



First freight train runs on East West Rail infrastructure

Maritime Transport and DB Cargo UK have launched a new rail freight service connecting DP World Southampton with a new Strategic Rail Freight Interchange (SRFI) at SEGRO Logistics Park in Northampton.

DB Cargo 66090 in Maritime livery passes Swanbourne, just west of Bletchley, on the newly opened East West Rail hauling 4056 1908 Northampton Gateway to Southampton MCT intermodal service on 17 June 2025, the second day of operation. Credit: Brian Ringer

The first train arrived at Maritime's new 35-acre site on Monday 16 June, and was the first commercial service to operate the full length of the newly reinstated section of East West Rail (EWR) between Oxford and Bletchley.

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Bristol Port welcomes arrival of new Class 99

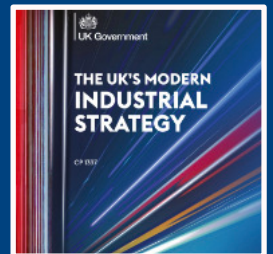
Bristol Port has welcomed the arrival of the first of two new GBRf Class 99 locomotives, which docked aboard the MV Constance following its journey from Germany.

The Class 99 has been specifically engineered for the UK with a dual-drive system, allowing operation in fully electric and diesel-electric modes, giving it the flexibility to run on both electrified and non-electrified lines. Its hybrid capability positions the Class 99 as a powerful alternative to traditional diesel, contributing to reduced carbon emissions and more sustainable rail operations.

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Positive momentum at Multimodal as rail freight gears up for growth

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

The RFG team spent a fun packed week at the Multimodal Exhibition which took place at the NEC in Birmingham in June. We were delighted to be joined on the RFG Pavilion by several of our members who were also exhibiting at the show, and it was fantastic to see the Pavilion so busy with people catching up and doing business. There is no doubt that across all the freight modes there is a sense that 'it could be busier', and the recent economic indicators do show that the economy has some way to go to return to proper growth, but as ever in freight there was a positive outlook and no shortage of new ideas and investments to discuss.

I was particularly pleased to be involved in a number of panel sessions and talks over the three days, including a panel discussion on international rail freight and one on the potential for growing rail freight from our ports. At both sessions we were able to enjoy in-depth conversations on the opportunities and indeed the challenges of both markets. There is certainly more we can do as an industry to promote growth, but there are also

infrastructure barriers which need to be unlocked. We were therefore pleased to see Government publish its infrastructure strategy [page 6], setting out how it plans to invest in projects around the UK, and unlock faster delivery. Within the announced schemes there are several which can benefit rail freight, most importantly the renewed commitment to the Transpennine Route Upgrade, which will be a key route for freight across the north of England once the gauge works are completed. However, other key projects including Ely Junction, Channel Tunnel routes gauge and improving capacity and capability from the north Thameside ports had no mention, and we will need to keep the pressure on for these critical works as the Department for Transport makes its forward investment plans.

Government has also recently published its Industrial Strategy setting out the key economic sectors it wishes to support [page 6]. Among the eight chosen industries there are many which have potential to drive forward rail freight growth, including from ports. This includes supporting green energy, advanced manufacturing and defence, all of which will need critical and resilient supply chains to succeed. The newly established Freight Council, on which RFG is represented, will play an important role with Government in helping ensure logistics and supply chain needs are fairly and effectively supported in the delivery of this strategy, with a new Freight Plan being promised for later this year.

Strategies are of course only as good as their delivery, and we will need to keep working to push for action. The positive spirit at Multimodal is an essential part of making progress, with government and the private sector each playing their part in driving growth and there is much to do for the rail freight sector as these plans progress. We will continue to engage across government over the summer, and beyond, in support of all our members.

Continued from front page.

Part of a government-backed programme to re-establish a strategic rail corridor between Oxford and Cambridge, the reinstated Oxford-Bletchley route restores vital east-west connectivity across central England and offers a practical alternative to traditionally congested north-south routes.

Operated by DB Cargo UK, the service runs five days a week, with a capacity of up to 68 TEU per train, and provides a new, direct inland link to one of the UK's busiest deep-sea ports.

The service has been supported by Network Rail's Track Access Discount Scheme, an important initiative to promote modal shift and encourage new rail freight business, whereby relevant access charges are waived for six months whilst new traffic is being established.

[Check out the video of the first service operating here.](#)

Chancellor unveils Spending Review with boost for rail investment

On 11 June, the Chancellor Rachel Reeves MP announced the government's latest Spending Review, setting out a wide-ranging package of investment designed to underpin the UK's Plan for Change and stimulate long-term economic growth. Central to the announcement was a renewed focus on transport, with billions committed to upgrading key rail infrastructure across the country.

Transport was highlighted as critical to the government's ambition to improve access to jobs, education, and services. The measures announced aim to support regional growth, improve journey times, and unlock long-term productivity gains.

Headline rail investments include:

- £3.5 billion for the TransPennine Route Upgrade, cutting journey times between Manchester and Leeds from 55 to 41 minutes by the early 2030s.
- £2.5 billion to continue delivery of East West Rail, supporting new connections and growth in the Oxford–Cambridge corridor.
- £300 million for rail improvements in Wales, plus £445 million pledged over time for long-term infrastructure needs, including key schemes such as the Burns Review stations and Cardiff West Junction.
- £240 million to enhance Leeds station, relieving congestion and increasing capacity.

Ongoing support for the Midlands Rail Hub and long-term ambitions in the North, with further details expected in the forthcoming 10-year Infrastructure Strategy.

£25.3 billion for HS2 Phase One, from Birmingham Curzon Street to London Euston, to support a programme reset and address delivery issues under new leadership.

Maggie Simpson OBE, Director General of the RFG, said: "It is good to see continued funding for key rail projects including the TransPennine Route Upgrade and East West Rail, both of which will provide new capacity for rail freight growth. However, the sizeable reduction in the Department for Transport's budget is of concern, and we will be seeking to understand the implications of this on key budgets such as the Mode Shift Revenue Support grant."

Further detail is expected next week as part of the government's 10-year Infrastructure Strategy, which will set out long-term transport priorities across the UK.

[Read the full Spending Review here.](#)



Huw Merriman joins RFG as consultant

RFG is pleased to welcome former Rail and Regional Transport Minister, and former Chair of the House of Commons Transport Select Committee, Huw Merriman, who joins us in a consultancy capacity.

Huw brings a wealth of experience from his time in government and a long-standing commitment to the UK rail industry. With his deep experience and passion for the sector, he will be extremely valuable in supporting our work to grow the share of goods moved by rail and help deliver the sector's full benefits for the UK's economy, environment and communities.

Huw said: "I'm delighted to start work with RFG. Despite impressive growth last year, rail freight moves just 7% of all UK freight. We can do much more. Rail reform, underpinned by the 2050 rail freight growth target of 75%, can provide a

platform for growth, transport decarbonisation and the delivery of the new homes, offices and infrastructure needed to meet the Government's growth mission.

"Whilst not every taxpayer is a passenger on the trains they subsidise, every taxpayer will consume or utilise something delivered by rail freight. That's why it's crucial that we continue to allow freight and passenger equal billing," he added.

RFG Director General Maggie Simpson OBE said: "Huw brings a powerful voice to the sector at a critical time for reform and investment and we are absolutely delighted to have him working with us."

Huw is particularly keen to hear from, and collaborate with, members who are looking to showcase and grow rail freight capability so do contact Huw if he can help. You can email him directly at huwmerriman@gmail.com

Continued from front page.

David Brown, CEO at The Bristol Port Company, said: "We're proud to play our part in the supply chain by welcoming such a transformative piece of rail technology through our port. Thanks to the excellent coordination with our partners, we were able to ensure a smooth and efficient operation, facilitating the arrival of a groundbreaking locomotive. We're especially proud that this will leave the port via our rail network, demonstrating our role as a true multimodal hub."

Following its arrival, the loco was transported to Leicester, where Stadler Rail Services will carry out maintenance, testing, and commissioning before the unit enters commercial service by the end of 2025.

John Smith OBE, CEO of GB Railfreight, added: "The new locomotives will enable businesses to transport their freight more efficiently. With both renewable fuels and electric capability, our Class

99s are built for a changing network and to meet the evolving demands of our customers."

