

# GBRf calls for the appointment of a 'Freight Evangelist' as Rail White Paper is published

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GB Railfreight, one of the UK's leading transport companies and the fastest growing rail freight operator, has called for the appointment of a new dedicated rail freight 'guiding mind' to steer the sector through the next phase in order to assure future growth, particularly following the COVID-19 crisis.

The new position, which will oversee all rail freight operations, is expected to be unveiled with the publication of the long-awaited Rail White Paper this week, in what looks set to be the biggest shake-up of the UK's railways since privatisation in the 1990s.

GB Railfreight is calling for the new 'Freight Evangelist' to sign up to its Freight Manifesto, a five-point plan outlining of proposed measures which will ensure the sector can continue to grow and support the UK economy, while also putting the industry as a whole on a path towards sustainability.

The five-point plan is calling for the new Evangelist to:

1. **Champion the economic value of freight**, so that it is put on an equal footing with passenger services;
2. **Put decarbonisation at the heart of their plan for the sector**, in order to champion the ongoing modal shift from road to rail;
3. **Enforce an access regime that is reliable and fair** to allow operators to deliver for their customers;
4. **Deliver investment that is freight specific**, notably on electrification and improvements to critical infrastructure that unlocks freight capacity;
5. **Take an integrated national perspective**, but also devolve powers over operations to the regions to ensure the smooth running of services across the country.

John Smith, Managing Director at GB Railfreight, said: “We are at a critical point in the rail sector’s future. The decisions in the White Paper this week will have long-lasting consequences on all aspects, including rail freight. For this reason, GBRf is calling for the appointment of a dedicated ‘Freight Evangelist’ that can guide the sector into the next phase of our development.

“What rail freight needs now is parity of esteem with passenger services, and we need a voice round the table that can make the case for us. We have kept going during the pandemic, showing that we are an integral part of the UK economy. Rail freight also has an important role to play in reaching net zero emissions – it is right our voices are heard, both within Network Rail and across Whitehall.

“Today’s Freight Manifesto is a list of demands of the new guiding mind which will ensure rail freight can play its full part in shaping the future of the UK’s railways and put the economy on track to reach net zero by 2050.”

*Photo credit: GB Railfreight*