forums**
30 April 2025
9 July 2025
5 November 2025

To join any of our forums, please email
yvonne@rfg.org.uk.



Some just need a hand to get back on track



Hardships can be invisible

It can be hard with rising costs from all facets of life and trying to manage at home. Your regular contributions create a vital safety net for those in our industry facing unseen struggles. Together, we can empower our friends and colleagues to keep their work-life balance on track, and keep our railways moving.



See what you can do
by giving today



A stronger EU transport budget is key for Europe's competitiveness

On 5 February, a coalition of 45 associations representing key stakeholders across Europe's transport sector sent an open letter to the Commission and Member States, calling for a stronger EU transport budget. This is seen as an absolute prerequisite for building a competitive, net-zero and resilient EU.

As the policy discussion on the next Multiannual Financial Framework has started, Europe's

transport sector is strongly urging EU policymakers to preserve and strengthen a solid dedicated European transport funding instrument in the future EU budget. The associations raised concerns about the Commission's envisaged plans to redirect a large majority of the EU transport funding towards National Single Plans.

ERFA Secretary General, Conor Feighan, said: "A dedicated EU transport instrument is of crucial importance to implement coherent infrastructure projects along Europe's corridors and to achieve the rail freight growth targets set for 2030 and 2050."

[Click here to download the letter.](#)



LTG Cargo has successfully completed its first test run across the Baltic States to the Muuga Harbour in Estonia using the EU rail industry standard — without data exchange and without interfacing with the Russian Railway Transport Council's (RTC) systems.

The Muuga Harbour is the largest cargo port in Estonia, located on the coast of the Gulf of Finland. The port handled 2.1m tonnes of containerised cargo in 2024.

[Click here to read more.](#)

Kombiverkehr defies difficult environment in 2024

Kombiverkehr said it transported a total of around 780,000 containers, swap bodies and semi-trailers, or around 1.5m TEU, last year.

Compared to the previous year, this corresponds to a volume loss of around five per cent. The national network accounted for around 180,000 shipments (-3 per cent), while around 600,000 (-6 per cent) shipments were transported

internationally. By using climate-friendly rail transport, the company's customers saved 1.12 million tonnes of CO2 compared to pure road transport.

Kombiverkehr succeeded in introducing new train products in 2024, strengthening the transport corridors to and from Rotterdam and to and from Spain and Scandinavia. In March, a new train started from Rotterdam to Cologne-Eifeltor with three round trips per week. This was followed in September by a new connection from Antwerp to Irun in Spain. From there, there are eight connections a week to Madrid.

News in Brief:

- CargoBeamer has expanded its European network with a new connection between Kornwestheim near Stuttgart and Domodossola, Italy.
- VTG has acquired the remaining shares in Retrack Slovakia s.r.o. from Rail Services Slovakia s.r.o., becoming the sole owner of Retrack Slovakia and its subsidiaries in Hungary and the Czech Republic. Retrack Slovakia will be fully integrated into VTG's operations.
- Hitachi Rail has been awarded a major framework agreement by Deutsche Bahn. The agreement, finalised at the end of 2024 and part of a 6.3 billion euros contract, includes the provision of digital interlocking technology (DSTW), European Train Control System (ETCS) digital signalling and an integrated control and operating system (iLBS).
- MSC Mediterranean Shipping Company has launched iReefer, one of the most advanced container monitoring systems for reefer cargo. This solution allows customers to track and monitor their temperature-controlled shipments in real-time from anywhere in the world.
- The Port of Sète is set to become a new multimodal hub. A key stage in upgrades to the existing rail terminal got under way on 16 January, led by VIIA. The project aims to transform cargo transshipment with a new horizontal transfer system that slides trailers onto wagons instead of lifting them with cranes.

Contact the RFG team:

- Maggie Simpson OBE, Director General, 07737 007957
- Phil Smart, Assistant Policy Manager, 07810 376201
- Maria Papp, Business Manager, maria@rfg.org.uk
- Yvonne Mulder, Project Manager, 07887 767666
- James Falkner, Marketing & Communications Manager, james@rfg.org.uk
- Martin Bignell, Scotland and Northern Representative, 07748 533603
- Robin Smith, Wales and West Midlands Representative, 07968 488905

RFG News is published by the Rail Freight Group, 7 Bury Place, London, WC1A 2LA. Tel: 020 3116 0008 contact@rfg.org.uk. RFG welcomes comments, letters and short articles. Opinions expressed are of the author only. RFG does not endorse the services of its advertisers.