The remainder of the Class 99 fleet is scheduled to arrive at Bristol Port starting late 2025, with deliveries continuing into 2026.



News in Brief:

- RFG is keen to ensure our content aligns closely with the needs and interests of our members and RFGN subscribers. We'd greatly appreciate your feedback through this very short survey. [Take our short survey here.](#)

- DfT and the Department for Business and Trade are developing a new freight plan. They are inviting insights from across the sector. A series of online workshops will also be held. [Click here to register.](#)

- DP World has issued the first certificates from its Carbon Inset Programme, launched in January 2025, with over 150,000 import containers now registered. The initiative rewards cargo owners with 50kg CO₂e carbon credits per loaded container moved through DP World's UK terminals, helping them address Scope 3 supply chain emissions.

- Getlink has launched a secondment opportunity for the role of General Manager – Intermodal Operations, based in Barking. This is an exciting chance to lead Getlink's intermodal and terminal operations as the Barking site reopens and expands service offerings. [Click here for details.](#)

- The government has launched a call for evidence to support new policy on achieving net zero carbon emissions from vessels docked at ports. The DfT is seeking insights on current port activities, decarbonisation challenges, and future infrastructure needs. [Click here for details.](#)

Maritime Transport launches two new services from DP World London Gateway

Maritime Transport has launched two new intermodal rail services connecting DP World London Gateway with its inland terminals at Hams Hall and iPort Doncaster.

Running Monday to Saturday, the new services are operated in partnership with GB Railfreight. Both services have been introduced in response to growing volumes at DP World London Gateway, where a £1bn expansion will increase its capacity.

John Bailey, MD - Intermodal, Maritime Transport, said: "London Gateway is seeing strong growth in container volumes, supported by its role in the Gemini Cooperation's Asia-Europe

network and a major expansion project that will further strengthen its position as one of the UK's leading deep-sea ports. As throughput increases, so too does the need for reliable inland connections. These new rail services provide the additional capacity needed to support that growth, enhance our national network, and enable a more meaningful shift from road to rail as part of a lower-carbon, more efficient UK supply chain."

Maritime said it plans to introduce additional services shortly, expanding connectivity between major UK ports and its network of nine strategic rail freight terminals.

New routes currently in development include Felixstowe to Manchester, DP World London Gateway to the East Midlands, and Southampton to Maritime's SRFI at SEGRO Logistics Park Northampton – the latest addition to the company's growing rail terminal portfolio which is now fully integrated into the national rail network.

RFG attends rail roundtable with Shadow Transport and Shadow rail minister

RFG Director General, Maggie Simpson OBE, along with Elaine Clark OBE, CEO of Rail Forum, and Darren Caplan, Chief Executive of RIA, were delighted to attend a roundtable discussion with Shadow Transport Minister Gareth Bacon MP and Jerome Mayhew MP.

In a wide-ranging discussion, they debated the opportunities and challenges of rail reform, how to support growth, the need for rail investment certainty and regional devolution.



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RFG ensures rail freight is in the spotlight at Multimodal 2025

The RFG team was busy at this year's Multimodal exhibition, hosting the Rail Freight Group Pavilion, while actively promoting the benefits of modal shift and representing the work of its members. The three-day event, which ran from 17 - 19 June, always offers a great networking opportunity and a chance to encourage more businesses to use rail.

Debates

RFG Director General Maggie Simpson OBE led several key debates on rail freight, including a fireside chat 'Using rail freight in logistics operations', which looked at increasing capacity through innovation, facilities and routing; 'Putting Rail Freight at the Heart of Multimodal', which looked at demystifying freight for new entrants; 'International Rail Freight – Time for a New Opportunity', and 'Maximising Rail from UK Ports', which examined the issues around growing rail across the port estates in the UK.

Awards

The RFG team was delighted to attend the Multimodal Awards Dinner, which saw Freightliner named Rail Freight Company of the Year, Maritime Transport named Road Freight Company of the Year and DP World as Port Company of the Year.

Networking

RFG's Martin Bignell walked the floor of the show with Huw Merriman and met with RFG members on the RFG Pavilion as well as on members' stands, including Russell Group, WH Malcolm, Maritime Transport, Port of Sunderland, ABP and PD Stirling. This provided a great opportunity for Huw to hear about the needs, aspirations, and challenges of rail freight customers and service providers, and for him to share the engagement plan being developed to enhance the understanding of elected representatives in Westminster and the regions.

Overall, Multimodal 2025 has provided another fantastic opportunity for Rail Freight Group to keep the industry high up the agenda in intermodal logistics and across the UK supply chain.

Rail Freight Handbook 2025

The Rail Freight Handbook 2025 was on display at the pavilion and is available now online and in hard copy at our events!

This essential annual guide brings together the latest data, insights, and contacts from across the UK rail freight sector.

Whether you're a logistics professional, policymaker, or industry newcomer, the handbook is your go-to reference for navigating the fast-evolving world of rail freight.

Packed with company profiles, infrastructure updates, and expert commentary, it's an invaluable resource for staying ahead in the sector.

Read the full handbook [here](#). If you attended Multimodal but didn't have time to visit us, and want to know more about rail freight, please email contact@rfg.org.uk



Government announces “Bold Reset” for HS2

Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander MP has initiated a full-scale “reset” of the HS2 high-speed rail project, accepting all five recommendations from the landmark James Stewart review, which identified a “litany of failure” in governance, cost control, and oversight.

Alexander characterised HS2 as an “appalling mess,” warning that Phase 1’s cost has ballooned by around £37bn, with a further £2bn squandered on now-defunct Phase 2 planning.

She confirmed there is no plausible route to meet the original 2033 opening, as HS2 Ltd CEO Mark Wild concluded that

the current cost, schedule, and scope are “unsustainable”.

In efforts to restore confidence and re-shape the project, the government said it has:

- Re-established a senior-level HS2 taskforce.
- Imposed tighter financial controls, restricting HS2 Ltd’s spending autonomy.
- Realigned contracts to include value-based incentives.
- Committed to starting tunnelling from Old Oak Common to Euston; further Euston station details are pending.

- Expanded infrastructure planning reforms into the forthcoming 10-Year Infrastructure Strategy

A major leadership shake-up will see Mike Brown, former TfL Commissioner, installed as HS2 Ltd Chair, working closely with CEO Mark Wild to renegotiate contracts, review organisational structure, and deliver revised timelines and budgets by year-end

Alexander told MPs: “Passengers and taxpayers deserve new railways the country can be proud of ... this must be a line in the sand,” pledging a shift to leaner, safer delivery—even if it means delays

A six-monthly reporting cycle will keep Parliament informed of progress and any further ministerial interventions.

Government unveils new Industrial Strategy

The government has launched a new Industrial Strategy as part of its broader Plan for Change, setting out a long-term vision to boost growth, competitiveness, and collaboration between business and government.

Focusing on eight key sectors, the strategy includes initial plans for Advanced Manufacturing, Creative Industries, Digital & Tech, Clean Energy, and Professional Services, with more to come for Defence, Financial Services, and Life Sciences.

Key measures include cutting energy costs for heavy industry by up to 25%, expanding innovation funding, and reducing regulatory red tape by 25%. The plan also pledges major infrastructure investment, including £2.5bn for East West Rail and £15.6bn for city-region transport.

A new Industrial Strategy Council will oversee delivery, with support for SMEs, better procurement, and faster tech adoption also on the agenda.

The RFG sits on the newly created Freight Council and it will play an important role with Government in helping ensure logistics and supply chain needs are fairly and effectively supported in the delivery of this strategy, with a new Freight Plan being promised for later this year.



UK Infrastructure Strategy launched

The government has also published its Infrastructure Strategy plan, laying out its long-term ambitions for enhancing economic, housing and social infrastructure sectors to drive much-needed growth.

It said the 10-year Infrastructure Strategy is 'core to delivering the government's growth mission' and to boost living standards across the UK. "Infrastructure investment has been erratic and too low in the UK, hampering productivity and wages and making delivery slow and costly", it said.

