

## RIA: railway industry now faces a 'summer of uncertainty'

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The Railway Industry Association, the voice of the UK rail supply community, **recently highlighted** that there would be a 'summer of uncertainty' for the railway industry if the Government's Transport Decarbonisation Plan, Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline (RNEP) and Integrated Rail Plan (IRP) for the Midlands & North did not get published before parliamentary recess.

With the House of Commons rising today for the Summer, the RNEP and the IRP have still not been released, despite repeated indications in the first half of this year that they would be. Encouragingly, the Transport Decarbonisation Plan was published earlier this month, which was welcomed by RIA.

Darren Caplan, Chief Executive of the Railway Industry Association (RIA), said: "Whilst it was good to see the Transport Decarbonisation Plan published – which the Railway Industry Association and its members broadly welcomed, given it supports a robust plan to decarbonise the railway network in the coming years – we are still awaiting an update on the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline and the release of the Integrated Rail Plan.

"Without seeing the details of enhancement schemes around the country, and the Government's plan for

the railways in the north and midlands, rail suppliers of all types and sizes simply will not be able to prepare their teams, resources and business plans over the summer. This lack of certainty and visibility makes it more difficult to build and enhance the UK's railway network as efficiently and cost-effectively as it otherwise could.

"The RNEP – a list of planned rail upgrades – has not been published for over 20 months, even though it was understood this would happen annually. The delay has meant that at least £1.5 billion has been cut from the rail enhancements budget, as the funds are returned to Government if not used. Similarly, the delay to the IRP has seen work halted just this week on HS2's Eastern Leg, and Transport for the North have reported they expect it to delay the delivery of Northern Powerhouse Rail by a year.

"We sympathise with the Government on the difficult impact the Coronavirus pandemic has had on budgets, yet we are simply seeking certainty and visibility on what the Government intends to do. This 'summer of uncertainty' will not help rail suppliers as they seek to deliver a world-class railway network to the timescale and budget the Government wants for the years ahead. We hope by the time Parliament returns, the Government provides the railway industry with the visibility it needs so that ultimately rail businesses can play their part in supporting the economic growth, jobs and investment the UK requires to bounceback from the Coronavirus pandemic."

*Photo credit: Railway Industry Association*