



MPs back rail freight to deliver new homes, jobs and sustainability

Rail Freight Group (RFG) has welcomed strong political support this summer, assisting MPs to visit sites in their constituencies across the country to see first-hand how rail freight is helping to build homes, create jobs and support local communities - while reducing congestion and emissions on busy roads.

Hazel Grove MP Lisa Smart, Luton South MP Rachel Hopkins, and Luton North MP Sarah Owen each met with rail freight operators and users including Tarmac, Malcolms, GRS and Breedon Group, to learn more about how the industry delivers the vital materials needed for housing and infrastructure projects.

During the visits, the MPs saw freight trains arriving at local terminals carrying aggregates and construction products from quarries across the UK. Just one train can provide enough material to build up to 30 new homes, while removing between 60 and 76 HGV journeys from local

roads and residential streets. Once unloaded, the materials are transferred for final delivery to projects including schools, hospitals, homes, roads, warehouses and even new football stadiums.

The MPs also heard about the wider sustainability benefits of rail freight. At Tarmac's Bredbury site, for example, recycled asphalt planings from road resurfacing are being reused to minimise waste, with plans to increase recycling rates further. At Breedon's Luton terminal, apprentices recruited through Barnfield College are gaining hands-on training, helping to equip the next generation with the skills needed in the sector.

Speaking after the visits, the MPs praised the role of rail freight in supporting both national and local priorities. Lisa Smart MP said rail offered "a better solution for everyone" by reducing congestion and supporting new housing,

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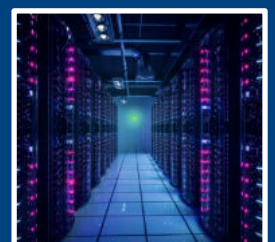
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RFG attends launch of GBR's new game-changing Class 99 loco



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Rail-connected warehousing vs. data centres: planning for carbon, jobs and our future economy



Network Rail's freight team wins RFG's Business of the Year award

Article on page 7 with a gallery of winners and runners-up on pages 8-10.



Rail freight holds firm amid construction slowdown

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

Have you turned your central heating on yet? I might have given mine a test at home, but our office landlord is still holding out, so it's jumpers on as I'm writing this column! It's a reminder that autumn is upon us, and winter only just around the corner. This season is usually good for rail freight with imported Christmas goods boosting intermodal traffic, and construction activity in full force ahead of the colder months ahead. And whilst containerised traffic is more or less on target, our members in construction are feeling the full impact of a massive downturn in UK building, which is significantly impacting on rail volumes.

Industry body the Mineral Products Association has shared some alarming statistics on the state of UK construction, noting that sales of ready mix concrete are at their lowest since the 1960s (article page 4). There are many reasons for this; the impact of new safety regulators post Grenfell, economic stagnation, and delays in starting major infrastructure projects even where government has announced they will proceed. New housing starts in cities are at woeful levels, far short of that needed to reach government targets.

Continued from the front page.

while Rachel Hopkins MP welcomed the way freight trains are "delivering the homes and projects we want to see in the area in a way that is good for the environment."

Sarah Owen MP highlighted the link between sustainable freight and tackling the housing crisis, adding that "bringing materials into Luton by train reduces pressure on local roads and provides good, local jobs."

Huw Merriman organised and represented RFG on the site tours. He said: "It was fantastic to show MPs the benefits of rail freight first hand. From physically delivering the products needed for regional construction projects to helping meet national carbon reduction targets, rail freight can play a huge role in UK prosperity."

"With only 7% of UK freight currently moved by rail, there is huge potential to do more. We are pleased these MPs share our ambition that upcoming rail reforms must provide the certainty and incentives for the industry to invest and grow."

Other site visits over the summer also included Daventry and Seaham.

- Members of Parliament are now being invited to visit rail freight operations in their constituencies to learn about the economic

And whilst rail is out performing the overall construction market, the most recent statistics show a year-on-year drop of around 8%, which is painful for everyone.

The measures needed to recover this are perhaps beyond rail's sphere of influence alone, but we are joining the voices calling for action. A key part of this is building up confidence for private sector investment in the UK, encouraging companies to move forward with plans for growth. This is challenging in the current fiscal environment, and the rumours around the November budget remain unhelpful, but there are some helpful signs in refocussing regulators and looking at planning rules, which could yield fruit.

In the railways, most activity remains focussed not on growth but on rail reform, where a new Railways Bill is still expected at some point over the autumn period. RFG continues to make the case for freight in the various discussions and meetings that are taking place, and are reassured by the openness and support for freight that we see. However, this is a complex project with major legal and regulatory changes ahead, with potentially significant implications for rail freight. Whilst many details are yet to be established, it is absolutely essential that these reforms support and encourage the growth agenda, unlocking private investment in the economy.

Despite the somewhat challenging situation, there continues to be many positive stories from our members, which you can read about in this newsletter. We were also delighted to announce our fabulous winners at our RFG Awards (starting page 7), including the Network Rail Freight Team as our business of the year. Congratulations to all our winners and runners up, and many thanks to our sponsors Burges Salmon and GB Railfreight.

and environmental benefits and to become an advocate for the future growth of rail freight.

With a visit taking place, on average, every fortnight across Britain, the industry is setting out the wider importance of rail freight with legislation soon to make its way through Parliament. The new laws may have a pivotal impact on the ability of rail freight to access the railway at a fair price.

A typical visit takes 90 minutes and involves a mixture of presentations and a site visit. MPs learn about the local jobs which rail freight supports, the products being transported, the lorry movements being removed and the importance to the local economy. With many MPs often getting more complaints about potholes, congestion and road safety than any other topic, the visit offers the chance for MPs to learn how rail freight is playing its part to reduce these issues and how more could be done.

It is hoped that these visits will give MPs a better understanding for their local operations and garner support for future plans or neighbourhood issues which may find their way to an MP's inbox. Inside Parliament, the visits help to build up a support base for rail freight which will help shape the new legislation and ensure that rail freight retains a fair access and price to operate on the railway.

Welcome to our latest new RFG members!

We are delighted to welcome five new organisations into the RFG community:

- **Trackwork** – A leading provider of multidiscipline engineering services to the rail network.
- **VA Rail** – Industry leading technical advisors and rail consultants.
- **3c8 Solutions** – Supply & overhaul components for freight & maintenance vehicles
- **Dellner Polymer Solutions** – A UK manufacturer of bonded rubber-to-metal bogie products and mountings
- **Total Traction UK** - Specialises in technical services, remote condition monitoring, traction electronics and fleet management.

Each brings valuable expertise, fresh perspectives and a shared commitment to supporting the growth of rail freight.

We encourage all our members to connect with them, explore new collaborations, and find out more about the work they do. Why not take a moment to visit their websites or reach out directly.



GB Railfreight unveils £150m Class 99 locomotives

GB Railfreight (GBRf) unveiled its new Class 99 locomotives at its Peterborough headquarters in July, marking a £150m investment in the future of sustainable freight.

Built by Stadler in Valencia, the impressive dual-mode Class 99s can run on both electricity and renewable fuels, cutting carbon emissions by up to 50% compared to diesel only. They will transport a

wide range of essential goods and materials across the UK, supporting regional growth and helping to decarbonise supply chains.

Industry leaders hailed the launch as a “game changer” for UK freight. Rail Minister Lord Hendy said the investment shows “the confidence the rail freight industry has in its future,” while GBRf CEO John Smith OBE called the Class 99 “the cleanest, greenest, and fastest way yet to move freight by rail.”

Rail freight already contributes £2.5bn annually to the economy and removes thousands of HGVs from the road. The new fleet will boost performance, reliability, and sustainability, setting a new benchmark for green logistics.

CMA CGM to acquire Freightliner UK Intermodal Logistics

The CMA CGM Group has announced the acquisition of Freightliner UK Intermodal Logistics.

The deal includes rail and road operations, inland terminals, and the Freightliner brand, and is expected to close in early 2026 subject to regulatory approval.

Freightliner will continue to operate independently with its existing teams, focusing on multi-user and multi-customer services. Other Freightliner businesses - Heavy Haul, Rotterdam Rail Feeding, and operations in Poland and Germany, are not part of the acquisition.

CMA CGM said the move strengthens its intermodal presence in the UK, supports the shift from road to rail, and advances lower-carbon logistics solutions across Europe.

Tim Shoveller, CEO of Freightliner Group, said: “This transaction marks an exciting new chapter for Intermodal and Heavy Haul, allowing each to focus on their distinct markets under separate ownership. The Intermodal business will become a stand-alone business within CMA CGM’s portfolio, with opportunities to collaborate with other arm’s length CMA CGM companies.

“Heavy Haul will continue its growth journey in the bulk materials sector under a new brand with a clear focus on strengthening its position as a key freight operator. Our customers will continue to receive the same high-quality leadership and operational teams, and we have robust plans in place to ensure a smooth transition of ownership,” he added.

News in Brief:

- RFG is delighted to be continuing its support of the Generation Logistics campaign. Generation Logistics is a dynamic project led by Logistics UK and CILT (UK), supported by the Department for Transport. It is designed to reshape perceptions and engage young people between the ages of 13 and 24, informing and encouraging them to consider careers in logistics.

- RFG was pleased to respond to the first draft of the report of the *Network Rail Wales & Borders Rail Freight Study*. [Click here to read the response.](#)

- An MOU has been signed between the South Eastern Railway (SER) and the East Kent Railway (EKR), a heritage line, sharing redundant railway assets from the mainline railway, facilities and volunteer time, and working towards re-establishing freight trains on the EKR for the first time since 1987.

- Marks & Spencer has announced a landmark £340m investment in its food supply chain, with plans to develop a 1.3m sq ft automated national distribution centre at Daventry International Rail Freight Terminal (DIRFT), Northamptonshire.

- VTG Rail UK has appointed Rizwan Shaik as Standards and Reliability Engineer. He joins VTG following his role as a Knowledge Transfer Partnership (KTP) Associate.

Concrete sales slump to 62-year low as sector confidence collapses

Britain's ready-mixed concrete volumes have fallen to their lowest level since 1963, according to figures from the Mineral Products Association (MPA).

Sales dropped 11.5% in Q2 2025 to just 2.7 million cubic metres, with total volumes over the past four quarters reaching 11.9 Mm³. Asphalt sales are also at their lowest in a decade, while aggregates and mortar demand declined during the same period.

