

Major boost for freight by rail as £17 million Southampton upgrade is completed

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A major upgrade to transport more freight by rail to and from Southampton is complete.

On Friday 19 February engineers finished a series of improvements on the lines used by freight trains between Southampton Central and Redbridge, unlocking more capacity at the country's second busiest container port.

Freight services between Southampton, the Midlands and the North can now carry up to 20% more goods thanks to track, signals and sidings improvements. Trains once restricted to 520 metres in length can now be extended up to 775 metres in length, or 14 extra containers per train.

Six 775 metre long freight trains per day are now set to operate from the Freightliner Maritime Terminal in Redbridge and if each of those trains adds 14 containers, they will combine to move an extra 84 containers of goods per day.

Chris Heaton-Harris, Rail Minister, said: "The completion of this freight upgrade will not only lead to a greener and more cost-efficient way to transport freight from Southampton, but will also significantly boost

the volume of goods transported to and from the Midlands.

“Our freight industry has played an integral role keeping this country moving through this pandemic. Our investment ensures it will continue to play a pivotal role supporting our economic recovery.”

Mark Killick, Network Rail’s Wessex route director, said: “We are very pleased to finally complete this ambitious project and unlock more capacity for freight on our route. This was a complex project which required us to install longer sidings, new track for heavier and faster moving trains, improved signalling and enhanced drainage, which will make the operation of the area more efficient.

“We are very grateful to our freight operators and passengers for their patience during the recent line closures. We are also grateful to those living close to the railway, who have witnessed a great deal of engineering work very close to them over the last two years.”

Charlene Wallace, Network Rail’s director of freight, national passenger and customer experience, said: “Completing the Southampton Freight Train Lengthening project passes a key milestone in our plans to move more freight by rail across the country.

“We have long sought to improve the route between Southampton and Reading and can now offer our freight operators more capacity and greater flexibility for their operations at an important location on our network.”

The completion of the Southampton Freight Train Lengthening scheme is a major boost for the Port of Southampton’s three rail freight operators DB Cargo, GB Railfreight and Freightliner.

Freightliner average up to 24 container trains per day in and out of their Maritime Terminal in Redbridge, while DB Cargo and GB Railfreight average up to 18 trains per day. DB Cargo and GB Railfreight can now transport three different kinds of goods to and from Southampton – intermodal containers, vehicles and gypsum.

The upgraded railway also brings environmental benefits. Each container transported by rail has the same capacity as one Heavy Goods Vehicle (HGV). Each container added to a freight service removes the need for an HGV on local roads, reducing both congestion and pollution.

Photo credit: Network Rail