

RIA: Enhancements Clock – 1 year and 111 days have passed since last RNEP announcement

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Today marks 1 year and 111 days since the last date the Government gave an update on its list of upgrade projects in the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline (RNEP).

Whilst we understand the Coronavirus pandemic has made things incredibly difficult for everyone, including of course those in Government, the supply sector is respectfully asking Government to publish an update on where things stand with the RNEP, so that railway businesses have the visibility to plan for whatever future work is going to be in the short to medium term pipeline, at what is clearly an uncertain time for the industry.

RIA's Enhancements Clock has tracked the time taken since the Department for Transport published the list of projects back in October 2019 – and it is now 1 year and 111 days since the list was last updated on 21 October 2019. At the time, the DfT also promised to publish the list on an annual basis.

Darren Caplan, Chief Executive of the Railway Industry Association (RIA), said: “The Railway Industry

Association and our members are concerned another milestone has passed on publishing an update of the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline list. Whilst we are not doubting the support the Government has given the industry over the past year, and we of course recognise the huge impact of the Coronavirus pandemic, rail businesses are simply calling for no more than visibility on the Government's thinking on upcoming projects, following repeated commitments to keep the supply sector updated on their progress. This is not about budget, it is simply a call for clarity on future work, whatever that thinking is.

"It has been 1 year and 111 days since progress on the RNEP was last published. These schemes – including new tracks or electrification of routes – are vital in ensuring the rail industry not just builds the world-class railway of the future but also supports current jobs, investment and economic growth at an essential time for the economy, as the network gets ready for when passengers return post-Coronavirus.

"2020 saw the Minister and the DfT engaging really positively with the railway industry, and UK rail welcomes the Government's support to keep the network running through the pandemic. We urge the Government to continue this constructive engagement with rail, and to let us know it's thinking on the RNEP as soon as possible."

A Department for Transport spokesperson said: "Alongside the billions invested in supporting the rail industry through the pandemic, protecting services and frontline jobs, we are also investing significant sums in modernising our railway.

"We continue to deliver ambitious improvements, including the Transpennine Route Upgrade, restoring lines closed during the Beeching cuts and HS2, as we level up our country and build back better."

Photo credit: Railway Industry Association