The MPA warns that business confidence across the mineral products sector has "evaporated" in response to high costs, weak demand, and delayed investment decisions. The picture is worsened by the impact of infrastructure project cancellations, regulatory delays, and subdued housing activity, particularly in major cities. Mortar sales, closely tied to early-stage housebuilding, fell by 2.7% in Q2, ending four consecutive quarters of growth.

The slump is also having knock-on effects in cement, where imports already account for almost a third of the UK market. The MPA says persistently high energy costs, labour pressures and regulatory burdens are further eroding domestic production.

Aurelie Delannoy, MPA's Director of Economic Affairs, said: "This quarter's data offers a stark reminder that market conditions remain incredibly challenging for the mineral products sector. A fourth consecutive year of declining sales is now a serious risk, including to jobs.

"What we are seeing is not just the challenge of a specific industry market; it is a broader signal of a UK construction sector

and national economy stuck in first gear, hampered by weak confidence, patchy project delivery and a chronic lack of tangible demand. Despite the Government's positive long-term announcements, businesses are still waiting for any concrete signs that the UK is ready to invest and to build again," she added.

Executive Chair Chris Leese commented: "Many of our members are telling us that the current trading conditions are the most difficult they have ever experienced, including the 2007–08 financial crisis, while in concrete the data shows it's the worst in a lifetime with no signs of recovery.

"The underlying problem is a total lack of business confidence leading to a lack of investment required to kickstart activity. The mineral products industry literally provides the foundations for the whole economy, employing 80,000 hard-working people in high-value, high-productivity jobs across the country, but in the current climate our members will have no option other than to mothball capacity and rationalise their businesses.

"Construction is a vital force for growth in the UK economy and these sales figures are a clear indicator that action is required. We need action now to unlock stalled projects, back the businesses that will build them, and break out of this cycle of weak growth and high costs. Our members are not only ready to deliver; they are also increasingly impatient for the right conditions that would create the opportunity to do so," he added.

For rail freight, the figures underline the pressures facing construction-related flows, which form a key part of the sector's traffic base. With aggregate, cement and concrete volumes all under strain, operators face reduced demand for bulk movements at a time when the industry is already challenged by wider economic uncertainty. RFG continues to support members in making the case for investment in infrastructure delivery, housing growth and net zero projects - all of which will be vital to stimulating construction activity and underpinning future rail freight demand.



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Freightliner and Breedon Group begin new five-year cement and aggregate deal

Freightliner has announced two new five-year Heavy Haul rail contracts with Breedon Group. The first is a renewal of a pre-existing cement contract and the second is a new contract moving aggregates from multiple sites across the UK.

This five-year contract includes the movement of aggregates from Dowlow and Shap Quarries to Breedon's sites at Ashbury and Walsall, as well as delivering to additional third-party sites.

Freightliner has deployed Class 70 locomotives to support the contract, which will enable longer and heavier services. It is also repurposing a residual coal fleet into aggregate box wagons in partnership with WH Davis and Porterbrook, to support the new operation.

The wagon conversions are being carried out at the WH Davis factory in Mansfield, bringing new life and service to an otherwise redundant fleet.

Freightliner has also invested significantly in a new maintenance and fuelling facility at Dowlow Quarry to contribute to increased operational efficiency of the contract.

The partnership is an extension of the longstanding agreement between Breedon and Freightliner, in place for more than 25 years, that covers the transport of cement from Hope Cement Works to distribution sites across the UK, including Dagenham, Theale, Dewsbury and Walsall. In addition to these flows, it also includes the movement of Alternative Raw Materials (ARM) – delivering materials from Llandudno and Drax Power Station into the cement works.

To support the increased traffic in and out of the busy Hope Cement Works, Freightliner has made significant investments at Earles Sidings, helping to ensure smooth and efficient operations.

Peel Ports Group to invest £100m to expand national steel and metals multimodal hub

Peel Ports Group is set to invest £100m into the steel and metals sector. It is progressing with £32m to add a further 140,000 sq ft of storage at its Port of Liverpool steel and metals terminals.

Across the Ports of Liverpool and London Medway, it will increase its warehousing by 50 per cent, from the current 1 million sq ft

to create an additional 500,000 sq ft of capacity.

Further plans include creating a second automated terminal in Liverpool dedicated to steel coils, as well as a new automated terminal for the Port of London Medway in Sheerness. These will be developed to include rail connectivity by a new inland rail terminal in the Midlands. The new investment by the port group follows a record year for steel imports at the Liverpool facility and will help further grow the volumes of steel it transports across the UK.

David Huck, Chief Operating Officer at Peel Ports Group, said: "This is a game-changing investment for us. Demand for steel and metals handling across our port

group, and the UK in general, has risen sharply over the past five years and this will allow us to expand our support to the construction and manufacturing supply chain right across the country. This investment ensures we have the scale, speed, and specialist expertise to support our customers today and long into the future, helping to also address some of the storage and transportation issues the steel sector currently faces.

"The addition of a new rail terminal in the Midlands will allow us to efficiently connect the two strategically located deep-water ports of Liverpool and London Medway, boosting the efficiency of logistics for our customers and partners," he added.

DB Cargo UK begins ETCS fleet fitment at Toton Depot

DB Cargo UK has started work fitting the new European Train Control System (ETCS) to nine of its Class 66 freight locomotives.

The work, which is being undertaken at DB Cargo's Toton Traction Maintenance Depot in the East Midlands, is part of the National Freight ETCS Programme, a critical component of the £1.4bn East Coast Digital Programme.

The initial roll-out of ETCS fitment is being delivered by the East Coast Digital Programme, which will see traditional lineside signals replaced by the new digital in-cab technology.

Siemens Mobility is the East Coast Digital Programme's chosen partner, responsible for designing, integrating and installing its Trainguard 200 Onboard unit onto freight locomotives, enabling in-cab digital signalling on the East Coast Main Line.

DB Cargo UK's Chief Operating Officer and ERTMS Project Sponsor, Neil Ethell said: "Mobilisation work had been underway at Toton for several months to facilitate the delivery of the new contract. This has seen the installation of a new load bank, wash plant and overhead cranes, as well as new accommodation to co-locate staff from Siemens Mobility on the site.

"Having recently played a significant part in the 'first-in-class' fitment of ETCS on one of our own Class 66 locomotives (66039), which has recently undergone dynamic testing at Network Rail's Rail Innovation and Development Centre, we are looking forward to continuing our collaboration with Siemens Mobility to install the new technology in further locomotives."

He added: "DB Cargo UK is very proud of the industry-leading role we continue to play in the delivery of ERTMS here in the UK, which will deliver a more dynamic, reliable and safer railway for



all those who use it. It will provide much-needed capacity for freight on the East Coast Main Line and other routes and this significant investment in the Class 66 locomotive is a further advancement towards securing the long-term growth of our sector."

Day Aggregates expands rail freight operations across Kent

Day Aggregates has launched new rail freight services into Ashford, extending the reach of its Ecoblend® recycled and manufactured construction materials across Kent.

The Ashford railhead will act as a key hub, enabling faster and more reliable distribution to major projects across the region, including highways, housing, and infrastructure schemes in Canterbury, Folkestone and Dover.

Adam Day, Contracts Director, said: "This new operation allows us to better support contractors and developers in Kent by providing reliable access to our high-performance materials. It reflects our ongoing commitment to offering practical, low-carbon solutions that support sustainable building practices."

By transferring bulk material movements from road to rail, each train is expected to eliminate around 75 lorry journeys.





Network Rail's freight team wins RFG's Business of the Year award

Network Rail was named Business of the Year at this year's Rail Freight Group Awards after demonstrating innovation, flexibility and collaboration with a range of stakeholders, resulting in reduced costs, greater productivity and new freight flows being brought to rail.

The judges also noted that the Network Rail freight team has worked hard to make sure that everyone in the Network Rail organisation understands the importance of freight to its business and to the country as a whole.

There were a record number of entries in this year's awards, with the winners announced at an awards dinner on Thursday 4 September at Shendish Manor, Apsley.

This year, RFG took the unusual step of presenting a Lifetime Achievement Award to recognise the huge contribution which the recipient, Neil Sime of Victa Railfreight, has made to the rail freight industry over the last 45 years. He identified a critical gap in the market and established a business that has resulted in major operational and resource efficiencies to the benefit of the whole industry. The judges said that his ability to balance strategic vision with hands-on expertise makes him a truly exceptional leader in our industry.

The Rail Freight Project of the Year award was given to GB Railfreight for supporting the MOD participating in NATO's largest military exercise since the Cold War. The judges said that the project has unlocked potentially significant new traffic flows by greatly increasing the feasibility of connectivity into mainland Europe, utilising the Channel Tunnel.

The award winners on the night were:

Driving Rail Freight Growth

Winner: Tata Steel, DB Cargo and Network Rail
Runners-up: Holcim UK and DC Rail
Runners-up: DRS and Tesco

Sustainability & Safety

Winner: Davis Wagon Services
Runner-up: DB Cargo

Innovation & Talent

Winner: Network Rail
Runner-up: Freightliner

Rail Freight Project of the Year

Winner: GB Railfreight
Runner-up: Network Rail

Outstanding Individual Contribution

Winner: Paul Lemon of GB Railfreight
Runner-up: Charlotte Ashton, Network Rail

Young Rail Freight Professional

Winner: Emma Haldane of Freightliner
Runner-up: James Butterworth of Victa Railfreight

Lifetime Achievement Award - Neil Sime of Victa Railfreight

[A gallery of images of the night is available here.](#)

RFG Awards Dinner 2025

Sponsored by GB Railfreight & Burges Salmon

GB Railfreight

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A huge thank you to everyone who joined us for our annual RFG Awards Dinner 2025. The event was a great success and it was great to see so many members and colleagues celebrating the best from right across the rail freight sector.

Congratulations to all of our amazing winners and runners-up. A reminder that a full gallery of images from the night is available [here](#). On the night we were also delighted to raise £4,000 for the [Railway Benefit Fund](#) through our charity raffle.



Driving Rail Freight Growth

Winner: Tata Steel, DB Cargo and Network Rail.

The judges chose this project to commend the way in which the rail freight industry can respond flexibly and efficiently to changing economic and environmental circumstances. It involved close collaboration, significant investment and a tight timetable to set up a new rail freight flow.

The scheme involves the movement of 31 freight trains per week, transporting vital cargo for the manufacturing process, delivering significant benefits in efficiency, safety and environmental impact.

