

Rail trade bodies come together on key 'asks', to make Rail Project SPEED a success

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The three main rail supply trade bodies have come together to set out five key 'asks' to help ensure Rail Project SPEED – the Government and Network Rail's plan to reduce the time and cost of rail projects – is a success.

Following the Rail Project SPEED Conference held virtually today, the Railway Industry Association, Rail Alliance and Rail Forum Midlands, agree with the Rail Minister's 'one team' approach, and have united to call for:

1. **A partnership approach** between DfT, Network Rail and the supply chain that embeds early supplier involvement and collaboration, and which recognises all parties have a key role to play in reducing time/costs on projects (for example, ensuring timely planning and funding decisions and delegation);
2. A cross industry approach to identify and action **practical solutions, such as improved access to track and improved planning processes;**
3. **A clear investment roadmap**, providing visibility and certainty of rail schemes, so suppliers can take key decisions on investment and skills;
4. **A new, transparent, approach to risk and benefits-sharing**, which drives innovation and cost reduction; and
5. **Recognition that the whole industry workforce is key to success** with commitment by all parties, including those involved in education and training, to ultimately bring about changes to reduce time/cost on projects.

Darren Caplan, Chief Executive of the Railway Industry Association (RIA), said: "It's good news to see the Government and Network Rail proactively engaging the wider industry and setting out their vision of Project SPEED, of delivering rail projects more cost-effectively and quickly in future. The Government have given strong support to the railway industry over the last year, which we of course welcome, and rail business are now fully committed to working with it and Network Rail to ensure the sector is best able to support the UK's economic recovery as we all seek to build back better.

"In order to make Project SPEED a success, we need Government and Network Rail to work closely with the supply chain in a collaborative fashion, as partners, to reduce the time and cost of future projects. So, today with fellow trade bodies Rail Alliance and Rail Forum Midlands, we have set out five key 'asks' which UK rail suppliers need to be delivered on to make a success of the initiative. We look forward to working with colleagues across Government and the industry to deliver Project SPEED in the months ahead."

Alex Burrows, Managing Director of the Rail Alliance, said: "The rail industry has worked hard to address the challenges set in the last few years by the Government, highlighted by the collaboration that delivered the Rail Sector Deal and the raft of initiatives that have come from that. We all want to see a thriving industry delivering a world class railway for customers that can come back from the pandemic with a strong positive response to get people and goods onto rail in ever greater numbers.

"A shared vision and strategy of what we want to achieve is vital along with a committed plan that all parties are fully signed up to. More rail travel, through significant modal shift, is vital to reduce traffic congestion and emissions for the benefit of our society, economy and environment. Rail Project SPEED is a vital part of the process in taking us towards that bigger picture of moving people and goods off the roads and onto rail. A joined up and effective rail industry will deliver a successful railway."

Elaine Clark, Chief Executive of Rail Forum Midlands, said: "The Government has shown considerable faith in the industry during the pandemic as evidenced by the huge support we have received over the last year. We are now uniquely placed to support the Government's future agenda; supporting the rebuilding of the economy and tackling critical issues such as climate change.

"The railway is often described as a system and the same concept applies when it comes to carrying out

projects. All the various parties involved including Government, Network Rail and the supply chain have a part to play in understanding their impact on project timeframes and the cost base. All need to work together to drive improvement and the five key asks that we are launching today with RIA and Rail Alliance set out how Government, Network Rail and the wider industry need to work together, in partnership, to achieve this step change.

“Rail Project SPEED can be a game changer for the industry; we look forward to working with Government, Network Rail and our wider industry colleagues to make it a reality.”

Photo credit: Railway Industry Association