

# RIA recognises 'hands-on' rail experience MPs

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The Railway Industry Association (RIA) has this week held a Parliamentary Reception in the packed House of Commons Terrace Pavilion.

The event brought together leaders from across the railway industry and senior parliamentarians, and hosted the Rail Fellowship Programme (RFP) awards ceremony, where RIA recognises politicians from across the political spectrum who have taken part in the initiative over the past year.

The Programme matches parliamentarians with rail suppliers in their constituency or local area, giving them 'hands-on' experience of the industry.

RFP Fellows in 2022-23 included Shadow Climate Change Secretary Ed Miliband, Business Secretary Grant Shapps (who was Transport Secretary at the time) and Shadow Exports Minister Nia Griffith, who visited Unipart Rail, label manufacturer Silver Fox and the Global Centre of Rail Excellence in South Wales respectively.

Fellows received an award designed and produced by RIA member Transmission Dynamics, which depicts Stephenson's Rocket.

Rail & HS2 Minister Huw Merriman, Transport Committee Chair Iain Stewart, Shadow Rail Minister Tan Dhesi and parliamentary sponsor Chris Loder addressed the Reception and spoke about the value of the supply sector and its bright future.

The RIA Rail Fellowship Programme Class of 2022-23 included:

- Bob Blackman MP, who visited Alstom's Willesden Depot in London;
- Jo Stevens MP, who visited the South Wales Metro;
- Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP, who visited Silver Fox in Welwyn Garden City;
- Tan Dhesi MP, who visited Siemens in Chippenham;
- Dame Rosie Winterton MP, who visited Unipart in Doncaster;
- Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP, who also visited Unipart in Doncaster; and
- Nia Griffith MP, who visited the the Global Centre of Rail Excellence in South Wales.

Darren Caplan, chief executive of the RIA said: "I would like to congratulate the Rail Fellowship Programme Class of 2022-23 on receiving their awards, having found time in their busy schedules to gain hands-on experience of the rail industry.

"The RFP plays a pivotal role in showcasing to parliamentarians across the parties the exciting and innovative work carried out by the rail supply sector; not only keeping people and freight moving around the rail network but securing the skilled jobs, investment and innovation that the railway industry supports.

"For the last six years, the programme has brought dozens of parliamentarians together with the rail supply chain to raise awareness of the immense value of the industry to every corner of the UK.

"The class of 2022-23 completed their visits at an exciting time for the rail industry where - despite the challenges of industrial action and concern about some passenger service levels - passenger numbers and freight still bounced back strongly after pandemic restrictions were relaxed in early 2022. This encouraging outlook, combined with confirmation that a number of key major rail projects are set to go ahead in the coming months and years, demonstrates that all of us should be optimistic about the future of rail.

"In this spirit optimism, we look forward to the year ahead, and to welcoming more parliamentarians to RIA member sites."

Chris Loder, MP for West Dorset, Transport Select Committee member and Reception host, said: "It is incredibly important for parliamentarians to gain an in-depth understanding of the value of UK rail to their constituencies and to the whole country. I'd like to thank RIA for the work they do through the Rail Fellowship Programme in raising awareness of the industry."

*Photo credit: Railway Industry Association*