Sustainability and Safety

Winner: Davis Wagon Services

The judges were impressed by Davis Wagon Services' success in finding a solution to a difficult Health & Safety issue faced when undertaking maintenance and cleaning of specialist wagons.

It worked closely with its customer Drax and with a specialist supplier and found a solution which made the work safer, cleaner and more cost-effective while reducing wagon turnaround times and extending the life of the equipment.



Innovation & Talent

Winner: Network Rail

The judges said the Freight Loads Book digitisation project is benefiting the whole rail freight sector, improving efficiency, productivity and safety. The organisation established a small, specialised team to lead the process and worked closely with suppliers, customers and others to ensure the project was able to deliver a streamlined customer-friendly interface, with the capacity to incorporate future industry changes as needed.

The digitisation of the data assessing network capability has transformed the user experience, saving an estimated £100,000 worth of working hours per year. And the process is seen as a blueprint for future digitisation efforts.

Rail Freight Project of the Year Winner: GB Railfreight

The judges said that GBRf's project with the MOD unlocked potential significant new traffic flows by greatly increasing the feasibility of connectivity into mainland Europe, utilising the Channel Tunnel.

The project team had to prepare a suite of bespoke, highly detailed loading schematics to prove the cargo could be transported within very tight gauge constraints and it created innovative monitoring equipment to ensure the loading met the exact measurements. The customer said this company's excellent project management skills mean they could react to any unplanned contingencies with alacrity and that they were "a complete joy to work with during some very long days".

The judges said that this project lays the foundation for moving more military traffic by rail in the future.



Lifetime Achievement Award Winner: Neil Sime of Victra Railfreight

Neil Sime has been in the industry for more than 45 years, starting out at British Rail. Over time, he identified a critical gap in the market and established a business that has resulted in major operational and resource efficiencies to the benefit of the whole industry.

He has launched a ground-breaking safety training programme and has continued to drive innovation and improvements in productivity throughout the sector. He has been a strong supporter of RFG and believes collaboration and co-operation are key to everyone's success. His ability to balance strategic vision with hands-on expertise makes him a truly exceptional leader in our industry.



Outstanding Individual Contribution Winner: Paul Lemon, GB Railfreight

Paul has been in the industry more than 40 years with a career that is a rare blend of hands-on operational expertise, strategic foresight and sector-wide influence.

He has a deep-rooted commitment to ensuring the highest standards are maintained throughout the business and in the rail sector generally. He continues to lead on innovative projects and his work has been instrumental in ensuring the freight sector's effective integration into the ERTMS programme on the East Coast Main Line, advocating for freight-specific requirements and working closely with industry partners to ensure readiness and resilience.

He is happy to share his knowledge and expertise and offers support and guidance to many of his younger colleagues.



Young Rail Freight Professional Winner: Emma Haldane, Freightliner

As in other years, the judges were impressed with the quality of entries in the Young Rail Freight Professional category and feel that the future of the industry is in safe hands.

Emma joined the industry only two years ago but has brought in a variety of experience and skills that have greatly improved all forms of external communication for her company. She quickly educated herself about all aspects of rail freight and her new employer and launched a new website within weeks of arriving.

This website now generates about 35 leads a month, an increase of 133% compared to the old site. She has created strong engagement across social media channels to reach a much wider audience and streamlined communication channels with customers.



And finally, RFG's Business of the Year Winner: Network Rail

The judges were very impressed by Network Rail's entries in several categories. It demonstrated innovation, flexibility and collaboration with a range of stakeholders, resulting in reduced costs, greater productivity and new freight flows being brought to rail.

Network Rail has built closer relationships with customers and end-users to ensure that projects are designed to the benefit of all parties and driven forward more quickly.

The judges said that the freight team has worked hard to make sure the whole organisation understands the importance of freight to its business and to the country as a whole.





Defending State and Industry

By Jonathan Roberts, JR Consulting

This month we look at recent debates in the House of Commons. An emerging theme at Westminster is about what the Government is doing to safeguard Britain and its industrial capacity, against international economic pressures, energy costs, and sabotage in various forms.

Rail freight was not explicitly mentioned in these debates, though it is a core part of Britain's remaining heavy industry, and essential for national supply chains. Railways too are vulnerable to such threats and their consequences, so the parliamentary focus is a backcloth to real issues for operational and strategic rail planning.

Steeling the economy

It was a short parliamentary session, just over two weeks, between the return from the summer break, to the departure of MPs and Lords for party conferences on Wednesday 17th September. Working days saw questions or debates which, cumulatively, are a substantial peacetime warning about UK vulnerability to an increasing international volume of risks, with signals also about how the UK is responding to those.

The Minister for Industry, Sarah Jones MP, bore the brunt during the initial two days back, on 1st and 2nd September. On the 1st, the Government updated its financial and policy support for steel-making in Britain, and the transition from carbon-intensive blast furnaces to electric arc furnaces. The remaining blast furnaces at Scunthorpe have to be kept in operation until new electric-arc furnaces are able to replace them.

Retaining a core steel-making capability is a strategic industrial priority for the Government. Steel is important for rail freight, with typically 250m net tonne kms of metals every quarter year, about 7% of the railway's freight volume, comprising steel, scrap metal, and imported slabs and coils.

Sarah Jones' written statement said that: "since early August, UK steelmakers have been able to export more construction grade steel to the EU tariff-free, following a major win secured at the UK-EU summit earlier in the year to restore our country-specific steel quota to historic levels."

"Our long-term aspiration for British Steel will require private investment to enable modernisation and decarbonisation, support jobs, safeguard taxpayers' money and retain steelmaking in Scunthorpe. We are continuing discussions with Jingye on options to achieve that objective... we will be publishing a steel strategy later this year, setting out our long-term vision".

[Hansard: BritishSteel](#)

Defending material supply

Day 2 saw Sarah Jones at the front bench, to set out the Government's actions to safeguard the steel-making capability of 'Liberty Speciality Steels', which has been moribund for a year but whose electric-arc furnaces enable manufacture of steel to high-grade defence industry-standards.

There are concerns and legal actions about the company's failure to file accounts for over six years, now involving the Serious Fraud Office. Meanwhile, "following the appointment of special managers, the company's sites have been secured and employee payroll processed within 24 hours". "We will pursue every option to keep steelmaking in Rotherham, Sheffield, South Yorkshire and the West Midlands."

The parliamentary debate was more wide-ranging, and the Minister expanded on the steel strategy:

- "a competitive, decarbonised and resilient domestic steel industry... with strong private investment and commercially sustainable operations at its core
- "We are reducing electricity costs for steel producers by increasing network charge discounts through the supercharger from 60% to 90%
- "We are changing Government procurement rules via the publication of a new steel public procurement notice to ensure that UK-made steel is considered for all public projects
- "a much-improved deal for workers at Port Talbot... alongside a £500 million grant to support the transition to low-carbon electric arc furnace production
- "The strategy will ensure that we will not be in the position we are currently in, where only 30% of the steel we use in this country is made in this country."

The shadow Industry Minister, Gareth Davies MP (Con), doubted that the Government's promises could be delivered adequately, especially when North Sea oil and gas was being wound down to reduce carbon impact and there were soaring energy costs. He asked "when will the negotiated provisions lowering US tariffs on UK steel come into effect?"

Sarah Jones responded that "we are in a position where the world has tariffs of 50% on steel and aluminium; we have 25%. We are working with our US counterparts to reach a conclusion to those negotiations."

The LibDem shadow minister, Sarah Olney MP, backed the Government: "Steel is a sector of huge strategic importance for our country. It provides vital materials for our national infrastructure, from defence to renewable energy, and it creates thousands of jobs across the UK..."

The linkage between steel-making and national defence requirements was reiterated by MPs representing constituencies with defence and aerospace industries. Sarah Jones confirmed "I work very closely with my colleagues in the Ministry of Defence to ensure that we use British Steel where we can, and that we have the right infrastructure across the country, producing the right types of steel."

[Hansard: LibertySpecialitySteelsUKContingentLiability; SpecialitySteelUKInsolvency](#)

Cyber attacks within Britain

Tuesday 9th featured a Commons debate about cyber attacks on UK industry and businesses, whether as ransomware or as foreign 'state-sponsored' activity. Large-scale businesses such as Marks & Spencer and Transport for London have been victims, with multi-million pound consequences and significant effects on trading and administration, plus loss of customer data.

The largest attack so far was in late August, on Jaguar Land Rover (JLR), which has caused world-wide shutdown of its manufacturing, 34,000 UK employees out of work and another 5,000 elsewhere, loss of trade among its entire 200,000-job supply chain including rail freight flows inwards and outwards at factories, retail vehicle sales suspended, delay in procuring spare parts for vehicle repairs, and a multi-billion cash flow impact, as well as theft of personal data. JLR is unable to resume production and trading until at least 1st October.

The Minister of State for Business & Trade, Chris Bryant MP, observed that "most countries in the world... are going through exactly the same issue". He quoted the National Cyber Security Centre, which "recently stressed that the UK faces increasingly hostile activity in cyber-space... 'some 40% of companies in the UK reported last year that they had faced some kind of cyber-attack'. It is a very important issue that we take seriously."

Continued over the page.

He confirmed that “when parliamentary time allows the Government will introduce the Cyber-security and Resilience Bill to raise cyber-security standards in critical and essential services, such as energy, water and the NHS”.

[Hansard: JaguarLandRoverCyber-Attack](#)

Other parliamentary coverage

Westminster Hall on Wednesday 3rd saw a debate on the use of drones in defence. The Minister for Veterans and People, Al Carns MP, set out how the Government is positioning Britain to retain industrial and military leadership during this radical change in current warfare and future threats, and is working closely with Ukraine on continuous updating of drone capabilities. The Government’s stance was fully supported by the previous Conservative Defence Procurement Minister, James Cartledge MP.

[Hansard: UseOfDronesInDefence](#)

On Thursday 4th, the Prime Minister confirmed in a written statement that the UK was developing a new state threats proscription-style tool, “which will enable us to designate state-linked organisations that seek to do us harm”.

[Hansard: IntelligenceAndSecurityCommitteeReportOnIranGovernmentResponse](#)

The Defence Industrial Strategy was launched on Monday 8th September by the Defence Minister of State, Luke Pollard MP. He summarised it as “a plan to make defence [spending] an engine for economic growth in every nation and region of our country”.