"Across policy and delivery, there has been insufficient coordination, across sectors and between government and

industry. Delivering this requires a new approach."

It added that in the 10-year Infrastructure Strategy, the government is doing things differently to fix the failures of the past, prioritising long-term outcomes over short-term announcements, "providing the certainty and stability needed to attract investment, boosting British supply chains and jobs, and taking a joined-up view to improve planning and delivery across all types of infrastructure".

"This is a strategy built on long-term certainty and deliberate choices," said the Department for Business and Trade. The government says the strategy will help create high-quality jobs and a more competitive, innovative UK economy.

[Click here or the image left to access a full copy.](#)



Victa Railfreight marks rail safety training milestone during Rail Safety Week

Victa Railfreight has reached a major milestone, having trained 5,000 people nationwide through its Rail Safety Awareness (RSA) course.

Delivered since 2015, the RSA course is tailored to operational needs and includes classroom theory and practical training on non-mainline railway infrastructure. It equips staff working near rail lines, such as in freight yards, quarries, ports and power stations, with essential knowledge on safe working practices, responsibilities, and emergency procedures.

Victa's Managing Director Neil Sime said: "To have trained 5,000 people in vital and practical skills in how to stay safe in the railway environment is a landmark achievement to reach in our company's 30th anniversary year.

"Our team at Victa are experts in the field of safety training and we are very proud developing this bespoke course for the benefit of people working in a range of sectors that are linked to rail freight. Alongside those working in sidings, yards, maintenance facilities and terminals the course is also ideal for staff employed in train maintenance, cleaning facilities and the emergency services," he added.

David Livett, Biomass Maintenance Planner at the Port of Liverpool (pictured), became the 5,000th person to complete the course. Rail Operations Manager Andrew Wijeyewardena praised the training: "It's a must for anyone working in the rail freight environment—helping keep our operations safe and efficient."

So far, Victa has trained 2,360 people in the aggregates sector and 2,822 across ports, power stations, and other rail-connected terminals. Victa also offers courses for rail site managers, safety-critical communications, and designated persons under the Railway Rulebook.



Each course is meticulously crafted to meet industry standards and ensure that safety remains a top priority. By equipping rail professionals with the necessary skills and knowledge, we are fostering a safer rail environment for everyone.

[Click here for the full article and further details.](#)

British Steel secures a new £500m supply contract with Network Rail

British Steel has secured a new five-year, £500m supply contract with Network Rail.

All the rails will be manufactured at British Steel's Scunthorpe steelworks where most of the track laid in the UK is made.

The company will deliver between 70,000 and 80,000 tonnes of rail a year – enough to stretch between London and Edinburgh. Employees at British Steel's site in Scunthorpe have been supplying Network Rail with track for more than 20 years, and in the last decade alone they have manufactured more than one million tonnes of rail for the UK's network operator.

The rails in the new agreement will largely be used for maintenance and renewals. Among the products to be supplied are two long-life rail innovations, HP335 and Zinoco® – both of which reduce the need for maintenance and replacement works.

Introduction to Regional Energy Strategic Plans

The National Energy System Operator (NESO) is currently developing Regional Energy Strategic Plans (RESPs), which will support the business plans and investment decisions made by electricity distribution network operators (DNOs) for the period 2028 - 33.

It is important that these plans take account of the electricity infrastructure needed for freight and logistics during this period. NESO is holding online sessions, which will provide information

on the development of the plans and an opportunity to input.

Details of the sessions can be found on the [NESO website](#).

Transport artificial intelligence action plan

DfT has outlined a new plan that sets out how it will work with the transport sector to exploit the opportunities from AI while managing potential risks.

Following the 2025 AI opportunities action plan, this plan sets out the approach the Department for Transport (DfT) is taking to working with artificial intelligence.

[Click here for details.](#)



Solent Rail Terminal driving rail freight growth one year on

The Solent Rail Terminal at the Port of Southampton has seen significant increases across all rail and container operations in the first year since its multi-million-pound upgrade completed.

The award-winning terminal operated by Solent Stevedores is celebrating one year of operations since the infrastructure upgrade completed. With an additional 12 acres of space, 130m of extended rail loading pad and the potential to handle 12 intermodal daily trains up from eight, the team has reported a 23% increase in rail moves compared to the same period in the previous year.

The 18-acre yard that incorporates a Maintenance and Repair function, laden and empty container storage handling within a single site boundary, has experienced a 122% increase in lifts following the upgrade compared to the same period in the previous year.

Mark Hooper, Director of Rail and Containers at Solent Stevedores, said: "This project was driven by a need to shift cargo movement from road to rail and this newly expanded facility has not only achieved that but allows the capacity for further growth as intermodal rail freight continues to grow."

The upgrades in the yard have also facilitated an increase in containers handled with the team seeing an increase of 125%. Up to 180,000 containers can now be handled in a year.

As Solent Rail Terminal continues to grow, its offerings have expanded particularly in the Maintenance and Repair function with bespoke conversions, container upgrades and liner bags added to the menu of services available.

Network Rail stations and offices go solar in ground-breaking deal with EDF Renewables

A solar farm about to begin construction in Norfolk is set to help power Network Rail stations and offices thanks to a deal with energy

supplier EDF Renewables.

Through the Corporate Purchase Power Agreement – a first for Britain's railway – Network Rail will secure 64GWh of clean energy at a fixed cost every year for the next 14 years, providing around 15 per cent of the electricity needed for its offices, depots and managed stations – known as non-traction energy.

Rail Minister Lord Hendy said: "We are working with partners across the rail industry to build a modern transport network with our environmental commitments at the heart. The Government's Plan for Change is driving

economic growth, transitioning the country to sustainable energy, and securing jobs. Under our new integrated approach, we are ensuring the British rail industry remains at the forefront of innovation and improvement."

The facility, which will be built, owned and managed by EDF Renewables UK, could contribute to saving around 60,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions over its lifetime, which is equivalent to planting approximately 2.2 million trees.



Major mobilisation work underway at Toton Traction Maintenance Depot

Preparations are underway at DB Cargo UK's Toton Traction Maintenance Depot in Derbyshire, as the company gears up to begin installing the European Train Control System (ETCS) on its first Class 66 freight locomotives.

Construction activity is ramping up across the site to ensure everything is in place when the first locomotives arrive for retrofitting in July. By March 2026, a total of nine Class 66 locomotives will be fitted with ETCS, marking a significant milestone in the modernisation of the UK's freight fleet.

To support the project, extensive modifications are being carried out inside the depot's main engineering shed. Four dedicated lanes have been allocated for the upgrade work, and the existing roof-mounted heating system is being removed to make way for new cranes.

In the north end yard, new track infrastructure is being installed to support a second load bank—an area used to test locomotive engines. A new fully-automated wash plant is also under construction, replacing the current manual cleaning operation housed within the engineering shed.

Elsewhere on site, vegetation clearance has begun near the oil tanks adjacent to the main crossing. This area will soon host modular office accommodation and a new ERTMS Mobile



Training Facility. The clearance work was carefully scheduled to avoid the nesting season, helping protect the site's local bird population.

The new office space will provide a base for colleagues from Siemens Mobility, DB Cargo UK's delivery partner for the ETCS retrofit. Siemens Mobility, the designated contractor for the East Coast Digital Programme, is responsible for designing, integrating, and installing its Trainguard 200 Onboard system on the locomotives.

Draft National Ports Policy Statement opens for public feedback

A public consultation on a proposed revision of the National Policy Statement for Ports (NPSP) has begun.

The NPSP outlines the need for port development in England and at reserved

trust ports in Wales, such as Milford Haven.

It provides guidance for applicants and the Secretary of State in determining applications for development consent orders (DCOs) for sea port projects.

The revised draft NPSP, accompanied by an Appraisal of Sustainability (AoS) and a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), is open for public consultation until 29 July 2025. Parliamentary scrutiny will run to 14 November 2025.

This review aligns with the government's broader planning reforms,

including the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, aiming to expedite decision-making processes and promote economic growth and green energy transformation. The consultation documents, including the draft revised NPSP, AoS, HRA, and UK port freight demand forecasts, are available on the GOV.UK website at the link above.

Stakeholders and the public are encouraged to submit their views on the draft revised NPSP by the consultation deadline.

