

# Report: East Coast Digital Programme is the way forward

January 13, 2022



The East Coast Digital Programme (ECDP) is a blueprint for a national digital signalling program and other major schemes, according to a report being released by the Railway Industry Association (RIA).

The [RIA report](#) recognised the ECDP as a new model of delivery utilising an industry and commercial partnership, with a more significant role for train operators and the supply chain.

Created independently and produced by RIA following a series of interviews with partners involved in the ECDP and senior industry figures, the report looks at the innovative structure of the programme and the benefits it is driving.

It says that the programme, led by Network Rail Director Toufic Machnouk, should be considered as the default model for future schemes across the industry, whether in signalling or other areas such as electrification and rolling stock — especially as the industry transitions to the new Great British Railways.

The report outlines six essential lessons the industry can learn for similar complex programmes. These include:

- **A different approach is needed.** This is a transformational industry change programme enabled by technology and therefore needs to behave like an integrated business bringing all the parts together.
- **User-centricity is paramount.** Working with the operating community and their understanding of the railway is central to realising user benefits.
- **Success equals a lean multi-organisational delivery partnership with a shared vision.** Jointly defined principles, values, critical success factors and an open operating model are vital.
- **Unleash the power of the supply chain.** Supplier and client should be responsible for the areas they are best equipped to deliver and bring the supplier close to the user.
- **This is not easy.** There is a steep learning curve for all parties involved when implementing new ways of working.
- **Communicate, communicate, communicate.** If this is to be the default model for future complex programmes, the benefits and lessons need to be shared and embedded across the industry.

Despite the progress so far, the report stresses that the team do not underestimate the potential challenges ahead and are committed to working together to identify emerging risks and find solutions.

David Clarke, technical director at the Railway Industry Association (RIA), said: “The rail industry has a significant challenge over the next 15 years to replace around 65% of current signalling equipment, and the only affordable way to do that is to use new digital technology. Such a challenge requires new ways of thinking and for the rail industry, Network Rail, operators and suppliers, to work together in a wholly different way.

“The East Coast Digital Programme shows just how the rail sector is taking that brave and important leap. As our new report shows, the programme has taken an industry partnership approach, bringing the supply chain into the room as early as possible, working with them as partners and making the most of the capability they bring.

“Speaking to those involved on the ECDP, it is clear that, although the project is not yet complete, there is a huge amount of positive work and excellent progress being made in delivering an undoubtedly challenging programme which seems to be set up for success. It is testament to the leadership at Network Rail, notably Toufic Machnoug, establishing ECDP as it is, and to every partner who has been involved to date.

“Upgrading to digital signalling in the UK will be vital for improving the passenger experience, making trains more reliable and increasing capacity, as well as for improving safety on our network. We hope that this report helps share the learnings from the programme, and will help enable the roll out of digital signalling and other complex schemes across the country. This offers a delivery model for Great British Railways, bringing track and train together.”

Toufic Machnoug, director of industry partnership digital at Network Rail, said: “When we launched this programme, we approached it from first principles, which made clear a number of truths. This programme is inherently one of the most complex enterprises the industry has ever taken on, as it changes how we run the railway across track and train underpinned by the opportunity of technology. The only way to organise for success was by creating a deep industry partnership, organised in a user centric change

programme, and for the capability deliverers to be deeply embedded and close to the user community.

“As a result, we now have an industry developed bottom-up plan unlike anything we have seen before, with a level of clarity, resilience and adaptability, setting up for the immense challenges ahead.”

“I would like to thank RIA for undertaking this study, which I hope will help expand the learnings from the principles that underpin this programme with the wider industry.”

Caroline Crewther, ECDP industry change lead, railway systems integration partner, Atkins, said: “ECDP is truly integrating the industry like never before. In embracing a collaborative approach, we are changing the way of working across the railway. I am proud of how we have come together across over 30 partner organisations and how we continue to build an environment where we can all thrive – investing in our team and engaging the right people at the right time, to deliver the Programme.

“As a Programme, we are committed to learning from others, achieving the best from collective knowledge and realising our ambition to leave a blueprint for the future.”