[Hansard: DefenceIndustrialStrategy](#)

Conclusions

Parliament in September has illuminated how the Government is protecting core industrial capacity, and acting on a broad front on national security and future defence capability.

As we have seen with the JLR cyber attack, what’s bad for British industry is bad for freight transport, including rail freight. Strategic Government decisions will safeguard UK steelmaking for defence uses and other speciality purposes. New cyber laws will also enforce stronger industrial cyber security, and these can be expected to apply to Britain’s railway systems.

Postscript

There was a celebratory debate in Westminster Hall on 10th September, about the 200th anniversary of the Stockton & Darlington Railway.

[Hansard: StocktonAndDarlingtonRailway200ThAnniversaryFestival](#)



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Photo caption: (L-R) Richie Beddow of Beddows Borders who landscaped the roundabout; Charlie Nettle, group managing director of AV Dawson and Stockton & Darlington Railway board member; Phoebe, Elliott and Nicky, all students of the Northern School of Art and Jack Pratt, Senior Lecturer at the Northern School of Art.

Train art installation to celebrate 200 years of rail

AV Dawson, owner and operator of the Port of Middlesbrough, has unveiled a refurbished train on a local roundabout, to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway (S&DR).

After securing permission from Middlesbrough Council to utilise the roundabout, the company collaborated with students from The Northern School of Art on a creative project to design a striking new look for an old redundant locomotive, to mark the bicentenary.

A design competition was launched for first-year students at the college, with the winning concept created by student Phoebe Allan, aged 17, whose interpretation of the S&DR 200th anniversary was brought to life on the locomotive. AV Dawson’s engineering team then carried out extensive refurbishment, restoring both the interior

and exterior of the locomotive before applying the winning artwork design.

AV Dawson’s group managing director, Charlie Nettle said: “We wanted to mark this significant milestone in the right way and thought why not combine education with the bicentenary? We do a huge amount of work with young people, but this work is usually about helping them understand what’s happening today and the range of career opportunities available to them. This particular project has enabled us to share the story of our region’s history – a story that changed the world but started right here in Teesside.”



30 years of Direct Rail Services celebrated

Direct Rail Services (DRS) has celebrated its 30-year history and revolutionary work in the nuclear and rail freight industry.

Since its formation in 1995, DRS has grown from a niche freight operator into one of the country's most versatile and respected rail freight companies, playing a pivotal role in supporting the UK's energy, logistics, and infrastructure sectors.

Established to provide the safe, secure and reliable transport of nuclear materials, DRS's early operations focused on specialist freight services, but the company quickly expanded into broader logistics, including intermodal and infrastructure support.

It has completed millions of miles in the safe transport of nuclear material, running hundreds of specialist services a year and helping to keep the lights on for the UK.

Highlights in DRS's history include:

- First nuclear service
- The Royal Train when HM Queen Elizabeth II visited Aberystwyth.
- Kosovo Train for Life
- First intermodal services
- Class 68s and 88s introduced.

In 2005, DRS became a wholly owned subsidiary of the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA), aligning its operations with national priorities for safe and sustainable energy management.

In a ceremony held at the company's Kingmoor depot in Carlisle, on Sunday 21 September, a "30 Years of DRS" locomotive wrap was unveiled on locomotive 68007. It was revealed by Rail Managing Director, Gottfried Eymer, and NDA CEO, David Peattie.

The new wrap celebrates the 30th anniversary, marking the event with a unique design and nameplate. The naming was part of a special event, held for employees and their family and friends which gave guests an opportunity to celebrate the role DRS has played in supporting the nuclear decommissioning and rail freight sectors.

Gottfried Eymer said: "DRS started with just seven employees, with the sole purpose of moving spent nuclear fuel, and has grown to a company of over 400 staff members and diversified into many different markets over the years. It now boasts some of the biggest names in retail as customers but remains committed to its core function of ensuring nuclear material is transported safely, securely and reliably.

"I was thrilled to be able to unveil this nameplate in the presence of everyone who makes this company such a fantastic place to work," he added.

David Peattie, NDA Group CEO, said: "It is a privilege to be with colleagues and their families to help mark Direct Rail Services' anniversary and reflect on the many achievements of the last 30 years.

"DRS is central to the success of the NDA group's mission to safely and securely manage the UK's nuclear legacy. They are making a lasting and positive impact on the nation's transport, energy and infrastructure landscape."

As well as the DRS milestone, 2025 is year of anniversaries across the NDA group, including 20 years of the NDA itself, 50 years of Pacific Nuclear Transport Limited and 70 years of Dounreay.



DCRail increases capacity with the overhaul of 'Ben More Assynt' loco

DCRail celebrated the completion of the overhaul of Class no. 60099 'Ben More Assynt' at a special launch event held on 28 August 2025.

Customers, key suppliers, media and staff enjoyed the event, which was held at UKRL Loughborough Works, where the locomotive has been overhauled over the last 12 months. The overhaul is the first of several planned as DCRail continues to expand its fleet to meet growing customer demand.

The locomotive has seen several modifications to further improve performance, including re-engineered electronic control cards, rewind chokes and transformers, electronic governors, new turbos and LED lighting internally and externally.

The rebuild of Class 60 no. 60099 is a significant moment for DCRail as it increases its fleet of locomotives, so it was thought

to be appropriate to mark the occasion with a standout livery. The locomotive's livery recognises the strong relationship between DCRail and the wider Cappagh Group to provide integrated supply chain solutions to the construction industry. Alongside looking to the future, the livery recognises the significance of the overhaul taking place at UKRL Loughborough Works, where the locomotive was originally built by Brush.

There are some features from the original livery, such as replica works plates, DCRail diamond crests and the return of the original name. 'Ben More Assynt' at 998 metres is the highest mountain in Sutherland, and is thought very appropriate for a locomotive that will be moving mountains of construction materials.

David Fletcher, Group Director for Rail at Cappagh, said: "The introduction of 'Ben More Assynt' demonstrates our commitment to grow our rail business with our customers. The finished product is a testament to the hard work of the DCRail team, led by Richard Ellison, UKRL and the wider supplier base. Thank you to all involved in this project and we look forward to the locomotive playing a key role in our planned growth."

DB Cargo UK backed Doncaster Pride with sponsorship and special liveried loco

DB Cargo UK sponsored Doncaster Pride for the first time in 2025, as part of activities led by its Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI) Council. During Pride month, the council also secured approval for a special Pride-liveried locomotive, 66068, which will be officially named during the company's Diversity Week in November.

HR Director Laura Clarke said the initiative reflected DB Cargo's commitment to making Equality, Diversity and Inclusion "business as usual." EDI Council Chair Simon Lock added: "Our partnership with Doncaster Pride was a powerful step towards a more inclusive society."





Industry comes together to mark 150 years of freight on the Settle and Carlisle Line

GB Railfreight, Heidelberg Materials UK and the Settle and Carlisle Railway Trust celebrated 150 years of rail freight at an event at the newly reopened Horton quarry rail link. To mark the occasion, GBRf named locomotive 66791 "Settle & Carlisle 150" on 21 August.

The first freight train ran over the iconic Settle and Carlisle line in 1875. To mark 150 years of freight services across the line, Heidelberg Materials UK, which owns Horton quarry, GB Railfreight (GBRf), which runs freight services, and the Settle and Carlisle Railway Trust brought together industry figures to an event at Horton quarry.

At the event, GBRf named locomotive 66791, "Settle & Carlisle 150" to mark the occasion before the loco departed to Doncaster along the old Settle and Carlisle line, crossing the iconic Ribbleshead Viaduct. The quarry at Horton has produced limestone and high-quality gritstone since 1889, which have both played a crucial role in delivering infrastructure projects across the north-west of England.

The Settle-Carlisle line is one of the UK's most famous scenic rail routes, taking in 20 viaducts, 14 tunnels and countless beautiful vistas along the 72-mile route.

The first freight train ran on this historic line on 2 August 1875, helping to shape the economic and industrial landscape of northern England for generations. In July 2025, rail freight services were restored to Horton quarry with GBRf operating the first rail freight service in six decades.

John Smith OBE, CEO of GBRf and trustee of the Settle and Carlisle Railway Trust, said: "In a year of milestones, we are proud to name our locomotive after this special railway line. Like rail freight, the Settle and Carlisle line has played a key role in driving the economy. Since 2019, we've had a fantastic partnership with Heidelberg Materials UK, moving 6 million tonnes of aggregates and cement nationally. Now with this new rail link, we can continue to move more aggregates via rail out of Horton quarry to projects across the North West, reducing emissions in the local area."

Becky Murphy, Aggregates Regional Director at Heidelberg Materials UK, said: "The reopening of the rail link is part of our strategy to improve our network of rail-connected quarries and depots. It allows us to supply high-quality aggregate to construction projects by rail, reducing vehicle movements on the wider road network and cutting associated carbon emissions."

Bryan Gray CBE DL, Chairman of the Settle and Carlisle Railway Trust, added: "The Settle-Carlisle line is one of the world's great railway journeys enjoyed by travellers and tourists. It also supports the many communities along the line and has in the past been an important freight line. We are delighted that freight traffic is increasing, and the naming of a freight locomotive is a fitting tribute to those who built the line and have kept traffic moving for 150 years."

Construction of landmark rail innovation centre takes shape

Construction of a modern rail innovation and training centre in Barrow Hill is beginning to take shape as construction of the steel frame begins.

The Derbyshire Rail Industry Innovation Vehicle (DRIIVe) is being built next to the historic Barrow Hill Roundhouse. Once complete it will provide classroom and training areas, specialist research and development facilities including a

digital laboratory, and commercial workshop space.

Work on the project began on site in early June and has progressed quickly with the foundations being completed and construction of the steelwork frame in progress. The next stages of the build will see work on the external cladding begin.

Councillor Tricia Gilby, Leader of Chesterfield Borough Council and Vice Chair of the Staveley Town Deal Board, said: "It is fantastic to see this project coming together so quickly. DRIIVe will help grow our local economy by providing local people with the skills they need to access great careers in the rail sector and will help cement our borough's position in the sector by attracting new businesses to the area.

The DRIIVe project is funded primarily through the Staveley Town Deal but has also received funding from Chesterfield Borough Council, East Midlands Combined County Authority and from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

It is being delivered in collaboration with Barrow Hill Engine Shed Society, which will manage the centre on a day-to-day basis.