[Click here for further details.](#)



Horton quarry rail link reopens after 60 years

The rail link at Horton quarry in Yorkshire has been reinstated as part of Heidelberg Materials' strategy to improve its network of rail-connected quarries and depots.

Horton quarry, which has been producing limestone and high-quality gritstone since 1889, is situated within the Yorkshire Dales National Park and its original rail siding was removed in 1965.

The newly constructed rail terminal at the quarry is undergoing testing. Once fully operational each rail movement will supply

around 1,650 tonnes of aggregate to construction projects across the north west.

"The reopening of the rail link is fantastic news and has been years in the making," said Becky Murphy, Aggregates Regional Director. "It will allow us to supply high-quality aggregate to major construction projects by rail, reducing vehicle movements on the wider road network and cutting associated CO2 emissions."

The reinstated line connects with the Settle to Carlisle railway line, which is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year.

The work has been carried out by Duo Group, VolkerRail and AECOM, in partnership with Network Rail, and the trains are being operated by GB Railfreight.

APPG for Freight and Logistics launches call for evidence

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Freight and Logistics has launched a call for evidence to inform its upcoming report on diversity in the logistics workforce.

Following a meeting on the topic, the APPG is seeking input on where the sector has made progress, areas still in need of improvement, barriers to entry, challenges around talent retention, and the impact of a lack of workforce diversity. The scope includes gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background, neurodiversity, disability, and more.

Submissions are open until 24 July and should be sent to the group's secretariat at rha@pagefield.co.uk.

Responses should include a brief description of the organisation and whether it wishes to be named in the final report.

Andrew Harston awarded MBE in King's Honours

RFG was delighted to hear that former board member and industry legend Andrew Harston, was awarded an MBE in the King's Birthday Honours list.

Andrew is a stalwart of the UK ports sector and was formerly Regional Director for Wales and Short Sea Ports at Associated British Ports.

He has been a tireless advocate for the vital role ports play in supporting jobs, driving prosperity, and creating opportunities in coastal communities.



Many congratulations, Andrew – the RFG team is thrilled for you!

Rail reform, digital innovation and growth opportunities top the agenda at RFG Spring Meeting

The presentations at the RFG Spring Members Meeting on 21 May generated a great deal of questions and discussion. Topics included rail reform and regional rail freight initiatives, the opportunities for international, parcel and hydrogen transport services, and the latest technical and digital developments that will enhance productivity in the industry.

The meeting was hosted by Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems at its Melksham facilities and many members took advantage of the opportunity to do a short tour of the workshops and facilities after lunch.

Rail reform is happening and work is underway to develop a new Access and Use policy explained Network Rail's Andrew Bradford. The new policy will set out the parameters for access to the network along with track access charges and other regimes. They are working to prepare a discussion paper to be published in the autumn.

James White, Technical Lead, Western Gateway Sub-National Transport Body, explained that the role of these sub-national bodies is to develop transport strategies that cross local authority boundaries and that the freight forums are keen to tackle 'freight blindness', especially among council employees and councillors. They are currently doing work to identify intermodal terminal locations and see huge potential for Avonmouth amongst other sites.

Joshua Jodan-Boddey, Business Manager – Freight, Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems, said that the company's Digital Freight Train provides the technology needed for the automation of all the critical processes from train preparation to parking and maintenance. The Digital Auto Coupler is under development in Europe, while their Sentinel system is now being fitted to wagons in partnership with VTG Rail.

There are many opportunities for international rail freight through the Channel Tunnel, according to Arnaud Vitou, New Business Finance Director, Getlink. But there are reforms needed including upgrading HS1 to allow 1800 tonne trains and so unlock the possibility of carrying unaccompanied semi-trailers from the Continent. A trial service for Trailerlink, carrying trailers between Dourges and Barking, is planned to start next year, running one train a night at first.

Daniel Griffiths, CEO, Inter City Rail Freight (ICRF) explained how the company is using specialist 'luggage' to transport light freight on passenger trains between city centres. The bags fit in



the overhead compartments and are loaded and unloaded without disturbing normal operations. A lot of work has gone into developing the security of a system that so the train companies will allow unaccompanied bags to be carried.

New technology, locomotives and wagons are not recognised in Network Rail's planning processes, according to Ralph Goldney, Railfreight Consulting and Aaron Rostron-Barrett, Head of Research Delivery, RSSB. The methodology used to determine sectional running times, for instance, is based on out of date or unexplained information and many assumptions about tractive effort and trailing loads are simply incorrect. Current research which has been undertaken and new data will allow longer, faster trains.

Sam Gillert, Account Manager, Eversholt Rail talked about the opportunity for hydrogen and carbon dioxide transportation and storage by rail. There are challenges, not least that hydrogen requires three times the space that traditional fuels do. But rail is already experienced in carrying dangerous goods and would be a complementary service to pipelines.

The BBQ held the evening before the meeting was also well-attended and much enjoyed – with many networking opportunities. Many thanks to all the speakers and to the team at Knorr-Bremse for being such excellent hosts.



RFG meets Scottish Transport Secretary to discuss rail freight growth and Net Zero opportunities

As part of RFG's ongoing political engagement in Scotland, Maggie Simpson OBE and Martin Bignell met with Fiona Hyslop MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Transport, at the Scottish Parliament on 3 June. The meeting followed RFG's Private Round Table with MSPs in March and Martin Bignell's contribution to the Scottish Parliament's Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee evidence session in April.

During a 45-minute discussion, RFG updated the Cabinet Secretary on the latest developments in Scottish rail freight. She expressed a strong interest in understanding how the Scottish Government could support further growth, particularly around the role of rail freight in boosting Scottish exports. RFG highlighted the significant private investment being made in rail terminals across the country and the strength of industry collaboration around shared growth goals. The Cabinet Secretary noted the recent allocation of a single-year Freight Facilities Grant budget, acknowledging it as a modest but positive step.

The conversation also revisited key themes from RFG's earlier engagement with MSPs, particularly the need to align industrial, land-use, and transport planning policies to maximise the long-term potential of rail freight. RFG emphasised that such coordination is essential to support major infrastructure projects and the movement of goods related to Scotland's green energy ambitions, including hydrogen, sustainable aviation fuel, and carbon capture.

The Cabinet Secretary spoke of her commitment to growing the green economy, pointing to planned investments in key locations such as Aberdeen, Grangemouth, and Hunterston. She also outlined preparations for the shift to zero-emission road freight and the implications of the planned 2040 ban on diesel HGV sales. RFG underlined the opportunity this presents for rail freight, especially given Scotland's reliance on long supply chains, and its compatibility with regional and urban distribution using zero-emission HGVs from rail-connected hubs.



The discussion also covered the importance of the West Coast and East Coast Main Lines for Scotland's connectivity. RFG stressed the need for the Scottish Government to be actively engaged in cross-border planning, particularly as decisions made in England have significant implications for Scottish rail freight.

To conclude, Maggie Simpson outlined RFG's engagement with the Westminster Rail Reform Bill. She outlined RFG's concerns regarding unresolved issues, particularly around network access, charging frameworks, and the need for independent oversight to ensure long-term confidence for freight operators and investors. The Cabinet Secretary noted this, and said that Scottish Government continues to have discussions on how rail reform will affect the railways in Scotland, and protect the existing frameworks and settlements.

Cemex strategic safety forum highlights rail safety collaboration

Rail freight partners came together at Freightliner's Crewe depot for the latest Cemex Strategic Safety Forum, held as part of Rail Safety Week 2025.

A key part of the day was a joint safety tour and a visit to Freightliner's Vehicle Maintenance Facility, providing valuable insight into frontline operations and reinforcing the importance of collaboration on safety, health, and wellbeing.

The quarterly forum, chaired by Dave Alec Hart of Cemex, brings together key stakeholders to discuss emerging safety trends and share best practice across the sector. Attendees included representatives from Cemex, Victa Railfreight, Network Rail, GBRF, DB Cargo, Freightliner, and DC Rail.

Special thanks go to Jimmy Pettitt and the Freightliner team for hosting a productive and engaging event.





