

Shadow Transport Secretary: Rail can drive the green industrial revolution

December 2, 2022



“Rail can drive the green industrial revolution and boost decarbonised economic growth.” That was the message from shadow transport secretary Louise Haigh who spoke at the RIA North Conference in Manchester, setting out Labour’s vision.

She said: “We already have such significant strengths in advanced manufacturing, in research, in tech, and enterprise. We’ve already attracted investment from Boeing in Sheffield and Siemens in Goole. We have 27 universities including eight of the top research institutions. In short, we have all the ingredients to drive the ‘green industrial revolution’.

“Rail investment is fundamental to the challenges a future Labour Government is determined to address. Driving economic growth, particularly in those areas left behind for far too long. And decarbonisation, meeting the critical challenge of the century ahead... We know that for every pound invested in infrastructure, the economy gets £2.80 in return. We know that growth begins to be delivered in year one of such infrastructure investment.”

The conference also saw:

- **Martin Tugwell, Chief Executive of Transport for the North**, reporting that passenger numbers were getting back to pre-Covid levels in the region, and making a plea for rail investment not to be cut at a time when rail was rebounding strongly from the pandemic;
- **Nick Donovan, Managing Director of Northern Trains**, saying that, despite concerns over service levels, Northern Trains had seen its highest ever weekly revenue levels in mid/late November;
- **David Clarke, RIA North Lead**, reiterating the priorities in the region of: delivering value, decarbonisation, digitalisation, people and skills, and innovation, and setting out what had already been delivered in each area and planned next steps.

The RIA North Conference was held at the Science & Industry Museum in Manchester, on Thursday 1 December. The conference is a flagship event in the railway calendar and attracts more than 100 RIA members, industry leaders and senior players, to discuss the strategic direction of the industry in the region. This year's conference included:

- Shadow Transport Secretary Louise Haigh MP;
- Martin Tugwell, CEO Transport for the North;
- Nick Donovan, Managing Director Northern Rail;
- Eoin O'Neill, Capital Delivery Director, North West and Central, Network Rail;
- Vernon Everitt, Transport Commissioner for Transport for Greater Manchester; and
- Tony Matthews, Head of IT at DB Cargo.

The conference was sponsored by **AmcoGiffen** and included an opportunity for SME businesses to engage with delivery and procurement specialists from five of the larger rail businesses operating in the region.

Justin Moss, RIA North Chair, said: "Today was a hugely positive event, hearing from senior players and demonstrating the readiness of RIA North members, using their expertise to deliver better outcomes for the users, funders and builders of the railways in the north.

"We agree with Shadow Transport Secretary Louise Haigh's point that rail can power the 'green industrial revolution'. And we are ready to work even more collaboratively with DfT, TfN, regional mayors, Network Rail and other stakeholders to deliver a cleaner, faster and better railway.

"We also have constructive ideas on how to deliver investment projects more efficiently and innovatively, and about how to cost efficiently decarbonise and digitise the railway. And we want to highlight the potential to create significant numbers of high-quality, long-term jobs across the north if the industry has the confidence in the investment programme. Today's conference was an excellent forum to discuss this essential agenda."

Photo credit: Railway Industry Association