Bob Burgess, Director and Trustee at Barrow Hill Roundhouse, said: "We're thrilled with the works on site. Once complete this facility will help local people to access new opportunities and ensure that we can continue to help people connect with our heritage at the Roundhouse."

RFG's 33rd Annual Rail Freight Conference

The launch of Great British Railways (GBR) and the establishment of more regional and city authorities were topics raised throughout the day at the 2025 Rail Freight Group Conference. Both speakers and attendees agreed that these developments created both opportunities and challenges for the rail freight industry.

Lord Hendy, Minister of State for Rail, speaking via a video link, stated that the government was not just consulting industry about GBR but looking to partner with it. He said that focused discounts as well as the statutory growth targets would help rail freight to thrive.

Other speakers pointed out that, in the end, most customers based their logistics decisions on costs and that rising track access charges combined with a road fuel duty that had not risen for 15 years, made competing with road difficult.

There was good news from Guy Bates of Network Rail on the Track Access Discount Policy which offers free track access for six months for new-to-rail services: about three in four of the new services continued after the free access ended, proving that this seed funding could make a real difference.

John Larkinson of the ORR notes that about a quarter to a third (depending on what you measured) of the rail industry would remain outside GBR – including freight, Scotland, Wales and HS1. This means very careful management of the interfaces and of the transition to the new timetable is needed.

Huw Merriman, former Minister for Rail, said it was important that the rail freight industry engaged directly with MPs and took them to see the operations on the ground. Others added that the Devolution Bill would create more strategic authorities – many with responsibility for transport – so closer engagement with all those officials and politicians would also be vital.

The introduction of ETCS (European Train Control System) to enable digital signalling on the East Coast Mainline requires intense cooperation and coordination, including between competitors, according to Ed Akers of Network Rail. Retrofitting on this scale had never been done before and freight will be particularly challenging, he said.

Despite the current difficulties, especially in the construction sector, most speakers remain optimistic about rail freight in the future. Network Rail is looking at how rail freight can be incorporated into a pipeline of future major construction projects and new locos and new technology will help to improve productivity and sustainability.

RFG thanks Waterfront Conference Company for organising the event and Addlestone Goddard for hosting.

RFG would also like to thank all of the speakers who contributed their time and expertise to the programme, including Peter Graham (Freightliner), Kathryn Oldale (DB Cargo), Sara Gilmore (Addleshaw Goddard), Mark Grimshaw-Smith (Cemex), John Smith OBE (GB Railfreight), Ross McKissock (Forth Ports Group), Gottfried Eymer (Nuclear Transport Solutions), Jozef Ochwat (Port of Felixstowe), Katy Grand (Network Rail) and Adam Lloyd (Tritax Big Box). Their insights on rolling stock innovation, market development, supply chains and strategic infrastructure added breadth and depth to the day's discussions.



Autumn Members' Meeting & AGM
11 - 12 November 2025
Westone Manor Hotel
45 Fir Tree Walk
Northampton
NN3 3DS

With an optional site tour at Northampton Gateway

RFG
Rail Freight Group

Come and join us at our Autumn Members' Meeting & AGM

11 - 12 November 2025 | Westone Manor Hotel, Northampton

A wide range of topics will be covered at Rail Freight Group's AGM and Members' Meeting in Northampton on 12 November.

Speakers include David Bray, the Delivery Director for East-West Rail, giving an update on progress of this new rail link connecting Oxford and Cambridge and looking at future developments.

John Bailey of Maritime Transport, will give a brief overview of the company's significant investment in its Northampton facility – an important addition to the national rail freight infrastructure. Attendees will be given an opportunity to visit the site after the meeting.

Benjamin Bird of Yusen Logistics will outline the challenges faced in building the company's new Sustainable Distribution Centre in Northampton and the benefits it now brings to the customers and the local community.

Tim Bentley of Wabtec will talk about the company's new structure and vision in the UK, while Pete Brunskill, Rail Development Lead, Oxfordshire County Council will explain how the county has developed a focus on rail freight.

We also have two speakers looking at the mental health of workers, with Wendy McCristal of The Mental Wealth Company discussing how to help your workforce handle uncertainty and Ben Lumley of Night Club addressing health, wellbeing and productivity in night workers.

The meeting will be held 9 am – 1 pm on Wednesday 12 November with an opportunity to visit the Maritime Transport site after lunch. There will also be an informal networking dinner the evening before 7 pm - 10 pm. Both events will be held at: Westone Manor Hotel, 45 Fir Tree Walk, Northampton NN3 3DS.

To book a hotel room please contact Sansuta Bajimaya on events@westonemanager.com or call 01604 739 955 and please mention Maria/RFG when making your reservations. Please note that all room bookings will be on a non-refundable basis.



Time to deliver a National Rail Freight Strategy

By Dr Phil Evans, VA Rail.

If every freight train takes up to 76 lorries off our roads reducing emissions, easing congestion, and supporting UK industry then surely rail freight should be at the heart of our transport strategy.

The case for a national freight strategy has never been clearer. As the UK grapples with the twin challenges of achieving net-zero emissions and building economic resilience, the role of rail freight is growing ever more important. From supporting housing delivery and major infrastructure projects to strengthening supply chains and regional economies, rail freight offers solutions that align with national goals. Yet the sector remains underpowered and under-recognised in wider transport planning.

Rail freight already contributes £2.45 billion annually to the UK economy. It plays a vital role in supporting construction, energy, manufacturing and increasingly e-commerce. With each train capable of removing dozens of HGVs from our roads, the environmental and social benefits are substantial. But to realise its full potential, we must plan for significant growth, embrace new technologies, and reform the way we make decisions about capacity, access, and investment.

International connections also deserve greater attention. The Channel Tunnel and HS1 provide the UK's only direct rail link to continental Europe, with treaty-protected capacity for freight that remains underutilised. Unlocking this potential through investment in gauge clearance, diversionary routes and terminal connections could strengthen our connectivity with European markets and integrate us more fully into pan-European low-carbon logistics chains.

With the EU prioritising green freight corridors, the UK has a real opportunity to align and benefit. But this requires the same collaborative approach we need domestically: public and private partners working together, strategic planning that looks beyond narrow boundaries, and a recognition that rail freight growth is as much about international opportunity as it is about domestic resilience.

A sector on the cusp of growth

Forecasts indicate a significant increase in rail freight demand, particularly in construction materials and intermodal logistics. This growth is being driven by major infrastructure programmes like HS2, large-scale housing development, and an expanding consumer goods market that increasingly values speed and sustainability.

Rail freight is also playing a growing role in supporting the green economy. From moving biomass and steel to enabling the logistics backbone of offshore renewables and battery production, the freight network is critical to achieving the UK's net-zero goals. And in the express parcels market, new operators like Varamis Rail are pioneering electric rail solutions that could shift significant volumes of light freight away from congested roads.

Yet, this potential cannot be delivered in isolation. The sector faces well-known constraints: limited access to terminals, lack of network capacity in key corridors, inconsistent electrification, and a planning system that rarely integrates freight considerations.

A foundation already exists

Importantly, the foundations for a national rail freight strategy are already in place. The Department for Transport's Future of

Freight Plan, due for refresh this year, sets a cross-modal vision. Transport for the North's Freight and Logistics Strategy demonstrates strong regional thinking and a series of Network Rail freight market and demand studies have all provided robust evidence on the sector's growth potential, infrastructure needs, and role in decarbonisation.

We now need to build on these studies, implement their recommendations, and consolidate them into a clear national strategy for rail freight. By drawing together this existing body of work and aligning it with today's market conditions and policy priorities, we can create a coherent plan for delivery that drives investment, supports modal shift, and accelerates progress.

From strategy to delivery

To support the predicted growth and meet wider policy ambitions, the freight sector needs a more integrated approach. This means:

- Smarter, more dynamic use of the existing network including better integration with passenger services where feasible
- Increased investment in terminal capacity and last-mile connectivity
- A pipeline of targeted electrification and gauge clearance schemes
- More responsive and transparent access planning
- Clearer funding pathways to de-risk private investment in infrastructure and rolling stock
- Stronger alignment between national, regional and local transport and spatial planning frameworks

There is also a growing need to ensure engineering and maintenance facilities can support a modern, expanding freight fleet. The shift toward lighter, faster, and often electrified freight services will require a review of existing depot capacity, innovation in low-emission handling solutions, and strategic thinking around asset reuse. These areas are often overlooked in national strategy but are essential enablers of reliable and scalable freight operations.

What's clear is that the private sector is ready to invest. Across the UK, operators and developers are exploring new models for freight delivery from multi-modal logistics parks to repurposed rail assets but they need planning certainty, supportive regulation, and access to infrastructure to bring these schemes to life.

A collective call to action

At VA Rail, our work is grounded in systems thinking, practical insight, and a deep belief that freight must be part of the core narrative around decarbonisation and economic growth. This isn't about ownership of the agenda; it's about momentum, collaboration, and delivery.

The Government has set a target to grow rail freight by at least 75% by 2050. That ambition is welcome, but it now needs a delivery plan. A refreshed national strategy, supported by the right partnerships and mechanisms, would provide the platform to move from pilots to scale, from studies to implementation.

The opportunity is here. The evidence is clear. Let's bring it all together and make it happen.



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Building a strategic freight spine for a stronger, greener economy

By Mark Swift, MAKE UK

As the UK railway network approaches its 200th anniversary this year, the country finds itself at a pivotal moment to reshape its transport infrastructure.

The Government has unveiled an ambitious 10-year plan, backed by significant public investment, as a source to increase private investment, offering an unprecedented opportunity to rebuild our transport infrastructure as a means for sustainable economic growth and long-term competitiveness. Central to this strategy is a £15 billion investment in the North and Midlands, including upgrades to the South Yorkshire Tramline, Derby–Nottingham links, and the Oxford–Cambridge corridor, which together promise to boost productivity by enhancing labour mobility and fostering regional knowledge exchange across the country.

However, challenges remain. The cancellation of HS2's second phase which manufacturers believe is a mistake with nine in ten companies believing the original plans should still go ahead. This, coupled with delays to phase one, risks leaving ambitions unfulfilled. The lack of recognition for freight in the latest Government's strategy is also a potential concern, though one Make UK sees great opportunities for.

Today, manufacturers still rely heavily on the Strategic Road Network (SRN) to move goods across the UK and abroad, and the road network will remain important going forward. At the same time, as the Government begins work on a Logistics and Freight Plan, manufacturers are placing increasing importance on shifting more freight to rail to help achieve the target of boosting rail freight by up to 75% by 2050, reducing carbon emissions and helping the UK achieve Net Zero.