Picture perfect Peak District viaduct to get £7.5m renewal

An iconic railway viaduct that is crucial to the Peak District quarrying industry is getting a multi-million-pound upgrade this summer.

Network Rail is investing £7.5m to improve one of Chapel Milton's twin Victorian viaducts between now and the autumn.

The 160-year-old 15-arch structure is a mainstay of the success of the country's freight network, allowing services to transport stone, cement and limestone from four major Derbyshire quarries to destinations across Britain. These goods are essential for the construction sector, which uses the materials to build homes, roads and railway upgrades such as HS2.

On average 25,000 tonnes of material is carried over the viaduct daily, and to keep those freight services moving safely and reliably in future, the project team will:

Fill in voids across each span to strengthen the structure; repair brickwork; reinforce the parapets (bridge walls); install new waterproofing and drainage systems; install handrails and guardrails to improve the safety for workers; replace and realign the railway track;

On 13 June, Network Rail released drone footage capturing the scale and beauty of the Victorian structure ahead of the significant repairs. In September, the Great Rocks freight line will close for nine days as contractor AmcoGiffen carries out the essential improvements. To carry out this work safely, the line over the viaduct will be closed between 29 August and 7 September 2025. The track will be removed and then replaced when the work is complete.

Network Rail said it has worked closely with freight companies to plan the work with as little disturbance to their operations as possible.

David Hunter, Network Rail's senior freight manager for the North West and Central region, said: "Chapel Milton viaduct is the only route allowing freight services to transport aggregate from four major Derbyshire quarries to serve the construction sector. It is Grade II listed Victorian structure and requires a modern touch to make sure freight trains can pass over it safely and efficiently for generations to come."

DP World extends groundbreaking carbon inset scheme

DP World has issued the first certificates from its Carbon Inset Programme, with more than 150,000 import containers now registered.

The initiative rewards cargo owners with 50kg CO₂e carbon credits per loaded container moved through DP World's UK terminals, helping them address Scope 3 supply chain

emissions and become more sustainable.

Initially a six-month trial, strong demand has extended the programme through to year-end. Unlike traditional offsets, carbon insets reduce emissions at the source, such as through cleaner fuels, within a company's own supply chain. The first certificates, covering Q1 activity at London Gateway and Southampton, were issued in April.

John Trenchard, DP World UK's VP – Commercial & Supply Chain, said the programme's success reflects growing customer demand for practical sustainability solutions.

Participants include Fyffes UK, whose CEO John Hopkins said the scheme offers a "pragmatic way" to reduce supply chain emissions.

Carbon inset credits are generated by DP World's subsidiary Unifeeder, which uses lower-carbon fuels across Northern Europe. The credits are independently verified and pooled quarterly.

The programme supports DP World's wider decarbonisation drive, including investments in electric handling equipment and modal shift. The company aims to cut absolute emissions by 42% by 2030 and reach net-zero by 2050.

GBRf and BTP unveil bespoke livery to promote rail safety

GB Railfreight (GBRf) has unveiled a special livery for one of its locomotives in collaboration with British Transport Police (BTP) at Waterloo Station.

At the ceremony, GBRf's CEO John Smith OBE and Assistant Chief Constable Sean O'Callaghan of BTP highlighted the impact that network disruption has for all rail users. Criminal disruption, in its many forms, from trespass to theft to vandalism, cost the rail industry over £150m last year.

BTP works tirelessly to reduce the cost of criminality on the rails and it is hoped the locomotive will act as a visual deterrent for trespass and criminality.

The idea for the livery was created by PC Ian Kennerley of BTP and GBRf Train Manager, Bessie Smith, who felt that the 016 unique identifier of the locomotive aligned perfectly to BTP's famous text number for reporting non-emergency incidents – 61016. In 2024, BTP received around 250,000 text messages from concerned rail users.

John Smith OBE, Chief Executive Officer, GB Railfreight, said: "We're proud to partner with BTP to help raise awareness that if members of the public witness a non-emergency incident they should report by texting 61016 and minimise disruption."



Freightliner runs Breedon's first Dowlow Quarry - Grimsby service

The first Dowlow Quarry - Grimsby Freightliner Heavy Haul train has run for Breedon Group.

The train, which ran on Monday 9 June, is the heaviest train to ever leave Dowlow Quarry at a total of 22 wagons and an estimated 1,650 tonnes of material conveyed. The Freightliner team are delivering the aggregates to a new rail site in Grimsby.

Photo credit: Jake Blood, Operations Support Manager, Freightliner.



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Yellow Rail to relocate to Alstom's historic Derby Litchurch Lane Works

Yellow Rail has announced it is relocating to the Derby Litchurch Lane Works, home of Alstom's historic train manufacturing site.

The move will enable Yellow Rail to double its current workshop space dedicated to the overhaul of freight wagons and bogies. The long-term lease will also provide ample space for growth allowing remote field service activities to be brought on to the site and enable

Yellow Rail to create around 25 new roles.

Paul Cunningham, managing director at Yellow Rail, said: "This is a transformative moment for Yellow Rail. Relocating to Litchurch Lane not only gives us the vital space we need to expand our growing business, but it also allows us to work more closely with Alstom and other industry partners to deliver cutting-edge solutions for our customers."

DB Cargo's Cricklewood Terminal commended in BusinessGreen Awards

DB Cargo UK's team at its Cricklewood Terminal has been awarded 'highly commended' in the Low Carbon Industrial Project category at the UK BusinessGreen Awards 2025.

The team were nominated for creating the UK's first net-zero rail site at its Cricklewood Terminal. DB Cargo said Cricklewood will form a blueprint for the future development of its terminals across England, Scotland and Wales.

[Find out more about the award winners here.](#)



VolkerRail set to continue signalling structure renewals across the North West

VolkerRail has been awarded the Tranche 6 contract to renew signalling structures across the North West of England.

This is a continuation of the Tranche 5 contract, where VolkerRail delivered an extensive programme of signalling asset renewals across the West Coast Mainline and Cumbrian Coast, including the commissioning of five major signalling gantries.

University of Hull launches rail freight tech company

The University of Hull has launched Railwhere, offering cutting-edge software to boost efficiency and sustainability in the rail freight sector.

Developed in partnership with Network Rail, Freightliner, and others, the software enables smarter route planning and improved fuel and carbon efficiency.

A key project with Freightliner restructured stone transport from the Mendips to London, cutting journey times, reducing emissions, and earning multiple industry awards.

Railwhere Director Barrie Louw said: "Our intuitive software empowers the rail freight industry to plan smarter, operate cleaner, and make data-driven decisions."





Unlocking the potential of digitalisation in rail freight

By Martin Pickles, Sales Director, Fargo Systems.

Rail freight is a cornerstone of the UK's supply chain, offering a sustainable and efficient means of moving goods. However, despite its advantages, the sector has long grappled with fragmented communication, siloed data, and operational inefficiencies. At Fargo Systems, digitalisation is key to overcoming these challenges, enhancing productivity, and driving innovation across the industry.

One of the most significant opportunities digitalisation presents is end-to-end visibility and automation. Fargo Systems' TopsTMS® and Container Yard/Terminal Management solution, CYMAN, works at the forefront of this transformation, enabling real-time data exchange between rail operators, intermodal terminals, and road transport providers.

Automated Data Exchange

Freight operator GB Railfreight (GBRf) exemplifies how automated data flows can transform intermodal operations by eliminating time-consuming manual input. Processing over 500,000 EDI (Electronic Data Interchange) messages annually, TopsTMS® enables GBRf to operate seamlessly, delivering real-time updates that enhance coordination and visibility for all stakeholders.

EDI transactions play a critical role in streamlining operations. Port EDI integrations allow GBRf to obtain the latest container status, ensuring accurate tracking from arrival to departure. Additionally, EDI messages validate that train loading adheres to strict safety guidelines, preventing operational disruptions. Customers benefit from automated EDI notifications confirming which containers are assigned to specific trains, improving supply chain visibility. Furthermore, real-time EDI communication with locomotives provides GPS tracking data, enabling customers to monitor shipments precisely and confidently.

Automation is transforming the way the rail freight sector operates. The ability to process over 500,000 EDI messages means less manual intervention, fewer errors, and improved efficiency for operators like GBRf.

