

RIA sets out plan to boost rail exports in International Trade Select Committee Inquiry response

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The **Railway Industry Association** (RIA) has submitted a series of recommendations to the International Trade Select Committee Inquiry, setting out how the UK Government can grow rail exports and boost UK trade.

The Committee is holding an Inquiry into export opportunities and whether UK exporters are able to take advantage of them, and is examining the current situation for exporters, the support offered by Government, and how easily exporters can access that support.

Responding to the Inquiry, RIA submitted eight key recommendations, urging the Government to:

1. Increase the level of support at overseas rail exhibitions and UK Pavilions;
2. Review the cancellation of the previous Tradeshow Access Programme (TAP) scheme and reintroduce or improve the existing UK Tradeshow Programme (UKTP) grant scheme;
3. Where possible, produce a visible pipeline of international rail projects looking to be awarded project finance support from UK Exports Finance (UKEF);
4. Provide seed funding and initiatives to support exporters, especially for SMEs, by re-introducing or continuing the 'Internationalisation' fund;
5. Recognise suppliers' decarbonisation efforts in their production cycles of manufacturing;
6. Ensure UK railways can align as much as possible with international standards;
7. Provide specific support to SMEs wanting to export by including an SME chapter to Free Trade Agreements, where possible.
8. Provide an assurance that the divergence risk is being accurately assessed through the exports' lens as part of the Retained EU Law Bill.

Commenting, RIA's Exports Director, Neil Walker, said: "UK rail already has a strong global reputation, with the supply chain exporting its world-leading products, services and capability to overseas markets. While rail exports are immensely valuable – totalling over £600m in the year before the pandemic started – there is great potential to grow exports more, boosting the country's trade and increasing the resilience of the UK supply chain – for example by creating new SME jobs.

"At a time when the UK Government is seeking to redouble its efforts to build a 'Global Britain', it is important that support for rail exporters increases in the future. So, we urge the Government to adopt the Railway Industry Association's eight recommendations, from providing more grant support at overseas trade shows and increasing assistance for SMEs, to ensuring UK rail aligns as much as possible with international standards. There is much work to be done to realise rail's full potential, and to help UK exports in the years ahead."

Photo credit: Railway Industry Association