To unlock this potential, Make UK is proposing a bold vision: the creation of a strategic national freight spine supported by a

network of French style 'logistics hotels', starting in Crewe and extending to Felixstowe Port. This cost-effective strategy would not only recapture some of the value lost from HS2's curtailed second phase, but also significantly enhance the UK's freight capacity and industrial competitiveness, while integrating road, rail and port infrastructure would also tackle the 'last mile' logistics challenge - the often complex and costly final stage of delivery to end destinations - and therefore maximise freight efficiency. Lack of access to local terminals is cited as a barrier to rail use by four in ten companies so improving connectivity would bring clear economic benefits as well as contributing towards net zero decarbonisation by reducing the estimate 12 million journeys which will be taken by lorries by 2050. Improving rail capacity would also bring greater access to a wider pool of labour.

Crucially, rail should be embraced not as a rival to road and maritime transport but as a vital component of a fully integrated, multimodal logistics network. Manufacturers back this with two thirds of manufacturers saying Government should prioritise investment in multi mode hubs with a third saying investment in rail freight should be a priority. Realising the transformative potential of rail freight requires bold leadership, strategic investment, and coordinated action across government, industry, and infrastructure bodies. By implementing the recommendations outlined in Make UK's report the UK can position itself at the forefront of freight innovation. This will deliver far-reaching benefits: enhancing industrial competitiveness, reducing environmental impact, improving supply chain resilience, and supporting regional and national economic growth.

Seizing this opportunity to revitalise rail freight is not only essential for meeting ambitious climate targets but is also a strategic imperative to build a stronger, greener, and more prosperous economy for all.

[Click here to read 'From Road to Rail: optimising goods transport in UK manufacturing'](#)



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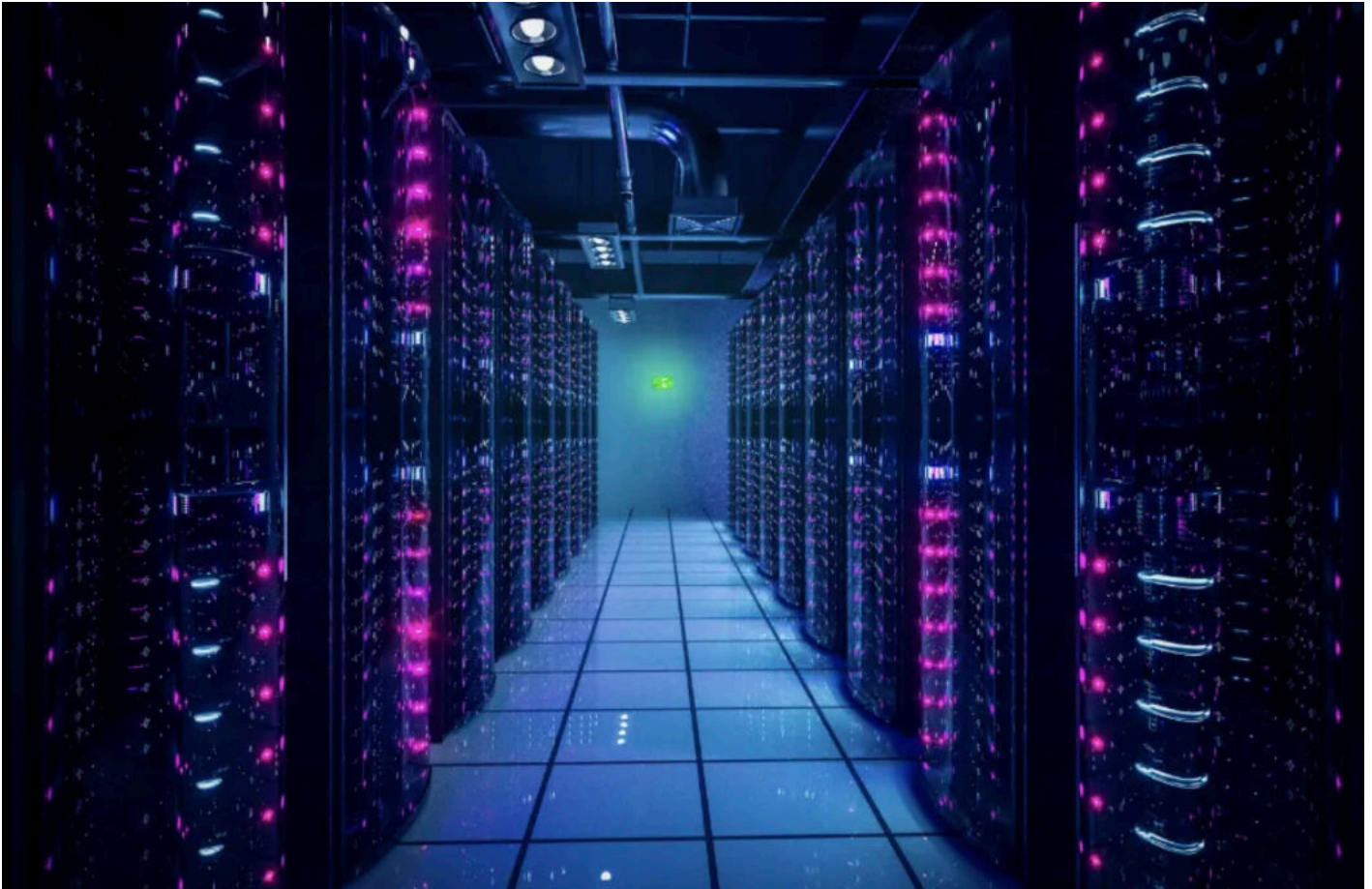


Historic High Peak viaduct's freight future secured after £7.5m upgrade

Major improvements to a historic railway viaduct in the Peak District have been completed, securing its future for freight trains serving four major quarries in Derbyshire.

Between 29 August and 7 September, teams from Network Rail and AmcoGiffen strengthened a 160-year-old 15-arch structure on the Great Rocks freight line near Chapel-en-le-Frith. It's one of two iconic structures which converge high above the hamlet of Chapel Milton and is one of the region's most photographed railway viaducts.

The twin structures are also a mainstay of the success of the country's freight network, allowing trains to transport stone, cement and limestone from four major quarries to destinations across the country.



Rail-connected warehousing vs. data centres: planning for carbon, jobs and our future economy

By Martin Bignell, Scottish and Northern representative, Rail Freight Group

On 15 August 2025, the BBC reported that data centres are to be expanded across the UK “as concerns mount.” Nearly 500 exist now, with a further 100 in planning for the next five years, including proposals in Blyth for an AI data centre of nearly 6m sq.ft over 10 buildings.

That phrase, “concerns mount”, felt familiar. Because we are not only debating data centres. We are also wrestling with the future of rail-connected interchanges and warehousing. Both sectors are trying to convince communities, planners and ministers that their scale, visual footprint, and disruption will be worth it.

The truth is, we need both. But we must be clear-eyed about what each delivers—and what they ask of our land, power system, and economy.

The carbon leverage of rail logistics

In a net-zero era, the case for rail-connected logistics sites and warehousing is almost embarrassingly straightforward. The National Networks National Policy Statement (NNNPS) published in 2024 reinforced that rail freight emits 76% less CO₂ per tonne than road haulage, and sets a target of 75% growth by 2050.

A single freight train can remove up to 76 lorries from the roads. At SEGRO’s East Midlands Gateway, the intermodal terminal is

designed to handle sixteen 775-metre trains a day—a clear case of mode shift at scale.

Yet public debates rarely focus on these climate dividends. Instead, SRFIs are often dismissed as “big sheds” intruding on the countryside.

Scale and the planning weigh-up

Yes, SRFIs are large and visually prominent—but the planning system weighs benefits against trade-offs. The West Midlands Interchange won approval—even on the Green Belt—on the basis of its national role, including 8,500 jobs over ten years. The Hinckley National RFI, by contrast, was refused on highways and safety grounds.

This is not a free pass. The NNNPS requires environmental sensitivity—landscaping, biodiversity, community care—to be built-in, not tacked on.

Jobs, skills, and future workers

Jobs are the easiest argument for politicians—and here, logistics quietly outpaces. East Midlands Gateway is expected to generate 9,000+ permanent roles, plus thousands of construction posts.

Beyond numbers, SRFIs offer a chance to rewrite perceptions about logistics careers. The Generation Logistics initiative—backed by government and industry, with the Rail Freight Group as a partner—promotes logistics as a meaningful career path for the young. By tying SRFI projects into a national skills pipeline, the sector is investing not just in jobs, but in delivering social capital to local communities.

Meanwhile, data centres, though capital-dense, deliver fewer long-term roles. The Northumberland campus, for example, involves £10 bn of capex, about 1,200 construction jobs, but just “hundreds” of ongoing positions. As the Financial Times has cautioned, the employment story often gets overstated.

Continued over the page.

This doesn't make data centres unimportant—they are critical—but it does mean the job story cannot be treated as equivalent.

Energy demand as a new battleground

The crunch for data centres is increasingly about power rather than land.

Future Energy Scenarios 2025 puts current UK demand at ~7.6 TWh (2.4 GW connected), with forecasts ranging from 30–71 TWh by 2050. In West London, grid strain caused data-centre sprawl to delay housing. Globally, the IEA expects data-centre energy use to double by 2030.

SRFIs, by contrast, are carbon-reducing by design—but they are not power-neutral. As the decarbonisation of road freight accelerates, distribution fleets serving SRFIs will need high-capacity charging infrastructure for electric or hydrogen-fuelled HGVs. That will inevitably increase power demand at logistics parks, compounding the challenge of aligning freight decarbonisation with grid capacity.

Not all digital (power) demand is equal

Another uncomfortable truth: not all digital demand is equally valuable.

Sandvine's 2024 report shows video makes up ~38% of internet traffic, with streaming dominant. Ofcom's Online Nation 2024 finds hours disappear into TikTok, YouTube, Snapchat.

Of course, AI models that aid healthcare, research or financial systems are vital. But much capacity serves convenience or passive scrolling—"Alexa, change the radio"—not just economic or productive benefit. This duality doesn't devalue data centres,

but it demands realism when allocating scarce grid capacity and land. In the interest of balance, similar arguments might be made of the true value to the UK of our transport systems satisfying consumer demand for cheap, single-use clothing or disposable tat.