Real-Time Visibility and Improved Planning

At Maritime Transport's rail freight terminal in Doncaster, CYMAN's integration with TopsTMS® allows for live tracking of container movements, enhancing planning and scheduling efficiency. By capturing data at every stage - road and rail arrivals, depot movements, and onward distribution - CYMAN provides full supply chain visibility, improving terminal throughput and reducing delays. Additionally, EDI communication with depots ensures they receive real-time updates on incoming containers, allowing them to prepare resources in advance and streamline operations. This automated exchange of information enhances coordination across the supply chain, reducing bottlenecks and enabling more efficient freight handling as it moves through the terminal. Having real-time visibility of operations is a game-changer. Our technology enables businesses like Maritime Transport to optimise planning, improve asset utilisation, and ultimately provide better customer service.

Digital Security & Trust Through Blockchain

One of the most exciting prospects for rail freight is the adoption of blockchain technology. By treating the container itself as the blockchain 'block,' each event - arrival at a terminal and transfer to another mode of transport - can be securely recorded. This eliminates discrepancies in milestone ownership and ensures a

single source of truth for all parties, from shipping lines to last-mile hauliers.

Blockchain presents an opportunity to establish trust and transparency across the supply chain. By securely recording each milestone in a container's journey, we can improve accountability and reduce stakeholder differences.

While the benefits of digitalisation are clear, significant challenges remain. Currently, multiple stakeholders manage different aspects of a container's journey. For example, if a container is booked on a GBRf-operated train, it may arrive at one of Maritime Transport's multi-user rail terminals before being collected by a road haulier. One of the biggest hurdles in the industry is ensuring data continuity across multiple stakeholders. At Fargo Systems, we are working towards breaking down these silos and creating a more integrated and transparent data-sharing environment.

Rail freight operations involve diverse systems, from port interfaces to terminal management and CBS solutions. A lack of common standards can result in inefficiencies and missed data points. Fargo Systems is committed to tackling this by ensuring our solutions integrate seamlessly with third-party platforms such as CBS, as demonstrated in our partnerships with GBRf, Maritime Transport, and Russell RailRoad.

Interoperability is crucial and by ensuring our technology works across different platforms, we can help bridge the gaps within the sector.

As digitalisation advances, so do concerns around cybersecurity. Secure data sharing is crucial to protect sensitive information and prevent unauthorised access. Blockchain presents an opportunity to enhance data security while maintaining transparency and trust between all parties. With increased digitalisation comes the need for enhanced cybersecurity measures and our focus rightly remains on ensuring that data is not only accessible but also protected against potential threats.

The Future of Digital Rail Freight

The digital transformation of rail freight is well underway. Innovations such as ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) are already streamlining operations - John Mitchell Haulage and Warehousing, for example, is working towards eliminating the need for a gatehouse by automating vehicle acceptance at terminals. The next step is the broader adoption of smart systems, blockchain, and AI-driven analytics to optimise operations further.

Like in other sectors, the future of rail freight is digital. By embracing technology, the industry can unlock efficiencies, reduce costs, and build a more resilient supply chain. Fargo Systems is committed to leading this change and working alongside our partners to drive innovation across the sector. Fargo Systems' vision is a fully connected, automated, and secure rail freight ecosystem. Harnessing the power of digitalisation can drive efficiency, reduce costs, and create a more resilient and sustainable supply chain.

The challenge is clear but so is the opportunity. Now is the time for the industry to collaborate, invest in innovation, and embrace the full potential of digitalisation in rail freight.



What the Spending Review did and didn't say

By Jonathan Roberts, JR Consulting

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves, announced in Parliament on 11 June the Government's new spending priorities, nominally for the next five years.

She had created significant flexibility last year for new monies, with the redefinition of the Treasury Green Book, which increased the headroom for capital spending. It also revalued how to measure worthwhile business cases, with less emphasis on initial property values, which had given a previous head start for projects in London and the Home Counties, and now opened more options elsewhere in the UK.

Spending pressures and priorities

There are large-scale external pressures such as greater spending on defence and counter-terrorism, and an insatiable call for more by the NHS and social security cases. This has limited resources for other revenue spending. The Chancellor stated that priorities were "to invest in Britain's security and Britain's health and to grow Britain's economy so that working people are better off... Total departmental budgets will grow by 2.3% a year in real terms."

Increases in revenue spending would be linked to tax receipts – implying little hope for projects expected to be loss-making unless there were other overriding reasons for their authorisation. Nevertheless, the available operational funding would be "£190 Bn more to the day-to-day running of our public services over the course of this spending review compared with the previous Government's plans". The spending review "provides the largest settlement in real terms since devolution was introduced, with £52 Bn for Scotland, £20 Bn for Northern Ireland by the end of the spending review period, and £23 Bn for Wales".

Later in the Commons debate, the Opposition Shadow Chancellor, Sir Mel Stride (Con, Mid-Devon) commented in broad terms that: "Our country is now vulnerable to even the smallest changes in the bond markets. Should we face a sudden external shock, we have no fiscal firepower left with which to respond, all thanks to the right hon. Lady's choices. So can I ask the Chancellor: will she be open about what she has done? Will she admit that she has made a conscious choice to borrow more and to accept higher debts? Does she accept that this means interest rates and mortgages will be higher than they would otherwise have been, as the OBR itself has said?"

The Chancellor responded that: "In the spending review today, we set out the spending that we announced in the Budget last year and in the spring statement—not a penny more, not a penny less. I said in the Budget and in the spring statement that public services must now live within the means that we have set, and we have achieved that. There will be a Budget later this year, and in that Budget we will set out all the fiscal plans in the round. But we have already drawn a line under the Tory mismanagement".

Consequences of new fiscal rules

Rachel Reeves spent much time spelling out the consequences of changes in fiscal rules, by listing the range of revenue spending and investment projects which could now proceed. Examples included: £39 Bn for the affordable homes programme, with related spending on a 10-year rent deal and new low interest loans; a further £10 Bn for Homes England; widespread nuclear energy investment and research, including £14 Bn for Sizewell C and £2.5 Bn for new small modular reactor programme; pioneering work in carbon capture, usage and storage in various locations across Britain; and re-

investment in steel-making at Scunthorpe, which was a national decision to maintain the UK's capacity to make steel and not be so dependent on other countries.

£22 Bn a year was allocated to innovation, £2 Bn to back the Government's AI action plan, £25.6 Bn financial capacity for the 'British Business Bank' to help pioneering businesses", and £1.2 Bn a year by the end of the spending review to support over a million young people into training and apprenticeships. There was also to be large scale expenditure to upgrade the run-down environment in many communities.

She outlined the interdependence and consequences of one investment decision, on other parts of the national economy and regional well-being. Steel was an example: "Heathrow airport, where we are backing London by backing a third runway, has signed the UK steel charter—a multibillion-pound airport expansion backed by Labour and built with British steel. Building our train and tram lines, our military hardware and our new power stations will mean orders for steel made in Britain at Sheffield Forgemasters, where we are investing in nuclear-grade steel, and in Port Talbot, where the spending review confirms the £500m grant to Tata Steel."

So what does the Spending Review mean for transport and rail freight?

11 June saw the Department of Transport budget for day-to-day spend cut by 5%, though gains were a four-year settlement for Transport for London "to provide certainty and stability", while there would be a fourfold increase in local transport grants by the end of this Parliament.

However capital investment was talked up for passenger projects. £15 billion for urban transport across the Midlands and the North had been announced the previous week: buses in Rochdale, stations in Merseyside and Middlesbrough, mass transit in West Yorkshire and metro extensions in Birmingham, Tyne and Wear and Stockport. £2.5 billion was committed to East West Rail for the Oxford-MK-Cambridge project, and a further £3.5 billion to the TransPennine route upgrade. Road schemes included a further £1 billion spend by the Government on preparatory works for the Lower Thames Crossing.

Rachel Reeves confirmed funding for the Midlands rail hub; also £445 million for railways in Wales over 10 years, "including new funding for Padeswood sidings [for more frequent passenger services] and Cardiff West junction". "In the coming weeks I will set out the Government's plan to take forward our ambitions for Northern Powerhouse Rail." £25 billion was set aside over 5 years for continuation of the abbreviated HS2 project.

