

Rail Supply Group Coronavirus Taskforce sets out priorities to bounce back

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The Rail Supply Group has published the actions to be taken to support the best possible recovery of businesses supplying the rail industry.

The RSG Coronavirus Taskforce report has harnessed the views of the industry through an independent survey, coming up with three Act Now priorities:

- Improve work pipeline visibility and cashflow across the whole supply chain to allow organisations to plan and deliver with confidence.
- Simplify data access to allow better decision making and new services to be developed including improved customer information.
- Change railway access arrangements to maximise the time available and boost productivity.

Earlier this year the RSG was invited by Government to form a Coronavirus Taskforce to set out a clear path from the current crisis to the fullest, fastest and best recovery for the rail supply chain.

The work – which included the independent survey and stakeholder interviews – anticipated lack of

demand and cash flow as being significant barriers for the recovery of their organisations to pre-virus levels.

Following analysis, the RSG has shaped a clear way forward which will see elements of the Rail Sector Deal being adapted and accelerated in response to these industry needs and concerns by:

- Improving work pipeline visibility: Working with industry partners, the RSG will complete expenditure analysis at contract level throughout the supply chain and highlight opportunities to accelerate work where it can be done productively.
- Simplifying access to rail performance data: The RSG will accelerate existing work by the Rail Data Council to simplify data access to allow better decision making in the short, medium and long term across all parts of the industry.
- Changing railway access arrangements: Working with industry partners, the RSG will explore whether access arrangements can be extended or enhanced for a large number of planned smaller projects to increase productivity.

Philip Hoare, Chair of the Rail Supply Group and President of Atkins, said: “While our report shows that many businesses are confident about survival, it is evident that we need to recover quickly to prevent wider impacts on cash flow, people, passengers, freight, skills and jobs. Put simply, the longer-term resilience requires swift, decisive action.

“The RSG’s Taskforce has quickly mobilised to agree a plan of action and our focus over the coming weeks and months is to work with the wider industry to deliver against the priorities set out in the report.”

Nadhim Zahawi MP, Minister for Business and Industry at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, said: “The Rail Supply Group has reacted quickly to the challenges presented by the coronavirus pandemic and have identified clear priorities for the sector through this survey.

“The Government will now work with industry to adapt the Rail Sector Deal, so that our supply chains can have a bright future and achieve the best possible recovery.”

Chris Heaton-Harris MP, Minister for Rail at the Department for Transport, said: “The rail industry has been right at the centre of our efforts to combat this virus, and I am immensely grateful for the skill, dedication and vast amount of hard work that has gone into keeping our railway running.

“I welcome this report and the action taken to support the swiftest possible recovery from the pandemic. By working together, we can build back better and bolder from Covid-19, improving journeys, boosting economic growth and levelling up across the country.”

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