But the point is, does the Government properly consider how much of that energy use is flowing back to genuine benefits to the UK economy? Pertinent as we simultaneously struggle to get sufficient power into the OLE on the railway to support greater electric traction.

A hierarchy worth upholding

Here's what we ought to be saying now:

SRFIs deliver carbon savings today—shifting freight from road to rail and delivering jobs across communities and through initiatives like Generation Logistics.

Data centres underpin the digital economy tomorrow—but with high energy demands, modest jobs, and some questionable end-uses.

Return-on-investment differs—rail-based logistics pay back in tonnes of social and environmental benefits – avoided emissions, decongestion on the roads, jobs and skills uptake; data centres pay back in computation capability and underpinning the digital economy.

Britain needs both—but on different terms. Carbon first. Power-aware planning second. Honest economics throughout. That hierarchy should help guide how we approve—and narrate—these mammoth projects.



Transformation of Wrexham to Liverpool line

Work to transform the Wrexham to Liverpool line has been given the green light, with upgrades on the line at Padeswood confirmed as the first major step to realise more rail services between the two cities.

Padeswood serves the Heidelberg Materials' cement works, and the

upgrade will make it easier for freight to enter and exit the site.

Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales Ken Skates and Secretary of State for Wales Jo Stevens visited the site to see the planned upgrades [pictured] and said it would create lasting economic benefits.

Skates said: "Delivering the upgrade at Padeswood will bring real economic benefits, helping the cement works and improving connectivity between Wrexham and Liverpool, increasing services to two trains per hour. It was fantastic to hear the UK Government's commitment to this

project, which campaigners have pushed for over many decades. Two governments, working in partnership, will deliver this key part of the Network North Wales.

Secretary of State for Wales Jo Stevens added: "The UK Government is investing in Wales' future and unleashing our country's economic potential. We promised we would deal with the historical under-investment in Wales' rail network and announcing at least £445m in the Spending Review delivered on that pledge."



Final journey marks the end of an era for Fort William Alumina Wagons

GB Railfreight recently hauled the last PCA rail wagon from Port of Blyth to ALVANCE British Aluminium's Fort William. After 37 years and more than 50 million miles, the PCA rail wagons have travelled the equivalent of 2,000 laps of the globe, 105 return trips to the Moon, or nearly halfway to Mars.

The final departure from Fort William took place on 9 July 2025, and was hauled by GBRf 66302. After a brief stop at the Port of Tyne, the train reached its destination at the Port of Sunderland, where the wagons are now being decommissioned.

ALVANCE British Aluminium has entered early discussions with a historical rail organisation regarding the possible donation of selected PCA wagons, with the aim of preserving a small part of the UK's industrial heritage for future generations.

Tom Uppington, Managing Director of ALVANCE British Aluminium, reflected on the occasion: "These wagons have been part of the rhythm of life at Fort William and the Port of Blyth for almost four decades. Their retirement marks a significant moment for everyone who's worked with them. More than anything, I want to recognise the commitment of our teams, contractors and long-standing partners who kept everything

running smoothly. As we look ahead to a modernised fleet and a more sustainable supply chain, we do so with real gratitude for the people and partnerships that brought us here."

Phil Amos, Head of Energy & Industrial at GB Railfreight said: "The PCA wagons have served as a stalwart on the railway, moving Alumina powder between Blyth and Fort William which is rolled across the country for various products and goods. We're now looking ahead to the next chapter, with more modern wagons and a continued focus on reliable, sustainable service."

- ALVANCE British Aluminium also recently announced it has entered a 10-year leasing agreement with VTG Rail UK for the supply of 20 modern 4 axle powder tank wagons, marking a major step forward in the transformation of our rail logistics between the Port of Blyth in Northumberland and our Fort William smelter in Lochaber.

The new wagons, which replace a fleet of 2 axle models that have been in service since the late 1980s, will nearly double the payload capacity per trip. This upgrade will reduce the number of annual rail journeys required from 107 to 76 – a 30 percent reduction that delivers meaningful gains in both efficiency and environmental performance. The wagons' introduction forms part of a wider infrastructure upgrade at its Blyth site.

Freightliner names train after CILT UK to celebrate 200 years of train travel

In honour of Railway 200 and the rail freight sector, a locomotive was named after the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport UK (CILT UK) during a ceremony at Doncaster Railport on 16 August, as part of the nationwide Railway 200 celebrations.

The plaque was unveiled by Anna-Jane Hunter, CILT(UK) Chair of the Board, who

said: "Today is not only about the naming of a train but also the remarkable history this represents. CILT UK have been supporting rail freight for over 100 years, and we are proud to be part of the Railway 200 celebrations. Freightliner is one of the biggest names in rail freight, so it's a huge honour to have our name across one of their trains."

David Turner, Intermodal Operations Director, Freightliner, pictured on the left with Anna-Jane Hunter and Julian Worth, CILT's Freight Lead, said: "I want to take a moment to celebrate and remember the important work CILT UK do for our sector. They are the backbone of our industries and continue to fly the flag for all those working in logistics and transport. The institute offers a recognised and respected voice for all of us and that's why we are here today, to honour them and create our own little piece of history. It was a pleasure to host so many guests at our Railport over the weekend. I want

to thank all our visitors, partners and everyone involved in helping make the event a huge success."

To mark the bicentenary, an additional train called 'Inspiration' joined the weekend celebrations, welcoming visitors from across the nation and industry leaders.

Emma Roberts, programme manager for Railway 200, said: "We were delighted to bring Britain's newest visitor attraction to Doncaster, a city with a proud railway pedigree. Our special exhibition train aims to excite, enlighten, entertain and inspire visitors to take a fresh look at the railway and consider a career in an industry that's going places. We're very grateful to Freightliner and City of Doncaster Council for hosting the train and joining in the national bicentenary celebrations."

RIA publishes SME Exports Insights Report

The Railway Industry Association (RIA) has published a new report on how to improve support for UK SME rail exporters, following its SME Exports Workshop 2025.

With UK rail exports worth over £1bn a year and supporting nearly 12,500 jobs, the report identifies significant potential for growth as the global rail market expands by 3% annually.

Key recommendations include:

- Better signposting of export support and training
- More coordinated sharing of overseas market intelligence
- Clearer visibility of UK Export Finance services
- Stronger pathways between Tier 1 companies and SMEs

RIA is now working with industry and government partners to take forward the findings.

[Read the full report here.](#)

RBF and Railpen announce new charity partnership

The Railway Benefit Fund (RBF) has announced a new charity partnership with Railpen.

For over 165 years, the RBF has supported rail workers and their families through illness, injury, and financial hardship.

Railpen, which has managed pensions for rail staff since 1965, shares this commitment. As part of Railway 200 celebrations, the partnership will strengthen support for railway people across the UK and help the RBF reach

even more who need a helping hand.

Network Rail shines the light on 'Life in Rail Freight'

Network Rail has profiled three of its freight specialists, Simon, Megan and Daniel, who play a vital role in keeping goods moving across Britain's railway.

In a [recent Q&A](#), they shared insights into their careers, the satisfaction of supporting the environment and supply chains, and their hopes for the future of rail freight.

They also highlighted exciting developments on the horizon, including new freight terminals and innovative locomotives such as the bi-mode Class 99 and tri-mode Class 93.

Day launches new waste management & muck away services from Battersea

Day Aggregates has launched enhanced waste management and muck away services from its newly developed Battersea facility, supporting construction and infrastructure projects across South and Central London.

The facility serves as a hub for the import of fully compliant, high-volume removal of non-hazardous soils and stones from construction sites across London. With integrated rail freight connections, the site enables the efficient bulk transport of materials to licensed disposal and recycling centres entirely by rail.

"Our Battersea operation brings faster turnaround, lower emissions, and scalable solutions for the construction

sector," said Adam Day, Director, Day Group. "This development is part of our ongoing commitment to supporting the wider construction industry in carbon emissions, improving resource efficiency, and building more sustainable supply chains."

Day Aggregates' rail freight transport service from Battersea plays a key role in reducing road impact across London. By shifting bulk waste removal locally from lorries to rail, each outbound train eliminates the need for over 75 HGV journeys, easing urban congestion, cutting emissions, and enabling cleaner, more efficient logistics for large-scale construction projects.

Operating from a fully licensed waste handling facility, the Battersea site is permitted by the Environment Agency to handle up to 200,000 tonnes of inert and non-hazardous construction waste each year. With full duty-of-care documentation and waste traceability built into the process, clients can rely on total compliance and accountability.

VTG iWagon to feature at Railway 200 showcase

VTG Rail UK presented its multi-award-winning iWagon at the Next Generation Line-Up Exhibition, part of this year's Railway 200 celebrations at Locomotion, Shildon, from 24 September to 1 October 2025.

A specially branded IIA-C covered hopper wagon was transformed in distinctive iWagon livery to highlight the cutting-edge technology developed by VTG Rail UK in partnership with Knorr-Bremse Rail Systems. The wagon is fitted with VTG Telematics and Knorr-Bremse's FreightControl Sentinel system, the backbone of the iWagon platform.



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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SCAN ME





New research highlights steps to prevent suicides and support rail staff

Improved safety measures and increased support for people in crisis are at the heart of new government-funded research into suicide prevention on the railway, published on 10 September to coincide with World Suicide Prevention Day.

The study underlines the importance of physical interventions, such as fencing to restrict access to high-risk areas, as well as responsible media reporting and regular staff training to help identify and support those at risk. It also recognises the psychological impact of traumatic events on rail staff and highlights the benefits of trauma support and intervention training.

As part of the government's commitment to passenger safety and the transition to Great British Railways, all publicly owned train operators will now be required to provide frontline staff with regular suicide prevention training.