But there was no investment in essential rail freight projects. Nothing for relief of Haughley and Ely Junction bottlenecks on the key Felixstowe-Midlands rail corridor, nothing about infill electrification to enable electric haulage and faster acceleration times across other junction bottlenecks, nothing to relieve constraints on the cross-London rail corridors where London Gateway intermodal flows can now max out available junction space on Overground lines.

Meanwhile the Government's own new priorities on carbon capture, Sizewell C, house building, and steel will generate foreseeably large-scale rail freight flows measured in tens of millions of tonnes per year. Capacity pressures at key junctions will impact on rail network reliability for both freight and passenger services. Julian Worth has assessed such impacts in a 'Spending Review' article in the July 2025 [Modern Railways](#). Rachel Reeves has said herself in her speech: "But it is no good investing in new skills, new jobs and new homes if they are not properly connected."

Now Labour's Infrastructure and Industrial Strategies have been published (page 6), there is hope that some joined-up thinking will follow. It would be really helpful to make explicit how national strategic priorities can be delivered on rail infrastructure where there is no visible financial underpinning for expansion of rail freight capacity.



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FRA celebrates 40th anniversary

Freightliner recently celebrated the Freightliner Retirement Association's 40th Anniversary with a loco naming at the Severn Valley Railway Spring Diesel Festival at Kidderminster Station.

Over 50 FRA members were at the event, which included a trip to Bewdley and back on 66509 which is now officially named "Freightliner Retirement Association".

The FRA was founded in March 1985 by five former managers who recognised that colleagues who were retiring might like to continue the friendships built up during their employment with Freightliner - there are now currently 170 members.



South Eastern Railway unites track and train teams in step toward Great British Railways

Southeastern and Network Rail's Kent Route have merged operational leadership under the new South Eastern Railway team, marking a major milestone in the government's rail reform agenda and the future creation of Great British Railways (GBR).

The new, integrated structure, overseen by Southeastern Managing Director Steve White, aims to deliver a more efficient, responsive service by aligning infrastructure and operations under a single leadership. It is the first such

regional arrangement to implement GBR-style working, with others expected to follow.

Early results include consistently low cancellation rates, 86% customer satisfaction, and a projected £50m annual reduction in taxpayer subsidy. Joint planning has improved performance and innovation, including daytime track access for engineers, drone surveillance to reduce trespass, and smarter train timetabling that has generated £3m in extra annual revenue.

Lord Peter Hendy, Rail Minister, called it "the first step in our journey to create a railway we can all be proud of," as more services return to public control under the Government's Plan for Change.

Future plans include £40m in station upgrades, new Metro rolling stock, AI-driven safety tech, and investment in a more diverse and inclusive workforce.

RSSB launches consultation on Standards

RSSB has launched an industry-wide consultation on proposals to strengthen the governance of its standards committees.

The move follows an independent review by KPMG, which identified areas for improvement, particularly around industry leadership, decision-making on complex issues, and clearer escalation routes.

In response, RSSB has initiated a dedicated project to implement all recommendations, with the first milestone, a proposal for improved governance, now endorsed by the RSSB Board. Industry feedback is now being sought ahead of final approval at RSSB's Annual General Meeting in November.

[Click here for details on the consultation.](#)

RFG joins call for stronger support for rail freight

RFG recently joined leading organisations UKTiE and Campaign for Better Transport in urging the Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, to back the growth of international rail at the recent EU-UK summit.

RFG joined in calling on the PM to commit to unlocking the Channel Tunnel's full potential for both passengers and freight.

Delivering a fully interoperable European rail network, one that can compete with road freight, support modal shift, and help achieve net-zero goals, will drive sustainable transport for the future, but we need the right infrastructure, market conditions, and policy commitments to make it happen.

[Read the letter here](#)

Understanding sustainability culture within the rail industry

A new survey, sponsored by Network Rail's sustainability team, has been launched to gather input from across the industry on the extent to which sustainability is embedded within working practices.

It seeks to understand people's views on the impact of sustainability on decision-making, its perceived importance to organisations within the sector, and whether colleagues working directly on the sustainability agenda are both visible and impactful.

[Take the survey here](#)

RFG Sponsor Partners 2025

The RFG's Sponsor Partners provide additional support for our activities and events throughout the year. The companies involved in the scheme represent a wide range of key stakeholders and we would like to thank each of them for their commitment and ongoing support.



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Port secures RoSPA Gold for a second consecutive year

AV Dawson, owner and operator of Port of Middlesbrough has for the second consecutive year been awarded an international accolade for its efforts in health and safety.

The Teesside-based port operator has achieved one of the highest accolades from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) receiving the 'Gold' award, while also obtaining the RoSPA 'Fleet Safety Gold Award' for managing occupational road risk during 2024.

AV Dawson's group MD, Charlie Nettle, said: "Receiving this internationally recognised award for a second consecutive year is a huge achievement for us. It solidifies our strong safety culture and showcases how we've prioritised safety across our business. It's something we aim to achieve year in year out as we know we have embedded a strong safety culture within the business."



Rail Forum podcast tackles key issues impacting the industry as part of Rail Safety Week

As part of Rail Safety Week, Rail Forum's podcast series features powerful conversations shaping the future of rail safety.

Episode 1 features Sir Andrew Haines, Chief Executive of Network Rail, discussing the personal, moral, and strategic responsibilities that underpin safety in today's evolving rail landscape.

In episode 2, Richard Clinnick, Editor of Modern Railways, [pictured] opens up about his personal mental health journey



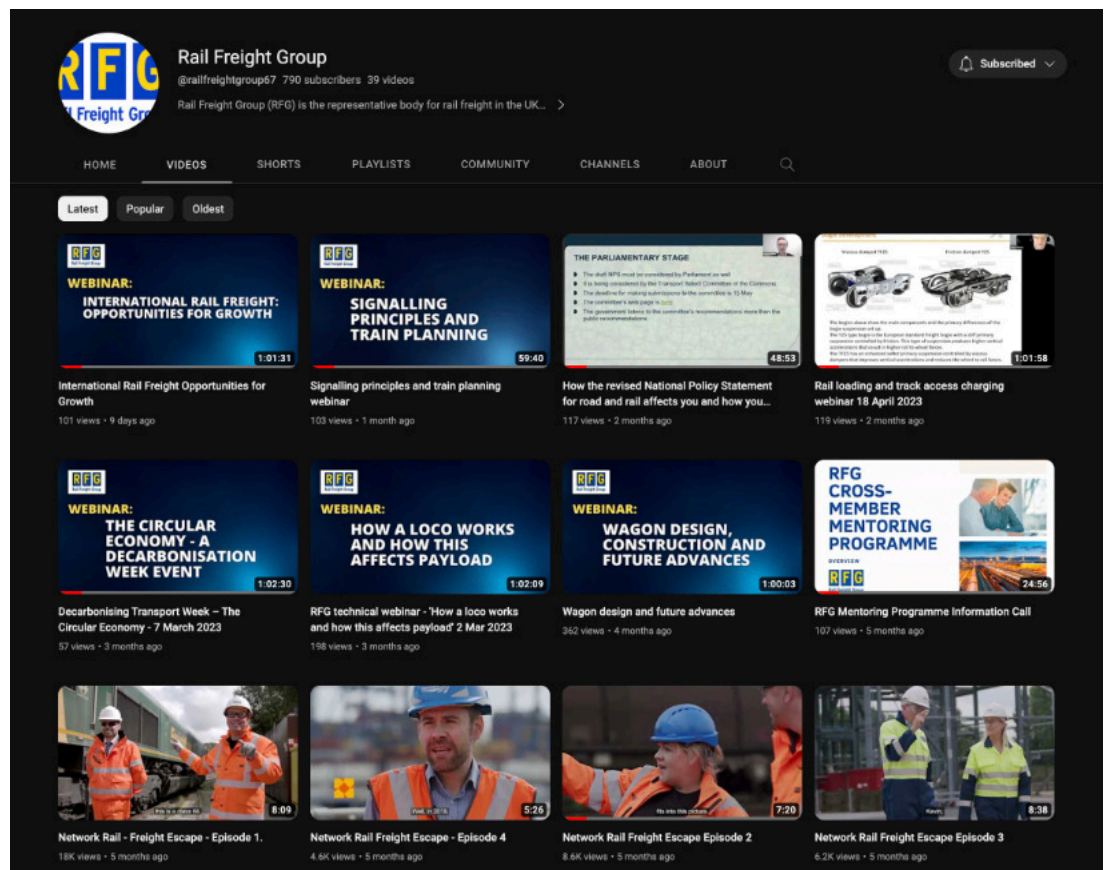
and shares his thoughts on how we can better support mental wellbeing across the rail sector.

