

## 19/3 – Calls for rail freight staff to be classed as key workers to deliver services for the economy

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The Rail Freight Group has called on freight staff to be classed as key workers so they can continue to deliver services for the economy.

It has also called for financial support for private sector business to enable trains to keep running and increase volumes where required.

In a statement it says: “In these unprecedented times, the rail freight industry is doing all it can to ensure the continuation of supply for its customers.

“To date, some services have been adversely affected by the slowdown in global freight, but others are seeing increased demand for domestic distribution. We are continuing to work as hard as we can to ensure delivery of vital supplies for supermarkets and retailers, manufacturers and business, and to support communities across the UK.

“As the situation progresses the rail freight sector will do all it can to step up and provide additional services and capacity, and we have identified a number of measures which are urgently needed to ensure continued operations.”

The measures are:

- Ensuring that the rail network remains open for key freight movements, and that freight trains are prioritised in operational planning.
- Including all operational logistics employees, including rail freight staff within the list of key workers, so that our staff can travel to and from work and access emergency school places and childcare, enabling them to continue working.
- Temporary extension of certain competency and medical requirements. Relaxing certain rules would help maximise the number of rail freight staff that are available for duty and minimise the impact of sickness on business.

Measures to support the financial viability of the private sector train operators and terminals, including;

- Temporary changes to the Mode Shift Revenue Support scheme to ensure viability of services, in particular where services are not able to be fully loaded but still convey vital supplies.
- Suspension of track access charges to enable freight operators to quickly respond to customer priorities and support critical services that may not be viable in their own right.
- VAT / taxation and National Insurance deferrals. Mechanisms that support cashflow, including deferral of VAT / taxation and National Insurance payments would support the operators at a time of significant financial risk.
- Continuation of planned infrastructure work wherever possible.

Government-sponsored infrastructure work, for example, the Network Rail and Highways England work banks, support the construction logistics sector.

RFG is working with its members to press for the urgent implementation of these measures and to ensure that companies can continue to support the people and economy of the UK

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