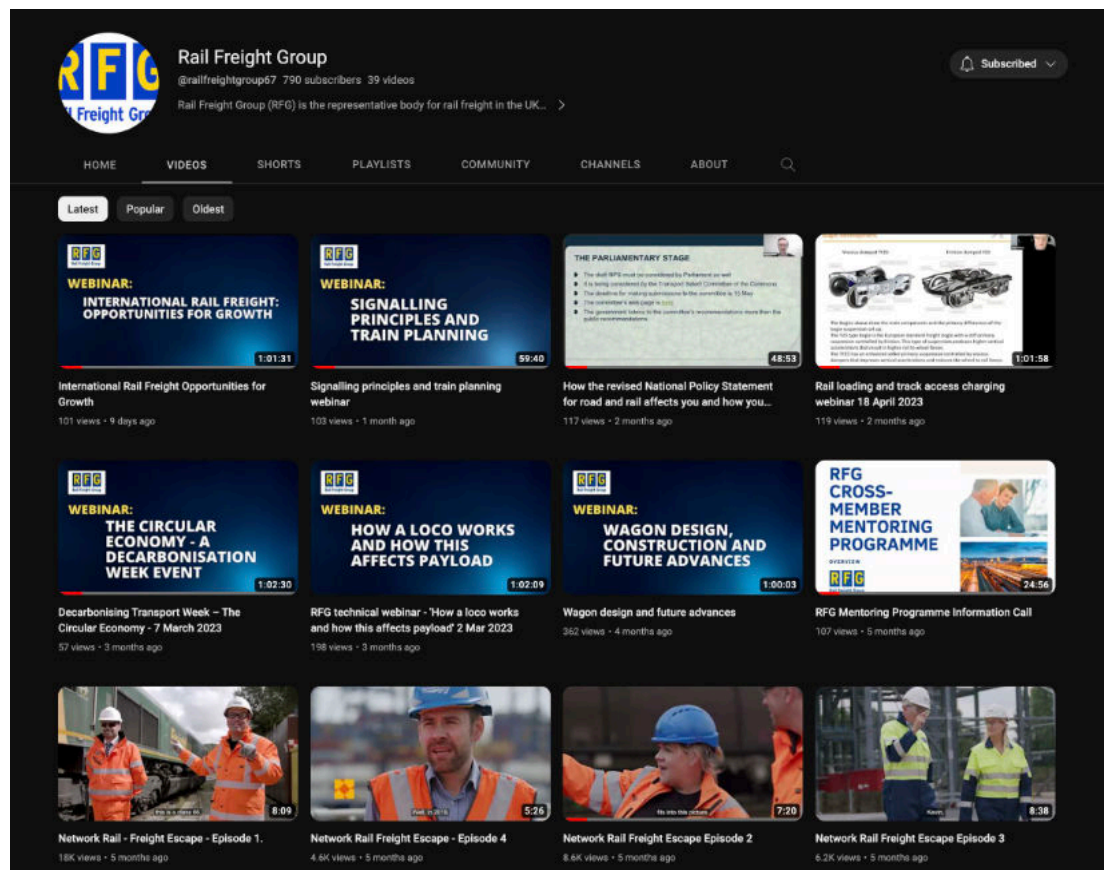
The research builds on existing initiatives including Network Rail's Small Talk Saves Lives campaign, delivered in partnership with Samaritans and British Transport Police, which encourages members of the public to look out for others and start a conversation if they see someone who may be in distress.

Network Rail and Samaritans marked the 15th anniversary of their partnership – reporting an 18% increase in life-saving interventions on the railway over the past year. Since the partnership began in 2010, the number of interventions has doubled, with more than 31,000 rail employees and BTP officers trained in suicide prevention techniques through the Samaritans' Managing Suicidal Contacts course.

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

Next RFG event:

- **Autumn Group Meeting**

11 - 12 November 2025 | Northampton

A wide range of topics will be covered at Rail Freight Group's AGM and Members Meeting in Northampton on 12 November. It will be held 9 am – 1 pm on Wednesday 12 November with an opportunity to visit the Maritime Transport site after lunch.

- **RFG Christmas Lunch 2025**

10 December 2025

RFG Forums

- **Digital Technology & Innovation Forums**

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.



From 'pop-up' to 'top-up' – How Cemex's Warrington rail depot continues to contribute to growing market demands

The location was initially thought of as a temporary site but has now become firmly established as a core rail depot in Cemex's UK supply chain network to serve the Greater Manchester, Merseyside and Lancashire areas and supply vital building materials to support with the growth of housing, construction and infrastructure projects across these regions.

The depot has often been described as a 'pop-up' depot due its original installation taking a matter of weeks, using land adjacent to the West Coast Mainline with a readymade weighbridge and office.

The Warrington depot, which is supplied by rail from Cemex's Dove Holes quarry, is an example of how industry can support wider ambitions for the growth of rail freight through connecting potentially challenging sites and locations to the mainline.

Existing market demand across the region provided the catalyst for Cemex and DB Cargo to seek innovative solutions to support with the movement and distribution of materials, whilst helping to ease congestion on the UK's road network by reducing the number of truck journeys that would otherwise have been required.

Each delivery by rail can carry up to 2,000 tonnes of construction materials in comparison to a HGV vehicle, which is only able to carry around 18 – 30 tonnes per journey. Last year Cemex ran over 2,000 rail freight trains, the equivalent of taking around 1,500 truck journeys off UK roads.

Mark Grimshaw-Smith, Cemex UK's Rail and Sea Manager, says, "This is a fantastic achievement for everyone involved with this project. The Warrington depot is a great success story in the growth of our rail freight operations at Cemex. It serves an important developing market with essential building materials and is an example of how industry can overcome challenges around space, logistics and connectivity to the mainline, when installing new freight hubs as part of their existing supply chain network."



Cemex currently moves around 20% of its aggregates in the UK by rail and around 55% of the materials out of its Dove Holes quarry are transported by rail, with plans to grow this figure in order to meet future demand for building and construction materials across the UK.

The partnership between Cemex and DB Cargo demonstrates a continued commitment to rail as a safe, effective and more sustainable mode of transport, with DB Cargo providing a complete end-to-end haulage service for the movement of materials from Cemex's Dove Holes quarry to their Warrington rail depot including loading shovel, grab offload and weighbridge facilities whilst prioritising local safety processes in accordance with Cemex's global rail safety standards.

Mandy Atherton, Contract Delivery Manager for National Terminals at DB Cargo, comments, "The rail terminal at Warrington, demonstrates how rail transportation is becoming more flexible and innovative in its ability to meet the demands of its customers and end-users. We have been delighted to work with our long-standing customer, Cemex, on this project as it has grown from a temporary pop-up depot into a significant contributor to the region it serves."

Hitachi Rail's digital solution could boost rail freight terminal efficiency in Germany

As part of a joint venture, Hitachi Rail has brought a new digital solution, 'InGa-Z', to market, which it says is set to transform efficiency at intermodal freight terminals.

Protostellar GmbH, is a joint venture between Hitachi Rail, MT Logistics GmbH, DB Cargo AG, and with financial support from the Federal Ministry for Transport (BMV).

As part of the federal Future of Rail Freight Transport (Z-SGV) programme, it

has developed a Terminal Operating System, including mobile applications, that digitizes, simplifies, and accelerates key processes in intermodal freight transport. The technology will help to remove the barriers between road and rail, creating seamless, digital interfaces between freight forwarders, terminals, and rail operators.

Real-world impact on operations include:

- 50% less time spent on terminal check-in
- 70% reduction in manual data entry
- +1 loading unit per train – potentially generating over €25m in additional annual revenue for rail freight

At the heart of the solution is a cloud-based software platform that digitally manages container movements, automates order processing, and provides real-time status updates – including contactless check-in and AI-powered load optimization. The system

has been in operation at the Philippsthal Terminal (Werra Kombi Terminal Betriebsgesellschaft mbH) since July 2025 and has already attracted several potential adopters.

"With InGa-Z, we're proving that digitization isn't just theoretically possible – it delivers real results: faster, more precise, and more transparent processes – making rail more competitive," says Yves Sterbak, Director Sales and Business Development at Hitachi Rail in Germany and Managing Director of Protostellar GmbH.

"Our goal is clear: to increase rail's market share in freight transport, we don't need more barriers – we need smart, digital solutions like InGa-Z," adds Christoph Renschler of DB Cargo AG.



Rail freight traffic moved more than 1.2m tonnes in the first half of 2025 at Valenciaport

So far this year, Valenciaport has recorded the movement of 1,221,014 tonnes of goods by rail, which translates into 131,795 TEUs handled by rail. These figures represent more than 8% of the total land traffic passing through the Port of Valencia.

According to figures for the last six months of the year, between January and June, Valenciaport trains transported 12% more containers than in the same period last year. This percentage rises to 18% if we take into account the number of tonnes. The number of direct entries and exits to the port facilities has also grown and now stands at 26,382 TEUs and 242,968 tonnes.

A total of ten companies manage rail traffic from the Port of Valencia to the logistics areas of Madrid, Valladolid, Bilbao and Zaragoza, where most of the goods arriving via rail-port traffic originate.

WH Davis secures €44m export deal to supply 150 freight wagons to Irish Rail

WH Davis, part of Buckland Rail, will supply 150 freight wagons to Ireland under a €44m deal backed by UK Export Finance (UKEF).

The contract is the first under a 10-year framework that could rise to 400 wagons, supporting Ireland's rail freight expansion.

Production at WH Davis's Shirebrook site will boost its workforce by 25%, with the first wagons expected in service by 2026. The new designs offer a third more carrying capacity and higher speeds (110km/h) than the current fleet.

UKEF support, alongside Barclays financing, enabled the deal, WH Davis's first export in 20 years, paving the way for

further European opportunities.

Andy Houghton, Managing Director of WH Davis, said: "We are proud to be shaping the future of rail freight with this landmark export contract. This is a significant milestone for WH Davis and reaffirms the strength of UK manufacturing on the international stage. UKEF's support has given us the confidence and liquidity to deliver on our ambitions and explore new export internationally."

News in Brief:

- Neill & Brown Global Logistics has launched a new European combined road and rail freight service in a joint venture with its Italian logistics partner, Sogedim.
- ÖBB Rail Cargo Group (RCG) is further expanding its presence in the Italian rail freight transport market. A ten-year contract has been signed for close cooperation with the Sona terminal near Verona. This makes RCG one of the main partners of the terminal near Verona – and secures important capacities at a fast-growing logistics hub at an early stage. In the coming years, the RCG intends to further expand its transport operations and contribute to the modal shift from road to the more environmentally friendly railway.
- Voestalpine Railway Systems, part of steel and technology group Voestalpine has acquired 100% of the shares in Hird Rail Services, based in Doncaster.
- Transfesa Logistics launched its new Med Express intermodal service between Perpignan and Cologne on 16 June. The Med Express service between the PSCCT-Perpignan Saint Charles Conteneur Terminal and the HGK terminal CTS-Westkai in Cologne, initially offers three weekly rotations, which will be increased to four from September.

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