[Listen to the discussions here.](#)

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.



RFG Events Calendar 2025

To find out more about any of our events please go to rfg.org.uk/events

- **RFG Awards Dinner 2025**

4 September 2025

- **Annual Rail Freight Conference**

25 September 2025

- **Autumn Group Meeting**

11 - 12 November 2025 | Northampton

- **RFG Christmas Lunch 2025**

10 December 2025

RFG Forum Dates

- **Digital Forums**

10 September 2025
4 December 2025

- **Intermodal Forums**

15 October 2025

- **Construction Forums**

9 July 2025
5 November 2025

To join any of our forums, please email yvonne@rfg.org.uk to register your interest.



First HS2 rail tunnel breakthrough completed in Birmingham, as project reaches latest milestone

HS2's tunneling machine finalised the first excavation of the 3.5 mile Bromford tunnel, which connects Warwickshire and Birmingham.

Rail Minister, Lord Hendy, who attended the breakthrough event, said: "Today marks a major milestone for the country's biggest infrastructure project, opening up the HS2 gateway to Birmingham. This is the longest railway tunnel ever built in the West Midlands. It's truly a monumental feat of engineering and represents huge progress."

The Bromford Tunnel starts in the Warwickshire village of Water Orton and ends in the Birmingham suburb of Washwood Heath. The tunnel boring machine, which created the Bromford Tunnel, was named Mary Ann by the local community, after the Warwickshire-born writer better known by her pen name, George Eliot.



VTG Rail UK appoints new head of sales and marketing

VTG Rail UK has appointed Matt Hannant as its head of sales and marketing. Matt takes over the role from Marc Hurn, who was promoted to become the company's managing director in April.

Matt joins VTG from previous sales and marketing director roles in the water and lighting sectors. He said: "I was attracted to VTG as they have a great reputation for being a successful, forward-thinking business and also as a good company to work for. I'm excited

about VTG's current market position in terms of providing high quality, its strong focus on service delivery and on product development, which will ensure its successful long-term future.

"I'm joining a winning team and I'm looking to add value, continually support the company and to bring close communication across all departments. I have stepped in to lead a young and talented team and there are real opportunities for me to share my knowledge, learn new skills and become part of a hugely successful sales and marketing department."

Marc Hurn added: "Matt has extensive experience in the sales and marketing arena, and this is his first role in the rail freight industry which means he will bring fresh eyes and new ideas. I'm delighted to welcome Matt to VTG Rail



UK, he will be an effective and motivating leader within our business."

WH Davis and Irish Rail sign deal for 150 freight wagons

Iarnród Éireann (Irish Rail) has signed a framework agreement with W.H. Davis for the supply of 150 new freight wagons, with the potential to expand the order to 400 additional wagons, subject to funding and approvals. The initial contract is valued at around €44m, and production will commence shortly.

The new wagons will replace Iarnród Éireann's aging fleet, which is nearly 50 years old and nearing the end of its operational life. This investment forms a key part of the company's ambitious rail

freight strategy, aimed at boosting sustainable transport and supporting Ireland's national climate goals by shifting more freight from road to rail.

Manufactured at W.H. Davis' facility in Nottinghamshire, the wagons will feature an estimated design weight of 17–20 tonnes and a payload capacity of 62–65 tonnes, a 33% increase over the current fleet. The new wagons will also support a higher operational speed, increasing from 80 kph to 110 kph.

Under the 10-year framework agreement, the full order could enable over 100 new weekly freight services across the network, significantly expanding capacity to meet growing demand.

Delivery of the first wagons is expected in summer 2026. Following testing, commissioning, and external safety

validation, the new wagons are anticipated to enter service in 2027.

Glenn Carr, Director of Commercial Business Units at Iarnród Éireann, said: "This new wagon fleet will significantly enhance the quality, competitiveness, and service we offer our customers for decades to come. It will enable more companies to diversify their transport strategies by incorporating rail, supporting Ireland's climate objectives and contributing to a more sustainable logistics network."

Andy Houghton, Managing Director of W.H. Davis (part of the Buckland Rail Group), added: "We are delighted to partner with Iarnród Éireann on this project and to support the delivery of their ambitious freight strategy. I look forward to seeing our latest wagon designs operating in Ireland."



CargoBeamer to build proprietary terminal in Germany

CargoBeamer has announced plans to construct a new terminal in Kaldenkirchen near the German-Dutch border. It said the site will become one of the most advanced intermodal transshipment facilities in Europe.

Designed specifically for the automated loading of non-craneable semi-trailers to rail, construction of the new terminal is scheduled to commence in the second half of 2025, with operations of the newly installed CargoBeamer transshipment technology set to launch in 2026.

With an annual handling capacity of up to

228,000 loading units, the new terminal is set to unlock substantial new capacity for combined road-rail transport in the Rhine-Ruhr & Benelux markets. Much of the project's funding will be provided by the German Federal Railway Authority, accompanied by CargoBeamer's own investment.

Nicolas Albrecht, CEO of CargoBeamer, said: "By building our first CargoBeamer terminal in Germany, we are delivering the momentum needed to accelerate modal shift across Europe. Kaldenkirchen will be home to our largest terminal yet, where we'll demonstrate the full capabilities of the CargoBeamer system. To achieve a large-scale shift of semi-trailers from road to rail, the intermodal industry needs frequent services and terminals designed specifically for semi-trailers – which is exactly what we're delivering in Kaldenkirchen."

Hutchison Ports BEST terminal gets upgrade

Hutchison Ports BEST has started upgrade works of the Intermodal Terminal of Navarra (TIN) where it will make an investment of around E10m for the improvement and expansion of the terminal area.

BEST, the main container

terminal of the Port of Barcelona and one of the largest private investments in the history of the Spanish port system, won in September 2024 the concession from ADIF for the operation of the facilities located in Noain for the next 15 years.

Guillermo Belcastro, CEO of Hutchison Ports BEST said: "We are very proud to start this expansion work of a project that began 13 years ago in the same place with an inoperative terminal, and in which, as a result of our vision and the support from our customers,

Synergy has managed to connect the Port of Barcelona with six weekly frequencies".

After several months of work on the site study and the construction project, the expansion work has begun to almost triple the current space of the terminal to the projected 42,000 sq m. The project includes the construction of two new tracks of 550m each with a new esplanade of larger surface area for railway operations and container depot. The work will be completed before the end of the year.

News in Brief:

- The Port of Dunkirk has awarded Modalis Group, via its Delta Rail subsidiary, the contract to operate its new rail-road terminal, set to open in March 2026. Located near the UK/Ireland ro-ro terminals, the site will handle up to four 750-metre trains per day and aims to shift 50,000 ITUs from road to rail annually.
- Wascosa Group has appointed Markus Vaerst as the new CEO. He assumed leadership of the European freight wagon leasing company from 30 April. Vaerst succeeds Iris Hilb, who led the company since January 2023.
- Europorte, a subsidiary of Getlink group and a major player in rail freight and rail infrastructure management in France, has announced the signing of an agreement to acquire, through its subsidiary Socorail, 67% of the shares in Electrofer.
- Transport logistic 2025, held in Munich from 2–5 June, set new records with 2,722 exhibitors from 73 countries and more than 77,000 visitors from over 130 nations. Key themes included digitalisation, sustainability and AI.
- METRANS has expanded its terminal in Gądk, Poland, to boost capacity and enhance service efficiency in response to growing customer demand. The upgrade includes the installation of next-generation remote-controlled RMG cranes, expansion of the terminal's operational area, extension and construction of rail tracks to handle 750m trains.

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