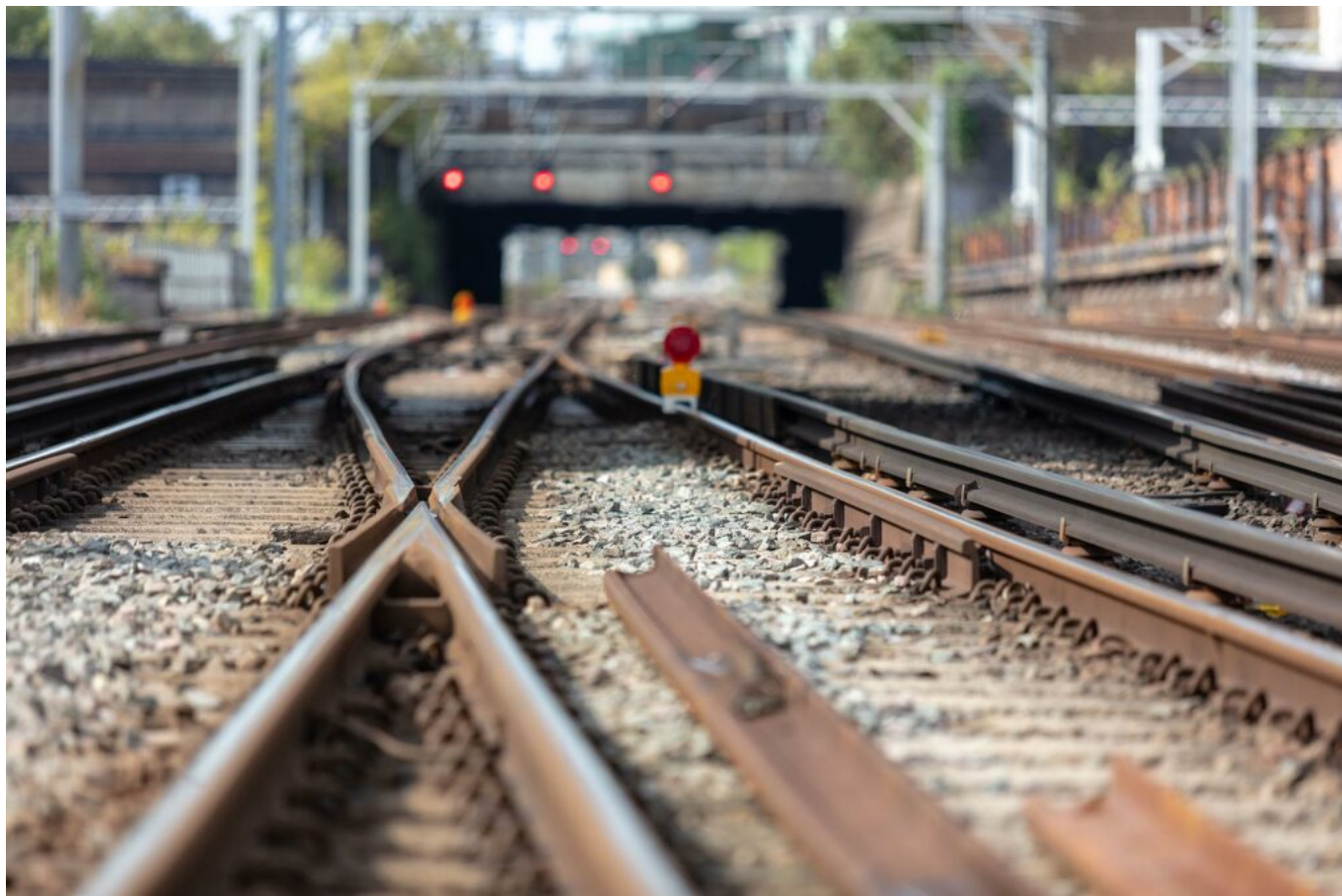


# Railway industry – barriers to ‘levelling up’ the UK rail network, five crunch points

February 13, 2020



The Railway Industry Association (RIA) has published its submission to the Spring Budget today, highlighting five ‘crunch points’ that could act as a barrier to ‘levelling up’ the rail network.

These crunch points, all of which will take place over 2020 to 2024, include:

- ‘Boom and bust’ in renewals;
- A lack of ‘shovel-ready’ enhancements and – whilst acknowledging the Prime Ministerial statement of support for HS2 on 11 February – continuing uncertainty around major projects;
- Volatility in the rolling stock market, and a possible hiatus in decision-making whilst the Williams Rail Review is implemented;
- The need to increase rail electrification, and promote a range of clean traction modes; and
- A significant ramp up in digitalisation in 2024.

Darren Caplan, Chief Executive of the Railway Industry Association (RIA), said: “The coming few years will be of critical importance to the new Government, but they will also be pivotal for the rail industry. If we get

this right, it could be a 'golden age for rail'.

"The sector has much to be positive about, with the Government showing itself to be a keen supporter of rail, with £48 billion in rail funding over the current five year funding cycle, and the recent decision supporting HS2 giving some certainty to rail businesses planning ahead.

"However, there are also a number of barriers to the Government's ambition of 'levelling up' our rail infrastructure by the next General Election in 2024. Simply, 'boom and bust', whether in renewals, enhancements, rolling stock, electrification or digitalisation, will lead to the industry ultimately delivering less efficiently than it could, leading to higher costs for customers – passengers and freight – and taxpayers.

"So we urge the Chancellor in his Budget on 11 March, and with the impending publication of the Government's National Infrastructure Strategy, to work with the railway industry to overcome these crunch points, so we can deliver greater capacity and connectivity on the UK rail network, with all the increased economic growth, investment and jobs this will bring."

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