

# Minister for Transport to open new rail research building at the University of Birmingham

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Andrew Stephenson, Minister of State for Transport, has visited the University of Birmingham to formally open a new purpose-built centre designed to deliver specialist research in railway engineering.

The Centre of Excellence for Digital Systems was delivered via a partnership between the University and the UK Rail Research and Innovation Network (UKRRIN) with investment from Research England. Facilities include cab simulators, and a signalling control centre, as well as project labs, and other technologies that will enable high quality, fast-paced research, through proof-of-concept to demonstration and testing.

Mr Stephenson's portfolio includes responsibility for skills in the transport sector and also HS2. As part of his trip to Birmingham, he also visited the National College for Advanced Transport and Infrastructure (NCATI).

In May NCATI became part of the University of Birmingham group, heralding a special collaboration between higher and further education. NCATI will draw on the University's internationally-recognised rail

expertise and – together with strong industry and a wide range of partners – will help address the sector's skills gaps producing a new generation to lead Britain's future rail, transport and infrastructure workforce.

University of Birmingham Vice-Chancellor Professor Sir David Eastwood said: "I am delighted to welcome the Minister to our campus to experience our rail research and see how we work closely with the rail industry. We have an international reputation for our research and development strengths in this sector and, in partnership with UKRRIN, we are set to make significant progress in applying digital technologies to the UK's railways.

"Through our collaboration with the National College for Advanced Transport and Infrastructure we will be using our expertise in railway education to deliver high-level technical skills into the industry."

Professor Clive Roberts, Head of the School of Engineering at the University of Birmingham, said: "The Centre of Excellence for Digital Systems is set to deliver a step-change in the use of digital technology across the entire rail sector. It is rapidly becoming the 'go to' centre for collaboration with our industrial partners to design, test and integrate these technologies and bring them to market. With the opening of these new facilities, we're looking forward to further developing and delivering our world-class expertise alongside our sector partners."

- The University of Birmingham is ranked amongst the world's top 100 institutions. Its work brings people from across the world to Birmingham, including researchers, teachers and more than 6,500 international students from over 150 countries.
- The National College for Advanced Transport & Infrastructure (NCATI) is a Further Education college and a subsidiary of the University of Birmingham. Based at state-of-the-art campuses in Birmingham and Doncaster, the College is headed up by Principal, Ian Fitzpatrick.

The College has been established to provide inclusive and high-quality education and training that meet the needs of learners, industry partners and local communities, supporting local, regional and national economic growth. Working collaboratively with partners and the University of Birmingham, the College provides a lifelong learning opportunity supported by railway, transport and infrastructure qualifications and competencies.

NCATI is a new institution, replacing the Further Education Corporation of The National College for Advanced Transport and Infrastructure, which dissolved on 29 April 2021.

For further information please visit: [www.ncati.ac.uk](http://www.ncati.ac.uk)

- Research England shapes healthy, dynamic research and knowledge exchange in English universities. It distributes over £2.2bn to universities in England every year; works to understand their strategies, capabilities and capacity; and supports and challenges universities to create new knowledge, strengthen the economy, and enrich society. Research England is part of UK Research and Innovation alongside the seven Research Councils and Innovate UK. <https://re.ukri.org> @ResEngland
- The UK Research Partnership Investment Fund (UKRPIF) is administered by Research England and the devolved funding bodies. It supports investment into higher education research facilities and to date has invested £900 million into 53 facilities and centres across the UK, attracting over £2 billion from businesses, charities and philanthropic donors.